



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1999

REINSPECTION JANUARY 2001

# London Borough of Tower Hamlets

## SUMMARY

Through its support for learning service, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets is very successful in giving long-term unemployed people the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to gain employment as special needs learning support assistants in the borough. Training is well resourced, and placements are well managed. The corporate training schemes provide effectively managed business administration training to NVQs at level 2 and 3. Many trainees progress to employment. The retention rate on the modern apprenticeship programme was particularly low at the time of the first inspection, but it had greatly improved by January 2001. There is good promotion of equal opportunities. The organisation listens carefully to the views of trainees and employers and takes appropriate action regarding these views. Quality assurance systems were inadequate at the time of the first inspection. Procedures were revised, however, and quality assurance systems are now clearly focused on ensuring that trainees learn effectively.

**As a result of the reinspection of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the original published report text for quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	2
Health, care & public services	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	
Quality assurance	2

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-managed work placements
- ◆ rapid achievement of NVQs in administration at level 2 by many trainees
- ◆ successful in progression into employment by many trainees
- ◆ excellent retention and achievement rates on the learning support assistants programme
- ◆ good promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ good and extensive guidance and pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ extensive use and effective feedback from trainees and supervisors



### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ poor achievement rates on modern apprenticeship programmes
- ◆ some gaps in quality assurance arrangements

## INTRODUCTION

1. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets provides work-based learning to two groups of people. The two programmes are managed separately, on different sites, by different people and with different management systems. The team responsible for managing the training programmes for young people is known as corporate training schemes. At the time of the first inspection, in September 1999, this team was managed through the personnel department. Now the finance and the corporate services department, through its community employment section, manages training programmes in administrative skills for foundation and advanced modern apprentices, and for trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. The community employment section also runs graduate recruitment and other programmes outside the scope of this inspection. The education directorate, through its support for learning service, runs courses for unemployed adults who want to become learning support assistants for children and young people with special educational needs. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has contracts with London East Training and Enterprise Council (LETEC) to provide the training courses.

2. At the time of the first inspection, most of the young people learnt general administrative skills and pursued national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2, or 3 in administration. Some now work towards qualifications in accounting or information technology. Some are aiming to take up specialist careers in housing, and are working towards relevant NVQs at levels 2 or 3. In September 1999, a few trainees were working in arts administration. There are no longer any trainees working in this area. In September 1999, of the 98 young people training in administration-related disciplines, 41 were modern apprentices, 15 were national trainees and 42 were on other work-based learning programmes. Of the 19 adults, three were on the full-time education and training option of the New Deal and 16 were on the work-based learning for adults programme. In January 2001, there are no New Deal clients and nine unemployed adults training to be learning support assistants. There are 40 advanced and 42 foundation modern apprentices. Eleven young people are on other work-based learning programmes for young people. The current adult course is the last to be run through work-based learning for adults programmes. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has secured alternative funding to allow a wider range of local people to take the course.

3. Tower Hamlets is in East London, and includes Stepney, Bethnal Green, Poplar and Bow, Wapping and the Isle of Dogs, which is home to Canary Wharf. The chief industry of the area used to be in the London docks and associated warehousing. The docks have been closed. Partly as a result of substantial government investment, new buildings which house service industries, particularly in the financial service sector, have been established in the area. Smithfield, the London meat market, is also now located in the area, as are the offices of most national newspapers. The public sector provides much employment locally,

particularly in two large local hospitals and in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets itself. The Whitechapel area is still an important centre for small-scale enterprises in the textile industry. The City of London borders the borough to the West.

