



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 2000

Accrington & Rossendale College Training Services

SUMMARY

Accrington and Rossendale College Training Services offers training in nine occupational areas and the full time education and training option of New Deal in a range of vocational and academic subjects. There are high levels of achievement in construction and trainees' work in hairdressing is of a high standard. Foundation programmes have good work placements and effective off-the-job training. In business administration, training is provided in good work placements but achievement rates are weak. Health, care and public service programmes have good college based training, but achievement rates are low. There is good communications with under-represented community groups but little monitoring of equality in the workplace. Trainees receive a good induction and ongoing pastoral support but there is no systematic assessment of prior learning. Good use is made of management information. Co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training is weak. In quality assurance, there is an effective audit process for procedures but some internal verification is weak and there is insufficient monitoring of training in the workplace.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	2
Business administration	3
Hair & beauty	2
Health, care & public services	3
Foundation for work	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ high participation rate in additional training
- ◆ effective communications with under-represented groups
- ◆ effective use of performance data

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little use of work-based evidence
- ◆ low achievement rates for some trainees
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ inadequate internal verification in some areas
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of training in the workplace

INTRODUCTION

1. Training Services (TS) is a division of Accrington and Rossendale College. It was formed in 1983, when its primary function was to provide training to those school leavers for whom there were no mainstream college training programmes. TS has a contract with East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide national traineeships, foundation modern apprentices, modern apprenticeships and advanced modern apprenticeships together with other work-based training programmes for youths and adults. TS has contracts in the following occupational areas: horticulture, construction, engineering, business administration, retail and customer service, hospitality, hair and beauty, health, care and public services, and foundation for work.

2. Training Services is managed through Accrington and Rossendale College's directorate of business services and is housed in purpose-built accommodation in central Accrington within easy reach of all public transport services. There are 28 members of staff directly involved in the management, administration, training and assessment of work-based training. A programme manager manages TS on a day-to-day basis. Off-the-job training and assessment are subcontracted to Accrington and Rossendale College in the following areas: hairdressing, engineering, construction, hospitality, and business administration. Off-the-job training and assessment in all other areas are the responsibility of TS's staff. Accrington and Rossendale College is referred to as the subcontracting college throughout the rest of this report.

3. The subcontracting college is a member of a consortium of four colleges providing a range of New Deal options and Gateway services. The subcontracting college is a main contractor with the East Lancashire Unit of Delivery and provides training for the full-time education and training option of the New Deal. There are 10 New Deal clients on this option attending college for 30 hours each week. There are another two clients on the employment option subcontracted to the college for off-the-job training. The clients on the full-time education and training option undertake vocational training, job preparation and key skills training. The work experience aspect of the full-time education and training option is organised by Training Services and each client undertakes 20 days' work experience on a day-release basis. Like all other college applicants, New Deal clients receive initial advice and guidance from the subcontracting college's trainee/client services. Any arrangements for additional learning support are established and planned at this stage and clients are then placed on mainstream college courses. Wherever possible, work experience is linked to the relevant vocational training programme and clients are encouraged to gather evidence towards their qualifications while at work. Between March 1999 and June 2000 Accrington and Rossendale College was a partner in a Lancashire consortium of colleges. The consortium was successful in securing European Social Funding to provide additional components to the New Deal full time education and training option. These additional components included improving client motivation,

healthy lifestyles and outdoor pursuits.

4. TS has 240 trainees and 10 New Deal clients on the full time education and training option. The table below shows the breakdown by training programme and occupational area. Of the 250 trainees and clients, 116 are female, 134 are male, and 29 are from minority ethnic groups. They are employed or undertaking work experience in 171 different companies. All the modern apprentices are employed, all but one of the national trainees, and six of those on other youth training programmes are employed. Sixty-three of the 240 trainees have been identified through initial assessment as requiring additional learning support to complete their individual training plans.

5. The population of the subcontracting college's main recruitment areas of Hyndburn and Rossendale is 149,000. The population of the adjacent Ribble Valley is 52,715. In the Hynburn and Rossendale areas the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community make up 5.9 per cent and 2.5 per cent of the population respectively. The number of year 11 pupils in Hyndburn and Rossendale in 1998 was 1,965 compared with 2,348 in 1995. Between 1991 and 1995 the population of East Lancashire as a whole declined by 1.4 per cent. The number of people aged between 20 and 24 fell by 27 per cent between 1992 and 1998. This is thought to be as a result of a decline in the birth rate in the 1970s, migration from the area, and younger people in particular leaving East Lancashire for higher education and better job opportunities elsewhere.

6. It is predicted that the East Lancashire population will continue to decline in the short term but will show an overall growth of 1.5 per cent by 2021. Between 1996 and 2006 there are predicted decreases for all age ranges except the 45 to 60 year olds which will increase by 10 per cent. The East Lancashire minority ethnic community is relatively young with 40 per cent of the population under 15 years of age and only 2 per cent over 65.

7. In July 2000, the East Lancashire unemployment rate was 4.0 per cent compared with the national average of 5.1 per cent. However, the region has a higher proportion of unemployed 16 to 24 year olds than the national average. During 1998, 70 per cent of unemployed 16 to 24 year olds were men and 30 per cent women. The manufacturing sector is a major employer in East Lancashire. The area has twice the national average proportion of employees in manufacturing (36 per cent). Much of the manufacturing is traditional, low technology activity and few companies are involved in the research and development. The demand for higher-level skills in East Lancashire is low and graduates often seek opportunities elsewhere. Between 1981 and 1996 East Lancashire lost over 7 per cent of its full time jobs. This loss was partially offset by an increase in part-time employment, which grew by 78 per over the same period. Although 100,000 new part-time positions have become available since 1981, women have benefited more than men. Female full time employment has also risen. Almost half the growth in female employment has occurred in the last three years, reflecting the strong growth in the retail/service sectors.

8. East Lancashire is currently behind the national targets relating to literacy, numeracy, general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) and vocational qualifications. Almost 33 per cent of the workforce has no recognised qualifications. In 1998, only 51 per cent of white males stayed in full-time education compared with 78 per cent of males from minority ethnic groups. In 1999, 62.9 per cent of school leavers in East Lancashire entered further education, 9 per cent went directly into work-based training and 5.7 registered as unemployed.

Breakdown of trainee numbers by occupational area and type of training

	Modern apprentices	National trainees	Other youth training	Work-based learning for adults	New Deal clients FTET option	Total
Agriculture					1	1
Construction	33	41		9	3	86
Engineering	2	1			3	6
Business administration	11	1			2	14
Retail & customer service		4				4
Hospitality		1				1
Hair & beauty	7	30			1	38
Health, care & public services	19	16	2			37
Foundation			44	19		63
Total	72	94	46	28	10	250

INSPECTION FINDINGS

9. TS' manager, under the supervision of the director of business services, completed a self-assessment report in September 2000. TS' staff were involved in the preparation of the report, but trainees and employers were not. East Lancashire TEC supported the self-assessment process by providing training workshops. Each section of the report included strengths and weaknesses and actions required for improvement were identified. The report did not provide detailed evidence for each strength and weakness, but it did provide inspectors with detailed information about each occupational area and the local community. The subcontracting college and TS made other relevant documents available throughout the inspection.

