



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 2000

**Prostart Training Limited**

## SUMMARY

Prostart Training Limited provides good training in business administration and satisfactory training in retailing and customer service. Trainees are set clear short-term goals and are assessed regularly. Many trainees make rapid progress towards their qualifications. Trainees receive a high level of support when on their programmes, but there is no initial assessment of their key skills when they start training. The company has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity, which is rigorously implemented and monitored. The training programmes are well managed and the company responds promptly to individual trainees' identified training needs. However, on-the-job training is not planned or monitored. Assessments and reviews of trainees' progress are carried out effectively and consistently across the organisation. The company has yet to develop procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of training.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	2
Retailing & customer service	3

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent assessment through observation
- ◆ good level of support for trainees
- ◆ good action-planning to promote equality of opportunity
- ◆ well-managed training programmes

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no planning or monitoring of on-the-job training
- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

## INTRODUCTION

1. Prostart Training Limited (Prostart) was established in July 1999 as a trading arm of Millbrook Management Services. In October 2000, Prostart separated from its parent company and is now a company limited by guarantee. Prostart is based in Long Eaton, where it has its administrative offices and a training room. The company has two directors, a company secretary, who is also the training and development manager, and eight full-time and two part-time members of staff. It has contracts with Greater Nottingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and South Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE). There are currently 120 trainees, all of whom are employed.

2. Prostart provides training in business administration, information technology, accounting, retailing, customer service and sales. Most of the training is done in the workplace by Prostart's staff. The company's training room is used for drop-in training sessions six days each week. All off-the-job training is arranged on an individual basis with each trainee. Trainees working towards accounting qualifications attend one day each week at a subcontractor or use Prostart's training room on a Saturday.

3. The company operates primarily in Greater Nottingham and South Derbyshire and recruits trainees from Alfreton, Bestwood Village, Beeston, Colwick and Hucknell, Ripley and Annesley. The unemployment rate is 3.8 per cent in Nottinghamshire and 4.3 per cent in South Derbyshire, compared with the East Midlands average of 4.4 per cent and the national average of 5.2 per cent. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 28.7 per cent in Nottingham and 49.1 per cent in Derbyshire, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of 16 year olds staying on in full-time education in South Derbyshire is 64 per cent and the proportion of trainees entering employment with training is 5.6 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The company produced its first self-assessment report in July 2000. All staff were involved. Each member of staff had responsibility for producing an area of the report. The whole team then discussed the findings. The company was not happy with the depth and overall conclusions of its first attempt and staff made a further study of the organisation and developed a more detailed report. The company found the process useful in helping it to look objectively at its strengths and weaknesses. Prostart also developed an action plan to address the weaknesses it had identified, and all staff have worked towards implementing the plan. The training manager monitors progress towards achieving the targets in the action plan.

5. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days at Prostart during November 2000. Inspectors interviewed 39 trainees, visited 20 work placements, and interviewed 16 supervisors and employers and all staff involved in the training and assessment of trainees. Inspectors examined a range of documents including trainees' work, trainees' records, assessment and internal verification documents and the awarding body's reports.

### OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

#### **Business administration**

#### **Grade 2**

6. Prostart provides youth training and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes in administration, information technology and accounting. There are a total of 88 trainees working towards business administration qualifications. Of these, 47 are advanced modern apprentices in administration, four are advanced modern apprentices in accounting and one is a foundation modern apprentice in information technology. There are 24 modern apprentices in information technology and one foundation modern apprentice in accounting. The remaining 11 trainees are all working towards administration NVQs at level 2 or level 3. All trainees are employed, mostly with small local companies in the Nottingham and Derby areas involved in manufacturing, retailing or the service industries. Assessors visit trainees once every month and more frequently if trainees need additional support. Another member of the Prostart team visits trainees to review their progress and to check on their welfare. Most trainees learn through work activities which are supervised. Assessors give individual coaching during their monthly visits. Trainees who are working towards accounting NVQs usually attend training sessions one day each week at a local specialist college. Some level 2 accounting trainees attend training sessions at Prostart's offices rather than the college. Some administration and information technology trainees also attend individual training sessions at Prostart. These sessions are offered both inside and outside normal office hours and at weekends.

