



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 1999

REINSPECTION FEBRUARY 2001

Springboard Sunderland Trust

SUMMARY

Springboard Sunderland Trust's foundation for work programme is outstanding: there are imaginative and dynamic training opportunities, particularly for young people. Its business administration, and health, care and public services training programmes are satisfactory. Following reinspection, media and design is also satisfactory. All four areas provide good on-the-job training and appropriately demanding work placements. Key skills are not fully integrated into vocational programmes. Support for trainees is outstanding. A wide range of occupational and pastoral support is provided for all trainees, including those on overseas exchange visits. Springboard provides good equality of opportunity and actively encourages all potential trainees, regardless of their background, into training. Management of training is effective and results in continuous improvements. Training programmes are linked to the local community's needs. The quality of training and assessment is regularly monitored and effectively assured. The quality assurance system is linked to the process of self-assessment.

As a result of the reinspection of Springboard Sunderland Trust, the original published report text for media and design has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report 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	3
Health, care & public services	3
Media & design	4
Foundation for work	1

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	1
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	2

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Media & design	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ wide range of high-quality work placements
- ◆ high-quality off-the-job training
- ◆ outstanding and imaginative training on the foundation for work programme
- ◆ high level of additional support for basic skills
- ◆ action taken to attract under-represented groups to training
- ◆ thorough initial assessment and induction processes



- ◆ high levels of occupational and pastoral support
- ◆ achievement of additional qualifications by trainees
- ◆ effective management of training
- ◆ good staff-development practices
- ◆ thorough internal audit of quality assurance procedures
- ◆ good self-assessment process and report

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress for some trainees
- ◆ failure to fully integrate key skills into vocational programmes
- ◆ some poor assessment practices
- ◆ some weak review practices
- ◆ insufficient setting of targets
- ◆ some weak internal verification practices

INTRODUCTION

1. Springboard Sunderland Trust (Springboard) is a self-governing trust, which is part of the training and enterprise division of Community Service Volunteers (CSV). Springboard was established in 1975 to provide training and community development for young people and adults in the city of Sunderland. It has four training centres, one each in the Roker, Pallion, Southwick, and Pennywell districts of the city and a fifth at Hetton-le-Hole, just south of the city. Three of the five training centres are in some of the city's most deprived areas. The training centre in Pallion has workshops for motor vehicle repair and painting and decorating, as well as two training rooms. The training centre in Roker has five training rooms and is the main administrative centre. The training centre in Southwick houses a graphic design and printing facility, which is used for both training and commercial printing. The training centre in Pennywell has various training rooms, including one fitted out as a public house for training bar staff. Springboard also operates an outdoor-education training centre at Allenheads in Northumberland.

2. Springboard offers a broad range of work-based and other training in foundation for work, administration, information technology, childcare, care, printing and hospitality. The hospitality programme in bar service has been introduced since the first inspection. Many of the trainees start at Springboard on prevocational programmes and progress to occupational programmes leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1. These include horticulture, horse care and motor vehicle repair as well as basic and key skills. In some cases, trainees then progress to level 2 and even level 3. Springboard has a contract with Sunderland City Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide work-based training for young people through advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships (formerly modern apprenticeships and national traineeships respectively), other work-based training for young people, basic employability training and the Learning Gateway. Funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), with matching funds provided by Sunderland City TEC, supports youth trainees who have significant learning difficulties. Springboard also has a contract with Sunderland City TEC for short programmes of basic employability training for adults. It has two contracts to provide options of the New Deal. One is with Sunderland City TEC to provide all aspects of the full-time education and training option. The second is with East Training, Education and Community Limited (ETEC) to provide the voluntary sector and environment task force options. Springboard also has a contract with the Employment Service to provide the New Deal mentoring service. In addition to the work-based and basic employability training, it runs programmes for Millennium Volunteers and provides a range of short courses supported by the youth offending service for young people excluded from mainstream education and training because of problems of criminality or risk

of criminality. It also runs programmes of activity for excluded or disaffected school students aged 14 to 16 supported by the Neighbourhood Support Fund. Springboard does not subcontract any of its training.

3. Springboard employs a total of 45 staff, of whom six are part time. Four of the staff have a disability. Twenty-three staff have teaching or training qualifications, 20 are qualified as assessors, 10 also hold the internal verifiers' award and one is qualified in the accreditation of prior learning. There are 23 full-time and four part-time staff who undertake training, assessment and internal verification on the government-funded programmes.