10. The inspection was carried out by a team of eight inspectors over a total of 32 days. They inspected the training provided in construction, business administration, hair and beauty, health, care and public services, and foundation training. The other occupational areas, including horticulture, engineering, retailing and customer service and hospitality were not inspected as they each had fewer than 10 trainees at the time of the inspection. Inspectors examined assessment procedures, subcontracting agreements, trainees' files and portfolios, staff qualifications, and quality assurance and management arrangements. They interviewed 32 employers and workplace supervisors, 38 TS staff and college tutors, nine TS and college managers, 132 trainees and two New Deal clients. Inspectors observed 11 trainees' reviews, eight assessments and 25 instruction sessions. The grades awarded to these sessions are shown below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		5	1			6
Business administration	1		1			2
Hair & beauty		1	5			6
Health, care & public services		1	2			3
Foundation for work		1	7			8
Total	1	8	16	0	0	25

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 2

11. There are currently 83 trainees and three New Deal clients in construction training. All advanced modern apprentices and foundation modern apprentices are

employed. There are two female trainees and two trainees from minority ethnic groups.

12. The subcontracting college undertakes all off-the-job training, assessment and verification. The subcontracting college's tutors all have industrial experience, are vocationally qualified and have appropriate assessor qualifications. The assessment and verification processes and procedures meet the awarding bodies' requirements. TS recruits advanced and foundation modern apprentices through referrals from the local careers service, as a result of marketing or directly from employers. Trainees are initially enrolled on a one-year further education course. During this year, the students complete a construction NVQ at level 1. Trainees are then transferred onto a TEC-funded foundation modern apprenticeship programme and they progress onto the advanced modern apprenticeship programme after completing NVQs at level 2 in their chosen craft area. During their first-year apprenticeship training, trainees attend the subcontracting college for eight one-week block-release periods. When trainees are not on block release they attend college on a day-release basis. While at college, trainees usually undertake theoretical training in the morning followed by practical workshop training and assessments in the afternoon. The level 3 NVQ is completed during the second college year when trainees attend the subcontracting college during term time for one day and evening per week. The framework key skill requirements are an integral part of the subcontracting college's training programmes. The subcontracting college's vocational tutors provide key skills training and assessment. College courses have prescribed starting dates and youth trainees generally need to start training before January in any academic year if they are to avoid having excessive amounts of work to catch up with. Trainees' reviews take place approximately every eight weeks. All adult trainees' applications are referred to TS and the subcontracting college by the local careers or Employment Service. Adults are enrolled on a college access course for two days each week for up to eight weeks. They then transfer to an NVQ at level 1 or 2, followed by a four-week placement with an employer. Reviews for adult trainees take place every four weeks. New Deal clients are reviewed weekly for the first four weeks and thereafter every four weeks. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, and awarded the same grade as that in the report.

The table below shows the number of trainees by skill area and programme:

Skill area	Advanced modern apprentices	Foundation modern apprentices	Work-based learning for adults	New Deal FTET option	Total
Brickwork	9	16	1		26
Painting & decorating	4	4	5		13
Plastering	4	7	3	3	17
Plumbing		1			1
Wood occupations	16	13			29
Total	33	41	9	3	86

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good training resources in college
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ good retention and achievement rates for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient use of work-based evidence

13. The subcontracting college's training workshops and classrooms are located in Accrington on two different sites. Plastering and plumbing programmes are provided at one site and all the other construction programmes are provided at the other site. A large building-product manufacturer has recognised the subcontracting college as one of six national centres of excellence in plastering training. The company provided the college with free training material for plastering craft training. Each occupational area has its own classroom base. Each room is well equipped with modern teaching materials and equipment including overhead projection facilities, black or whiteboards, and video facilities. The rooms are also well stocked with visual aids, trade literature, building product information, samples of building materials and equipment and a range of learning support materials. There are workshops where trainees undertake individual and group work and there is a good supply of hand and power tools. There are also outside work areas where trainees work under realistic site conditions but trainees are given insufficient opportunities to work above ground level on various forms of access equipment.

14. The off-the-job training is well planned and structured. All lessons have detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. The individual schemes of work fit into a larger plan for each level of training and assessment. Tutors and trainees can quickly see the targets set and progress made by each individual and group of trainees. The schemes of work are reviewed at each staff team meeting or when the qualification or assessment requirements change. Information sheets for trainees have recently been revised as a result of trainees' feedback. They no longer cover large topic areas but are linked directly to the content of individual lessons. Trainees no longer feel they are overloaded with information. Classroom and workshop tuition is interesting and stimulating. Tutors use a range of techniques to engage and maintain trainees' interest, including the use of learning support material, videos, question and answer sessions and effective references to their own and trainees' work experiences. In the workshops, trainees work purposefully on their projects and tasks with little supervision. Tutors are quick to identify and respond to those trainees requiring extra help and trainees enjoy their college training.

15. Of the 162 trainees who have started training with TS over the past three

years, only 15 per cent have left training early and over 80 per cent of all starters have completed all the requirements of their individual learning plans. Over 80 per cent of all foundation modern apprentices progress to level 3 or advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. These rates have been consistently good over the last four years. The trainees are clearly benefiting from the period of full-time further education training prior to entering TEC-funded work-based training.

16. Tutors in some sections within the construction department have developed links with employers. These tutors are able to link trainees' skill development at work with the subcontracting college-based training. Some tutors have recently started to visit trainees on site. Nevertheless, insufficient witness testimony and work-based evidence is being gathered for assessment purposes.

Business administration

Grade 3

17. In business administration, TS has 11 modern apprentices, one national trainee and two New Deal clients on the full time education and training option. Three of the modern apprentices are working towards level 3 qualifications. All applicants for modern apprenticeships and national traineeships are interviewed by TS's staff and undertake an initial assessment of their basic, occupational and key skills. TS's employment support officers identify employer vacancies and work placement opportunities. Most new trainees start training during the summer and early autumn period. Level 1 foundation training, which lasts between four and six months, is provided throughout the year. Training takes place both on and off the job. Most trainees attend college for one day a week but the New Deal clients attend for four days, being on placement for a fifth day. All off-the-job training includes occupational and key skills training.

