TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT DECEMBER 2000

Training and Development Resource Ltd

SUMMARY

Training and Development Resource Ltd offers good engineering training to large numbers of employed trainees in Tyneside. There are good retention rates, a wide range of good workplace opportunities and well-resourced workshops, but the planning of training in work placements is ineffective. Equal opportunities is less than satisfactory as trainees have a low awareness of the issues involved and there is weak monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Trainees have a comprehensive induction, and then receive strong careers guidance but their progress reviews are weak. On- and off-the-job training are poorly co-ordinated, and the monitoring of health and safety is inadequate. Management information is not used effectively in making decisions. The large number of subcontractors, where most of the trainees are based, are poorly monitored and there is some poor internal verification.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- good retention rates for advanced modern apprentices
- wide range of good work placements
- good off-the-job workshop facilities
- extensive involvement by employers in setting strategic direction of training
- thorough induction for most trainees

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor management of on-the-job training
- poor monitoring of subcontractors
- inadequate arrangements for monitoring health and safety
- low awareness of equal opportunities among trainees
- weak monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- weak use of initial assessment
- ineffective management-information systems
- poor progress-review practices

INTRODUCTION

1. Training and Development Resource Ltd (TDR) has the sole contract to manage work-based training in engineering for young people in the Tyneside area. Its contract is with Tyneside training and enterprise council (TEC). It provides engineering training in its own right or through one of its 10 subcontractors. TDR is a partnership of 130 members which was formed in July 1998. It is a registered charity, limited by guarantee, with offices in a modern business unit in the Team Valley area of Gateshead. There are 852 trainees employed in 248 companies. The subcontractors include large companies, some of which have over 100 trainees, local colleges of further education and training organisations. One of these training organisations has over 200 trainees.

2. Tyneside has a population of about 660,000 and comprises the four local authorities of Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead, North Tyneside and South Tyneside. Historically, the area has been associated with heavy industries such as shipbuilding, heavy engineering and coal mining. These industries are in decline and this has had a severe effect on the area. The local economy is undergoing dramatic structural change. There is streamlining of manufacturing, and growth among the service industries. This has led to a mismatch between the manufacturing-based skills of the workforce and the requirements of the newly dominant service sector. In November 2000, unemployment in the four areas was 4.7 per cent for Newcastle, which is a regional service centre, 4.6 per cent for Gateshead, where most of the manufacturing is based, 6.4 per cent for North Tyneside, which has a large public sector workforce and significant inward investment, and 10.6 per cent for South Tyneside, which has a similar proportion of public sector employment. Overall, the unemployment rates for the area are on a downward trend but they are all above the national rate of 3.3 per cent.

3. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in Newcastle was 35 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. The proportion for Gateshead was 45 per cent, North Tyneside was 45 per cent, and South Tyneside was 39 per cent. People from minority ethnic groups make up approximately 1.7 per cent of the population of Tyneside.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. TDR completed its first self-assessment report in September 2000 in preparation for the inspection. The company employed a consultant to oversee the production of the report, who worked closely with the chief executive, a special project team and other staff. The team held meetings with subcontractors to obtain their views. A survey of trainees was carried out so that their opinions could be included. The draft report was shown to the TEC for their comments. An action plan was included.

5. Seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days with TDR in December 2000. They conducted interviews with 12 staff, and interviewed 83 trainees in the Tyneside area. Four colleges and 28 work placements were visited, where 20 employers were interviewed. Inspectors looked at trainees' portfolios and personal files, management information and promotional material. They witnessed one trainee's progress review and two training sessions which were graded 3 and 5.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering — Grade 2

6. The organisation has 852 engineering trainees. All the trainees are employed. There are 650 advanced modern apprentices, 13 foundation modern apprentices and 189 trainees are on other work-based training for young people. The company directly manages 189 trainees, all of whom are advanced modern apprentices and based with 20 local employers. There are 10 subcontractors who manage the remaining trainees on behalf of TDR. These include training companies, colleges of further education and large private sector companies. The following table shows what programmes and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) trainees are taking.