4. There are 282 youth trainees and 56 adult trainees on government-funded programmes and 13 New Deal clients. Forty-six per cent of the youth trainees have literacy or numeracy skills below foundation level. A further 41 per cent of youth trainees require additional learning support. Almost half of trainees on the programme funded by the European Social Fund have a background of criminal offences and around a third have had no work experience or training. Thirteen per cent of youth trainees are employed and 40 per cent are in work placements. Just under a quarter of employed trainees are modern apprentices. Most youth trainees and all adult trainees are referred to Springboard by the Employment Service or the careers service. Some youth trainees are recruited through careers fairs at local schools and some through media and other advertisements and promotional material. A few youth trainees are referred by their employer. Government-funded work-based training and the New Deal account for approximately half of Springboard's training activities. There are 690 people on all its programmes. Of these, 62 per cent require additional support with basic skills or have other requirements for additional support.

5. In 1999, Sunderland ranked as the 33rd most deprived local authority area out of the 366 in England. Manufacturing is still an important industry in the area, employing 26.5 per cent of those in work. This compares with the average for England of 17.7 per cent. The rate of employment in banks and other financial services in the area is 12 per cent, much lower than the national average of 19 per cent. The annual average unemployment rate in the area served by the TEC is 6.5 per cent. In some wards in the city, the unemployment rate rises to over 20 per cent. The current unemployment rate in Tyne and Wear is 6 per cent and in the United Kingdom it is 3.3 per cent. In 1999, 36 per cent of 16 and 17 year olds were registered as unemployed and were not in any training. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 38.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. Sixty per cent of 16 year olds choose to remain in education, compared with the national average of 69 per cent. Eighteen per cent of young people choose to go into government-funded vocational training, compared with the national average of 10 per cent. Nearly all of the trainees live in Sunderland. At the first inspection, 20 per cent of youth trainees, 65 per cent of adult trainees and 43 per cent of New Deal clients were men. Three per cent of trainees were from minority ethnic groups, compared with the proportion in the area served by the TEC of 1.1 per cent. The proportion of trainees with a disability



was 3 per cent. The proportion of government-funded trainees with a disability in the area served by the TEC in 1999 was 7.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. Springboard prepared its first self-assessment report in September 1999. All staff attended self-assessment awareness sessions before preparing the sections on the occupational areas on a departmental basis. The reports on the generic aspects were prepared by Springboard's managers. These were discussed with staff before the report was submitted. Staff were involved in the grading of both the occupational and the generic aspects of training. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weakness identified in the self-assessment report, including almost all of the key strengths and weaknesses. Some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were considered to be no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report was well prepared and followed the guidelines in *Raising the Standard*. The report contained actions to address the identified weaknesses, although no designated responsibilities or timetable were included. Some of these actions had been implemented by the time of the inspection. Springboard prepared its second self-assessment report in November 2000. The process of self-assessment expanded on the review and assessment carried out in the previous year, guided by the results of the first inspection. The self-assessment report provides a detailed, well-presented description of Springboard's government-funded training. In the occupational area reinspected, the report provides an accurate assessment of the training together with a thorough action plan.

7. At the first inspection, a team of eight inspectors spent a total of 33 days at Springboard in October 1999. The inspection covered modern apprenticeships, national traineeships and other programmes for young people and adults in four occupational areas. Inspectors visited all four of Springboard's sites, as well as 27 work placements. Trainees' portfolios and personal files were examined, together with assessment and verification reports, management documents and audit reports by external bodies. Interviews were held with 91 trainees, representing 37 per cent of the total number of trainees, as well as with 17 workplace supervisors, nine employers' staff and 26 of Springboard's staff. Inspectors observed one progress review, two portfolio-building workshops and nine learning sessions. The grades awarded by inspectors for these sessions are given in the table below

8. At the reinspection, a team of two inspectors spent a total of four days at Springboard in February 2001. The reinspection of media and design covered advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships, other work-based learning for young people and the full-time education and training option of the New Deal for those aged 18 to 24. Inspectors interviewed all five trainees and the one New Deal client in the occupational area, as well as five members of Springboard's staff including trainers, work-based assessors and the internal verifier. The inspectors visited three employers and interviewed two workplace supervisors. Inspectors examined four portfolios of evidence, records of NVQ and key skills assessments,

records of internal and external verification records, the records of external audits and other management files. They observed two instruction sessions, the grades for which are shown in the table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration		2	1			3
Health, care & public services		3				3
Foundation for work		2	1			3
Total	0	7	2	0	0	9