18. Work placements are in a variety of businesses including insurance firms, manufacturing companies and local authority offices. Assessments are carried out in the workplace whenever possible for trainees working towards NVQs at levels 1 and 2. Level 3 trainees are assessed during their off-the-job day-release sessions at the subcontracting college. Evidence of competence is generated through performance of everyday workplace tasks and is, where necessary, supplemented with work-based assignments. Trainees' NVQ and key skills progress is reviewed on the employer's premises at least every eight weeks with both the trainee and employer contributing to the review. The numbers of trainees is small. They doubled from 10 in 1998-99 to 20 in 1999-2000. No adults have been recruited in business administration. The subcontracting college's self-assessment report was insufficiently self-critical. It failed to identify any strengths or weaknesses in the modern apprenticeship programme, focusing only on the level 1 training. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective off-the-job training
- ◆ good learning resources
- ◆ good assessment practices

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ poorly organised modern apprenticeship training

19. Off-the-job training is effective for all trainees. The subcontracting college provides level 2 NVQ training for New Deal clients and level 3 NVQ training for modern apprentices. New Deal clients receive four days college-based training each week. This covers administration theory, communication in business, numerical work, word-processing and portfolio-building. There are opportunities to gain additional qualifications in word processing, computer and communication skills. The level 3 trainees attend the subcontracting college for one day each week. They are enthusiastic and highly motivated. Their training is well planned and enthusiastically carried out. Tutors have clear aims for each learning session. They work closely with trainees and provide one-to-one tuition where required. The tutors use a range of teaching methods and provide stimulating learning tasks which are clearly related to the workplace.

20. Tutors use a range of good teaching materials. These include detailed information sheets, question and answer sheets, quizzes, video presentations, assignments and projects. Audio tape recordings are also used very effectively to teach telephone techniques. Training rooms have up-to-date, business and computer equipment. The training office in the subcontracting college is a very effective and well-utilised resource. The office is a realistic working environment and trainees spend most of their off-the-job time working there. A learning support officer, who is present throughout the week, ensures that trainees' work is completed and recorded and ensures that trainees receive any necessary additional tuition. Each day a different group of business administration trainees staff the training office with their tutor. Level 3 NVQ trainees, who do not have the opportunity to supervise at work, are able to take on the role of supervisor in the training office.

21. A chart is used to map the work experience of each trainee. This allows tutors, TS' staff, employers and trainees to identify any gaps in experience and plan work experience to fill these gaps. Most trainees receive training and assessment in excellent work-placements. These include placements in the manufacturing sector, solicitors' offices, accountancy and insurance firms and the local council. Work-based supervisors are clear about their role as trainers at work.

22. There are good assessment practices on all the programmes. TS' staff carry out an audit of all work placements prior to trainees being placed there. The audit identifies the workplace's potential for training and assessment and the

opportunities trainees will have to gather work-based evidence for qualification purposes. If a trainee's circumstances alter, the tutor quickly changes the trainee's individual training plan to suit the new circumstances. All trainees are provided with lists of suggested evidence for each NVQ unit and most of the evidence for the level 1 and 2 qualifications are obtained through direct observation of trainees in the workplace. When witness statements are taken from employers or workplace supervisors, TS staff provide the witness with appropriate paperwork to record the evidence and with examples of well-written witness statements to help them understand what is required.

23. For level 1 and 2 trainees, an assessment plan is completed before any observation in the workplace. The plan identifies which units or elements may be observed at work. The plan also spells out the trainees' responsibilities, including the trainees' duty to inform their supervisor about the dates of any workplace assessment. During workplace assessments, the assessor completes detailed checklists related to each element of the NVQ unit, ensuring trainees cover all the performance criteria and range required for the qualification. The assessor uses appropriate questions during the observation to check trainees' understanding. The trainees' responses to these questions are logged. After each assessment an assessment action plan is agreed on between the trainee and the assessor. Any action to be taken, such as a requirement for further information or witness testimonies is noted. Where opportunities for evidence collection are limited by the circumstances at the workplace, the assessor provides work at the training centre or designs an appropriate project. The assessment process is thorough and assessments are conducted in a professional and supportive manner. Assessors benefit from a clear, well-presented handbook which contains information about roles in assessment, support for assessors and the internal verification process.

24. Two of the three level 3 trainees are employed by TS in its administration office. There is no assessment based on observation in the workplace for modern apprentices working towards level 3. College tutors visit the trainee's workplace at the beginning of the academic year to check that it meets the requirements of the qualification and again during the year to validate the evidence collected by the trainee. Opportunities are being missed to record and assess trainees' skill development and competencies gained at work. Modern apprentices' progression towards qualifications has been slow.

25. The retention rates on all programmes have been poor. Most of the 26 trainees who started with TS between 1996-97 and 1998-99 left early without completing their individual training plans. TS recognised this problem two years ago and reduced the modern apprenticeship early leaver rate last year to 50 per cent. All of the 10 modern apprentices recruited during 2000-01 are still in training. At the time of the inspection no modern apprentices had completed the qualification framework requirements. Only 50 per cent of the other 12 youth trainees and national trainees who started in the last three years have achieved their qualifications.

26. The modern apprenticeship programme is not well organised. New trainees do

not have a clear understanding of the structure of the programme as a whole. The modern apprentice trainees are working towards level 3 without the benefit of visits from their tutors in the workplace or any observation of their work activities. Consequently, they have to rely heavily on the use of witness statements for their portfolio evidence. Some are unclear as to the supervisory requirements of the qualification. The recording of key skills has been left until after the completion of the NVQ, giving trainees the extra work of cross-referencing their portfolios a second time to identify key skill gaps. College tutors are not given copies of the trainees' review sheets. The tutors are not made aware of targets set for trainees by TS' staff.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

27. TS has 37 trainees and one New Deal client in hairdressing. There are seven modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 3, and 12 national trainees and 18 foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2. All trainees attend the subcontracting college one day each week and spend the other four days on work experience or employed at one of 24 local hairdressing salons. The New Deal client attends the subcontracting college for 20 hours over four days each week and spends seven hours with an employer gaining work experience and three hours on job search training. This client is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in hairdressing. The subcontracting college has two hairdressing training centres where trainees attend for practical and theory training. A vocationally competent member of TS's staff carries out the trainee reviews every 12 weeks. More frequent reviews are carried out when trainees require extra support. Reviews are carried out at work.

28. The proportion of trainees completing their individual training plans has improved from 9 per cent for the 29 modern apprentices who started training between 1996-99, to 67 per cent for those starting training in 1999-00. Youth trainees' completion rates have increased to a lesser degree, rising from 54 per cent to 60 per cent over the same period. The newly introduced foundation modern apprenticeship programme is already showing good completion rates with 14 of the 39 trainees starting since 1999-00 having completed and 18 trainees still in training. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They awarded the same grade as that in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

The excellent off-campus college salon is opened to the public during holiday periods. Trainees and college staff are offered the opportunity to become paid employees during these periods. Trainees are able to maintain progression, manage their own appointments and receive assessments from the tutors during this period.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high standard of trainees' work
- ◆ good training resources
- ◆ high participation rate in additional training
- ◆ effective initiatives to attract and engage employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ inadequate key skills training

29. Trainees produce work of a high standard and demonstrate good practical skills. While at college, they progress quickly towards the achievement of their qualifications. Three first-year trainees completed assessments relating to consultation with clients, shampooing, conditioning treatments and blow drying, to a very high standard within the first eight weeks of programme. Some trainees have photographic evidence in their portfolios showing examples of a good standard of hair colouring services achieved within their first few months of training. Trainees work confidently and efficiently with little supervision within a commercial salon environment. They participate in, and achieve high standards at, local and national hairdressing competitions.

