



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 2000

**Lifetime Health and Fitness Ltd**

## SUMMARY

Lifetime Health and Fitness Ltd specialises in training people for the exercise and fitness sector of the leisure industry. Off-the-job training is well planned and provides trainees with sound background knowledge in their chosen area. Assessment is frequent and trainees make good progress in their qualifications. Equal opportunities is promoted during occupational training. Trainees are well supported during training but initial assessment and induction are weak. Training is efficiently managed, with a strong emphasis on staff development. Quality assurance is rigorous and concentrates on training and assessment activities.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Leisure, sport & travel	2

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ well-established and effective systems to collect trainees' feedback
- ◆ excellent learning resources
- ◆ rigorous internal verification
- ◆ good staff development programme

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate understanding of equal opportunities by trainees
- ◆ superficial induction for modern apprentices
- ◆ no systematic initial assessment of trainees

## INTRODUCTION

1. Lifetime Health and Fitness Ltd (Lifetime) is a private training provider specialising in training for those working in the exercise and fitness sector of the leisure industry. Lifetime was established in 1995 and was incorporated in 1996. The number of trainees has more than doubled during the last year. The company's head offices are in Bristol. These offices act as the base for all the staff. Lifetime hires space in private health and fitness clubs to accommodate its formal training courses. Courses are run at a variety of venues around the country, with the main training locations being in Bristol and London. All of the training courses are open to fee-paying customers. Training groups are often a mixture of TEC-funded and private clients. Lifetime employs a total of 10 full-time and six part-time staff. The managing director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the company.

2. There are 76 trainees. All of them are foundation or advanced modern apprentices. All of them are employees of the organisations they are placed with. They are all working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 in sport and recreation. All of the training is funded through a contract with the National Training Partnership (NTP). NTP in turn contracts with the local training and enterprise councils (TECs) in the areas where the trainees are employed. The co-ordinating TEC for the purposes of inspection is Western Training and Enterprise Council.

3. The leisure industry is enjoying a period of sustained growth. The number of leisure and fitness clubs is growing fast in keeping with this trend. More than two-thirds of the population regularly participate in some form of recreational activity, spending between them £12 billion each year. It is estimated that a total of 420,000 people are in paid work in sport, recreation and associated activities, with a further two million people working on a voluntary basis. There are more than 50,000 companies involved in this broad area of work, with most being small businesses. Many organisations are not run for profit.

4. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 31.2 per cent compared with a national average of 49.2 per cent. Achievement levels in the surrounding areas are better, with several areas above the national average. The percentages across London vary widely. While Lifetime draws some of its trainees from the Bristol area, most are from other parts of the country.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Lifetime produced its first self-assessment report in 1998. All staff were involved in drawing up the report at this stage. There have been several revisions since this time. Most of the later self-assessment work has been undertaken by the managing director and the chief internal verifier. Various groups of staff, in particular the trainer/assessors, have been consulted. Trainees' feedback forms part of the evidence base, but there is little evidence derived from employers. Training and support for self-assessment is provided by NTP. The action plan accompanying the self-assessment report was reviewed and updated immediately before the inspection.

6. A group of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days with Lifetime in November 2000. Much of the time was spent in visiting trainees, employers and training sessions in different parts of the country. Locations included Sheffield, Leeds, Kent, London, Bournemouth and Bristol. In all, 21 different sites were visited. Inspectors interviewed 31 trainees, eight of Lifetime's staff, and four employers. Additional evidence included trainees' portfolios and training plans, policies and procedures, records of meetings, records of internal and external verification, and training materials. Inspectors also observed five training sessions and graded these.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Leisure, sport & travel	1	1	3			
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Leisure, sport & travel