4. Of the population of 176,625, 60 per cent are white, 26 per cent are of Bangladeshi origin, and 8 per cent are of Afro-Caribbean origin. (London Research Centre, 1997, based on 1991 census data). Tower Hamlets is one of the poorest boroughs in the country, and is ranked sixth lowest in the Department of Environment, Transport and The Regions' 1998 *Index of Local Conditions*. Over 37,500 people in the borough claim income support. The unemployment rate has dropped sharply from 13.5 per cent in 1998 to 5.9 per cent in November 2000. It is still higher than the average London rate of 3.7 per cent, which in turn is higher than the national rate of 3.3 per cent (Department for Employment and Education, November 2000). The unemployment rate among people from minority ethnic groups is twice as high as it is for the rest of the community. The number of young people in the local community is unusually high, and 25 per cent of the population are under the age of 16. Over half of the school population are of Bangladeshi origin. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers in Tower Hamlets achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 27.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. During the past five years, this achievement rate has risen faster than the national average, but has remained below it. In 2000, the rate rose to 32.7 per cent in Tower Hamlets, compared with 49.2 per cent nationally. On average in Tower Hamlets, girls achieve higher school grades than boys, and pupils of Bangladeshi origin achieve higher grades than white pupils. In 1998, 37 per cent of Bangladeshi girls, but only 18 per cent of white boys achieved five GCSEs at grade C and above. A fifth of children of school-starting age speak very little or no English and need support to learn English.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Both the support for learning service and the corporate training schemes team produced self-assessment reports for their respective aspects of training, initially as they had expected they would be inspected separately. Both self-assessment reports resulted from managers' extensive consultation with colleagues. LETEC's staff provided support and advice. The corporate training schemes produced a new self-assessment report in March 2000, and a short report in November 2000, outlining the progress made since the first inspection. The support for learning service wrote a clear and concise self-assessment report in November 2000. All self-assessment reports also resulted from managers' extensive consultation with colleagues. LETEC's staff provided support, advice and consultation.

6. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days inspecting the training. They spoke with 30 of the young people and 15 of the adults. They interviewed five of the six corporate training services' staff; the manager was absent on maternity leave. They interviewed all the support for learning service's staff, with the exception of one part-time tutor, who runs the mathematics session on Fridays. They also interviewed 18 workplace supervisors, many of whom were employees of other departments and sections of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. They observed instruction sessions, reviews and assessments.

7. Two inspectors spent a total of four days reinspecting this training provider. They spoke with eight staff and three trainees. Both teams examined an extensive range of paperwork including trainees' files and portfolios, learning materials, records of staff and management meetings, audit reports from qualification awarding bodies and LETEC, policies, procedures and systems, and records of achievements of former trainees.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration		1				1
Health, care & public services		4				4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration

### Grade 2

8. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has 98 trainees on business administration NVQ programmes. Fifteen of these are National Trainees and 42 are on other training programmes leading to an NVQ at level two. There are 41 trainees in the modern apprenticeship programme of whom 29 are on a modern apprenticeship in business administration. Two apprentices are receiving training

in information technology, five in housing, one in accounting, and four are following a new programme in cultural product administration. The assessment and verification for the housing, cultural products and accounting qualifications are subcontracted. Trainees have work placements from the start of their programmes. Some trainees start their programmes as employees. Their work placements and employment are mainly with the council. Fourteen modern apprentices and one national trainee have placements outside the council. Until a month before the inspection, the off-the-job training for modern apprentices took place at a local college of further education. This training has now been brought in-house. All training is now in-house, with the exception of the sole trainee accounting technician, who attends a college on a day-release basis. The inspectors did not agree with all the long list of strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They considered many of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. They found other strengths and weaknesses. They awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ trainees' rapid achievement of NVQ at level 2
- ◆ trainees' success in progressing to employment
- ◆ trainees' deep understanding of NVQ and key skills
- ◆ trainees' influence on on-the-job learning

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ low retention rate on modern apprenticeship programmes
- ◆ poor systems for monitoring trainees' progress

9. Trainees receive a thorough induction to the NVQ process. Trainees start developing their portfolios of evidence for their qualifications early in the programme. Staff clearly explain the importance of portfolios and how to present evidence. Trainees have a full understanding of the NVQ process and can explain it with confidence. Portfolios are well organised with clear cross-referencing between units. Trainees frequently rotate jobs at their workplace or, if necessary, move to another workplace in order that they may cover the full range of skills and produce evidence of their attainment of them for the purposes of NVQ assessment. Off-the-job training sessions in a range of computer application skills are frequently arranged. Although some trainees do not have keyboard proficiency, they have sufficient keyboard skills to satisfy the requirements of the NVQ at level 2. On the modern apprenticeship programme, training for the NVQ and training in key skills are carried out concurrently and the staff are working towards even more integration of key skills with the vocational content of the programme. Trainees are fully involved in their own action planning. The trainees draw up their action plans themselves with the help of their workplace supervisors and their mentors. They set themselves challenging but realistic timescales in which to complete the programmes. Trainees' achievement rates of the NVQ at level 2 are high. Of the 22 leavers in the last 18 months, 20 obtained an NVQ at level 2 and 17 progressed

into employment. At the point of completing work for the NVQ 2, trainees may progress to the modern apprenticeship programme and also apply for jobs with the council.

