



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 2000

Qube  
( also trading as  
Business Enterprise Consultants)

## SUMMARY

Qube provides satisfactory training in retailing and customer service and in hospitality. Employers support trainees' needs and offer good opportunities for them to gain experience in well-resourced working environments. Key skills training is not fully integrated with vocational work. Qube has a clearly written equal opportunities policy, and trainees have a good understanding of the issues relating to equal opportunities. However, the organisation does not adequately monitor equal opportunities practices in the workplace. Regular visits are made to trainees in the workplace, and staff take account of their unusual working hours when planning the visits. However, there is no systematic assessment of trainees' basic and key skills. Individual training plans do not indicate target achievement dates, and are not updated when trainees are identified as having additional support needs. Management of training is unsatisfactory. Although there is an open management style, and all staff contribute equally, some management responsibilities are unclear. Staff have a poor understanding of the programme frameworks. The company has well-written quality assurance procedures, which are understood by all staff. However, because the company only started to offer training in 1999, some procedures are not yet fully established.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	3

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent and flexible visits to trainees in the workplace
- ◆ good target-setting and short-term action-planning
- ◆ good work placements with supportive employers
- ◆ open and accessible management style

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor initial assessment
- ◆ poor individual training plans
- ◆ inadequate integration of key skills with vocational training
- ◆ inadequate progress reviews
- ◆ poor monitoring of training in the workplace
- ◆ some poor sharing of good practice
- ◆ poor understanding of programme frameworks by staff

## INTRODUCTION

1. Qube started to provide specialist training in hospitality in April 1999 and, for a short period of time, called itself Qube Hospitality. The company shortened its trading name to Qube now it offers training in the additional occupational area of customer service. Before April 1999, it had traded under the main company name of Business Enterprise Consultants (BEC) since 1990. BEC is a consultancy company and also offers commercial training for other organisations. The company has contracts with FOCUS Central London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), and North London TEC in the trading name of BEC. FOCUS Central London TEC was the co-ordinating TEC for this inspection.

2. The company's head office is located in Henley-on-Thames, although it also has accommodation in Enfield, north London, comprising administrative offices for TEC-funded training, and premises for private interviews and meetings. Between the Henley-on-Thames and Enfield sites, the company employs 26 full-time staff. Only the 15 staff at the Enfield site are involved with BEC for TEC-funded training. The company also employs 12 part-time assessors to train and assess trainees in the workplace. There are 91 advanced modern apprentices on hospitality programmes, and 77 foundation modern apprentices in customer service, although only 39 of these are TEC funded. Most training takes place in the workplace, but there is some off-the-job training in customer service. Trainees are employed in London and the home counties of Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Hospitality trainees work in hotels, restaurants, public houses and nightclubs. Customer service trainees work mainly for call centres.

3. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 46.8 per cent in Enfield, 61 per cent in Buckinghamshire, 49.3 per cent in Essex, 54.9 per cent in Hertfordshire, 50.9 per cent in Kent, 56.6 per cent in Surrey, 53.7 per cent in West Sussex and 49.6 per cent in East Sussex, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. Unemployment in the London area is high, at 3.9 per cent, compared to the national average of 3.4 per cent. Unemployment in the other regions is low. In the Southeast as a whole, it is 1.8 per cent, and in the Eastern area, 2.3 per cent.

4. Minority ethnic groups make up 23 per cent of the total population in the Focus Central London TEC area, and 21.1 per cent in the North London TEC area. Both figures are higher than the 1991 census figure of 6.4 per cent for England as a whole.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. As a recently established company, Qube began the self-assessment process in August 2000, and produced its first self-assessment report in September 2000. The company previously completed a self-assessment of its hospitality training under the trading name of BEC. All staff were involved in the process, with help from the co-ordinating TEC. The report was edited and produced by the managing director. Qube developed an action plan to address the weaknesses identified during the self-assessment process. Progress had been made in implementing the plan by the time of inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grades given for retailing and customer service, hospitality and equal opportunities. They awarded lower grades for trainee support, management of training and quality assurance.

6. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days at Qube in October 2000. All key documents relating to training were examined, including training materials, quality assurance documents, internal and external verification documents, questionnaires, data on staff's qualifications, and other statistics. Inspectors interviewed 37 trainees during 15 visits to the workplaces. Fourteen workplace supervisors and employers were interviewed, along with all of the key staff involved in training. Assessment and review records were examined, along with trainees' portfolios of evidence. Three sessions on training and/or assessment were observed, and the grades are given in the table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Retailing & customer service		1	1			2
Hospitality		1				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Retailing & customer service (customer service)

**Grade 3**

7. There are 39 foundation modern apprentices in this area, working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2. The company also has a similar number of privately funded trainees aged over 25 in customer service training. Trainees are recruited directly from employers in the public and private sector. Some off-the-job training is given for theory training. Trainees are located mainly in southern England although there are three in Liverpool, three in Bury and one in Leeds, all of whom are employed by existing clients of Qube. The first trainees on these programmes began in December 1999, and have not yet completed the programme. Induction is carried out in groups, or individually in the

workplace, and initial assessments are carried out individually. The internal verifier is employed by Qube, and is also the training manager. There is a team of 12 part-time assessors who visit trainees weekly. Most have been recruited over the past three months, but two have worked for the company since the start of the programme. Since December 1999, 64 per cent of trainees have remained on the programme. Qube identified eight strengths and three weaknesses in its self-assessment report. Inspectors considered many of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. The grade awarded at inspection is the same as that given in the company's report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ frequent and rigorous assessments
- ◆ good additional qualifications undertaken
- ◆ good work placements

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor key skills assessment practices
- ◆ insufficient use of accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ lack of involvement by trainees in portfolio development

8. All trainees receive visits from their assessor/trainer every week, and sometimes more frequently. Good working relationships are quickly established between the assessor/trainer and trainees. Assessors make detailed observations of the trainees at work, and record verbal questioning as it occurs. Opportunities to use naturally occurring evidence are recognised and taken. Internal verification is undertaken on an ongoing basis. Trainees are making steady progress towards completing their NVQs, and all are clear about the progress they have made. Seventeen trainees have completed their NVQs at level 2 and are now working towards level 3 NVQs.

9. Employers are highly supportive of the training process, and encourage trainees to undertake additional work towards NVQs in processing information using telecommunications or a level 2 NVQ in administration. Employers also allow trainees time off during the working day for their NVQ work if necessary, when work pressures permit. There are currently 18 trainees completing the telecommunications NVQ at level 2, and three trainees are completing additional NVQs in administration at level 2.

10. All trainees are employed in large organisations which allow them to gain the full range of experience for the NVQ. Most work in call centres in the private sector, in the telecommunications and information technology industries. Evidence is easily collected for customer service and the telecommunications NVQ. A small number of trainees work in a national health service trust, booking patients'

appointments. All trainees are in supportive work placements. Workplace supervisors are keen to help trainees. There is good use of witness testimony, exchanges of ideas, and new opportunities for experience are provided if needed.

11. Trainees are informed about key skills at induction but this is not sufficiently emphasised. Trainees are not initially assessed for key skills. All initial training plans include key skills targets at level 1, but not at level 2, which is a requirement of the foundation modern apprenticeship. Although trainees' main qualification is in customer service, those doing the additional telecommunications programme focus on that to begin with, with customer service work cross-referenced or assessed separately afterwards. Trainees are informed that key skills work will be done at the end of the programme, and recording and assessment is left until after they have achieved the other qualifications. New trainees do not have copies of the up-to-date key skills standards. Staff recently attended an awareness-raising session, held by the co-ordinating TEC, for the new key skills, but they do not have materials to help them to train in and assess key skills.

12. Most trainees have been employed in their jobs for at least a year before starting the programme, some for longer, and have already gained considerable experience. Some trainees have already had on-the-job training such as in telephone techniques. This is not always taken into account in their training plans. Some trainees have achieved general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) previously, some at level 3, although not all can produce their certificates. This has not been checked and no account has been taken of their previous key skills experience when planning their programme.