### Grade 2

7. Lifetime offers training in leisure, sport and travel. There are 76 trainees working towards sport and recreation NVQs in operational services and coaching, teaching and instruction. Many trainees also complete an NVQ at level 2 in customer service. There are 72 advanced modern apprentices and four foundation modern apprentices. Trainees are placed in leisure centres, leisure clubs and hotel fitness suites in many different parts of the country. All training and assessment is carried out by Lifetime. Most of the off-the-job training is given at large private health clubs in Bristol or London. Some trainees are assessed during the off-the-job training, but most is carried out in the workplace. Trainees are able to gain additional coaching qualifications in subjects such as circuit training and nutrition. These form part of the apprenticeship frameworks. In addition to this, trainees

attend additional training sessions provided by their employers for all their own leisure staff members. These sessions include customer care, lifeguarding and emergency procedures. Achievement rates compare well with the national achievement rates according to statistics produced by the sport and recreation industry training organisation. Of those trainees who have left in the past three years, around 30 per cent have completed the full apprenticeship framework and a further 30 per cent have completed at least one full NVQ. In the past year a substantial number of trainees have left early as a result of redundancies at one major health club. The number of trainees has increased significantly in the past two years. Inspectors found many strengths identified in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice. The weaknesses given were also not significant. Inspectors found other strengths, particularly concerning the organisation of the training, and awarded the same grade as that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

Achievements of those on advanced modern apprenticeship programmes until September 2000

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Trainees starting	53	28	109	59
Achieved NVQs at level 2	23	17	69	5
Achieved NVQs at level 3	19	13	4	2
Completed advanced modern apprenticeship	19	13	4	2
Left early with NVQ	8	9	20	1
Left early without NVQ	26	4	28	13
Still in training	0	2	57	43

Achievements of those on foundation modern apprenticeship programmes until September 2000

	1999-2000
Trainees starting	4
Achieved NVQs at level 2	3
Completed foundation modern apprenticeship	3
Left early with NVQ	0
Left early without NVQ	1
Converted to advanced modern apprenticeship	3
Still in training	0

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good rates of progress
- ◆ good learning resources
- ◆ well-structured off-the-job training
- ◆ good match between qualifications and job roles

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ late assessment of key skills

8. Trainees make good progress, especially towards NVQs at level 2. These qualifications are usually completed within six months. Trainees are visited in the workplace on a monthly basis by their assessors. There is good assessment planning for these visits to ensure that trainees understand how they are to be assessed and what type of evidence they are required to collect. Assessment planning is well structured and clearly recorded. Visits include a review of the work completed and conclude with a detailed discussion about the work which trainees need to complete before the next visit by the assessor. Trainees are given good feedback following assessments, and they are encouraged to look at their performance critically and to develop action plans for their further development. Trainees' portfolios are well structured with assessors using paperwork which specifies evidence required for trainees to complete their portfolios. Trainees understand the significance of the evidence they collate in their portfolios. The sampling plan for internal verification ensures that all units of NVQs, trainees and assessors are internally verified regularly.

9. Off-the-job training is well structured. Most trainees attend a core theory week which covers much of the background knowledge required for the NVQ in coaching, teaching and instructing. Additional tutorial sessions are available during all off-the-job training session for any trainee who wishes to take advantage of them. Trainees value these courses and are motivated by attending them. The course provides the opportunity for some trainees to be assessed. The course is taught by well-qualified tutors who have wide-ranging and relevant occupational experience. The same tutors also assess the trainees in the workplace, which helps the trainees to understand how the level of knowledge they are being taught applies directly to the workplace. Courses are well structured and given at health clubs which have good facilities and a wide range of equipment. This allows trainees, especially those from smaller establishments, to experience different types of exercise machines and different types of working environments. There is a good range of learning resources available to trainees, many of which have been developed by Lifetime. These resources are regularly updated and include current legislation, government reports such as *The Health of the Nation*, and research findings. The resources are both comprehensive and easy to use, containing a summary at the end of each chapter which can be used as a point of reference and revision. The effective use of these materials ensures that the trainees' knowledge is current and relevant.

10. There is a good match between trainees' job roles and the qualifications which they follow. When a trainee is not able to carry out all the requirements of the coaching, teaching and instructing NVQ early in their employment, Lifetime assists them in gaining an NVQ in customer service in a leisure context. While they are doing this they continue to gain knowledge of the industry, which can then help them to progress to the NVQ in coaching, teaching and instructing. Lifetime also arranges for trainees to move to other leisure sites to gain further experience if their own workplaces do not provide enough scope to complete all the requirements of their NVQs. Each trainee has a reassessment of their job roles on completing their NVQs at level 2 in order to ensure that they follow the NVQ at level 3 which is most appropriate to them. In some cases the company has switched trainees from NVQs at level 2 in operational services to NVQs at level 3 in coaching, teaching and instructing.