10. In contrast to trainees' rapid achievement of NVQ at level 2, the modern apprentices make slow progress. Until shortly before the inspection, apprentices had attended a local college of further education for off-the-job training. Trainees expressed a high level of dissatisfaction with the training and support they had received from the college. There is currently a high drop-out rate on the apprenticeship programme. Of the seven apprentices who have left in the last four months, only one had completed the programme. There has recently been a major change in the method of implementing the apprenticeship programme, and external providers are no longer involved. It is too early to judge whether this change is having a beneficial impact on the retention of modern apprentices. With help from their assessors and mentors, the apprentices have now set themselves revised targets for the completion of their programme. Trainees are following a programme leading to a new NVQ in delivering cultural products. Compared with trainees on programmes leading to other NVQs, trainees on this programme were not as clear about the requirements of their qualification and the extent of their progress towards it. The system for monitoring the progress of trainees on this new programme does not allow for an overview of the progress of the group as a whole. Trainers, assessors and mentors monitor the progress of individual trainees. Although the progress of individual trainees is monitored, there is no systematic process for sharing the findings from such monitoring with the trainee and other staff. Information on trainees' progress is kept in folders and manual recording systems and is not used effectively to plan ways of improving trainees' performance.

## **Health, care and public services (learning support assistant training)**

## **Grade 2**

11. There are three New Deal clients and 16 other adults on the 15-week, part-time course called "Introduction to Support Work in Schools". The objective of the learning programme is for trainees to gain employment in local schools as learning support assistants. Their work placements are mainly in mainstream schools, where they work in classrooms with teachers supporting children who have special educational needs. Successful trainees gain "The Certificate in Caring for People" which is a level two qualification but not an NVQ. There is no appropriate NVQ yet available, although a government-led working group is currently looking at the feasibility of including one in a national framework of qualifications. The training is organised by the support for learning service that is part of the education directorate of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The purpose of the service is to support children with special educational needs in a variety of settings and it offers a range of short courses related to the role of learning support assistants. Three trainers provide most of the theoretical training in creative work, mathematics and on topics such as work roles, record keeping and child



observation. These three trainers have relevant teaching qualifications and the workplace assessor has relevant vocational qualifications. Specialist trainers take additional sessions on communication skills, child protection and inclusive education.

12. Two of the 19 trainees are male and seven are from minority ethnic groups. Trainees go into workplaces for two days each week and are in the training centre for two and a half days. Eight of the workplaces are primary schools and one is a school for children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Each trainee gains experience in a class working with a teacher and a classroom assistant. A member of staff, such as the deputy head-teacher or the special needs co-ordinator, supervises the trainees in the workplace. Learning support assistants or the class teacher mentor the trainees. Of the 31 people who began the programme in 1998/9, 28 completed it and gained the qualification. The inspection took place in the last week of a course. Twenty trainees were enrolled on this course and one had left it early because of particular personal circumstances. Seven had already started jobs in local schools, three more were due to start work the first working day after the course ends, and a further five had interviews for employment pending. Heads of local schools said that they held the course in high regard and often refer potential applicants to it. Most trainees are observed in the workplace by a trainer from the centre on one or two occasions. At the end of the period of practical training, classroom teachers write a reference on the work of trainees who have been assisting them. The head of childcare education at a local college internally verifies the trainees' portfolios at the end of the programme. An external verifier from the awarding body visits the centre. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses and with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ excellent retention rates
- ◆ high rates of achievement of jobs and qualifications
- ◆ effective preparation of trainees for employment
- ◆ good physical resources and well-qualified staff
- ◆ effectively managed liaison between trainers and workplace staff

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of rigour in assessment processes
- ◆ inadequate internal verification system
- ◆ unsystematic reviews of trainee progress