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the reinspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Media & design		2				2
Total	0	2	0	0	0	2

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration

Grade 3

9. There are seven national trainees in administration and 20 trainees on other training programmes working towards information technology at level 2. There are 11 trainees on the foundation for work programme working towards NVQs in administration at level 1. There are three New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option and one New Deal client on the voluntary sector option. The average completion rate in this area is 45 per cent and 21 per cent of trainees have entered employment. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ Appropriately demanding work placements
- ◆ Well-planned and -run off-the-job training
- ◆ Good assessment planning and review

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ few work-based assessments by direct observation
- ◆ slow progress for some trainees
- ◆ under-developed systems to monitor trainees' progress

10. There is an effective programme of work placements. Trainees at the start of the programme often do not have high levels of academic achievement, personal esteem or self-confidence. They are placed in appropriate work placements in, for example, health centres, hospitals, schools and voluntary organisations, within days of registering on their programme. Springboard's placement officers plan to visit them at least every eight weeks in the workplace for a formal review of their progress. Trainees soon begin to change their attitudes about themselves and their ability to make a constructive contribution to the workplace. Placement organisations ensure that the trainees take on additional roles and responsibilities as their confidence and competence increases. Trainees with larger employers often change departments. As they progress through the programme, trainees' aspirations significantly change and their motivation and commitment increases. On their own initiative, many trainees are taking additional evening courses at local further education colleges. In cases where trainees find that they have difficulties in a placement, Springboard takes rapid action. In the few cases where another suitable placement cannot be found, trainees are placed at Springboard, where they are supervised by an administrator who is working towards trainer and assessor awards.

11. Training officers use consistent schemes of work and lesson plans, for both the NVQ requirements and key skills. The schemes of work have been designed to allow trainees to join the scheme at any time during the year without having to wait for the next training course to begin. The officers run effective training sessions. They use good teaching materials and set appropriate tasks. Springboard takes great care to ensure that trainees have a thorough basic knowledge before they begin to collect evidence and be assessed for competence. Trainees use a form to identify the relationships between their own development needs, their work content and the competence that they are required to demonstrate at assessment.

12. The trainee's timetable and the requirements of the NVQs are given to the trainee's work-based supervisor to keep the supervisor informed of the off-the-job training schedule and the assessment requirements. Trainees' portfolios are well presented. Portfolio-building is well managed by trainees, who are helped by a training officer. Trainees take a major role in planning assessment. They concentrate on developing appropriate skills and on filling gaps in their own knowledge and experience. With the help of the training officers they plan evidence collection, define the competence to be assessed at the next assessment and agree the date of the next assessment. After each assessment the trainee and training officer review the assessment and record the actions that are required. Although the introduction of key skills units is only a recent development, this work has been integrated into the NVQ. Those trainees working towards full competence in key skills are able to demonstrate competence in both their skills and their assessment planning at the same assessment.

13. Within the past year, staff shortages have resulted in some training and assessments being delayed or cancelled. This has hampered the progress of current trainees. During this period, no assessment of trainees by direct observation in the workplace took place. Some trainees made very slow progress. There were delays

of up to seven months between trainees being registered on the programme and trainees beginning their off-the-job training. Other trainees have had to abandon much of the evidence that they had begun to collect as it was found to be unsuitable when a more experienced training officer took over responsibility for their training. Springboard does not allow the trainees to begin to collect evidence until the trainees have gained all the necessary theoretical knowledge for their NVQ. Although this system is appropriate for many trainees, it slows the progress of those trainees who have the opportunities to collect evidence and who could have their competence assessed before further knowledge was gained.