30. First year off-the-job training is provided by the subcontracting college in a satisfactory training salon in college. This salon is well equipped and attracts a good range of clients. It enables trainees to meet the first year training and assessment requirements. Second year level 2 and all level 3 off-the-job training is provided in a new purpose-built, off-campus salon. The salon's facilities are of an exceptionally good quality. It is fully stocked with good quality hair products typical of those found in most high street salons. Fashion photography prints decorate the salon and help to provide a modern, commercial setting for training. Trainees use one of the 16 good-quality, spacious, individual workstations in the salon. Trainees are proud of the facilities available to them and take great care to look after the salon and equipment. The reception area is designed to replicate a large commercial salon and trainees use a computerised client booking and recording system. Trainees also have the opportunity to sell a broad range of hair and beauty products. The salon has a large, well-equipped common room for trainees which contains large, secure lockers, a drinks machine, microwave oven and a fridge. Trainees are given the responsibility of keeping this room clean and tidy. All staff involved with training and assessment are occupationally competent, well qualified and collectively bring a wealth of industrial experience to the learning process. Assessment practices are satisfactory and meet awarding body requirements. Trainees have good workplace training provided by their employers and supervisors. The workplace salons provide trainees with opportunities to practice their skills and learn new techniques.

31. All trainees are offered the opportunity to participate in a wide range of additional training and learning opportunities during their programmes. The optional unit on barbering is made available to all trainees. Trainees attend a range of one-day training programmes organised by manufacturers. Each trainee receives a certificate of attendance for these events. Some trainees have the opportunity to develop 'hair extension' skills while at work. Trainees participate in training sessions and observe master classes at highly reputable hairdressing companies in

London to learn the latest contemporary and fashion hairdressing techniques. TS arranges for all trainees to have the opportunity to attend a number of national hair and fashion events which often include competition work. Trainees are encouraged to enter the competitions and TS' trainees have succeeded at local and national levels. Trainees participate in the subcontracting college's annual "extravaganza" event which encourages teamwork and is staged by the level 3 trainees as part of their NVQ programme. They organise the two-day event in conjunction with the performing arts and media students from the subcontracting college. Employers are invited to attend to celebrate the work of their trainees. The event is recorded on video, which is later used as a part of the recruitment drive to promote the activities of TS and the subcontracting college. The event is well publicised and given a high profile in the local press.

32. TS's initiatives have successfully encouraged new salons to become work-placement providers, giving trainees a broader range of opportunities to develop their skills. Existing and new employers and work-placement providers have been encouraged to engage in work-based training. A very successful employers' awareness event was jointly organised by TS and the subcontracting college. Sixty employers attended. The event helped employers to understand the differences between level 2 and level 3 NVQ requirements. TS also used the opportunity to introduce employers to its new training facilities. As a result of the event, TS was able to increase the number of new work placements by 22 and has received a number of requests from employers to have their trainees moved onto the TS hairdressing programme.

33. Some hairdressing salons employ staff who are qualified hairdressing assessors. TS does not fully exploit this potential and there is insufficient workplace assessment. TS employs a visiting assessor for six hours each week to carry out assessment in the workplace. Priority is given to trainees in their second year of training and trainees completing their level 3 qualification. Witness testimonies from employers or workplace supervisors and photographic records of completed work are used as supplementary evidence.

34. Key skills training is not well structured. Trainees and employers do not have a scheme of work and they have little understanding of the content of the qualifications or what trainees are required to gather as evidence. Key skill projects for communication and application of number are organised by the subcontracting college's tutors. However, trainees are not given sufficient guidance to ensure that they have a full understanding of the key skill requirements being covered in these projects. Trainees also have insufficient guidance on how to cross-reference their work as hairdressing trainees with the key skill learning requirements. TS does not collect evidence of key skills achievements from the workplace. For example, trainees at the new salon have missed an ideal opportunity to record the work they do on the new, computerised client booking and records system as evidence towards the information technology key skill qualification requirements. First year level 2 trainees, who are nine weeks into their training, do not have copies of the hairdressing and key skill logbooks.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

35. TS provides training in care and in early years care and education NVQs at levels 2 and 3. There are 37 trainees, of whom 23 are working towards an NVQ in care and 14 are working towards early years care and education awards. There are 19 modern apprentices, nine national trainees and nine youth trainees. Eighteen trainees are employed and the rest have work placements. Trainees work in a variety of residential homes, nursing homes and nurseries in the area. Off-the-job vocational training and key skills training is provided, on a day-release basis every two weeks, by college tutors throughout the subcontracting college's academic year. Two TS assessors and 18 work-based assessors carry out all the assessments and all assessments take place in the workplace. TS' care tutors are all occupationally qualified, one tutor provides early years training and two tutors are responsible for care training. Modern apprentices are interviewed by TS staff and undertake a psychometric test before starting training. Trainees' progress reviews take place in the workplace every eight weeks. The subcontracting college provides trainees and employers with college timetables and an off-the-job scheme of work. Inspectors did not agree with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report and they awarded a lower grade than given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective off-the-job training
- ◆ particularly well-motivated trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low achievement rates

36. Trainees understand the requirements of the care qualification. Off-the-job training is good. It is well structured, and carefully organised. It is provided by occupationally skilled and qualified staff in a lively and effective manner. Tutors use a variety of training and learning resources to underpin the practical and theoretical training including information sheets, workbooks prepared by college staff, video presentations, individual assignments and case studies. Trainees receive constant encouragement from the tutors and participate in library-based research into care-related topics. These research topics provide evidence and information for the trainees' assignments and their general course work.

37. Trainees are effectively introduced to the team approach to care used by employers in the workplace. This approach helps to maintain trainees' motivation and provides them with a wide range of opportunities for on-the-job skills development. Some workplace supervisors provide trainees with individual coaching outside the team environment. Trainees enjoy their fortnightly off-the-job

training sessions and attendance rates are over 80 per cent. Employers receive copies of timetables for the off-the-job training. The timetables indicate the type of work trainees will be doing in college. Some workplace managers use these timetables to reinforce the college training in a workplace context. The frequency of the contact between TS staff, employers and trainees has recently improved. Until recently, contact was infrequent and trainees' progression was slow. Reviews now take place every eight weeks and workplace assessments every four weeks. Since the introduction of these new arrangements retention rates have improved, but it is too early to judge the impact they may have on achievement rates. At the reviews, TS staff encourage employers to discuss any improvements in trainees' skill levels. This information is now being used to plan assessments more systematically.