13. Trainees are provided with a portfolio at induction which contains monitoring documents and questions for each qualification. The assessor often completes these with the trainee. Assessors' observations and records of progress reviews from each weekly visit form the major source of evidence, although trainees produce supporting work, case histories and witness testimonies from colleagues and supervisors. Assessors take the portfolios and cross-reference the evidence to the occupational standards. The trainees are therefore not involved in this process. Some trainees have not seen their portfolios for most of their time on the programme.

## **Hospitality**

## **Grade 3**

14. There are 91 advanced modern apprentices working towards level 3 NVQs in on-licensed premises supervision. The company has only had trainees on hospitality programmes since April 1999, and so far none have completed the full programme framework. Trainees are employed in a wide variety of establishments such as pubs, nightclubs, ten-pin bowling clubs, hotels, and restaurants. Most trainees work for medium-sized organisations including public house and restaurant chains, while others work for small independent establishments. All training is carried out in the workplace. Twenty trainees are currently working towards NVQs at level 3, and the rest are working towards level 2. Nineteen

trainees are completing an additional NVQ in customer service at level 2. The company employs five full-time trainers/assessors, who are organised and managed by a full-time internal verifier. Part-time assessors visit the trainees in the workplace every two weeks, or more if required, to undertake progress reviews and provide training and assessment. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the company's self-assessment report. Some of the strengths were considered to be no more than normal practice, and additional weaknesses were identified during inspection. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ excellent occupational knowledge of all staff
- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ effective, frequent visits made to trainees

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ insufficient targets set for NVQ units on individual plans
- ◆ some trainees on inappropriate training programmes

15. Qube employs highly qualified and experienced training staff who pass on their experience and knowledge effectively to trainees. All have good trade experience and keep updated with industry requirements, through contacts. Most have supervisory or management experience. One member of staff is a former college lecturer and has a certificate in education as well as a broad knowledge of the industry. Another member of staff is a former public house licensee and manager, and is a member of the relevant professional institute. Staff have a wide range of industrial, training and assessment qualifications including NVQs at levels 4 and 5, and assessors and verifiers' awards.

16. All employers give additional support to their trainees when needed, and have developed good working relationships with Qube during their regular visits. Many trainees are given time off for NVQ work, often during working hours. Others allow trainees time off during their normal working day if the pressures of work can accommodate this. Some employers give trainees additional tasks to allow them to complete the range of requirements for the programme

17. Trainees are highly motivated and keen to learn. They all have an excellent rapport with their trainer/assessor, which is developed through the regular contact between the two. All trainees have the private telephone number of their trainer/assessor, and can contact them at any time. Visits are sometimes arranged at weekends or in the evenings if trainees are working.

18. Some trainees work in busy establishments, and have good opportunities to collect additional evidence for assessment. However, there is little use of witness testimonies or diverse evidence from the workplace, and a heavy reliance upon observation. Some trainees bring in cameras so that they can use photographic evidence, but this practice is not used across the programme and has only recently been introduced. Key skills work is not well integrated into the NVQ programme, and is often left until the end. Trainees are aware that they have to complete key skills, but not of how this fits into the NVQ work which they are doing. Although most trainees are progressing at a satisfactory pace, those working in busy establishments are not always given sufficient guidance on the type of additional evidence to collect from the workplace.

19. All trainees receive good training in the workplace. Training is carried out by experienced supervisors or managers and supplemented by one-to-one training by visiting associates. Employers also allow time to complete assessments and progress reviews, and are flexible in their arrangements with the visiting trainer/assessor. Some employers pay for necessary books and uniforms, and one employer also pays for taxis to take staff home in the evenings. Training is often carried out to employers' requirements, with little direction given by Qube. All employers have copies of the NVQ requirements, but no target dates for completing NVQ units are identified on individual training plans.