14. Although there is good short-term assessment planning and review, the system for tracking trainees' progress is underdeveloped. The present system records trainees' progress at the completion of NVQ units. There is no recording of their progress during the period that they are working towards completion. The learning and assessment environment provided by Springboard allows trainees to develop at a speed which suits each of them individually. However, as they develop, the system does not change in order to set trainees more demanding targets. They do not have a medium or long-term training plan with any interim targets.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

15. There are six modern apprentices working towards NVQs in care at level 3, three national trainees and 47 trainees on other training programmes working towards NVQs in care at level 2. The modern apprentices and national trainees are also working towards key skills at level 2. There are 11 trainees on the foundation for work programme working towards a vocational qualification in practical caring skills. Two New Deal clients are on the full-time education and training option working towards qualifications in practical caring skills. In early years care and education there are thirty-six trainees at level 2, one New Deal client on the full-time education and training option and 12 trainees on foundation for work programmes. Trainees can join the programmes at any time. The achievement rate in early years care is 83 per cent and in care it is 11 per cent. Fifty-one per cent of trainees who leave the early years care programme are employed or enter employment. Seventy-one per cent of trainees on the care programmes are employed. None of the trainees on the childcare programmes are employed. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses to those given in the self-assessment report. They awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of high-quality work placements
- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ well-planned off-the-job training
- ◆ thorough portfolio-building sessions

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient integration of key skills into vocational assessment
- ◆ introduction of assessment late in programme
- ◆ slow progress by trainees

16. On and off-the-job training is effective. The schools, nurseries, residential homes and hospitals used as work placements provide a good training experience, although there is no training plan for work-based training. Staff are supportive of trainees and are keen to pass on their knowledge. Trainees are integrated into the work team and are allowed to attend training courses provided by the work placement organisation. Theory sessions are taught in well-equipped classrooms by experienced trainers. Trainees have access to a computer in their training room which they use for preparation of displays. Each lesson has a teaching plan. All staff are vocationally qualified, have training or teaching qualifications and hold, or are working towards, an appropriate assessor award. Two staff are qualified as internal verifiers and one is completing a prior learning adviser qualification.

17. Arrangements for assessment and review are mostly satisfactory. The care and childcare team meets monthly; minutes are recorded and circulated. Staff have easy access to development and training. Good professional relationships exist between all parties in most work placements. Trainees are enthusiastic and motivated. Most workplace assessors who are unable to attend assessors' meetings organised by Springboard receive one-to-one support from placement officers when necessary. Placement officers meet with trainees every eight weeks, or more frequently, to review trainees' progress. These reviews do not always include everyone involved in the training process. The trainee and placement officers discuss trainees' progress and agree realistic goals for achievement. These are recorded on review forms and the employer has the opportunity to read and sign their agreement. Many reviews are not signed by employers. One copy of the review sheet is kept with trainees' files at Springboard. NVQ level 2 trainees working in a local hospital receive weekly visits, during which they meet with Springboard's staff in the reception area of the hospital to sign timesheets. Springboard's staff do not visit these trainees in the ward area. All parties comply with health and safety practices. Placement officers, who complete an appropriate health and safety course, visit to assess the safety of the environment before placing trainees in the workplace. Trainees are not allowed to lift until they have trained and demonstrated their competence.

18. There are shortcomings in the organisation of training. Key skills units are not integrated into vocational assessment and are only completed at the end of the programme. There are missed opportunities for assessing key skills throughout trainees' activities in the workplace and classroom. Childcare trainees use information technology skills during training sessions to produce displays for the workplace. This experience has not been recognised as achievement of a key skill. All trainees must complete eight months of training to acquire theoretical knowledge before starting to collect evidence and be assessed in the workplace. The constraints of having to wait for the theory training to be completed delay the

progress and achievement of some trainees. Those trainers who have the ability to achieve at a faster rate are not accommodated. The external verifier has identified lack of access to assessment until trainees have completed one year of their training as an issue for Springboard to address. Shift patterns in the hospital mean that hospital-based trainees have little contact with their assessor. They are trained by qualified staff.

Media & design

Grade 3

19. Springboard offers advanced modern apprenticeships, foundation modern apprenticeships and other training in desktop publishing and machine printing. There are five trainees and one New Deal client on the full-time education and training option. Two trainees are foundation modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 2 in desktop publishing. One trainee is an advanced modern apprentice working towards an NVQ at level 3 in machine printing. There is one foundation modern apprentice and one trainee on other work-based training working towards an NVQ at level 2 in machine printing. The New Deal client is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in desktop publishing. The three trainees on machine printing programmes work in local printing companies. The three trainees working towards qualifications in desktop publishing work at Springboard's subsidiary printing company. Off-the-job occupational and key skills training and support is provided at one of Springboard's sites on one day each week.