13. Trainees feel that they are well supported and they expressed high levels of satisfaction with the course. Retention rates are excellent. The programme is highly valued by heads of local schools and the majority of trainees obtain jobs, including those who had experienced long periods of unemployment before starting the programme. Trainees gain an increased sense of self-worth from the programme and are sufficiently confident to wait for the advertising of jobs that

suit them in terms of hours and location. Trainers provide continued support and tuition for those who start employment before they complete the course. These trainees are able to complete their portfolios and gain the award. Off-the-job training is carefully planned and off-the-job training sessions include a variety of activities and learning methods. Trainees are fully involved in these sessions. They ask questions, engage in discussion and draw on their workplace experience. Much of the training at the centre is practical and trainees develop skills and knowledge of direct relevance to their work in the classroom. Mathematics workshops help trainees to develop their own mathematics skills, and prepare them effectively to support children's learning in the classroom. Trainers are skilful in the ways they use group work as a means of helping individuals to become members of a team. Trainees can work independently of the tutor and co-operate effectively with each other. Trainees are thoroughly prepared for the workplace. They have realistic expectations of their support role and show initiative in the classroom. Trainers and workplace staff communicate effectively through information sheets, visits and by telephone, and they identify and resolve difficulties quickly. Trainees settle into their training role soon after starting their programme. Assessors provide trainees with helpful, written comments on their assignment work and these explain the reasons for the grade awarded.

14. There are excellent resources and facilities at the centre. These are used imaginatively for various training activities and for the display of trainees' work. Between them, the trainers in the team have an impressive range of qualifications in education and training, and these are relevant to work with children and with adults. In addition, key members of the team have recent or current experience in supporting children with additional needs in schools. Trainees are regularly asked for their comments on the training programme. Trainees' suggestions are taken into account when planning the course content and structure.

15. Centre staff have designed written and practical tasks that are relevant to the trainees' needs and meet course requirements. Tasks are graded but there are no written descriptions of what trainees need to do to achieve a particular grade. It is the intention of the training staff to observe and assess all trainees in the workplace, but in the case of some trainees, this intention is not fulfilled. Trainees who are observed do not always receive written comments on their performance promptly or they are not set targets for improving their work. In the last week of the programme, internal verifiers look at a sample of trainees' portfolios. They only make trainees and trainers aware of inadequacies at the end of the programme and in some instances, the trainees then have to find the evidence that is required. Trainees' individual training plans, action plans and records of progress reviews are kept in trainees' files but there is no systematic process for checking that trainees meet targets and are set new and achievable ones.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

16. In the Borough of Tower Hamlets, 13.4 per cent of the population are unemployed and three of the electoral wards are among the most deprived wards in England. Amongst children in the borough, 74 different languages are spoken, and 61 per cent of children have a home language other than English. The majority of trainees gain occupational experience in council workplaces. A small number of business administration trainees have work placements outside the council. A council representative visits potential work placements to explain borough policy before trainees attend them. The provider has collected data on applicants' ethnicity, gender and disability since programmes began. The data are analysed and the proportion of applicants from minority ethnic groups is compared with the proportion of persons from such groups in the borough. Training managers use the data to identify groups who are under-represented on the programmes. Trainers visit schools and work with careers and guidance centres. They send course literature and give presentations to community groups and meet community leaders to try to increase the number of trainees on groups under-represented on training programmes.

17. Potential trainees on the youth programmes are sent a copy of the equal opportunities statement with application forms. There are detailed policies on anti-discrimination and harassment and the complaints procedure is explained to all trainees. Coverage of equal opportunities comprises a substantial part of the trainees' induction course, and trainees remember the content of the sessions. A committee formally reviews the policy and procedures at regular intervals and members of staff raise issues as they arise. Inspectors agreed with the strengths in the two separate self-assessment reports produced by the support for learning service and the corporate training services, respectively. The latter report gave a higher grade than the former. Inspectors agreed with this grade.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ robust equal opportunities policies and procedures
- ◆ excellent promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ specific initiatives to recruit people from under-represented groups
- ◆ systematic review and monitoring of policies and procedures

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ failure to monitor promotion of equal opportunities in some workplaces
- ◆ failure to collate equal opportunities data on youth programmes