7. Trainees are employed in 248 small, medium and large companies involved in a wide range of engineering and manufacturing activities. These include shipbuilding and repair, offshore/marine engineering, heavy equipment manufacturing, transport services, power generation and distribution, and microelectronics. Those trainees directly managed by TDR are assessed and verified by the organisation, with the help of one subcontractor. The remainder of the trainees are assessed and verified by the other subcontracted companies, colleges or training organisations. Two of the subcontractors further subcontract assessment and verification, as they are not registered assessment centres for engineering. All assessors and internal verifiers hold appropriate qualifications. First year trainees attend approved training centres for basic engineering skills, where they undertake the level 2 NVQ in engineering foundation. They attend subcontracted colleges of further education for qualifications in theoretical

knowledge. During subsequent years, trainees work towards level 3 or 4 NVQs in the workplace, while continuing with day release at a college of further education. The self-assessment report correctly identified the good opportunities in the workplace and good off-the-job training facilities but did not recognise the good retention rates. TDR correctly identified some weaknesses but others were more relevant to generic areas. Inspectors found additional strengths and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

NVQ level	NVQ TITLE	NUMBERS IN TRAINING			TOTAL
		ADVANCED MODERN APPRENTICES	FOUNDATION MODERN APPRENTICES	OTHER YOUTH TRAINEES	
level 2	engineering manufacture (foundation)	107	13	27	**147**
level 2	performing manufacturing operations	0	0	16	**16**
level 3	engineering production	434	0	114	**548**
level 3	engineering maintenance	52	0	16	**68**
level 4	technical services	57	0	16	**73**
TOTALS		**650**	**13**	**189**	**852**

STRENGTHS

- good retention rates for advanced modern apprenticeship
- all trainees employed
- wide range of workplace opportunities
- well-integrated key skills during first year
- good off-the-job training facilities
- good opportunities for progression

WEAKNESSES

- some slow progress with NVQ level 3
- weak assessment practices by some subcontractors

8. The retention rate of trainees on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme is consistently high. Analysis of data shows that most trainees entering the programme remain in training. During 2000-01, 200 trainees began an advanced modern apprenticeship. There are 176 still in training, giving a retention

rate of 88 per cent. During 1999-2000 this proportion was 81 per cent and for 1999-98 it was 84 per cent. Achievement rates for the programme over a three-year period are satisfactory, at 61 per cent.

9. TDR ensures that all trainees who join the engineering training programme are employed from the first day of the programme. The trainees see this as a motivating aspect of their training and are able to see valid career paths within the organisations where they are being trained. This employed status increases the self-esteem of trainees as they are seen within the workplace as equal members of the workforce. If a small company is not able to employ a trainee during their first-year off-the-job training period they are employed by one of three subcontractors.

10. Employers offer a wide range of training opportunities in engineering disciplines. The activities of employers range from heavy engineering such as shipbuilding and offshore marine engineering to precision engineering and microelectronics. The scope of experiences offered varies from basic operations to highly complex tasks. One example is a company which designs, manufactures and maintains deep-sea ploughs and remotely controlled submersible vehicles for laying cables in deep-sea conditions. The engineering content ranges from the production of high-voltage power supplies and the fabrication of steel vehicle components to hydraulic sub-assemblies and electronic printed circuit boards. A trainee at the company was responsible for building and testing new control pods which contain highly complex circuitry.

11. During their first year, most trainees undertake a programme of off-the-job basic engineering training. During this period trainees also work towards some of the key skills required within their individual training plan. These include application of number, communication and information technology. In some instances, trainees also work towards a fourth key skill, that of working with others. By the time the trainees have completed their level 2 NVQ and are ready to return to the workplace, they have achieved most of their key skills. This is an effective way of integrating key skills into the training programme. Those trainees who do not enter an off-the-job training programme complete their NVQ and the required key skills through work-based evidence and support workshops. The organisation of key skills is not as effective for trainees in their final year of training. A number have not yet started to gather evidence towards their key skills. Other trainees, who have completed three of the five key skills units, do not know how, or when, they will finish the other two. A few trainees are unaware that key skills are part of their qualification.