20. There are three trainers in media and design, of whom two are full time and one is part time, who also carry out assessments. All staff are occupationally qualified and experienced. They are also qualified as assessors. The two full-time staff work for Springboard's subsidiary printing company and provide workplace training and assessment for the trainees placed there. There is a qualified key skills trainer and assessor. In the past four years, 34 trainees have been recruited onto training programmes. Of these, six trainees have achieved qualifications: three trainees have achieved all the targets on their individual training plan, one has achieved an NVQ at level 3 and three have achieved NVQs at level 2.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no occupationally competent assessors
- ◆ inadequate range of training opportunities
- ◆ some trainees make slow progress
- ◆ key skills not fully integrated into NVQ programmes

21. Since the first inspection, Springboard has appointed a trainer and assessor in machine printing who is occupationally qualified and experienced and is also a qualified assessor. The two assessors in desktop publishing hold assessors' qualifications and are occupationally experienced. Springboard has also appointed a suitably qualified member of staff who specialises in key skills training and assessment. Springboard has made some progress in integrating key skills into the NVQ programme but acknowledges in its self-assessment report that it is still not

satisfactory. The range of training opportunities has been increased and is now satisfactory. Current trainees are making satisfactory progress. Inspectors agreed with the strengths carried forward into the self-assessment report from the first inspection but did not agree with the others in the report. They did agree with the two weaknesses. Inspectors found other strengths but awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ thorough and effective progress reviews
- ◆ effective understanding by trainees of workplace health and safety
- ◆ high rates of progression to employment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low retention rates
- ◆ inadequate integration of key skills into programme

GOOD PRACTICE

An employer had no formal method for recording tasks carried out by trainees. This meant that much supporting evidence for the trainees' portfolios was lost. Springboard worked with the employer to design a job card for the trainee to use so that the evidence was captured. The employer now uses the same job card for all orders going through the company, not just those worked on by trainees.

22. There is good on- and off-the-job training. Trainees and clients have varied training programmes which give them a wide range of experience in different departments within their company including reception and telephone duties. Trainees working towards the desktop publishing NVQ have access to up-to-date computer software and produce creative work of a high standard. Off-the-job training is well planned and relevant and complements the skills learned at work. Trainers are enthusiastic and skilled. Liaison between trainers, assessors and workplace supervisors is good. Trainers regularly update their own skills and knowledge of new technology. Some visits to off-site exhibitions and large printing companies are arranged to broaden the trainees' knowledge of the industry. Trainees are also encouraged to complete additional short training courses on photocopying, stapling, laminating and binding to improve their employment prospects. Good evidence for their NVQ is gathered through the work undertaken on these courses.

23. During progress reviews, trainees are set demanding short-term targets and their progress in reaching these targets is monitored at subsequent progress reviews. Employers are fully involved in the progress-review process and have a good understanding of the NVQ structure and the progress of individuals towards achieving their qualifications. Good opportunities for gathering evidence towards the NVQ are identified during progress reviews. Employers and assessors agree tasks which generate the evidence trainees need to collect in the workplace. Employers aid trainees' progress by offering guidance on collecting evidence. Progress reviews for clients and trainees are well recorded and timely. Trainees who are new to the programme are visited regularly during the first month to ensure that they are settling into their work placement. Trainees' portfolios are well structured and contain many good examples of print and desktop publishing

briefs completed both on and off the job. Trainees are making good progress towards their qualifications.

24. Trainees have a good understanding of health and safety at work. They are familiar with the specific hazards associated with the print industry. Trainees get thorough training on health and safety in the workplace. Effective open-learning materials, designed specifically for the printing industry, reinforce this training. All trainees gain the emergency first aid certificate during their training. Springboard is effective in arranging employment for trainees and New Deal clients. All trainees are unemployed when they start their training. They start on other work-based training programmes and many transfer onto advanced or foundation modern apprenticeships when they become employed. Eighty-eight per cent of trainees starting programmes have gained employment during their training and 75 per cent of the New Deal clients get a job while they are with Springboard.

25. Retention rates are low. Since April 1997, 34 young people have started training. Five are still in training, three have left having achieved all the targets their individual training plan, four have left with an NVQ but before achieving all the targets on their individual training plan and 22 have left without gaining any qualification. The retention rate is 24 per cent. Fifty-nine per cent of trainees who leave before they have completed their training remain in employment. Only 15 per cent of trainees leave with neither a qualification nor a job. Key skills training is not fully integrated into the training programme. Trainees are not encouraged from the start of their programme to cross-reference evidence for their NVQ units to all key skills units. Many opportunities to gather evidence for key skills from the workplace are missed. Trainees' understanding of key skills is weak.