7. Since Prostart began providing government-funded training, 131 trainees have started on the business administration programmes. Eighty-eight trainees are still in training. Five have achieved the full advanced modern apprenticeship framework, 27 have left the programme early without achieving qualifications, and 11 have left early having achieved at least a level 2 qualification. The self-assessment report was out of date by the time of the inspection. Most of the weaknesses had already been addressed. Some aspects of the training identified as strengths were considered to be normal practice by inspectors.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ rapid progress by trainees'
- ◆ effective use of observation for assessment
- ◆ diverse and demanding job roles
- ◆ enhanced qualifications for most trainees

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ narrowness of some training
- ◆ inefficient use of learning resources

8. Assessors plan their visits carefully and set trainees challenging targets. Trainees' progress is reviewed effectively during each visit and trainees generally achieve their targets. New trainees are encouraged to tackle those aspects of the qualification which are most relevant to their job roles. They soon gain a good understanding of their qualifications and of the assessment requirements. Most have a satisfactory understanding of key skills although assessors approach them in different ways. Many trainees make rapid progress towards their qualification aims. There are examples of advanced modern apprenticeships completed in 12 months and level 2 NVQs achieved in six months. Most trainees on apprenticeship programmes undertake two NVQs, which is in excess of the apprenticeship requirements. The two NVQs are chosen to reflect the trainees' job roles and personal aspirations. Their achievement of the modern apprenticeship is not delayed by this approach. Trainees who choose not to undertake two NVQs nevertheless work at an appropriately demanding pace.

9. Assessors use observation as their primary source of evidence of trainees' competence. They observe trainees on about 12 occasions during their time on the programme and usually combine occupational and key skills assessments. The records of observations are detailed and clear. This method of assessment by on-the-job observation reduces the need for trainees to produce written evidence of their competence. Assessors provide detailed feedback to trainees on their performance.

10. Assessors respond well to training needs as they arise. They coach individual trainees during their monthly visits and arrange off-the-job training when it is needed, especially to develop computer skills. Training programmes are modified in response to trainees' needs. Employers are keen to see trainees improve their skills. Trainees are quickly given a range of challenging responsibilities. Most supervisors take a close interest in their trainees' progress. In some cases, Prostart has found new jobs for trainees to ensure they can continue their personal development and can work towards higher levels of achievement. A few trainees have progressed to level 4 NVQs as they have moved into managerial positions.

11. Employers make little formal contribution to trainees' learning. Trainees do not always recognise the value of the training they receive at work. They are clear about how they will be assessed and are adept at providing good evidence to demonstrate their competence. However, there are gaps in their background knowledge. They tend to focus on procedures which are used in their own organisations at the expense of learning about procedures which can be used in other situations. For example, some trainees have a narrow understanding of the various ways of dealing with conflict. The trainees' individual training plans and other documents concentrate on assessment objectives rather than learning goals. Assessors use handouts to reinforce some aspects of learning. However, these are not used efficiently: different assessors have developed and use their own resources. Prostart is starting to monitor the introduction of new learning materials and is putting together a bank of resources. All new materials must now be approved before use.

### **Retailing & customer service**

### **Grade 3**

12. There are 32 trainees on youth programmes in retailing and customer service. Two are working towards advanced modern apprenticeships in retailing, 17 towards advanced modern apprenticeships in customer service, and 11 towards foundation modern apprenticeships in customer service. There are two trainees who are not modern apprentices but are working towards customer service NVQs at level 2. All trainees in this occupational area are employed. Most customer service trainees are employed in medium-sized businesses. The two trainees in retailing are employed in a large retail outlet. All assessments are done by Prostart's assessors in the workplace. Prostart employs five assessors in this occupational area. Assessors typically visit trainees every three to four weeks. There are two internal verifiers, one for retailing and one for customer service. All assessors and internal verifiers are appropriately qualified and occupationally competent. Training in this occupational area started in 1999 and many trainees are only now submitting portfolios for external verification. Twenty-five per cent of those who have started programmes have achieved their target qualifications. Retention in the first year was 60 per cent. After eight months of the current year,

2000-01, the retention rate is 75 per cent. The average retention rate over the past 2 years has been 66 per cent. All the aspects of the training identified as strengths in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than that given by the company.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good employment
- ◆ good assessment practice
- ◆ high standard of trainees' portfolios