38. Completion rates are poor. TS identified this weakness in its self-assessment report and has an action plan to improve matters. Only 32 trainees out of the 139 that started training between 1997-2000 completed their individual training plans. However, of the current 37 care trainees, 25 are on target to complete all their individual training plan requirements. The retention rate over the same period has improved steadily from 28 per cent in 1997-98 to 55 per cent in 1999 – 2000.

Foundation

Grade 2

39. TS provides basic employability training for unemployed adults for up to 28 weeks and foundation training for young people for up to 24 weeks, with extension periods available if required. There are 19 adult and 44 youth trainees, most of whom are working towards an NVQ at level 1 in plastering, retailing, commercial horticulture, catering, bricklaying, painting and decorating or carpentry and joinery. All trainees have been identified through initial assessment as having barriers to employment. As part of their training programmes they work towards individual milestones on topics such as first aid, health and safety, food hygiene, job search and managing their own finances. Some trainees require additional support, such as help with literacy and numeracy, to achieve their qualification and employment aims. Trainees can undertake a two-to-four week trial period of training in any occupational area before they enter the foundation training programme. This can be extended up to eight weeks if they decide to undertake more than one vocational trial.

40. Most adult trainees work towards a level 1 qualification but a few work towards level 2. Construction and motor vehicle trainees are trained and assessed in college for the level 1 and 2 NVQs. This training is over a 12 to 16 week period not including a minimum of four weeks work placement. Retail trainees spend three to four weeks at college and then go into a work placement for four days each week while attending college on one day a week. Assessments are all completed in the workplace. Business administration trainees spend from six to eight weeks at college before starting a work placement with attendance at college

one day each week. Horticulture and catering trainees are on full time courses of 34 and 25 weeks respectively and are assessed at college.

41. All youth trainees start their training programmes in college. Retailing and administration trainees spend the first three weeks in college and then go on placement with attendance at college one day per week. Motor vehicle and catering trainees attend a 12-week college programme working towards an NVQ at level 1. Day release training at college includes sessions on basic or key skills, lessons in theory and practical training workshops.

42. Youth trainees undertake an initial induction programme. The results of all their initial assessments are coupled with information from the careers service to establish any support needs. All trainees have detailed individual training plans which record training, assessment and support needs. TS's placement officers or college tutors carry out monthly progress reviews. These reviews are, wherever possible, completed in the workplace. If trainees have additional support needs their reviews are carried out more frequently. Either TS's staff or college verifiers complete all internal verification.

43. Adult trainees' retention rates have improved over the period 1997-2000 from 50 to 75 per cent. The retention rate for trainees recruited since April 2000 is 61 per cent. The adult trainees' achievement rate over the same period has been 60 per cent. Twenty-six per cent of trainees have progressed into jobs over this period which is the same as the TEC average. For the current year 29 per cent of adult leavers have progressed into jobs compared with the local TEC average of 17 per cent. The self-assessment report did not provide any specific information about foundation youth training. Inspectors found strengths and weaknesses in addition to those in the self-assessment report but awarded the same grade as that in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective initial vocational guidance
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ effective off-the-job training
- ◆ additional qualifications to improve employability

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of awareness of their own progress by adult trainees
- ◆ failure to provide an initial assessment of adult trainees' basic skills

GOOD PRACTICE

TS has developed a key skills audit document which allows TS's staff to establish the opportunities each trainee will have within their workplace for gathering and recording evidence towards a key skills qualification.

44. Three members of TS' staff have specific qualifications in teaching basic skills and all have several years' training experience. This range of staff experience and qualifications ensures that each trainee receives excellent vocational advice and guidance at their interview. In addition to the vocational guidance, all adult trainees are advised to undertake an occupational trial period of at least two weeks before they make a final decision to join a full-time training programme. Construction trainees work towards a foundation accreditation for vocational education. This gives them a good introduction to construction trades and enables them to make an informed choice about which training programmes to join. Nearly all adult trainees choose to participate in the trial training period, at the end of which their tutors make either a written or a verbal report to the adult programme manager. The reports and feedback are used to establish an adult's suitability for full time NVQ training. All identified support needs and suggested milestones for progression are recorded on an individual training plan when the adult starts full time training. The close attention given to each trainee at interview, linked to the trial training period before choosing a vocational programme have helped to reduce early drop out rates.

45. Youth trainees undertake a period of initial assessment during their first week of training. The tests include a vocational aptitude test and a more general psychometric test. The results are quickly fed back to each trainee in a sensitive and constructive manner and help the trainee and tutor to decide on the most appropriate vocational route and work placement. After their first four weeks in training, youth trainees have an interview with their careers link officer and a TS tutor. They discuss the trainee's progress and confirm that they are still sure about their choice of programme. The interview makes use of feedback from the occupational and key skill tutors.

46. The overall effect of this thorough initial guidance is that each trainee has a clear career aim and an informed view about the type of work placement which is most suited to him or her. TS is able to establish high quality and supportive work placements in the sound knowledge that trainees will be clear about their role and responsibilities. Business administration trainees are placed in solicitor's offices, insurance companies and the local council. Retail trainees are placed with high-street stores, supermarkets and national wholesalers. Motor-vehicle trainees are in placements with major car companies and nationally recognised car-service companies.

47. Employers provide trainees with frequent opportunities to gather evidence of their competence in the workplace. In business administration and retailing, all trainees' assessments are completed in the workplace. All assessments are well planned and executed and the outcomes are carefully recorded. A good range of assessment methods is used and trainees are provided with written and verbal feedback at the time of assessment. Construction and motor-vehicle trainees complete their NVQ at level 1 in college before putting their skills into practice in

the workplace.

48. Off-job-job training is well planned. Where possible, training in theory is completed before trainees apply the knowledge in a practical situation. The training takes place in excellent classrooms and workshops. Assessments take place in as many real work situations as possible. For example, motor vehicle trainees carry out vehicle servicing for members of the public and college staff. Adults attend job-search sessions in an appropriate training room with good resources, including access to the Internet. All youth trainees attend key skills workshops and are working towards level 1 qualifications in communications, application of number and information technology.

49. All foundation trainees undertake additional qualifications which improve their employability. The local TEC average for the proportion of trainees gaining jobs during or soon after foundation training has dropped from 26 per cent three years ago to 17 per cent in 2000. Over the same period, TS's average has risen from 26 per cent to 29 per cent. Feedback from employers suggests that TS trainees have useful additional qualifications. For example, youth trainees undertake a course called 'employment skills'. Adult trainees undertake training on topics such as health and safety, employers' needs, job search and managing their own finances. The latter includes relevant information about in-work benefits and encourages trainees to explore all the financial support and benefits available to them when they are offered employment. This often helps to alleviate trainees' worries about not being able to afford to go to work through a fear of losing their benefits. The additional training is often recorded on the trainees' individual training plans. Youth trainees complete a learning task which encourages them to work with their employer to evaluate their own performance in the workplace.