20. In 1999-2000, some trainees left the programme early after completing level 2 NVQs and key skills, with 53 per cent of trainees remaining on the programme. This year, 60 per cent are still on the programme. All trainees have been placed on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme without a complete initial assessment of their needs. Some trainees are working in jobs which do not include a supervisory element, which is required for the level 3 NVQ. The company has recently recognised this in its action plan, and has started to address the problem. It has gained a new contract with the TEC to take trainees onto a foundation modern apprenticeship, with the opportunity to convert to an advanced modern apprenticeship if appropriate.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

21. QUBE has adopted BEC's equal opportunities policy which is reviewed annually and updated if required. The company's policy is available to all staff and the self-employed part-time assessors. Overall responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the operations director. Detailed information on equal opportunities is given to all trainees at the start of their programme. This includes a copy of the NVQ appeals procedure and an appeal form, should a trainee wish to appeal against an assessment decision. As part of the pre-placement check, employers are asked for a copy of their equal opportunities policy. If they do not



have one, Qube works with the employer to produce one. Of the 136 trainees on the programmes, 52 per cent are women. Forty-nine per cent of trainees on hospitality programmes are women and 59 per cent on customer service programmes. There are no trainees who are recognised as having a disability. Seven per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups. Of the 15 full-time staff, seven are women. One is from a minority ethnic group and none are classed as having a disability. Of the 12 part-time assessors, 11 are women, and none are from a minority ethnic group or classed as having a disability. Equal opportunities is always an agenda item at the monthly team for hospitality. The customer service team are in the process of establishing regular team meetings.

22. The self-assessment report did not contain sufficient narrative to provide evidence for the areas identified as strengths or weaknesses. The one strength was considered to be no more than normal practice and inspectors agreed with the one identified weakness. Two further strengths and one weakness were identified by inspectors, who awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good awareness of equal opportunities issues by trainees
- ◆ rigorous complaints procedure

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no systematic monitoring of employers' equal opportunities procedures
- ◆ insufficient use of equal opportunities data

23. Qube's equal opportunities policy is detailed and comprehensive. It includes reference to relevant legislation. The policy is further supported by a number of procedures covering a range of issues such as complaints, grievance and discipline. Trainees have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues, which are covered during their induction to their programme. The information covered at induction is reinforced by support material given to trainees. Some trainees, particularly in customer service, also receive detailed information on equal opportunities during their induction to the work placement, at further training events and through updates organised by their employers. Trainees are aware of equal opportunities issues and their impact on them as employees and trainees. Some hospitality trainees work in potentially vulnerable environments such as nightclubs. They are particularly well protected in the workplace. There are a range of measures for staff, such as panic buttons in all bar areas, closed circuit television and fully trained security staff.

24. Few complaints are made, although where they have, prompt action has been taken and clearly recorded. Owing to the frequency of the visits by Qube's staff to the trainees, many issues are dealt with before they develop into complaints. The complaints and NVQ appeals procedures are covered in detail during induction,

and trainees have a good knowledge of them. Internal verifiers have visited many of the trainees in their workplaces. This has helped trainees to understand the role of the internal verifier and also their right of appeal regarding assessment decisions.

25. Qube does not systematically monitor employers' equal opportunities procedures. A pre-placement check by its staff ensures that potential placements have an equal opportunities policy. However, there is no further monitoring of employers with regard to equality of opportunity. All trainees who join the programme are already employed and are nominated by the employer for the training programme. However, there is no rigorous check to ensure that the selection procedure ensures equality of opportunity. During progress reviews, questions are often asked of the employer relating to equality of opportunity, although this is not recorded. The progress review forms do not include any reference to equal opportunities issues.

26. Regular data are collected regarding participation in the training programmes in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability. Little use is made of these data to widen participation in the training programmes. The data are not analysed in order to identify under-represented groups or to prompt further investigation and action with regard to equality of opportunity. There has been no staff development in this area to date, although this training need has been recognised by the company.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 4**

27. Trainees are already employed before they are recruited on to programmes. Qube promotes its programmes through its contacts with employers and through direct marketing activities to employers. Staff from Qube meet with potential trainees who are given advice on training choices and the programmes available. All trainees receive an initial assessment as well as an induction to their training programme. These may be provided on a one-to-one basis for an individual trainee joining a programme, or in a group situation when a number of trainees from one employer join a programme. Qube's staff provide the induction to the programme. Trainees are given a separate induction to their work placement. Key aspects of the induction are supplemented with handout material. All employers' premises are subject to an initial health and safety inspection and subsequently to frequent monitoring by trained members of Qube's staff. Reviewing trainees' progress is the responsibility of Qube's staff. Reviews are planned at eight-weekly intervals. All trainees have a nominated member of Qube's staff as their first point of contact. A team of occupationally experienced assessors is employed by Qube, either as full- or part-time employees.