11. Many trainees lack awareness of key skills. There is little assessment of key skills while trainees are working towards their NVQs at level 2. Key skills assessment is usually left until they have collected a significant amount of evidence towards their NVQs at level 3. This can lead to missed opportunities for assessment of key skills and trainees having to complete additional work to prove their competence in these. Trainees do not produce a separate portfolio for their key skills. The process by which trainees identify and record key skills evidence is unclear. The main key skills assessor has recently left the company. The company has carried out basic training in key skills for the other assessors, but they lack experience in key skills training, portfolio development and assessment. As yet, there has been no work carried out to integrate key skills within the collection of evidence for the NVQ at level 3 in coaching, teaching and instructing.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

12. Lifetime has an equal opportunities policy which is subject to annual updating. The managing director is responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented. The policy is contained in the staff handbook, which is issued to all staff when they begin their employment. The policy is introduced to trainees during their induction. Employers' equal opportunities policies are collected when they agree to become part of the training programme. Copies of these policies are examined and retained at Lifetime's head office. The contract between Lifetime and the employer also specifies that the trainee should be provided with a copy of their employers' equal opportunities policies. There are separate procedures for dealing with complaints and for the resolution of appeals against assessment decisions. On average, 60 per cent of those starting training are men. Over the past three years, achievement rates among men have slightly exceeded those among women. There is one trainee from a minority ethnic group. None of the trainees have disabilities. Inspectors found that most of the strengths given in the self-

assessment report, for example regarding the issue of copies of the policy and basic staff training, were no more than standard practice and they identified a different strength and weakness. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good attention to equality of opportunity during training and assessment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of awareness of Lifetime's equal opportunities policy by trainees

13. Lifetime has minimal influence over applications for training, as trainees are already employed when they are referred to Lifetime. It does, however, share its equal opportunities policy with employers, so seeks to influence the practice of employers in this way. The equal opportunities policy is updated regularly and covers all the relevant legislation. Equal opportunities associated with age, gender, ethnicity and disability are all considered in the policy. The policy provides satisfactory protection for both trainees and staff. Training and marketing materials use a wide variety of images. The illustrations and examples in training materials deliberately use a non-specific figure to ensure that there is no stereotyping. The complaints and appeals processes are clear, and there are records to show that the procedures have been used by private clients. In these cases, the issues have been dealt with promptly within the specified timescales, and the outcomes of the complaints have been recorded. There have been no formal complaints from TEC-funded trainees.

14. Lifetime has designed its courses carefully to include training in equal opportunities with occupational training. This integrated approach enables trainees to see the direct relevance of the full range of equal opportunities topics to their work. As part of its system for observing training, Lifetime monitors tutors' awareness of, and ability to respond to, trainees' individual needs. Both physical needs and learning needs are dealt with in this way. If there are any trainees with mobility difficulties, tutors are able to adapt their programmes to accommodate their differing needs, as they can with other groups. Tutors also support trainees who need to adjust their own work to cater for specific client groups, such as those on rehabilitation or detoxification programmes. Lesson plans for off-the-job training emphasise individual needs when prescribing exercise programmes. Barriers or constraints to exercise, such as religious or cultural issues or disability, are explored with trainees through these sessions. The training that Lifetime's staff receive is wide ranging and covers various aspects of equality, mainly set in a sport and recreation context. Topics include appropriate language and behaviour, accepted good practice in the industry, legislation, and the use of specialist support agencies in order to refer clients who need specialist advice.



15. Trainees are introduced to Lifetime's equal opportunities policy and appeals procedures during their induction. The presentation of these issues is bland in contrast to the high quality of other elements of the training. A signed checklist confirms that trainees have received the appropriate documents. There is little explanation of the practical implications of equal opportunities, particularly as it applies to the trainees themselves in the workplace or training environment. There is no mechanism to check whether trainees have understood the key points, nor is there any subsequent training or reinforcement.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