Foundation for work

Grade 1

26. Springboard offers a variety of foundation for work programmes for young people and adults. Seven trainees are working towards NVQs at level 1 in vehicle maintenance (service replacement or vehicle valeting), seven in amenity horticulture, 11 in administration and three in horse care. Thirty-two trainees are working towards a vocational qualification in practical caring skills and 11 are spending short periods in a number of vocational areas before a decision is made as to which programme will be most appropriate for them to follow. There are 17 trainees on a preparation for work programme and 17 adult trainees on a basic employability programme; both last for six weeks. The preparation-for-work and basic-employability programmes are all discrete programmes with vocational elements arranged where possible. All the trainees on the administration and care programmes have work placements. Trainees on the preparation for work programme mainly undertake training in painting and decorating. However, there is the opportunity to undertake introductory training in other occupational areas which, if successful, can lead to a transfer to training in a specific area. All staff are occupationally qualified, five hold qualifications in preparatory training and four are qualified as assessors. Most trainees have learning difficulties and require

a high level of support to achieve their expected results. Trainees on youth programmes achieve 89 NVQs per 100 leavers. Adult trainees do not work towards any recognised qualification owing to the short duration of their programme. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report and identified others. They awarded a higher grade than the one given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high-quality off-the-job training
- ◆ good integration of basic skills with vocational assessment
- ◆ high achievement levels on youth programmes
- ◆ use of imaginative training schemes
- ◆ highly effective use of outdoor activities
- ◆ excellent working relationships among trainers, trainees and external agencies
- ◆ extensive range of vocational training opportunities
- ◆ strong emphasis on health, safety and first aid
- ◆ high level of commitment by trainers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for preparatory trainees to record achievement

GOOD PRACTICE

This is a good example of an imaginative use of training material. The literacy and numeracy tutor uses a calendar project to encourage trainees to record their own holidays, bank holidays and the dates of training sessions. The trainees are then required for numeracy purposes to write a note to their occupational trainers to inform them of the dates. The note is signed and then returned to the trainee's file as evidence of the skills that have been demonstrated.

27. Off-the-job training at the three training centres is of a very high quality. An appropriate range of training methods caters for the wide range of abilities of trainees. Those trainees who require additional support in either literacy or numeracy, or both, attend weekly sessions at their local centre. Portfolios contain a suitable range of evidence from their respective workplaces. Trainees understand how to track their own progress and how to cross-reference their evidence. Wherever possible, they work concurrently on literacy, numeracy and their vocational qualification. Those trainees identified by the careers service as needing additional support in literacy and numeracy spend one day each week at the centre working towards appropriate qualifications. They are taught in small groups by a specialist and experienced trainer. Units and elements are planned and actions agreed with the trainee on a weekly basis. Trainees are encouraged to use naturally occurring evidence from their occupational training. Trainers liaise with each other regularly. They are jointly developing programmes of literacy and numeracy qualifications and NVQs, and seeking to co-ordinate the collection of evidence for all qualifications. They carry out regular reviews of trainees' progress. Achievement rates are extremely good.

28. Training programmes are imaginative and very effective. They incorporate sessions provided by a wide range of external agencies, including the Careers Service and the Employment Service and professional counsellors. This approach broadens the training programme. Both trainers and trainees value these sessions. Trainees are able to take part in additional activities and have recently visited the

Lake District for four days building ramps for people with disabilities on behalf of the National Trust. Residential visits to Springboard's outdoor activity centre help to raise trainees' self-esteem and personal effectiveness. Following a visit to the outdoor centre, attendance rates for motor vehicle trainees improved significantly.

29. Extra resources are made available to enable trainees to achieve their qualifications. Some trainees receive additional sessions on a one-to-one basis. One trainee still attends Springboard to continue with support sessions towards an NVQ, despite leaving a government-funded programme on gaining employment. There are sound progress-tracking systems and assessment and verification procedures. Training staff demonstrate a very high level of commitment to training people who require additional learning support. All trainees are enthusiastic and are enjoying their training experience.