12. The off-the-job training facilities are of a high standard. TDR has attracted European funding for new resources which they have placed in the off-the-job training centres. In one training facility there are a number of industrial specification, computer numeric controlled (CNC) machines which are often used by the trainees. Use of such machines is outside the requirements of their NVQs. This also applies in other training facilities and companies where new machines have been specifically purchased for the level 3 NVQ trainees to use.

13. Most trainees also have opportunities to undertake extended further education courses, for example higher national certificates or diplomas and in some cases full engineering degrees. These opportunities may be sponsored by the employer, the subcontractor, and in some cases, TDR. This benefit is not restricted to technician-status trainees and there is evidence of craft trainees progressing to sponsored higher qualifications in local colleges. At one college, trainees are working in some innovative projects. Some trainees are building a 30-foot offshore boat. The keel has been laid and support stiffeners put in place. Trainees are preparing to refurbish and fit an engine donated from an old lifeboat.

GOOD PRACTICE

The training company has an interactive website where trainees can identify their position in the training cycle. Trainees can log on to the website and move through a flow chart towards their own goals. The website outlines what trainees need to do to move from one position to another and the training requirements for the move. The basis of the career path is operator, craftsman, engineer technician, technical engineer, incorporated engineer and chartered engineer. The links are conveniently placed and ask where you see yourself now and where you want to be.

14. Some trainees who have achieved their level 2 NVQ have made little progress towards the achievement of the NVQ at level 3. The late registration of the trainees on the level 3 programme has resulted in a delay in the receipt of the qualification standards. Therefore, the trainees are unable to gather appropriate evidence towards the standards. No formal assessment has taken place for some trainees, delaying their portfolio development.

15. There is some weak assessment practice. There is very little use of direct observation in the workplace as a means of proving competence. Portfolios mainly show product evidence and witness testimonies, but generally portfolios are satisfactory. The planning of assessments varies, depending on the subcontractor. Some show little evidence of assessment planning, while others plan assessments as a systematic and routine practice. In one company, trainees' portfolios were taken away by the assessor to be assessed. These trainees took no part in the assessment process and received no feedback. In another company, the assessor allocated to assess trainees in CNC machining does not have the appropriate occupational experience, or qualifications, to do so.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities — Grade 4

16. TDR has an equal opportunities policy which details equal opportunities legislation. The policy has been produced recently and has not been in use long enough for a review. No date is yet set for a review. There are no separate equal opportunities procedures, although compliance with relevant legislation is mentioned in the procedure for recruitment of trainees. The requirement for subcontractors to comply with equal opportunities legislation and practice is set out in the relevant contracts. Trainees are given copies of TDR's equal opportunities policy at their induction. TDR has appointed an equal opportunities representative. Data on equal opportunities issues are collected from trainees at the start of the programme. Of 852 trainees, 2 per cent are women and four trainees are from minority ethnic groups. Two trainees have disabilities. The self-

assessment report accurately highlighted a good initiative with schools and a comprehensive equal opportunities policy as strengths. Inspectors also identified some additional weaknesses and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive equal opportunities policy
- good initiative with schools to widen participation

WEAKNESSES

- low awareness of equal opportunities among some trainees
- weak monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- under-representation of women and minority ethnic groups
- insufficient collection and evaluation of equal opportunities data
- no written instructions for equal opportunities procedures

POOR PRACTICE
This is an example of a poor selection interview process. TDR carries out testing and interviewing as part of a selection procedure for entry to the modern apprentice programme. The interview is carried out by one of two nominated interviewers. The interview is conducted on a one-to-one basis and the outcome determines selection for the programme.

17. TDR has a comprehensive and clearly written equal opportunities policy which details the company's approach to equal opportunities. The policy describes relevant legislation and has separate sections covering harassment and examples of unacceptable behaviour. The responsibility for management and the complaints procedure is given and cross-reference is made to the company's disciplinary procedure.