18. There are strongly worded statements setting out the organisation's intentions to protect trainees and staff from discrimination and harassment. The policies state

that staff and trainees have an entitlement to protection from discrimination and they make trainers aware of how they can protect their trainees from unfair treatment. Clear messages of inclusiveness appear in training advertisements and there is an excellent range of information leaflets, pamphlets and posters that contain positive images of children and people from a wide range of communities and backgrounds. Information sheets and notices on display boards promote the use of community languages and aim to ensure that people from a wide range of community groups are fully informed about the training programmes. Meetings are held for the parents of applicants where information is presented in English and Bengali. Parents are given guidelines on the training programmes and they can choose a version in English or Bengali. The guidelines give them a good understanding of the training and help them to support their children effectively while they are on the programme. Members of staff join training programmes to help them promote non-discriminatory practice in the selection and interviewing of trainees. Standard interview sheets and criteria are used to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly. Trainers consider applications together in teams and are rigorous in ensuring equality of opportunity in the selection process. Equality of opportunity is effectively explained during induction and the trainees' understanding of the concept is developed further during training sessions. Trainees display awareness and a good understanding of issues related to equal opportunities. Stationery and art materials are provided free of charge for all trainees.

19. Working parties regularly review and monitor the effects of the policies in practice. Members of staff write reports for the committee and can make suggestions informally. Feedback on the effectiveness of the policies is collected from a wide group of people. Additional advice and support are given to trainees who work in settings where they may meet aggressive or abusive members of the public. There is a clear complaints procedure and staff and trainees know how to use this.

20. Equal opportunities data are routinely collected to monitor whether all groups are fairly represented on courses. These data are analysed and action is taken to encourage recruitment of people from minority ethnic groups under-represented on training programmes. Members of staff visit local schools and job fairs to try to recruit trainees from these groups. On the adult programmes, data on the achievements and destinations of each trainee according to gender, ethnic group and disability, are kept and analysed. There is no evidence to suggest that trainees of one particular sex or from any particular ethnic group have a better record in terms of retention rates or the achievement of qualifications or employment. The numbers of trainees with a disability have been too small to allow a realistic comparison of their performance with that of other trainees. On youth programmes achievement and progression data are not analysed in terms of trainees' gender, ethnicity or disabilities, even though it is a council objective to encourage diversity within its workforce. Managers are not able to identify whether, for example, young people of Bangladeshi origin do as well as other trainees in terms of their achievement of jobs and qualifications.

21. When briefing the supervisors in the schools where the trainees will work, the rights of trainees are not formally discussed before the work placement begins. There is an assumption that because the work placement providers are subject to the council's policy, they will comply with it. After induction, there is no further checking on adult trainees' or employers' awareness of the importance of equal opportunities.

## Trainee support

## Grade 2

22. Before entering the programmes trainees are interviewed and their skills are assessed. They then receive a selection interview. Unsuccessful applicants on the youth side are referred to a local placement centre or to a training centre offering basic skills training. There is a trainee charter that is clear and easy to understand. All trainees receive a thorough induction to their programmes. They also receive an additional induction on arrival at their work placement. Workplace supervisors on the youth side are offered a course before working with trainees. Trainees have regular and frequent opportunities to meet or contact assessors, mentors and supervisors during their programmes. The inspectors found more strengths than weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough and effective induction
- ◆ good and extensive guidance and pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ good opportunities for progression to further training
- ◆ good personal development training courses

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to take initial assessment fully into account in the planning of training programmes
- ◆ no individualised training plans

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Arrangements have been made with a local college to run a course specifically for adults who are not selected for this training because of their inadequate literacy or numeracy skills. The course is designed to enable these adults to meet the standards required of trainees, so they can re-apply at a later date. This is good practice, because initially rejected applicants are encouraged to improve, and given hope and practical help rather than rejection.*

23. The initial trainee induction is thorough and all trainees can recall it in depth. Particular emphasis is placed on health and safety issues. The training given to the workplace supervisors gives them a good understanding of the requirements of the programme and they are able to offer additional support when necessary. Pastoral support for trainees is good. Relationships between the trainers, assessors, mentors, supervisors and trainees are positive and productive. Supervisors stressed that the trainees were seen as colleagues rather than trainees and that the trainees are not in their work placements merely to provide another pair of hands. Trainees are given up-to-date information on opportunities for progression. On the adult training programme, trainees are given practical help and are made aware of their rights through talks and visits from representatives of various agencies. They

receive, on a one-to-one basis, accurate, current advice about employment and their benefits. Trainees are given assistance with progression to work as well as further training.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*Trainees are offered a five- day residential outdoor pursuits and personal development course in Wales. The course focuses on communication and teamwork skills, and is made enjoyable. The extensive preparation includes one-day personal development and team work courses, held at the Town Hall. This is good practice because high priority is given to personal development.*