16. Employers usually refer trainees to Lifetime soon after they begin their employment. Occasionally, trainees undertaking commercial training programmes with Lifetime are referred to employers and offered work, subsequently returning to Lifetime as modern apprentices. Trainees are interviewed by Lifetime to ensure that they are eligible to be accepted on a government-funded training programme and they complete an initial application form recording their previous qualifications, work experience and career aspirations. All trainees undergo a workplace induction organised by their employers and a further basic induction to the training programme. Each trainee is allocated to a member of staff who acts as both tutor and assessor. These trainer/assessors conduct regular monthly assessment and review meetings with trainees, during which they plan trainees' progress and provide pastoral support. These meetings are recorded. Whenever possible, trainees retain the same assessor throughout their training. The responsibility for managing all aspects of trainee support rests with the training co-ordinator. On completion of their training, trainees take part in award ceremonies. The self-assessment report identified strengths and a weakness which inspectors did not find. The strengths were descriptions of processes and did not focus on their impact on the trainees. Inspectors identified other strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high importance given to celebrating trainees' achievements
- ◆ good career progression during training
- ◆ good pastoral support and guidance to help trainees achieve

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no systematic initial assessment of trainees
- ◆ superficial induction for modern apprentices

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*All trainees complete a physical activity readiness questionnaire during induction to the modern apprenticeship framework. This allows tutors to identify and plan for any health conditions which may affect trainees' ability to lead strenuous exercise sessions.*

17. Trainees accepted on the modern apprenticeship programme are allocated to a trainer/assessor by the training co-ordinator. There are clearly recorded procedures for dealing with initial enquiries from employers and prospective trainees, and for signing up work-placement providers or employers. Trainees meet their trainer/assessor and complete the TEC-registration documents at an early stage. There is no systematic initial assessment of basic skills, key skills or occupational skills. Some trainees have learning difficulties identified through informal discussion with their trainer/assessor but this is not always the case. Additional support is offered to trainees if a learning difficulty becomes apparent at a later stage. Some trainees are allowed extra time for written tests or complete using verbal questioning if they have a literacy learning need. The internal verifier is consulted before this happens. During induction, all trainees are involved in preparing an individual training plan containing information on the programme to be undertaken and the qualification aim. Most trainees are allocated an expected completion date 18 months after the start of the modern apprenticeship. The lack of systematic initial assessment prohibits the inclusion of information on trainees' learning needs or styles, so individual training plans for modern apprentices tend to be quite similar. Some trainees have their prior achievement in key skills or NVQs at level 2 but accreditation is not carried out systematically. Some trainees' prior achievement is missed.

18. Trainees undergo a basic induction process to the modern apprenticeship, usually in small groups in the workplace. As part of the induction, a review exercise is conducted with the trainees to ensure that they have had a health and safety induction at their employers' premises. The induction also covers the equal opportunities, appeals, and health and safety policies. Trainees are asked to read the equal opportunities and appeals procedures and sign a document to state that they understand them. Little attempt is made to encourage trainees to relate the policies to their own experience or to ensure that they have a more detailed understanding of the importance of these issues in the workplace. There is no check on trainees' understanding of the content of the modern apprenticeship induction programme, nor is there any subsequent reinforcement of the points covered. In contrast, there are detailed, well-planned and recorded induction sessions for off-the-job training courses which introduce trainees to the ensuing training in an interesting and memorable way.

19. Continuing support for trainees is provided through review meetings every four weeks. Copies of assessment plans and review records are kept in trainees' portfolios and filed at the main office. The reviews include a mixture of detailed assessment planning, progress discussions and pastoral support. Short-term action planning is challenging and specific. Trainees are provided with their trainer/assessor's mobile phone number to facilitate counselling and advice between formal meetings. Trainer/assessors regularly make telephone contact with trainees between review meetings to check on their progress. Action points are reviewed every four weeks. Medium-term progress reviews with trainees are less well structured. There is little opportunity to take stock of the progress made

across the whole of the apprenticeship framework. Within the last two months, a system of formal quarterly progress review meetings has been set up with employers. Until this point, there was little inclusion of employers in reviews. The new review meetings ensure that employers are aware of trainees' progress. They also provide an opportunity for employers to give their views on the quality of training, its relevance to the job and to identify any further training which may be required. Employers are given copies of the records of the trainees' assessment plans and review meetings.