18. TDR is involved in a good initiative to bring together companies, schools and training companies, with a view to increasing the participation of women and minority ethnic groups in engineering training. Year 10 and 11 students in secondary schools are linked with employers who provide work-based experience during the school term. A pilot programme of 24 pupils in two schools, each linked to three employers, has been carried out over the past year and plans are under way to link a further five schools with 15 other companies. TDR and staff from the pilot schools have set up video-conferencing facilities to link workplace mentors with the schools. The five schools proposed for the next stage of the initiative include an all-girls secondary school. All those who participate in the programme are guaranteed modern apprenticeships with TDR if they choose.

19. The subcontractors cover equal opportunities at trainees' induction in different ways. These include video presentations supported by workbooks, presentations and handouts. Trainees' understanding and awareness of equal opportunities differs depending upon which subcontractor gives their training and the stage of training which they have reached. Some third year trainees, and a few trainees in their first year, have no knowledge, or only a superficial knowledge, of equal opportunities issues. Others can remember examples from their training and know how equal opportunities applies in the workplace. Most trainees have a good understanding of bullying and harassment procedures. They are aware of the basic issues involved and know what action to take if they think that they are being

harassed. Trainees are asked about harassment and equal opportunities in the workplace during their quarterly progress reviews. This is not supported by any monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace, and there is no procedure to do this. In some employers' premises there were displays of inappropriate images in the form of posters and calendars. Male trainees gave stereotypical responses when questioned about women undertaking roles in engineering.

20. Women and people from minority ethnic groups are under-represented on TDR's training programmes. The minority ethnic population of Tyneside is estimated as 1.7 per cent of those people over 16 years of age and 51 per cent of the local population are women. These proportions are not reflected among TDR's trainees, of whom less than 0.5 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 2 per cent are women. TDR has recently designed and issued leaflets showing women and people from minority ethnic groups, but the activities in which they are involved are not identifiable as engineering activities. The regular newsletter which TDR produces, and its website, show only white men engaged in engineering work. The women shown in the newsletter are performing administrative tasks or observing computer-aided design lessons.

21. TDR does not gather or use equal opportunities information effectively. Trainees give details of their gender, ethnicity, age and any disabilities when they start training. TDR does not gather such information as part of the application or selection process. It cannot, therefore, judge the effectiveness of any equal opportunities initiatives relating to recruitment or advertising. It cannot identify the ethnicity, gender or disabilities of those people who do not turn up for interviews or tests, or of successful applicants who do not start their training and so has no way of accurately evaluating under-representation on its programmes.

22. TDR has no overall strategy outlining the methods and resources it will use to deal with equal opportunities. There are no written procedures or guides on equal opportunities for staff to follow in their selection, assessment or training activities. Few employees are given equal opportunities training by TDR. Equal opportunities are discussed at fortnightly staff meetings and the topic has recently become a standing item on the agendas of these meetings.

Trainee support **Grade 3**

23. TDR recruits trainees by advertising engineering apprenticeships in the local press and taking referrals from the careers service or the TEC. All those who apply take an aptitude assessment which tests numeracy, literacy and mechanical and spatial awareness. Successful candidates are then interviewed by the training manager or the chief executive of TDR to determine their knowledge of, and interest in, engineering, their ability to communicate and their expected GCSE results. They are also asked to bring along any certificates which they have gained and any relevant examples of practical work. Unsuccessful candidates are referred back to the careers service. Those who are accepted are matched to NVQ programmes and further education courses. Trainees attend a two-hour induction