28. Three strengths were identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors considered that two of these were no more than normal practice and that the third is more appropriate to another aspect of the report. Three other strengths were identified during inspection. Of the three weaknesses in the self-assessment report,

inspectors agreed with two. An additional weakness was identified. The grade awarded is lower than that given by Qube.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent and flexible visits to trainees
- ◆ good celebration of trainees' successes

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor individual training plans
- ◆ poor initial assessment
- ◆ ineffective progress reviews

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Two trainees who were unhappy in their jobs had an appointment arranged with another employer by their trainer/assessor, who had contacts in the industry. They are now joint licensees of one of the employer's public houses.*

29. Support for trainees begins with their initial contact with Qube's staff. Time is taken to discuss the programmes in detail with trainees. Once on the programme, trainees are visited frequently. Visits are planned to suit the working patterns of trainees and the stage they are at in their programme. Visits are made at least once a fortnight, but often more frequently than this. During these visits, assessors spend time observing and questioning trainees in order to gather evidence for their NVQs. In hospitality, assessors frequently make evening visits to ensure that as much evidence is gathered as possible. Contact is also maintained through telephone conversations and sometimes during visits to other trainees in the same work placement. When necessary, these visits are arranged at short notice to deal with any issues as they arise. Each visit results in a written action plan being produced by the assessor and trainee. The action plan clearly details what the assessor expects the trainee to achieve by the next planned visit. A copy of this plan is given to trainees. At the subsequent meeting, all agreed actions are discussed to monitor their progress. Trainees are therefore well prepared for their assessments and good progress is made.

30. Qube works with employers and trainees to celebrate trainees' successes wherever possible. Events are organised for trainees where certificates are presented. Parents are invited to these events. A senior member of Qube's staff is usually involved in the presentation, which may be for a group of trainees or an individual. Often this involves considerable travel for the senior manager involved. The local press are encouraged to attend these events.

31. The quality of individual training plans varies across the different programmes. In hospitality, trainees do not have a training plan with identified target dates for NVQ units. In many cases, training plans do not identify the complete framework trainees are working towards. Additional NVQ units, key skills units and additional qualifications such as basic food hygiene in hospitality are not included on training plans, and no target dates for individual NVQ units are

included. As a result, most trainees consider the achievement of their NVQ to be the aim of the programme. Training plans are not updated to incorporate any additional training offered by employers.

32. Initial assessments are not used to update the training plans for each trainee. There is no assessment of trainees' basic or key skills. The assessment of their occupational skills is not sufficiently detailed, with one-word answers and a number of areas left blank without explanation. Qube does not accredit all trainees' prior learning where appropriate. Some trainees who have achieved key skills units as part of previous training programmes are expected to complete these again, in one case at a lower level than has already been achieved. There is no systematic assessment of any additional needs a trainee may have. Where potential problems are highlighted, Qube does not investigate these further to ensure that training is adjusted accordingly. One trainee who has been assessed as being mildly dyslexic at school has been given no extra support except for staff allowing more time during visits.

33. Qube's progress-review process is inadequate. Not all trainees have a progress review within the eight-week target period. A check is made to ensure that the staff responsible are informed of reviews becoming due, but no urgency is given to missed deadlines. Those progress reviews which are carried out are often poorly recorded. There is little detail on the progress-review forms in trainees' files. Workplace supervisors are not always involved in the progress reviews and, in some cases, are not aware that they have occurred. The progress-review process is not used to assess what has occurred during the review period and the impact this has had on trainees' progress. Progress reviews do not result in meaningful targets being set for the next period and so do not provide long-term direction for trainees.