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of understanding by some trainees of the qualification framework
- ◆ unplanned on-the-job training

13. Trainees are usually recruited by Prostart and are then found a suitable job. Some trainees already have a job when they join the training programme. Many of these have supervisory or managerial positions and are able to generate ample evidence of their competence. Staff at Prostart ensure that those trainees they recruit and place are given the opportunity to develop and extend their knowledge and are able to produce evidence to demonstrate their competence.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Suggestions on how the trainee could generate appropriate evidence for retail operations at level 3 were recorded on a pre-assessment plan. This information enabled the employer to organise the trainee's work schedule to help him prepare for the next assessment. The plan extended over four assessments for the unit.*

14. Assessment practice is good. Trainees are given frequent opportunities to be assessed. Assessors visit trainees in the workplace at least once every three to four weeks and in some cases more frequently. For example, one trainee, who was moving to a different part of the country, was assessed daily in order to complete as many units as possible before leaving. There is a high level of consistency in assessment practice among the five assessors in this occupational area. They carefully record the evidence during each observation and the NVQ unit or key skills qualification to which it applies. Trainees are set targets to be achieved so that further assessment can take place at the next visit. Trainees understand the assessment process and what is expected of them.

15. Employers are asked to read and sign the sheets on which assessors record their observations and the targets which they have agreed with trainees. Employers are not given copies but they can refer to the copy in the trainee's portfolio. Many employers make special arrangements in the workplace to enable trainees to undertake certain kinds of work which will provide the evidence required to achieve a qualification. Trainees are kept informed about the progress they are making towards their qualifications. Trainees and assessors record the progress made against each element of the NVQ on a monitoring sheet. This helps trainees to link the evidence they provide to the occupational standards.

16. The standard of work in trainees' portfolios is high. Assessors work closely

with every trainee to ensure that portfolios are well structured. Trainees take great pride in their portfolios. Observation is the main source of evidence in the portfolios, which contain photographs, product evidence, storyboards, and personal statements as well as observation reports.

17. Although all trainees know which NVQ they are working towards, not all understand all the requirements of their modern apprenticeship framework. Some trainees are unsure which key skills qualifications they are working towards. The company has recognised this as an area which needs improving and has issued all trainees with a booklet which contains the appropriate information.

18. Work-based training in this occupational area is not planned or recorded. Customer service trainees do not have a programme of training which ensures they acquire all the necessary background knowledge and understanding. When assessors identify a training need, they normally provide a one-to-one training session for the trainee. A range of handouts and other learning materials is available for some, but not all, units of the NVQs in this occupational area.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

19. Prostart has an equal opportunities policy which states that the organisation opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination and is committed to equality of opportunity. Prostart has also recently introduced a policy dealing with harassment. All policies are reviewed annually through established quality assurance procedures. Equality of opportunity is discussed with trainees during their induction. Prostart's equal opportunities policy is published in the trainees' handbook. Trainees' progress reviews include questions about equality of opportunity and fair treatment. Replies given by trainees to these questions are recorded on the progress-review form. A copy of each employer's equal opportunities policy is kept in the employer's file held at Prostart. If an employer does not have an equal opportunities policy, Prostart provides one and asks the employer to sign it and confirm that it will implement it. Prostart will not use the employer if it does not do this. At the time of the inspection, 80 per cent of trainees were women. Two per cent of trainees were from minority ethnic groups, compared with 8 per cent in the Greater Nottingham TEC area. Only one trainee with a disability has been recruited. Inspectors found strengths and additional weaknesses in addition to those in the self-assessment report and awarded a higher grade than that given by the company.



### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ designated equal opportunities officer
- ◆ good equal opportunities action-planning
- ◆ effective response to complaints

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient understanding of equal opportunities among trainees and employers
- ◆ no analysis of data relating to equal opportunities
- ◆ no accessible training room for people with restricted mobility

20. Prostart has given responsibility for ensuring implementation of its equal opportunities policy to a nominated member of staff who is also an assessor and has day-to-day contact with trainees and employers. This enables the equal opportunities officer to obtain first-hand information on equality of opportunity in the workplace. Equal opportunities is a standing agenda item at all staff meetings. At these meetings, staff are updated on changes to policies and information obtained from attending external courses and workshops is disseminated. Two members of staff have recently attended equal opportunities training and the staff-development plan for 2000-01 includes similar training objectives for other members of staff.