30. The preparation for work programme is well designed for young people who are unsure about which career path to choose. They may also need a period of supported training to help them to choose an occupational training route. The programme usually lasts for up to six weeks but can be extended to meet specific training needs. Trainees generally undertake painting and decorating projects while at the Pallion centre. The projects are designed to give trainees practical tasks while introducing them to the world of work. Regular visits from careers officers, who co-operate well with the trainer, help to support trainees during this period and complement the regular reviews that are carried out by the trainer.

31. Opportunities for appropriate work experience are offered to those trainees who are considered to be ready. Those who complete this stage successfully may be offered transfers to specific occupational training programmes; they work towards an NVQ at level 1 or its equivalent. There is a high priority given to health and safety. All trainees undertake a training programme in first aid and can gain a certificate of competence. They are also able to take part in other initiatives, including a course in adventure training with the local army youth team. Forty-three trainees have transferred to occupational training programmes during the last year.

32. The motor vehicle NVQ is not yet fully established. Motor vehicle training re-started in July 1999; trainees are working towards the NVQ level 1. The programme is new and is still in the process of development. Attendance, which initially was poor, is steadily improving. Trainees have the opportunity to undertake tasks on Springboard's vehicles. Assessments have started. The training is of a high quality and assignments relate to the trainees' motor vehicle training. As the programme is new, no achievement data are available.

33. All trainees on the two six-week programmes, adult basic employability and youth preparation for work, receive a certificate on completion. However, they do not leave with any evidence of the work that they have completed during their time on the programme to supplement their record of achievement.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

34. Springboard has an equal opportunities policy and code of practice which covers both trainees and staff. Trainees are introduced to equal opportunities issues during induction and are made aware of their rights and responsibilities. Employers' policies and practices on equal opportunities are monitored before any initial contract is agreed. There is a well-recorded complaints policy. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but considered others to be no more than normal practice. They identified additional strengths and agreed with two of the weaknesses but not a third. The grade awarded was higher than the one given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective equal opportunities policies and procedures
- ◆ appropriate publicity and marketing material
- ◆ good staff training in equal opportunities
- ◆ effective work with people from minority ethnic groups
- ◆ good arrangements for people with health and disability problems

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little awareness by trainees of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities in work placements

35. On most aspects of equal opportunities, Springboard's policies and procedures are effective and staff are well trained. Policies are reviewed every two years. A document defining trainees' rights is displayed in all areas in which trainees work. Complaints are dealt with quickly and full records are maintained. Staff are given regular opportunities to undertake training on issues relating to equal opportunities. These include disability awareness, teenage parenthood and the system of youth justice. All staff are aware of the importance of equal opportunities issues and to ensuring that trainees are protected. An open-access recruitment policy ensures that potential trainees can come in and, in a non-competitive and informal environment, choose options which most suit their needs.

36. Springboard works effectively with local minority ethnic groups. It has noted the projected growth in that section of the area's population and taken action to ensure that the organisation is well prepared to reflect that growth in its trainee numbers. Publicity material sent to potential trainees and displayed in and around Springboard's premises represents trainees from a diversity of ethnic and social backgrounds. Springboard encourages people from all backgrounds to consider entering vocational areas which they might not, or would not, consider traditional and therefore appropriate. As a result of analysis of the client group, Springboard has worked with the elder members of the Bangladeshi community. It has recruited

Bangladeshi women as trainees for a number of years; one is now working as a translator in a school. There is also an initiative being planned to attract Bangladeshi boys into training. Springboard has discussed issues relating to this project with local community organisations. Their recruitment of minority ethnic trainees is consistently above the average for the locality.

37. There are good arrangements for people with health or disability problems or with other difficulties which may hinder or prevent them taking on training commitments. Eleven per cent of Springboard's staff identify themselves as having a significant health or disability problem. Trainees with disabilities are encouraged to take training places and are successfully placed. Young single mothers are given opportunities to complete qualifications. Access to premises for trainees with mobility difficulties is generally good, although some areas for improvement have been identified. A high proportion of trainees has been identified as requiring additional learning support.

38. Trainees have little or no understanding of equal opportunities issues. Some see only a single issue, such as disability or gender, while others have no understanding at all. Information on equal opportunities is given to trainees during induction but there is no formal training. When a contract is signed with an employer, the employer's policy on equal opportunities is checked. If employers do not have a policy, they are requested to develop one. Employers are not required to comply with Springboard's policy. There is no systematic monitoring to check that employers are complying with their own policies on equal opportunities.