20. There is a policy for supporting trainees' learning, called the tutorial support policy, which is reviewed annually. Tutorials are arranged at the beginning and the end of the day during off-the-job training courses. Advice and action points are recorded on tutorial record forms. Personal counselling and regular reviews support trainees' achievement of NVQs at levels 2 and 3 and most trainees complete these qualifications in good time. Staff respond constructively when trainees experience difficult circumstances and emergencies, for example with childcare or mental health issues. Trainer/assessors offer pastoral support and assist trainees in drawing up action plans which lead to workable solutions for any difficulties they are facing. Training for staff has included topics such as supporting trainees with behavioural difficulties. The support offered by trainer/assessors has been of benefit to many trainees.

21. Trainees are provided with opportunities to develop their skills on completion of the modern apprenticeship framework. Trainees are offered the opportunity to complete free-standing industry qualifications in various specialisms, such as nutrition, weight management and sports injuries. One trainee has progressed to, and achieved, a sport and recreation NVQ at level 4.

22. Lifetime uses a wide range of methods to ensure that trainees build up a broad view of the industry they are working in and of their own possible progression routes. Most trainees have the opportunity to undertake off-the-job training at well-equipped gymnasiums other than their own workplace. Award evenings are organised regularly, providing an opportunity publicly to recognise trainees' achievements. High-profile employers within the industry are usually invited to present the awards. Trainer/assessors provide references for trainees and informally provide trainees with advice on employment opportunities. Trainees are regularly promoted in the workplace while undertaking their training. Several trainees have changed their employers mid-way through training to take up higher-level posts. In these cases, trainer/assessors continue to help trainees to achieve the modern apprenticeship.

## **Management of training**

## **Grade 2**

23. The managing director has overall responsibility for the running of the company, and is assisted by a training manager and an office manager. There are 10 full-time staff and two part-time staff working for the company. These staff are

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*During the training days for staff, each member of staff gives a presentation on a basic, everyday task like boiling an egg or putting up a shelf. Each topic is designed to allow the trainer/assessor to display a different method of teaching. Their colleagues provide a critical appraisal of the approach. The exercise helps both the presenter and the critic, and subsequent discussions provide a valuable opportunity to develop training skills.*

supplemented by a further six individuals who work on a freelance basis in order to provide specialist aspects of the programme. All the staff are extremely well qualified. The main points of contact between the company and the trainees are the six trainer/assessors. Each has responsibility for a set number of trainees to assess developing training resources and giving off-the-job training sessions. Five of the full-time staff are qualified internal verifiers. Managers closely monitor staff's work to ensure a balance is maintained and adequate time is devoted to all activities. The number of modern apprentices on the programme increased significantly in 1999 and, as a result, the job roles of staff have changed to reflect the altered focus of the company. The company develops and regularly reviews its procedures to ensure that they meet the current business requirements. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths and weaknesses, which were found by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. It underestimated its strengths, particularly regarding the training of staff. Inspectors identified other strengths and weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than that given by the company.

**STRENGTHS**

- ◆ full involvement by staff in developing the company's business strategy
- ◆ comprehensive induction and development for staff
- ◆ effective teamwork and communication

**WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ insufficient and incohesive management information systems
- ◆ few links between on-the-job training and NVQs

24. The company promotes its mission and values through its business plan and publicity materials. The direction of the company is decided through discussions with all staff. Regular team meetings provide the opportunity for managers to consult with staff on strategies to drive the company towards achieving its mission, drawing on their knowledge and experience gained within the industry. Through this involvement, staff can appreciate their contribution to the company's development. They work enthusiastically to develop their roles and promote the company's values, working closely with managers to ensure that targets and goals are met. Being so closely involved in the development of the mission and values gives the staff a full understanding of the direction of the company and their part in it, so that they can effectively communicate this to trainees and other organisations they work with.

25. New staff undergo a comprehensive period of induction and guidance for the first three months of their employment. This is an effective probationary period during which staff generate little income for the company. Their time is spent shadowing other staff members, and sitting in on training sessions and assessments. They are gradually eased into taking their own training sessions and

building up their expertise during the three months. This investment in training new staff ensures that trainees' experience is never compromised during staff changes. New staff are observed constantly and given feedback to ensure that they are aware of areas they need to develop. New staff have an appraisal after the three months in order to set new goals and to confirm their understanding of their role within the company. This high level of support and guidance continues throughout staff's employment with the company. There is also an effective staff development system which provides for six-monthly formal appraisals and three-monthly informal job chats. Through this process, staff are set goals and targets which are part of the overall targets of the company, and their training needs are identified. They are encouraged to appraise their own performance, and so are fully involved in shaping their own roles within the company through selecting appropriate training to address their learning needs. This attitude to staff training is up to date, creative and lively.