24. All trainees who obtain an NVQ at level 2 have an opportunity to progress to the modern apprenticeship programme. Once trainees have completed their portfolios for NVQ level 2, they are also able to apply for any vacancies, which occur in the council. Approximately half the advertisements for job vacancies at the council specifically invite applications from trainees. During their programmes, trainees have access to all the council training programmes whether or not they are employed by the council or are in a council work placement. Personal development courses are made available to trainees, as well as to council employees. These include courses in supervisory techniques, assertiveness training, communication skills, as well as courses in a range of information technology skills. The regular personal development courses enable the trainees to acquire additional workplace skills. The support for learning service offers additional in-service courses for trainees who gain employment within the borough.

25. Trainees undergo initial tests and assessment of their skills, but the results of these tests are not taken into account when planning trainees' off-the-job training. All trainees follow the same programme. Opportunities for accrediting trainees' prior learning are missed. The training plan, a requirement of the programme, is not individualised. All trainees have an identical plan. Plans are not tailored to reflect the individual skills and needs of the trainees. They are not working documents and are supplanted by the action plans for improving trainees' performance. Staff had identified the lack of individualised plans as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The draft of a new form for setting out individual training plans has been devised.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

26. The training schemes section of the corporate training services, a division of the support services directorate, manages the provision of work-based learning in business administration for young trainees. The training schemes manager reports to the head of personnel, who reports to a director of support services, who in turn, is answerable to a committee of elected councillors. Usually, the training schemes manager heads a team consisting of a co-ordinator, two placement officers and an administrative assistant. At present, as the manager is on maternity leave, the co-ordinator is acting as manager. Other staff have taken on additional responsibilities and temporary staff have been recruited to complement the team. All the team are based at Tower Hamlets Town Hall, a new building in Blackwall, where many of the trainees and a suite of training rooms are located. The council originally established the training provision to attract more young people to the workforce, as the composition of the council's workforce did not reflect the high proportion of young persons in the borough.



#### GOOD PRACTICE

*The contract with the placement providers explicitly states that trainees are super-numerary, and are not to be used as a substitute for another employee. They are to be integrated with team members. They are not, for example, to be asked to cover the telephones while the other members of the team have a meeting. This is good practice as the clarity of contract helps protect the trainees' best interests and avoid misunderstanding.*

27. The support for learning service is based at the special educational needs centre, consisting of a training room and facilities housed in a former Victorian school in Stepney. Support staff and one of the tutors are based there. Other tutors are part-time and are employed elsewhere. The service is responsible for meeting the special educational needs of children in the borough, and the training and support of teachers and classroom support assistants who work with them. The support for learning service was established in 1993. In 1996, the support for learning service first started training unemployed people to become learning support assistants, formerly known as special needs assistants. The deputy head of statement support has management responsibility for the learning support assistant training programmes, and for all school-based peripatetic educational services in a quarter of the borough. The educational directorate is one of the five directorates and has a separate personnel department, and some different personnel procedures. The directorate made a commitment in April 1999 to achieve the Investors in People award, and has taken the first steps towards achieving it. Inspectors found strengths and weaknesses not mentioned in the self-assessment report and agreed with the grade given by the provider.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide ranging staff development
- ◆ well-managed work placements
- ◆ comprehensive staff recruitment and induction policies
- ◆ well-maintained data on adult trainees' achievements

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unco-ordinated management data systems
- ◆ poor use of data on youth programmes
- ◆ some instances of failure to set measurable targets

28. Staff development is given high managerial priority and staff training is a key feature in the culture of both directorates. In-house personal development and information technology courses are widely advertised within the council, and staff are encouraged to attend them. Some staff are pursuing post-graduate professional courses with the backing of their manager. Placement officers have been trained as assessors. In some instances, they review trainees' welfare and general progress but are not the trainees' assessors. The placement officers have a deep understanding of the structure of NVQs and are able to give valuable advice to the trainees.

29. All work placements for adults are in schools in the borough, including some special schools. The support for learning service has developed close links with many of these schools, and is familiar with many aspects of how they are run, and with the management style of the head-teacher. Support for learning service staff establish a clear and detailed agreement with the school regarding the workplace, and the hours trainees work. The contract between the corporate training services

and the placements is also clear and explicitly states the trainees' rights. It contains clauses designed to protect the trainees from exploitation. The corporate training services also run training courses for workplace supervisors to acquaint them with their role, and to teach them techniques for supervising someone for the first time.