by TDR at one of the subcontracted training companies. This includes an outline of the modern apprenticeship framework requirements and the rights and responsibilities of trainees. An individual training plan is drawn up at this stage. The induction is then continued by TDR on a more detailed basis, and by a variety of methods, over about three days. Trainees are then matched to appropriate work placements and off-the-job training arrangements are made. All companies are visited by TDR on a regular basis, although the visits are not all formally planned. Trainees' progress reviews are carried out every three months. Some trainees who did not begin their training with TDR are reviewed every four months in their second and third year and every six months in their final year. TDR has a contract with the TEC to cover this arrangement. Trainees are initially tested for key skills at college or at another subcontracted provider and key skills are integrated into the level 2 NVQ foundation training. Extra tuition is given in the workshop and colleges determine, and provide, learning support on the academic side. The strengths indicated in the self-assessment report were not relevant to this generic area and inspectors found other strengths. TDR accurately identified that some progress reviews are inadequate and had already rectified weaknesses concerning the lack of staff and an underdeveloped job-search programme. The other two identified weaknesses were not relevant to this area. Inspectors identified others. The grade awarded by the inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- some thorough induction
- strong career support
- good job-search opportunities for trainees
- effective identification of opportunities for accreditation of prior learning

WEAKNESSES

- weak progress-review practices
- weak use of initial assessment
- inadequate knowledge of the training process by some trainees and supervisors

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of good support to resolve a medical problem. An academically able trainee learning plating was very poor at drawing and could not join two dots together with a straight line. He was sent to the works' medical officer, to his doctor and eventually to an optician where it was found that he had no depth of vision. He had an operation, was given spectacles and now uses specialised computer equipment. He is a highly regarded trainee. TDR paid for all of this.

24. TDR has its own thorough induction process. A member of staff visits a training provider, such as a college, and gives the trainees, who may be trainees from companies subcontracted to TDR, in addition to those from TDR itself, a short overview of the training process. The induction then continues in a manner designed to interest the trainees, by a mixture of discussion, overhead slide presentation, video material and engineering tasters in the workshop. The induction is memorable and very helpful in its content. The induction in other companies is of mixed quality. There is no formal evaluation of the effectiveness

of TDR's induction.

25. Trainees are well supported, both in their career aims and pastoral needs. Examples include the rapid transfer of 14 trainees to nine different companies when a sponsoring company closed down and a trainee who was given good guidance and support to make the change from being a welder to a mechanical fitter when he became asthmatic. One trainee sustained a disabling injury and was transferred from production engineering to engineering services so that he could continue his training. Trainees can be temporarily transferred to another organisation to gain skills which they cannot obtain with their own employer. Trainees are given good advice and encouragement if they wish to progress to degrees or higher national certificates. Those trainees who are struggling with higher theory courses are quickly moved to more appropriate levels to maintain their motivation.

GOOD PRACTICE

This is a good example of flexibility in training programming. A large engineering group took over a shipyard and discovered a group of trainees had received no training for two years. TDR took charge of their training. As the trainees were near the end of their apprenticeship, TDR put them on programmes to achieve NVQs at level 3 only, so they might be able to complete the modern apprenticeship framework. Some of the trainees have not completed NVQs at level2. In addition, the company is giving them all a fast track course in drawing to help their work and is in the process of training 10 mentors/assessors for the current and future trainees.

26. A small number of trainees who achieve their qualifications are not employed by their sponsoring companies. In order to help them gain employment a good, computerised job-search program has been installed at TDR. All trainees, including those from subcontractors, can use this facility. The programme is updated daily and at any one time holds 200 engineering vacancies. Trainees are helped by TDR's staff to use the programme effectively.

27. TDR effectively identifies opportunities within the recruitment and selection procedure for the accreditation of prior learning. From information in the application form the age and previous experience of applicants is noted. Sixteen-year-old trainees are unlikely to have useful experience, but TDR does not discount the possibility. On reaching the interview stage, the candidates are asked in detail about their past experiences and possible evidence is noted. This evidence is then checked and suitable action taken, such as the amendment of individual training plans. TDR plans to have subcontractors use this system, when necessary.