21. In partnership with Greater Nottingham TEC, Prostart has an equal opportunities action plan. As a result of the action plan, contact has been made with schools which have a high percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Prostart's staff have attended careers events at these schools. Links have also been developed with local community groups and with an organisation which aims to enhance the training and career prospects of young black people. Prostart has provided training sessions on job interview techniques for these young people. Two young people who undertook this training had job interviews with employers which had made contact with Prostart seeking to employ trainees and both were offered jobs. The company's equal opportunities action plan has resulted in Prostart reviewing its promotional material. Changes have been made to ensure that positive images are portrayed. All advertisements now confirm that Prostart is an equal opportunities employer. Other changes arising from the equal opportunities action plan include the introduction of procedures to deal with harassment, and the introduction of questions relating to equality of opportunity on the customer satisfaction questionnaire.

22. Prostart has an effective complaints procedure. Once a complaint has been made, details are recorded and brought to the attention of the quality manager. Actions and outcomes are recorded, and feedback is given to staff as a standing agenda item at staff meetings. Prostart deals quickly with any complaints from trainees of unfair treatment in the workplace. One trainee complained about lewd

remarks made to her by a work colleague. The trainee was immediately removed from the work placement and the employer was informed of the reason for this action. In another case, a bullying incident was dealt with promptly to the satisfaction of all parties. Employers which fail to respond to complaints are not used again by Prostart.

23. Other than the progress-review process, there is no formal mechanism to reinforce trainees' understanding of equal opportunities issues. When placed with an employer, all trainees have to fill in a work-placement check list. This does not require them to gather information on equality of opportunity in the workplace. Some trainees and employers have insufficient understanding of equal opportunities issues.

24. Data relating to equal opportunities are not analysed to identify patterns and trends which could be taken into account when setting targets for recruitment. Access to Prostart's offices and training rooms is by steep stairs which are unsuitable for use by people with restricted mobility. The company has no plans to rectify this weakness.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 2**

25. All trainees at Prostart are employed. Fifty-eight per cent of the trainees were already employed at the start of their training programme. The company has found employment for the rest. Applicants who are not employed are interviewed by Prostart, usually at their local careers office, and given a basic skills assessment. Any special learning needs are recorded on the individual training plan. Accreditation of prior learning is discussed with trainees who are not employed during their initial interview and with employed trainees during induction. Prostart finds jobs for applicants who are not employed by contacting employers which are advertising vacancies in the careers centres or local newspapers. Trainees are not accepted onto the scheme until they have been offered employment. All trainees undertake an induction programme. They are given a trainees' handbook containing basic information about their training programme, health and safety, and equal opportunities. Employers are also required to give the trainee a health and safety induction in the workplace. Formal reviews of trainees' progress are carried out in the workplace every 12 weeks. These progress reviews are in addition to the monthly assessment visits. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective recruitment process
- ◆ flexible training and assessment arrangements
- ◆ well-planned and effective system for reviewing trainees' progress

- ◆ effective response when problems arise

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ insufficient recording of additional support provided

26. The training centre is located in an area of Nottingham which is difficult to reach for many potential trainees. Arrangements are made to carry out interviews at careers offices which are more accessible to trainees, or to collect trainees by car. Trainees are offered interviews for jobs which meet their career aspirations, provide the experience needed to gain a qualification, and are in suitable locations. When appropriate, staff encourage trainees to move to jobs which will enable them to achieve higher-level qualifications.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*A trainee with multiple sclerosis in remission was dismissed from her job. Staff were concerned that the situation could affect her health. They visited her at home, supported her throughout the disciplinary procedures and helped her to find another job and continue her training.*

27. The training and assessment arrangements are effective in ensuring that trainees who wish to achieve at least one qualification are able to do so. Although trainees receive most of their training from their workplace supervisors, additional training needs are met promptly by the assessors, in the workplace or by bringing the trainees into the training centre. Trainees who leave their job are encouraged to come into the centre to work on their qualification until they have secured another job. Trainees make good use of laptops which are available on loan. Seven of the trainees in accounting undertake training on Saturdays. This arrangement avoids disruption to their working week, and suits both the trainees and the employers. Arrangements for getting trainees to the centre are good. Staff often collect trainees from their homes. Assessors usually visit trainees in their workplace once a month. However, more frequent visits are made if a trainee needs additional support or wishes to complete the programme quickly.