50. Youth trainees have a satisfactory understanding of the content of their training programme and the qualification requirements. Adult trainees are less clear. They all have a copy of their individual training plan, but this is a complicated document and adult trainees rarely refer to it. They are not provided with a simplified version of the plan to help them to keep track of their progress. Most of the trainees interviewed were unclear about the next step in their training programme. They were uncertain about when or where they would be undertaking a work placement and most did not know when they were expected to complete their training and gain a qualification.

51. All youth trainees undertake basic skill assessments when they start training. Adult trainees do not. Their basic skill support needs are assessed on the basis of feedback from tutors after they have completed their vocational trial period. TS is quick to provide additional support in basic skill when a need is recognised by tutors but this does not compensate for the failure to assess adult trainees' basic skill needs when they enter training.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

52. TS has an equal opportunities policy which complies with legislation, meets the contracting TEC's requirements, and is renewed annually. TS's staff are issued with personal handbooks which contain details of the policy and their responsibilities in relation to legislation. They are also given updates when legislation changes. Trainees are also issued with a handbook. It contains, among other items, details of the equal opportunities policy, appeals procedure and induction. There is a staff manual which explains TS's policies, including the equal opportunities policy as it applies to trainee and staff recruitment, discipline, grievance and job-sharing. Staff and trainees' complaints and grievances are reviewed every six months. The outcomes of these reviews are recorded and taken into account when changes to policies are being considered. TS employs a minority ethnic development officer who has responsibility for creating and maintaining links with various communities in the locality. A weekly newsletter is produced by the subcontracting college and is distributed to every staff member. The newsletter provides details of college developments and issues relating to equal opportunities. A publication which contains information on a variety of topics, including language courses for speakers of English as a second language, is distributed to all households in the subcontracting college's immediate recruitment area. TS collects data relating to equal opportunities and undertakes some analysis of the data for contractual and recruitment targeting purposes. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective communications with underrepresented groups
- ◆ very effective complaints and grievance procedures
- ◆ comprehensive policies

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements
- ◆ insufficient staff training on equal opportunities issues

53. TS employs a minority ethnic development officer. Part of the role of the officer is to maintain regular contact with the local community. TS have links with all schools in the area. The links are particularly strong with schools which have a high proportion of pupils from minority ethnic communities. TS holds awareness sessions in schools to increase understanding and awareness of the training opportunities in post-16 education and training. Training programmes are also promoted within the broader community through the distribution of leaflets in

many different languages. TS uses a roadshow presentation at schools' career events to promote and encourage applications from trainees from the minority ethnic groups. A community newsletter is widely distributed to all local community groups and organisations. On its marketing posters and pictures in the newsletter, TS uses images which avoid gender and ethnic stereotyping. Data are collected on trainees' gender, ethnicity and any disability. During the last two years, the number of trainees recruited from minority ethnic groups has risen from 13 to 16, the number of female trainees has increased from 16 to 36 and the number of trainees with a disability has increased from 4 to 21.

54. Staff and trainees have a clear understanding of TS's complaints and grievance procedures. Simple flowcharts have been produced to show staff and trainees the most effective way of pursuing a complaint or grievance. Posters relating to protection from harassment and bullying are displayed in prominent places throughout the subcontracting college in two languages. Complaints by trainees are discussed and recorded during TS team meetings. A trainee recently reported an incident of bullying and complained to her tutor. She was interviewed and the situation was resolved to the trainee's satisfaction.

55. The equal opportunities policy is supplemented by clear procedures and guidelines for its implementation. The policy is reviewed annually and a staff handbook is issued to all staff. The handbook includes details about a number of key issues including new staff recruitment, discipline, grievance, job sharing and maternity leave.

56. TS have established good work placement and employment relationships with over 170 different companies. However, these employers are not clearly briefed by TS regarding their role and responsibilities for the promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace. TS have failed to adequately monitor the extent to which employers adhere to equal opportunities policies and procedures.

57. Equal opportunities training and guidance for TS's staff are weak. Only basic equal opportunities awareness raising has occurred. This basic training did not include issues such as widening participation, use of appropriate language and equality of opportunity in the workplace. Some of TS's staff use inappropriate language in training sessions. TS staff guidance on equal opportunities is focused on grievance and complaints procedures and fails to consider the broader accountabilities and responsibilities of the trainee, training provider and employer.

Trainee support

Grade 3

58. Applications for training at TS come from a variety of sources. They include referrals from the careers and Employment Services and applications resulting from direct marketing at the twice-yearly job fairs organised by the local TEC. Potential youth trainees are interviewed by a member of TS staff from the occupational area in which they have shown an interest. The adult programme

team leader interviews all potential adult trainees. Adults are offered an occupational trial training period of up to eight weeks before joining a full time training programme. After any trial training, the occupational tutors provide the team leader with a verbal report on the suitability of each individual for their chosen occupational area. This forms the basis of an occupational assessment. All youth training applicants undertake a psychometric assessment and basic skills tests in literacy and numeracy. The results of the interview, the basic skills test and the psychometric assessment are combined to prepare an individual training plan for each trainee. Additional learning support is organised as required.

59. For youth trainees, tutors provide a one-week induction, which covers an introduction to the subcontracting college's support services, health and safety, disciplinary and grievance procedures, a visit to their occupational area, NVQ and key skill qualification requirements. Adult trainees receive a shorter half or full day's induction. At induction all trainees are given a students' handbook and a copy of the subcontracting college's charter. They are also enrolled at the library. Trainees have access to a range of additional support arrangements. These include qualified counsellors, large print textbooks for the partially sighted, signers for the deaf, tape recorders for loan to people who cannot cope with large amounts of written work, and practical daily support such as travel allowances and a subsidised canteen. The subcontracting colleges' charter details rights and responsibilities for trainees, employers and the general public. Trainees receive another induction into their workplace.

60. Trainees are reviewed at least every 12 weeks. Many trainees receive more frequent reviews depending upon their rate of progress or any identified additional support they may require. All adult trainees and New Deal clients attend job-search sessions for a two-hour period once each week. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. Another two aspects of training identified as strengths were considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified some additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

During a job-search training session one tutor dressed two tailor's dummies in examples of appropriate interview clothing (one male and one female). All the clothes had been purchased cheaply from local charity shops and none had cost more than five pounds. Trainees saw that wearing presentable clothes for an interview need not be a barrier because of cost.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ systematic initial assessment of youth trainees
- ◆ effective counselling and advice
- ◆ effective induction programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate recording of additional support needs
- ◆ no systematic accreditation of prior learning

61. Initial assessment results are used to prepare realistic individual training plans for all youth trainees. The results of the trainees' basic skill tests are used to identify any literacy or numeracy support needs. Learning support is carefully

timetabled to ensure that all those who require it can attend the sessions. TS's staff use the psychometric and vocational assessment test results to help identify the most appropriate training plan for each trainee.