## **Management of training**

## **Grade 4**

34. Qube also trades under the name of BEC, and it is BEC which holds the contract with the co-ordinating TEC. The organisation is an Investor in People. Training staff work in either of the two occupational areas. For retailing and customer service, assessors are self-employed, working under contract for varying hours for Qube. In hospitality, assessors are all employed by Qube. Training is managed from the administrative centre in Enfield. In hospitality, assessors meet monthly to discuss trainees' progress towards qualifications. The internal verifiers lead these meetings, as their role includes team management as well as quality assurance of NVQs. Equal opportunities and feedback of issues from internal and external verifiers are standing agenda items. The team also has staff meetings every quarter, to provide mutual support. In customer service, it has recently been agreed that the part-time assessors will meet on a quarterly basis, as the geographical spread means it is not practical for teams to meet more regularly. There are also 'cluster' meetings every six weeks, which are for groups of staff who are working within a large employer and assessing employed trainees there. Again, the internal verifier leads the meetings. The management team, based at

Enfield, meets monthly to assess contractual progress across both occupational areas. Qube's business plan links government-funded training to objectives for business growth. It also includes a staff development plan, which is an overview of all staff's training needs identified in personal development plans.

35. The self-assessment report included four strengths and one weakness. Two of the strengths were agreed on by inspectors and two were considered to be weaknesses. One additional strength was identified. The weakness in the self-assessment was more appropriate to trainee support, and four other weaknesses were identified by inspectors, who awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good use of management information
- ◆ well-managed target-setting

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor understanding of programme frameworks by staff
- ◆ unclear management responsibilities for some staff
- ◆ poor sharing of good practice
- ◆ insufficient staff training

36. Assessors' work is carefully monitored and effectively managed. All staff understand that assessors should have no more than 20 trainees each. This is systematically checked at monthly management meetings and any cases where numbers exceed this are scrutinised for the next month. All assessors work towards specified targets in terms of NVQ achievement rates. Internal verifiers are in regular contact with assessors. They continually review assessors' progress and are available to discuss any potential problems in meeting targets. The recruitment of trainees is also planned taking into account the geographical location of assessors, to ensure that staff's travelling requirements are realistic. Assessors know how well trainees are progressing towards their qualifications because they regularly complete trainees' monitoring sheets. These are returned at least monthly, but more frequently in many cases, to the administration department where they are updated and shared with other assessors and managers so that targeting can be monitored effectively.

37. Qube systematically collects information about trainees and how they are progressing. The information is used to monitor contracts and is fed back to the TECs to renegotiate contracts, as well as to make improvements, such as to key skills training for staff. However, some basic management information is not collected. For example, Qube does not record how many trainees achieve their individual training plans or frameworks.

38. Management responsibility for several aspects of the training is unclear. For example, some staff believe that the on-the-job training is the employer's responsibility. Others recognise that it is part of Qube's role. Qube is not mentioned in agreements signed by employers, although its training role is described in one of the TEC's documents. Qube's own employers' agreement does not specify who provides training, beyond the employer's role to ensure that trainees are trained and equipped to work safely. The lack of clarity results in confusion and poorly managed training. For example, although Qube has recognised that key skills have not been well integrated into training and managed, it is unclear as to where the responsibility for this lies. All staff and trainees are aware that feedback is collected, but there is uncertainty as to who is responsible for processing this information. Staff's understanding of the NVQ requirements in both occupational areas is poor, and contracts are based on NVQ results alone so the weakness is not picked up. In hospitality, some of the framework requirements are not met. There is no check to ensure that trainees achieve the basic food hygiene qualification required for the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship frameworks. It is assumed that most employers will provide this, but some trainees have not gained the award. In customer service, some individual training plans specify 'processing information using telecommunications' as the primary qualification, rather than an additional qualification. Trainees' understanding of foundation modern apprenticeships is poor. Assessors are also confused and are unclear as to where to seek advice on the frameworks. Key skills management was poor until a recent training course was run for staff from both occupational areas. Even then, the requirements of the frameworks were not made clear.