26. Staff have up-to-date knowledge of the industry and work to maintain and improve their training skills. Training and assessment is observed regularly and the results are evaluated, leading to training sessions for all staff. This training lasts for one or two days, depending on the topics to be covered, and begins with a meeting of all staff during which all the main aspects of the training programmes are discussed. Staff are given updates on the progress of the company, and individual members of staff present items and examples of good practice to colleagues where necessary. Teams of trainer/assessors meet after this and have more in-depth discussions about training and assessment. Minutes of these meetings are distributed to all staff on the same day. The afternoons of these training days are taken up with training sessions on weak points identified during recent staff observations or updates on changes to qualifications and/or legislation. All staff are involved in presenting aspects of the session and receive feedback from managers and their colleagues. The training days are invaluable for the staff, keeping them updated on the latest changes within the leisure industry and in relation to the NVQs and other qualifications. This information is then passed on to the trainees to ensure that their knowledge is current.

27. The company covers a large geographical area, which means that the staff spend considerable time out of the office. Communication between them is very good. There is a set procedure which requires each individual to telephone the office daily to pick up messages and report back any relevant information, and time is set aside in their calendars for office-based working. Managers carefully monitor the level of contact with staff, providing them with an e-mail facility when they are working from home and mobile telephones for business use. Time in the office is used constructively, with all staff providing regular updates on their work to colleagues and updating files that other trainer/assessors need to be made aware of. The team is a very cohesive unit, with members constantly supporting each other. They work together to develop systems and materials to enhance training.

28. The company uses a number of management information systems which each generate slightly different types of data. Various statistics are drawn out of the systems by the managers and are analysed, but there is little use of the systems by

other members of staff. Not all the databases provide sufficient information to track all aspects of the programmes. One tracking system has comprehensive information on the commercial clients and their involvement with the company, but similar information cannot be drawn out for the modern apprentices. Another database provides basic information on trainees' details, but cannot track their achievements and destinations. Although there are a number of systems, there is no consolidation of the data to provide coherent, all-encompassing management information. Staff do not work with the systems and therefore do not have the opportunity to analyse trainees' information except through individual manual systems. Managers pass summary information to staff at the team meetings, and a white board is provided to show which trainees are about to complete their qualifications, but there is no opportunity for staff to access information on trainees at other times. This problem has been recognised and plans are being made to allow staff access in order to view information on trainees' progress.

29. Lifetime does not manage the link between the employers' on-the-job training and trainees' work towards their NVQs. Lifetime provides a comprehensive programme of off-the-job training for all trainees. Running alongside this, many of the employers provide on-the-job training for all their staff, including trainees. The additional information given to the trainees in this way is not used to provide assessment opportunities or to generate extra evidence for their NVQs. Assessors are not taking full account of the additional on-the-job training when they review trainees' progress, nor are they recognising its value in complementing the excellent off-the-job training.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 2**

30. Lifetime has a range of policies and procedures concerning quality assurance. These include procedures concerning training and assessment and other administrative aspects of the company's work. Internal verification forms a key part of the system. Customer service standards describe the ways in which staff are expected to deal with trainees and other customers. The managing director is mainly responsible for drawing up and maintaining the policies and procedures, and for their dissemination through staff meetings or other means. There is a separate procedure which sets out how this is to be done. Feedback is collected from trainees and from employers. All training courses are evaluated separately by the participants. External quality checks are carried out by NTP and the bodies which award qualifications. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report and identified one further strength. It underestimated the impact of the quality assurance mechanisms in improving the training. The grade awarded by inspectors is higher than that given in the self-assessment report.



### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ rigorous quality assurance of training
- ◆ well-established and effective feedback systems
- ◆ good use of internal verification to generate improvements

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little monitoring or follow-up of trainees leaving early
- ◆ poor control over application of procedures to place trainees on appropriate programmes

31. Quality assurance procedures describe the standards expected of trainer/assessors and how their performance will be monitored. Expectations are high. The standards are set by the team of trainer/assessors and are based on accepted good practice as well as the requirements of funding agencies and awarding bodies. The areas covered include the level of background knowledge trainer/assessors need, their teaching skills, programme development, personal presentation, awareness of areas of controversy and interest, and communication skills. The means of developing and measuring the required levels of knowledge and skills in each of these areas are well defined. One of the means of measuring teaching skills is through monitoring trainees' feedback about training courses. Trainees are asked to evaluate each course. The results are then analysed and attributed to the individual trainer/assessor concerned. Trainer/assessors are expected to maintain an average rating of 4.2 out of 5 against all parameters. Training materials are also subject to continuous updating and improvement in the light of feedback and developments within the industry. The trainer/assessors undertake this work.

32. The arrangements for gathering feedback from trainees and employers about training and support as a whole have been in operation for three years. Anonymous feedback from trainees is collected on an annual basis through a questionnaire. Topics covered include the quality of training and assessment, and the amount and reliability of contact with the trainer/assessor. Employers' feedback is collected in a similar way and addresses many of the same issues, although there is an additional focus on the impact of training in key areas such as whether training has a positive effect on the performance of employers' staff or on the retention of employees. The responses to questionnaires are analysed and any immediate areas of concern are discussed with the trainer/assessors so that appropriate action can be agreed. Both trainees and employers report high levels of satisfaction.

33. The internal verification system encompasses a wide range of effective quality assurance measures, in addition to its core functions in relation to assessment. For example, tutor assessors received regular and detailed feedback about their teaching as part of this system. The reports on the sessions which are observed include evaluation of teaching techniques, the structure of the session, the trainer/assessors' working relationship with the trainees, and their subject

knowledge. Details of areas for development are included as part of the report. This system is effective both in ensuring the quality of training and in promoting the professional development of the tutors. Assessment practice is monitored in a similar way. There is a planned sampling strategy, which ensures that internal verification, covers a range of units of the qualifications and that all assessors are included. Internal verifiers review evidence from assessments and observe staff undertaking assessments. Detailed feedback is provided. Less experienced trainer/assessors are subject to increased levels of internal verification. Internal verifiers meet on a monthly basis as does the full team of trainer/assessors.

34. The trainer/assessors are given broad targets for the average time in which trainees are expected to complete different elements of the modern apprenticeship. Progress against these targets is monitored closely. The overall performance of the training programmes is monitored by the managing director who uses data supplied by the NTP and national training organisation to make comparisons with other training providers. The main measure used is the number of NVQs achieved in a given year compared with the number of trainees leaving the programme. This measure shows improving achievement rates over the past three years. While this is a useful measure for TEC purposes, it is not a good indicator of the achievement of modern apprenticeships and the effectiveness of training towards this. Internal audit is in the early stages of development and currently focuses on checking basic paperwork and on ensuring that assessment paperwork is kept up to date.

35. The self-assessment report covers all the relevant areas as dictated by *Raising the Standard* but lacks any background information describing how the company organises its training or addresses the generic aspects. For example, it does not cover how initial assessment is undertaken. Many of the strengths in the report are descriptions of what is done, or how it is done, and most fall within the bounds of normal practice. However, most of the general areas of strength and weakness identified by inspectors are included in the self-assessment report. The strengths and weaknesses claimed are clearly linked to relevant evidence. Some use is made of statistical analysis to support the strengths claimed. Self-assessment has been used over a considerable time, but it is treated separately from the company's quality assurance system.

36. The leisure industry as a whole has high staff turnover. Just over 50 per cent of trainees joining Lifetime leave without completing their modern apprenticeships. The trainer/assessors are aware of what is happening to the trainees they have responsibility for and follow up those leaving early on an individual basis when they can. In some cases, trainees move to another employer and continue their training. Although this individual action is taken, there is no overall analysis concerning those leaving early which seeks to identify any trends in reasons why they leave and in turn to help staff to take preventative action for other trainers.

37. Trainees are recruited from a wide range of employers, and most join training programmes shortly after they begin their employment. A recently revised procedure governs the process for ensuring that new recruits are eligible for





government-funded training. This process is not always reliably implemented, with the result that some university graduates have begun modern apprenticeship programmes even though they are not always eligible for this government-funded training. Where such instances have been discovered, immediate action has been taken to rectify the situation.