62. Trainees are given excellent counselling, advice and pastoral support during the review process. They discuss their progress towards a qualification and any relevant personal matters. All trainees are reviewed more frequently than the minimum 13 weeks required by the TEC contract. Reviews take place every eight weeks for modern apprentices and every four weeks for foundation trainees. Adult trainees and New Deal clients are reviewed every four weeks and New Deal clients are reviewed every week during their first month of training. This frequency of contact has helped to develop good working relationships between trainees, employers and TS staff. The subcontracting college's tutors conduct progress reviews for level 1 trainees and TS's employment-support officers review the progress of level 2 and 3 trainees. In all cases, additional review visits are arranged at the request of the tutor, support officer or trainee. When possible, TS's staff encourage workplace supervisors to participate in the review process. This occurs routinely in all occupational areas, apart from construction. At each workplace review the workplace supervisor is asked to comment on the trainee's progress, conduct, and attitude to work. Trainees are then interviewed in private and invited to add their comments to the review record sheet. Finally, if any specific action involves them directly, the workplace supervisor is included in the review again. For example, the supervisor may be asked to monitor the trainee's attendance or behaviour at work or be asked to organise different tasks to enhance the trainee's skill development. All three parties sign a copy of the review sheet. Supervisors and trainees do not routinely receive copies of these sheets. New forms, including copies for the trainee and the supervisor/employer, will be used during TS's next review cycle.

63. Trainees have a good recall of their induction programmes. They have a good awareness of health and safety and equal opportunities issues and know how to act if they think they are being treated unfairly. Trainees generally have a good grasp of the requirements of their training programmes and understand the review process and the support arrangements.

64. Sixty-three of the 250 trainees and clients currently on programmes have been identified, as a result of initial assessment, as requiring additional learning support to help them complete their individual learning plans. Adult trainees do not have their basic skills assessed when they start training. When learning support needs are identified during training, rather than as a result of initial assessment, tutors and TS staff complete an amendment document for the individual training plan. This document enables the member of staff to record the identified support needs, the planned action and its successful completion. Both the planned action and its successful completion should be signed and dated. However, the form is unclear as to whether it should be signed by the trainee or by the member of staff who identified the problem. In hairdressing, some forms lack any signatures or dates. The amendment documents often fail to describe the problem clearly, resulting in delays in identifying and providing the most appropriate support.

65. TS's arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning are poor. TS does not systematically assess trainees' prior learning or achievements. One trainee claimed to have already achieved the required key skill levels for their qualification. TS did not validate this claim with the awarding body or encourage the trainee to provide confirmation of the key skill awards. A New Deal client had previously studied for six months in a subject closely related to the NVQ they were following but no attempt was made to assess the skills or knowledge they had already acquired.

Management of training

Grade 3

66. TS is a division of the subcontracting college. There are 28 members of staff working for TS. Overall responsibility for TS lies with the college's directorate of business services. A programme manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of TS. TS has five team leaders who are responsible for quality development, initial assessment, training, assessment and finances. The subcontracting college has a three-year strategic plan, which incorporates the activities of TS. All members of staff have job descriptions and defined roles within the organisation. Information on trainees is kept on a computerised management-information system. The subcontracting college is responsible for providing a large proportion of the off-the-job training in all the occupational areas. TS has a service level agreement with each occupational area within the subcontracting college. The subcontracting college achieved the standards required for the Investors in People award in 1995 and was re-accredited in 1998. All new staff at TS undertake a TS and college induction. All staff and managers receive an annual appraisal, as do their colleagues within the subcontracting college. There is ongoing staff training and development for all of TS's staff. There are regular meetings involving managers and all members of staff. TS has a range of policies and procedures which cover most aspects of training. Many of these are based on the college's policies and procedures, which have been adopted or adapted for TS's use. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good internal communications
- ◆ good management information
- ◆ comprehensive staff development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and-off-the-job training
- ◆ poor communication with employers

67. Communications within TS and those between TS and the subcontracting college are good. TS's staff hold a range of meetings to manage and monitor work-based training. For example, TS's training team meetings are held weekly and provide a regular opportunity to monitor trainees' progress. TS's supervisors and managers meet at least once a month and more frequently if required. They discuss a variety of issues including the quality of provision, the requirements of the TEC contract and trainee support issues. The director meets with the subcontracting college's senior management team on a weekly basis and provides strategic updates about training. All meetings have set agendas and are well attended. Comprehensive minutes with action points are created and circulated to all staff. Action points are followed up at subsequent meetings to confirm progress. Decisions taken at strategic level are well communicated to managers and staff. All team leaders are involved in the annual review of the business plan. Targets are reassessed against past performance and adjusted appropriately. TS's staff have a clear understanding of their roles within the organisation and they maintain effective informal communication links outside the formal meeting arrangements.

68. TS has a clear understanding of its performance in relation to the TEC and Employment Service's contracts. Management information about performance against contracts is updated every day. The updates are distributed to all members of staff. The use of such data has enabled TS to assess its own performance against that of other training providers. TS is aware of the areas of work which need to be improved. Managers routinely prepare reports to assist the action-planning and decision-making process for team leaders. Reports are prepared on recruitment trends, trainees' progression towards qualifications in each vocational area, equal opportunities, retention and attendance rates. All data are easy to read and understand. Managers and team leaders formally discuss current management information as an agenda item at their monthly team leader meetings.

69. Staff recruitment, appraisal and development practices are good. When a staff vacancy occurs, TS takes care to write an accurate job description and person specification. This information is given to the personnel department at the subcontracted college which then advertises the post. Interviews are conducted in a professional manner with each applicant graded against set criteria. When appointed, all employees receive induction twice. The first is an induction into TS, which informs the new member of staff about the procedures and arrangements for work-based training programmes. The second induction is into the subcontracting college. This induction is equally well prepared and structured and TS's staff appreciates its content and thoroughness. All staff have clearly written and accurate job descriptions. These are reviewed annually to coincide with staff appraisals. Staff are given prior notice of their appraisal dates and they are advised to prepare documents for discussion with their appraiser. Long- and short-term staff training needs are identified through the appraisal process. Training needs are matched to individual aspirations and organisational goals. For example, one relatively new member of staff has recently obtained trainers' and assessors' qualifications and is now working towards a key skill practitioners' award.

Another staff member, who deals with the organisation's finances, is taking an accountancy qualification. Several members of staff have received training in auditing skills.

70. There is insufficient co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. Nearly all employers interviewed during the inspection were unclear about the qualification requirements of their trainees. Employers are also unaware of the content of off-the-job training provided by TS or the subcontracting college. Most trainees are at work for four days each week. During this time, they learn new skills and practise the skills learnt at college. The skill development at work and the formal training and assessment at college are not effectively co-ordinated. For most trainees, training at college and learning at work are two completely separate activities. For example, hairdressing employers are not given a copy of the hairdressing or key skill schemes of work and they are not closely involved with the TS tutor and the trainee during the review process. Construction and motor vehicle trainees routinely complete tasks which demonstrate competence in the workplace, but these activities are not being exploited for assessment purposes.