28. A member of staff who is not the trainee's assessor carries out progress reviews. This arrangement ensures that trainees have the opportunity to express any concerns about their training and assessment to a third party. There are arrangements which enable the supervisors to give feedback on a trainee's progress at work, even if they are not able to be present at the progress review. There is an effective wall-chart system for checking that progress reviews are carried out at the required intervals. Reviews are carried out at more frequent intervals when trainees need additional support.

29. Staff at Prostart deal promptly and effectively with problems identified during progress reviews or on other occasions. Concerns over training programmes, personal problems such as lack of confidence or personal effectiveness, and problems at work such as bullying or disciplinary issues are dealt with effectively. If the problem is not resolved immediately, staff advise the trainee on a suitable course of action and keep in regular contact to monitor the situation.

30. Ninety per cent of trainees are on foundation or advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. The initial assessment of these trainees does not cover key skills. Relevant diagnostic materials have been purchased but are not being used. Assessors are unaware of the trainees' level of each of the key skills when they join the programme. The arrangements to develop trainees' key skills are not tailored to meet individual needs from the start of the programmes.

31. Some of the information collected during the initial interview and assessment, such as details of disabilities and previous qualifications, is not fully recorded on the application form or individual training plan. Although prior achievements are recognised, details are not systematically recorded in the trainees' personal files or portfolios. There is insufficient recording of the additional support given to trainees throughout their training programmes.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

32. The company has been in operation since July 1999 and is still going through a period of development and growth. New staff are being employed to release existing members of the team to develop internal verification procedures, links with employers, and office systems. There is a training and development manager who is responsible for all the company's activities. There are five full-time and one part-time assessor, a work-placement officer and a review officer. All staff have clear and accurate job descriptions. Staff appraisals are followed up by one-to-one discussions and a review of performance. Staff development is linked to the appraisal system and the company's business aims and objectives. Team meetings are held weekly and assessors meet regularly to discuss new developments and tackle problems. All staff are notified of external verifiers' visits. The action plans resulting from these visits are circulated and individual responsibilities for remedial action are identified. Inspectors awarded a higher grade for management of training than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good communication
- ◆ effective mentoring and responsive staff development
- ◆ well-managed training programmes

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no formal guidance on the teaching of key skills

- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ poor use of management information

33. Informal communication among staff is good. Formal weekly team meetings enable staff to discuss trainees' progress, review performance and discuss general issues. Standard agenda items include quality, equality of opportunity, and trainee issues. Staff who are unable to attend team meetings are briefed by team members and receive a copy of the minutes. There is a good team spirit within the company. The views of staff are sought and acted on. Managers are approachable and willing to listen.

34. Staff who are new to the company are given a training schedule. This includes training on health and safety, monitoring trainees' progress, assessment and internal and external verification. There is a mentoring process which continues for six months. In the first month either the training manager or an experienced assessor accompanies new assessors on at least six visits. There are observations of the assessment process once a month for the first six months. This process provides support for new assessors and ensures the high standard of assessments. Mentoring continues until the staff member feels confident enough to make all visits and assessments unaccompanied.

35. All training programmes are well managed. The training manager, who has overall responsibility for training and assessment, takes a personal interest in the progression and learning experience of individual trainees. Although assessors and the review officer makes visits to trainees, the training manager also visits them from time to time and provides additional training sessions on a Saturday for trainees undertaking accounting qualifications. The company identifies early in a trainee's programme the additional training which will be needed. It has arranged for some trainees to attend a local specialist college to ensure they get the training they need to complete their qualification. These arrangements are well managed. Regular, detailed feedback is sought on trainees' progress, both from the subcontractor and from the trainee. There is little guidance for staff on how to teach key skills. Some trainees start developing their key skills as soon as they start a training programme, but others do not start until they have completed a level 2 NVQ.