39. Good practice is not systematically shared among training staff. Assessors on hospitality programmes tend to work separately from those responsible for customer service. A good induction programme is available in customer service but it is not used by all assessors in that area. An assessor in one area is piloting a new method for trainees to obtain witness statements to be used as evidence of competence towards their qualifications. This has not been discussed in the other occupational area, where there is insufficient use of witness statements. They are aware of types of harassment and how to cope with it if necessary. Off-the-job training is good in customer service, as it is tailored to individual trainees' needs. However, it is not offered in hospitality, despite the fact that it relates to personal development skills including assertiveness, time management and interpersonal skills. In hospitality, good practice is shared at regular monthly team meetings, but this does not occur in customer service. Qube has started to integrate the two occupational areas more effectively, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this.

40. The staff development programme is inadequate. Although there is frequent training and effective skills development for assessors, there has been no staff training in relation to equal opportunities. Staff are therefore not kept up to date on legislative changes which may affect trainees. They are not trained to be effective with trainees who have diverse needs and experience. For example, assessors are unclear as to how best to support a trainee with dyslexia, other than offering extra

time to complete the qualification. Staff are not given training to be able to identify trainees with additional needs or deal competently with them and they are not made aware of the support available from specialists in the local community.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 4

41. Qube has been providing training for only 18 months, and so its quality assurance procedures are still being developed. It has a quality assurance policy, which covers training processes. A reference copy is held centrally in the administration office. Amendments or updates to the policy, with issue dates and version numbers added, are notified to staff through managers at monthly management meetings. Qube holds the ISO 9001 quality standard. The company conducts regular internal audits and both of its contracting TECs carry out separate audits to check contract compliance. External verifiers from two awarding bodies undertake visits at least twice a year to ensure that assessment and internal verification of NVQs are in line with their requirements.

42. The self-assessment report for quality assurance included three strengths and one weakness. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths. Another weakness was identified and the grade awarded was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ clearly written quality assurance procedures

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor monitoring of training in the workplace
- ◆ slow implementation of some quality assurance procedures

43. The company's training processes are described clearly in its quality assurance procedures, in an accessible language which is understood by all staff. The procedures are comprehensive, covering issues such as staff development, induction, health and safety, and progress reviews. These are issued to every new member of staff on recruitment and their understanding is reinforced during induction. It is a tightly controlled document, since each update or amendment is given a specific issue date and version number. A variety of supplementary documents are maintained but they are not all part of the rigorous control system and some are updated independently. These include assessors' guidance notes about the assessment process and recording methods. There is ongoing internal verification in both occupational areas, where assessors are observed and receive feedback on their performance. In addition, internal verifiers sample portfolios according to planned schedules, and give written feedback on their findings to the

assessors concerned. This is recorded on monitoring sheets when trainees have completed units of their NVQ, but not always midway through units.

44. Qube does not adequately monitor the quality of training in the workplace. Assessors and supervisors respond to trainees' needs if they require additional work experience for particular aspects of their NVQ, but this is not planned or monitored. Trainees' progress reviews lack detail, and this has been identified over a period of several months in TEC and internal audits. It has also been recognised in TEC audits that individual training plans are incomplete for many trainees, with inappropriate qualification titles or poorly recorded initial assessment. Qube has been slow to make improvements to the identified problems.

45. Some quality assurance procedures have only recently been introduced, and so there is no evidence of steadily improving performance. Systems to collect trainees' feedback have been introduced but are not yet operating effectively, and no feedback is sought from employers. Qube has recognised this, and has developed questionnaires to send to employers. One group of trainees has completed questionnaires regarding the training they have received, and the quality of support provided by their assessors. A common database to record management information for achievement of all NVQs is being developed, but the monitoring systems for hospitality are different from those for customer service, and so it is difficult to obtain a clear analysis of the company's overall performance. The internal verifiers/training managers for both areas have recently begun to meet on a regular basis.

46. The self-assessment report was drawn up in consultation with staff from all areas, but did not involve employers or trainees. The grades were accurate in three areas and in the other three, inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.