71. Employers' understanding of training arrangements are weak. TS conducts a pre-work placement visit to comply with the contractual requirements of the TEC. They also provide each employer with a pack of information and advice about health and safety, the NVQ requirements and a suggested list of key issues to cover during the trainee's workplace induction. Many of the employers interviewed had not read or used this information. TS fails to check employers' understanding and use of the information pack. There are some poor health and safety practices in some workplaces but TS's staff have not identified them during review visits. For example, one motor vehicle trainee had been issued with overalls and advised to wear gloves when working on a car engine. The trainee was observed, by inspectors, not wearing his overalls correctly, not wearing gloves and with his hands covered in oil. Employers are not fully aware of what their duties and responsibilities are when providing work-based training. For example, a retail trainee started training with TS but was not allowed to attend off-the-job training for nine weeks, as the employer would not release the trainee. Eventually, the trainee attended training at TS in his own time. Some employers are unclear about what happens to a trainee after the work-experience period has ended. One employer was confused when TS provided it with NVQ guidance notes for level 2, as the trainee concerned was working towards level 1.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

72. Accrington and Rossendale College's quality assurance framework has been adapted by TS to produce a system which covers its key activities and which meets the quality assurance requirements of the TEC and the awarding bodies. TS first achieved ISO 9002 and the Charter Mark in 1995. TS has a quality assurance policy, supplemented by clearly written procedures and working instructions. Each

member of staff has their own copy of the manuals and familiarisation with the system forms part of the induction programme for new staff. Separate handbooks cover the arrangements for assessment and internal verification. Internal audits are conducted annually to monitor compliance with standard procedures and to update procedures as necessary. Feedback is gathered from trainees by means of questionnaires at three stages during their time on the programme: during induction, at the midway point and when they have achieved their target qualification. Questionnaires have recently been distributed to employers and TS's staff to collect their views about the quality of the training. TS's programme manager has overall responsibility for quality assurance and new roles of quality development advisor and quality officer have recently been created. Improvements to the quality assurance arrangements and the training programmes have been made recently. Some of the new arrangements have not been evaluated to assess their effectiveness. Inspectors did not agree with all the judgements in the self-assessment report. They found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that in the self-assessment report.

POOR PRACTICE

Assessment recording in care training is poor with little evidence of unit assessment records being completed by assessors. Although key skills training is delivered off-the-job there are missed opportunities to cross-reference evidence from care portfolios. Individual unit assessment of key skill takes place, which leads to unnecessary repetition of work for trainees. There is very little evidence of practical assessments taking place in the workplace.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good auditing practices
- ◆ effective use of performance data

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate internal verification
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of training in the workplace

73. TS's staff are fully aware of the quality assurance systems and regularly refer to their working instructions. There is a strong commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement in the organisation. Internal auditing has been conducted effectively for the past five years and was praised for its thoroughness at the last external audit for ISO re-accreditation. There is a team of six trained internal auditors. A detailed annual quality audit plan is produced to ensure that each procedure is audited within a 12-month period. The audit schedule is closely monitored and any deviations from the agreed plan are quickly identified and appropriate action taken to ensure that auditing is carried out according to the planned timescale. In addition to the planned audits, further spot checks are made throughout the year to ensure that the correct procedures and standards are maintained. The relevance of the quality assurance system is reviewed as part of the auditing process. The audit arrangements do not consider internal verification arrangements.

74. The management-information system is used to provide data which are analysed and used to plan improvements and to set targets for trainees, training staff and subcontracted training providers. An analysis of data, such as retention and achievement rates, attendance patterns at college, sickness rates, accident rates, recruitment enquiries from women and applications from people from

minority ethnic groups has enabled TS to improve its services to trainees and to assess its performance against other organisations. Areas for development are discussed at TS's staff and management meetings. Data analysis identified that there had been a drop in the number of people entering TS's training programmes and that the early leaver rate is high on some programmes. As a result TS launched an imaginative recruitment campaign resulting in a 15 per cent increase in trainee recruitment. They also introduced a number of measures to improve retention rates. For example, adult foundation trainees now receive additional guidance prior to coming on to the programme and initial assessment for young people has been developed to help trainees to make an informed choice about their training and to enable their support needs to be identified at an early stage. Recent data analysis of retention rates shows that fewer trainees are leaving early.

75. TS's quality assurance arrangements make only brief reference to internal verification and verification is not included in the quality auditing process. TS has not fully accepted its responsibilities to ensure that all assessment practices are recorded and that quality is assured through the use of robust internal verification arrangements. Existing quality assurance arrangements have failed to identify weak internal verification practices. In some occupational areas, there is no overall plan to verify the different forms of assessment used by TS staff. Where this planning is poor, verification only takes place when an assessment is being made of a trainee's portfolio. This often occurs at the end of training. One trainee assessor has completed a trainee's assessment and signed the trainee off as competent without the signature being countersigned by a qualified assessor. The trainee assessor's tutor has verified these assessment decisions as acceptable. This assessment practice is contrary to the awarding body's requirements. In the care training team, there have been no meetings this year to standardise assessment decisions between assessors and no monitoring or observation of assessment practices has taken place. Consequently, care assessors have not received guidance or support about assessment and verification practices. A new internal verification strategy has been introduced recently for care programmes. The new arrangements now comply with the requirements of the common accord, but it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness.

76. TS's quality assurance arrangements do not include procedures to monitor the quality of training in the workplace. TS is not able to formally establish and influence the standards of training and learning for trainees at work. The subcontracting college produces reports following its own observations of training. These reports are now being shared with TS. Arrangements have only recently been made for the subcontracting college's reports from internal and external verifiers to be forwarded to TS. Most of these reports are filed without being systematically analysed by relevant members of TS's staff to identify outstanding action points or issues. Feedback from employers and trainees is poor. The response rate to the employers' questionnaire is very low. There has been an improved response by trainees to questionnaires issued at the beginning and part way through their training. Less feedback is received from trainees who have completed their training and very little is received from those trainees who leave early without completing their individual training plans. The quality of information

generated by the questionnaires is poor and of little use to TS. The resulting reports do not analyse or present the data in a format which allows staff and managers to identify issues and areas requiring improvement.

77. The self-assessment report provided a full description of the local community and the context in which the subcontracting college and TS work. Each occupational and generic area report included detailed introductions and supporting text for the identified strengths. The report contained a detailed action plan to address the weaknesses but no plan was submitted showing how TS would build on identified strengths. The report did not provide evidence or supporting text for all the weaknesses and was not sufficiently self-critical in a number of occupational areas. Most significantly, the report failed to identify weaknesses in the internal verification arrangements. TS staff were closely involved in preparing and editing the report but employers and trainees were not involved in the self-assessment process.