30. Staff recruitment and induction policies are thorough and detailed. They are understood by all staff and strictly adhered to. Particular note is given to equality of opportunity. Staff are issued with a handbook, explaining all the policies and procedures affecting them.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*The contract with the placement providers explicitly states that trainees are supernumerary, and are not to be used as a substitute for another employee. They are to be integrated with team members. They are not, for example, to be asked to cover the telephones while the other members of the team have a meeting. This is good practice as the clarity of contract helps protect the trainees' best interests and avoid misunderstanding.*

31. The support for learning service staff have developed comprehensive computerised records detailing the length of stay, achievements and destination of every trainee who has ever been on the course. The gender and ethnicity of each trainee are coded, and recorded. The records also show whether or not a trainee had a disability. The system is clear and simple. It allows easy analysis of trends and patterns, and assists reporting on the promotion of equal opportunities reporting.

32. Data on the younger trainees are not so well kept. Different staff keep different information on different computers which are not networked. The provider does not use the information to establish trends or improvements. The provider recognised this weakness shortly before the inspection and has already begun to rectify it.

33. Some staff are not clear about the objectives of the section they work in, or how these relate to the council's overall aims. The objectives and goals are not explicitly stated. Some members of staff are not given measurable targets.

## **Quality assurance**

## **Grade 2**

34. The corporate training services and the support for learning service have a number of quality assurance arrangements. Some are written and some are not. There are nominated managers with responsibility for quality assurance. Regular management meetings are held. All relevant staff attend these. For the young people's training, trained staff are responsible for the internal verification of assessment practices. The first inspection team found that internal verification was inadequate on the adult training programmes. These no longer lead to a qualification, so there is no need for internal verification of assessment. Shortly before the first inspection, off-the-job training for young people was brought in-house, following dissatisfaction with the training subcontracted to a local college. The retention rate had been poor, but now very few apprentices leave prematurely. There are now no subcontracted trainers used for training young people. Trainees are taught by the provider's own staff at the town hall. Some of the trainees for adult courses are employed by other educational institutions, as was the case at the time of the first inspection. There are arrangements to monitor the quality of their work.



At the first inspection the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no cohesive quality assurance system
- ◆ poor understanding of quality assurance concepts on the part of some staff
- ◆ lack of systematic evaluation of quality assurance systems
- ◆ some non-compliance with TEC quality assurance procedures

35. Since the first inspection, staff have devised quality assurance procedures which address the training, assessment and verification processes. All staff were involved in the development of quality assurance arrangements, which link to the London Borough of Tower Hamlet's aims and objectives. Staff are now fully aware of the procedures and their responsibilities with respect to quality assurance, which are stated in their job descriptions. They now understand quality assurance. Quality assurance procedures are discussed and evaluated at the regular quality assurance review meetings. Where needed, they are subsequently amended. Internal verifiers closely monitor adherence to TEC-contract requirements, as well as assessment practices. When they identify problems, they implement remedial action. Staff have reviewed and updated self-assessment reports and action plans since the first inspection. Inspectors also found the strengths given in the self-assessment report. In several areas, progress had been made to overcome identified weaknesses by the time of the reinspection. Inspectors considered the impact of the strengths on the trainees' learning outweighed the weaknesses and they awarded a higher grade than that given by the training provider.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ extensive and effective system for collecting trainees' feedback
- ◆ clear focus of quality assurance arrangements on trainees' learning
- ◆ comprehensive action planning resulting from self-assessment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some gaps in quality assurance arrangements

36. Training staff have developed a comprehensive feedback system to collect the views of trainees. Feedback has been sought through the two distinct methods of questionnaires and group review meetings. Specific questionnaires are issued to trainees on programmes for both young people and adults, at defined intervals. Questionnaires have also been posted to young people who have completed their training to find out about their career progression. Questionnaires are designed to establish how trainees learnt about the training programme, whether it meets their expectations, and their level of awareness of the programme's requirements. Other questionnaires are sent to workplace supervisors and employers to establish whether the training programmes offered meet local employers' requirements. The lead course tutor analyses the questionnaires given to adults, which are issued three times during each 15-week course, and produces concise reports showing the findings. One of the mentors on the training programmes for young people has been given responsibility for the analysis of all questionnaires pertaining to young