28. TDR's progress-review process is weak. Some records of reviews do not contain short-term and long-term targets and lack detail concerning specific training goals. TDR carries out progress reviews at intervals of more than 13 weeks for second, third and fourth year trainees, although this is allowed by the contractual agreement. Frequent informal visits by trainers compensate for these long intervals between progress reviews. Subcontractors carry out quarterly progress reviews, as required by their contracts. Attendance at progress reviews is inconsistent, as the employer's representative is not always there, so dialogue among the three parties cannot always take place. Employers, colleges' representatives and the trainee fill out written pre-review assessments which are discussed in the review meeting. Not all trainees receive a copy of the progress-review sheet or possess a copy of their training plan.

POOR PRACTICE

This is an example of poor initial assessment. An apprentice welder who developed asthma and changed programmes to become a mechanical fitter was made to repeat the whole of the level 2 NVQ foundation programme when he only needed to cover the three mandatory mechanical units.

29. There is weak use of initial assessment. The results of initial assessment tests are mainly used to help TDR decide which applicants to take, rather than to help in the development of the individual training plans. As trainees are assessed at TDR, learning support is identified. Test scores are not given to trainees and explained,

and the results are not passed to colleges where they could be of use in deciding the level of learning support. On some individual training plans initial assessment is simply stated as an introduction to apprenticeships, NVQs and health and safety. An example was found where two trainees had successfully worked on computer-controlled lathes for two years, but were made to begin their training at level 2 NVQ rather than level 3.

30. Some trainees and workplace supervisors are unsure of the requirements of the individual training plans. The workplace supervisors are uncertain of the modern apprenticeship framework and NVQ process as a whole. Some trainees do not know if they are modern apprentices or not, cannot name their NVQ and have little, if any, knowledge of key skills requirements. They do not know how to identify appropriate evidence for their portfolios.

Management of training — Grade 4

31. TDR is a partnership of 130 members and was formed in July 1998. It is a registered charity, which is limited by guarantee. The partnership members include representatives from local manufacturing and engineering companies, schools, colleges and universities, industrial training centres, trades unions and other work-based training organisations. The company is an engineering training company in its own right and has held a training contract with the TEC to manage engineering training in the Tyneside area since April 1999. The company recruits and directly manages 189 trainees, employed with 20 local companies. The company has a board of directors and a chief executive. There are nine staff and a secondee from another regional training provider. The training manager and two training co-ordinators carry out assessment and internal verification. A contracts manager acts as the quality assurance manager, and there is a business development manager. There is a finance and administration manager who is supported by three administration assistants. The schools/industry co-ordinator deals with school and industry projects. There is also a finance and business development group, made up of members of the partnership, which gives financial and strategic guidance. There are other strategic groups which give direction on school and industry initiatives, modern apprenticeships and workforce development. The company subcontracts engineering training to eight training companies and two local colleges. Some of these training companies subcontract parts of their allocated engineering and key skills training to other training companies. Six of these subcontractors have ongoing contracts and four contracts only for existing trainees and no new trainees will be funded. Staff from TDR, and its subcontractors and employers, are encouraged to be involved in management discussions and to take part in developing the strategy of the organisation. The self-assessment report identified four strengths and three weaknesses. One of the strengths was considered to be no more than normal practice and two of the strengths combined to make one on internal and external communications. Inspectors agreed with the other strength. Additional strengths and two other weaknesses were identified. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- good arrangements for wide availability of work-based assessors
- good internal and external communications
- extensive involvement by employers in strategic management of training

WEAKNESSES

- poor management of training in the workplace
- no staff appraisal system
- lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- inadequate monitoring arrangements for health and safety
- ineffective management information systems

32. TDR is effective in training assessors for its own organisation and its subcontractors. It maintains a useful register of assessors who can be used to cover shortages if they occur. It is also successful in encouraging employers to train their staff to become work-based assessors. Staff in these companies are pleased to gain this qualification as it enhances their career prospects, gives them a greater understanding of the NVQ process and more direct involvement in the training and development of their trainees.