36. Most of the training takes place at the trainee's workplace. There is little formal, long-term planning of this training. However, training is arranged when a need is identified. For example, a trainee who had little experience of using pie charts was given individual training on this topic. There is insufficient co-ordination between training which employers provide and the training given by Prostart.

37. Trainees' progress towards their learning goals is recorded in their portfolios and on assessment-planning reports which are completed at each visit. However

there is no overall monitoring of trainees' performance to enable managers to forecast outcomes. A new system has recently been introduced to record the achievement of each element of each NVQ centrally to enable trainees' progress to be monitored by the management. This has not yet been used to evaluate the company's and individual assessors' or trainees' performance. Achievement against targets is discussed at team meetings but this is dependent on assessors' knowledge of individual trainees.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

38. Prostart has a written set of procedures which give details of how most aspects of the training programme should be managed. These have recently been reviewed and reissued. There is an internal audit programme to check whether the procedures are consistently and accurately applied. There are arrangements to evaluate the quality of some aspects of the training. Most of these are informal. The quality assurance system is relatively new and is still being developed. Some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had been rectified by the time of the inspection. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good arrangements to promote consistency and improvement
- ◆ detailed analysis of data about early leavers
- ◆ honest and self-critical self-assessment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ ineffective evaluation of training
- ◆ no systematic analysis of feedback
- ◆ failure to comply with internal verification procedures

39. Prostart has some formal quality assurance arrangements which are collected in a quality assurance manual. These relate primarily to the use, and internal audit, of documents relating to training and assessment. There is also a range of informal measures intended to ensure that staff work in the same way and that the time they spend with trainees is worthwhile. Progress-review dates are monitored and all progress reviews are completed on time. All assessment plans and observation records are copied to trainees' personal files. Managers review these each month to check that they are clear and relevant, and that trainees are making progress. Any concerns are discussed with assessors and promptly addressed. Managers observe staff at different times including at recruitment and selection interviews, induction, progress reviews and assessments. These observations are not formally recorded but have led to additional staff development where appropriate. Managers regularly telephone employers and trainees to give them the opportunity to express

any concerns. They also intervene quickly with employers and trainees if they hear about emerging problems from colleagues. An accounting trainee was unhappy with the training provided by a subcontractor. Managers obtained all the relevant information and arranged a meeting with the subcontractor to resolve the issue.

40. The reasons why trainees have left the programme are recorded. An analysis of these data has prompted managers to introduce an early warning system to identify trainees who are at risk of leaving the programme before they have completed their qualifications. In such cases, additional support is given, usually in the form of extra assessment visits. This has led to an increase in the proportion of trainees who leave with a full or partial qualification. Overall, 50 trainees have left Prostart early. Of these, 30 per cent achieved at least a level 2 qualification.

41. The self-assessment report was about six months out of date by the time of the inspection. Many of the weaknesses had already been addressed. The original action plan had been well managed and progress had been reviewed regularly. All staff are involved in the process and continue to work closely together to identify where further improvements are necessary. Staff have a positive attitude to self-assessment. They welcome suggestions for improvement and are keen to make changes which enhance the trainees' experience. The organisation does not hide its weaknesses. The original self-assessment report concluded that many areas were less than satisfactory. This open and self-critical approach has helped Prostart to develop into an organisation in which all aspects of the training are now at least satisfactory.

42. There are presently no formal systems to monitor and evaluate training. Staff have little awareness about the quality of on-the-job training. Trainees and employers are not asked for their views. Off-the-job training is not observed or evaluated. Prostart obtains feedback from trainees mainly during the progress-review visits. Employers are encouraged to complete a brief evaluation questionnaire. Neither of these methods facilitates quantitative analysis of customers' views. They are used to identify concerns which individual trainees or employers have. These concerns are dealt with quickly. However, there is no analysis of the concerns to identify any patterns or trends.

43. The organisation has an internal verification system which is designed to meet the awarding body's requirements. Trainees' portfolios are looked at regularly. Internal verifiers observe all assessors. There are regular meetings of assessors to promote consistency and share good practice. The internal verification arrangements are designed to ensure that each assessor and each trainee is checked by the internal verifier on a regular basis. However, compliance with these arrangements is not rigorously enforced. Assessors fail to deliver their trainees' portfolios to the internal verifier on time. The internal verifiers do not ensure that assessors adhere to agreed procedures.