people's training. He developed a database to help with this. Each returned questionnaire is numbered and referenced. The response to specific questions is recorded in tabular form. Interrogation of the database system allows an indication of the number of unanswered questions. The nominated member of staff can see whether trainees understood the questions clearly. Trends are evident. He has presented responses in the form of graphs and charts. He passes on trainees' responses about their initial level of understanding of the programme to the careers service, so it can improve, if necessary, its careers guidance. The quality and content of the questionnaires themselves is reviewed and amendments are made if necessary. In some instances, staff's expectations were misconceived. Staff had thought that trainees would welcome a committee of trainees' representatives. The analysis of responses showed the opposite. Most trainees, particularly foundation modern apprentices, were not interested in a committee. In the other method of gaining feedback from trainees and staff, the group meetings, tutors speak with the adult trainees and listen to their opinions. This is at set times during the course. The manager speaks to a small sample of trainees together, so as to enable trainees to comment freely about their tutor if they wish to. Staff mentors facilitate group meetings of young trainees and modern apprentices. Each mentor holds meetings every six months with their respective trainees. Mentors convene a meeting for those trainees new to the programme three months after their induction. Issues regarding all aspects of training are discussed as agenda items at staff and at trainees' meetings. Formal minutes are kept of discussions. Staff's quality assurance review meetings are also held. These discuss either identified problems or selected aspects of the training process, such as induction or initial assessment. Each process is reviewed in depth.

37. Quality assurance arrangements are specifically focused on trainees' learning. Senior managers place a great emphasis on enhancing the experience of trainees, as well as ensuring contractual compliance. Trainees' feedback is effectively used in the planning and implementation of improvements. There have been improvements since the first inspection in all generic areas and occupational programmes, in strategic issues and in specific curriculum development. On the programmes for young people, trainees' feedback in April 2000 indicated that trainees had insufficient support from their workplace supervisors. Training staff arranged courses for workplace supervisors, to enable them to support their trainees more effectively. They subsequently developed more advanced courses leading to assessors' qualifications. Over 30 per cent of workplace supervisors have attended courses. Training staff explain workplace supervisors' responsibilities clearly. Trainees' feedback also identified reluctance on the part of some trainees to voice concerns directly to training staff. As a response to suggestions from trainees, some advanced modern apprentices now act as support mentors and trainees' representatives. They act as the link between trainees and managers. Trainees complained there was insufficient time to develop their portfolios at work. The London Borough of Tower Hamlet's managers discussed the issue with employers and workplace supervisors, and trainees are now allocated Friday mornings for portfolio development. On the adult programmes, trainees from one group said that they would like more work experience in the early part of the course. As a consequence, work placements were extended from

two to three days a week, for part of the next course. Feedback following this course is yet to be analysed.

38. Senior managers have rigorously addressed the key weaknesses identified by self-assessment, and set demanding action plans. They have encouraged all staff to become involved in improving processes and procedures, and allocated them development projects. These relate directly to the self-assessment action plan. They have set short- and long-term targets, with clear timescales. In most instances, targets set have been achieved. Action planning has evolved as development activity has progressed. The quality assurance manager is responsible for drafting a new action plan every three months. Identified weaknesses are prioritised for action during the staff's review meetings. All staff are well informed as to the various ongoing development activity and who to contact should a concern be raised.

39. On the adult programmes, the course content and structure is being continuously reviewed to take account both of trainees' feedback, and of national developments in training of learning support assistants. Key weaknesses addressed since the first inspection include the reviewing and management of trainees' learning in their workplaces. The lead tutor now visits trainees more frequently, and has developed a structure for the visits. Trainees now have individual training plans, and learning targets. The tutor ensures that classroom teachers allocate sufficient and appropriate work to trainees, and appraise this work.

40. There are some gaps in the quality assurance documents, in respect of the training for young people. Procedures do not adequately define responsibility for each process. Procedures and training materials are not adequately monitored to ensure that up-to-date versions are used. Clear authority and methods used for approving change to any process, procedure or training resource are not specified. Senior managers do not have clear performance indicators by which they can judge the quality of training, or whether standards continue to improve. Statistical reports for managers are new and not well understood by managers. There is no clear system for defining the frequency, content or presentation of management reports regarding the corporate training schemes.