33. There is good communication throughout the company and between the company and its external partners. There is a spirit of openness, which starts with the board of directors and chief executive and is evident throughout the organisation. The chief executive takes an active part in the management of training. There are clear lines of internal communication. The fortnightly staff meetings have minutes and clear action points, a quarterly newsletter is produced and appropriately distributed, the company's notice board is regularly updated with useful information and there are frequent exchanges of written information among staff. TDR maintains good communication with external partners such as the careers service, the TEC, schools, employer members and employing companies through such activities as seminars and recruitment initiatives. It has successfully developed an interactive website and a CD about key skills, to encourage member companies and workplace supervisors to take a greater interest in training.

34. TDR has developed strong relationships within its membership. This places it in a position to respond to the specialist engineering requirements of industry in the region, and ensures the support of the local authorities, industry lead bodies, the awarding body and the TEC. TDR encourages members to influence the training to meet their own needs and to share good practice. The company has been successful in getting employers' representatives to attend meetings and to join strategic groups. This has contributed to a raised awareness among employers of the importance of engineering training, an increase in the number of work-based assessors and the development of good engineering foundation training.

35. There is weak management in terms of the planning of training and assessments, internal verification, action on external verification, the setting of goals and targets, and the effective use of staff. There is inconsistency in the training given in the workplace. The management structure and resources cannot adequately deal with 852 trainees, 10 subcontractors and 248 employers. Sometimes, practical on-the-job instruction is left entirely to the work-placement provider to plan, organise and give without TDR having any direct influence. The quality and relevance of training in this situation is dependent on the commitment, time and understanding of the work-placement provider. Although in most cases TDR's staff make regular and frequent visits to these employers, they are primarily for discussions with trainees rather than for planning and monitoring the level and scope of the training. Some trainees have been on their programme more than 12 months and have not been assessed on any elements of their level 3 NVQ units. There is a well-written set of procedures to manage the training but they are not yet fully developed and applied across the whole organisation. This has created a number of inconsistencies in the subcontracted training. The company has no staff appraisal system.

36. On- and off-the-job training is poorly co-ordinated. Trainees do not get the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills they develop during off-the-job training. Employers are not regularly informed of the progress that trainees are making and the topics which they are studying. They are unable to tailor training in the workplace to reinforce the learning at college. Subcontracted colleges do not know what a trainee is learning during on-the-job training. College tutors, staff in the workplace and, in some cases, trainees, are not given an integrated training plan.

37. Most subcontractors carry out appropriate monitoring of the health and safety arrangements of the companies they use for training placements. However, some do not. In these cases, trainees are doing tasks for which they have not been trained. For example, trainees are involved in the unsupervised use of slings with insufficient training and other trainees are using electrical testing equipment on a high voltage system without appropriate training. These are potentially dangerous practices which may put trainees at risk. One subcontractor allowed a person to carry out the annual health and safety audit of a work placement for which he was not qualified. TDR has introduced a system to monitor the health and safety arrangements of its subcontractors. This is new and it is too early to identify how well subcontractors are performing.

38. TDR's system for collecting and controlling management information is inadequate. The system cannot provide TDR with sufficient information to effectively manage the large number of subcontractors and work-placement providers. It relies mainly on information gathered from two databases, one of which is primarily for controlling payments and claims from the TEC. The other database contains trainees' personal details and information on their training programmes. The system cannot provide detailed information, in a suitable form, to help TDR to determine the effectiveness of its marketing, recruitment or equal opportunities activities. It cannot give the information which TDR needs to assess

subcontractors' performance or employers' on-the-job training. It does not identify areas for concern in the training. TDR is assessing the suitability of commercially available computer-based packages but has not completed this evaluation yet.

Quality assurance — Grade 4

39. TDR developed and started to implement a quality assurance system in October 2000. It has appointed a 'quality representative' who reports directly to the chief executive on quality assurance matters. TDR has partly introduced a range of quality assurance procedures covering various aspects of their operation as defined by the quality assurance system. All the activities which TDR is planning to undertake, such as the monitoring of subcontractors or staff recruitment, are covered by procedures. However, the procedures are new and have yet to be fully implemented or audited as part of the quality assurance system. Internal audits are generally carried out twice a year, sampling a variety of aspects of the procedures. A survey has recently been conducted with trainees and the data have been analysed. No action has been taken as a result of this analysis. The self-assessment report correctly identified the clear quality assurance procedures, the incomplete introduction of the quality assurance system, and the weak internal verification. Inspectors found other strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- thorough quality assurance system
- clear and concise quality assurance procedures

WEAKNESSES

- poor monitoring of subcontractors
- weak use of feedback data
- incomplete implementation of quality assurance procedures
- some poor internal verification practice

40. TDR has developed a thorough quality assurance system covering its different training functions. The system itself is modelled on an international standard for quality management systems. It requires that TDR carries out periodic management reviews of the system, has an audit schedule, controls paperwork, and reviews contracts. There are procedures covering sampling rates for internal verification, customer care and the maintenance and handling of quality assurance records. Procedures are held in a quality assurance manual. They are explained in a clear and concise way, using flow charts appropriately for illustration. This makes the interpretation of the procedure easy for users and identifies clear steps for auditing. The procedures have been followed for a small number of the operational activities of TDR, but have yet to be introduced for others such as the monitoring

of subcontractors. There has been no audit or review of the procedures yet as they were only issued in October 2000.

41. TDR is not monitoring its subcontractors well. A quality assurance procedure has been developed for this activity, but TDR is not following this procedure yet. TDR does have contractual agreements with subcontractors but these do not contain agreed review dates or a mechanism for monitoring subcontractors' performance. Subcontractors are not clear as to who is responsible for monitoring their performance or how it will be done. There are more than 600 trainees with subcontractors. The progress of some of these trainees has been affected by TDR's poor monitoring of the subcontractors. In particular, monitoring of assessment and internal verification standards has been weak. TDR subcontracts the assessment and verification of 50 trainees. Although this is carried out satisfactorily, there are no identified stages for the review of subcontractors' performance in this area and their compliance with their contract. TDR's subcontractors themselves subcontract to colleges of further education. TDR's monitoring procedure for subcontractors does not cover the monitoring of contracts beyond that of the first subcontractor. TDR does not have sufficient staff to conduct appropriate monitoring and reviewing of subcontractors.

42. TDR recently issued a questionnaire to all trainees to assess their satisfaction with such things as the induction process and elements of the subcontractors' training. Most questions asked trainees to use a scale to rate their satisfaction. There was an opportunity to make further comments. In several areas, the questions were unsuitable for trainees. Much of the background information which was collected is available in trainees' personal files. The trainees' responses were collated and analysed. Where there were serious problems, such as conflict between trainees and lecturers, TDR visited the trainees and their employers to identify the problem areas and took immediate action to solve them. The remainder of the feedback from the questionnaires has yet to be used to identify areas for improvement. Employers were also given questionnaires to identify levels of satisfaction. Out of 248 employers there were only two responses. The queries which these employers raised were dealt with immediately.

43. The recently published quality assurance procedures have yet to be fully implemented. TDR's staff and subcontractors are not familiar with relevant procedures. Staff are not operating in accordance with procedures and in some cases were unaware of the finer detail of the procedures, or even their existence. The procedures do not cover all aspects of TDR's operations. There are no procedures in the manual to cover training and development, equal opportunities or staff disciplinary issues.

44. The internal verification process is inconsistent. Subcontractors have a variety of different arrangements. A few subcontractors conduct ongoing internal verification but there are also cases of internal verification occurring at the end of trainees' programmes. This has delayed the certification of trainees' NVQs and means that poor assessment practices are not identified and improved early in the training cycle. External verifiers' reports indicate instances of both satisfactory

and poor internal verification by subcontractors. The external verifier reported that TDR has poor internal verification practices. Sampling rates for internal verification vary from 100 per cent down to a more normal practice of 10 per cent.

45. The self-assessment report accurately identified some of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspection, and gave a good description of the training and subcontracted arrangements. The report was self-critical and provided good detail and some useful descriptive appendices. It underestimated the importance of the monitoring of subcontractors and was over-generous in the grading of some generic areas.