Trainee support

Grade 1

39. Potential trainees are recruited through the careers service or by direct application to Springboard. Trainees who are over 18 may be referred from job centres. The placement officers interview all trainees before the start of training programmes. A form is completed when trainees begin the training programme, which records their personal details and previous qualifications and experience. An initial assessment of their basic skills is carried out during the first two days of the induction and determines the level of training programme for the trainee. Initial assessment of key skills is a recent introduction. Prior learning is not systematically assessed. All trainees receive an induction, which consists of general information related to the training programme, Springboard's policies and the trainee's rights and responsibilities, and specific information related to the occupational qualification. Additional support is available for trainees with specific learning needs or disabilities. Trainees are funded and supported to take part in activities that will benefit their personal development. Springboard has an amenity fund from which trainees with financial difficulties can be helped and supported. Trainees' reviews are carried out more frequently than the eight-week contractual requirement. A job search programme has recently been developed. Additional qualifications such as first aid are offered and achieved. There are two members of staff with designated responsibility for aspects of trainee support. The

self-assessment report identified a number of strengths and weakness which inspectors agreed with. Action has been started to address the weaknesses. Inspectors identified other strengths and awarded a higher grade than the one given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough initial assessment process
- ◆ good vocational induction of supervisor and trainee in the workplace
- ◆ high level of additional support for basic skills needs
- ◆ good additional opportunities for personal development
- ◆ wide range of good pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ good access to assessment in unsocial hours
- ◆ thorough and well-focused progress reviews
- ◆ effective celebration of trainees' success
- ◆ programme of additional qualifications offered and achieved

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some weak practices for review of trainees

40. The staff at Springboard are successful in increasing trainees' confidence and self-esteem and in helping them to overcome barriers to training and employment. A new member of staff has recently been appointed to develop and co-ordinate initial assessment, induction and job search. Following the initial contact with Springboard, trainees complete an occupational preference form, which is also used as the first step in the initial assessment process. The placement officers from the relevant occupational sector interview the trainees.

41. Induction is extensive. It lasts at least five days, during which time trainees are informed of their rights and responsibilities and the details of their training programme. Trainees are also able to experience training in a number of occupational areas to identify what suits them best. A statement of trainees' rights is displayed at both sites. A leaflet giving answers to questionnaires that trainees ask most frequently has been produced.

42. A thorough initial assessment takes place over two days. Springboard has developed assessment materials to assess basic skills at three levels. These are used to identify the level of basic skills support the trainee may need and the level of NVQ programme to which they are most suited. The level 2 basic skills tests are used to initially assess trainees' level of key skills. If trainees progress from level 2 to level 3 and become modern apprentices, the initial assessment materials are used to assess the level of their key skills. Occupationally relevant induction packs have been developed and are used as a framework for the induction in the workplace. These arrangements help to introduce trainees to the requirements of the workplace and to what will be expected of them. It also helps the employer to

understand the training needs of trainees. Although the induction is well planned and comprehensive, some trainees have poor recall of aspects such as equal opportunities, complaints and grievance procedures.

43. Springboard's response to basic skills needs enables trainees to achieve wordpower and numberpower qualifications. Some staff also have basic skills training qualifications and are able to help with basic skills needs during off-the-job training sessions. The company has links with a large number of external support agencies, which can help trainees with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Alternative placements are arranged for trainees who are experiencing difficulties. Springboard often places trainees who have personal difficulties to overcome on the Millennium Volunteers programme. This programme provides a supportive environment and seeks ways of motivating trainees prior to their specific training programme.

44. Pastoral support is extensive and effective. A number of staff have counselling qualifications. An amenity fund is available to help trainees who have financial difficulties. It is used in many ways, for example, to provide the appropriate clothing necessary for the training programme, or paying for childcare for trainees' children. Trainees have the opportunity to become involved in activities that will develop their personal skills and extend their experience of people and places. The company has exchange links with other countries and groups of trainees have received financial help to enable them to participate in the visits. In the last few years, groups of trainees have travelled to Spain, France and Brazil.

45. On the whole, Springboard has thorough arrangements for review, and a self-critical approach. Recent changes to recording individual training needs on the training plan have been introduced. These will be monitored through the review process. For some trainees currently on programmes, the training plans do not fully record their individual training needs or set individual targets for completion. Progress monitoring reviews take place every eight weeks and in some case more frequently. This increases the level of support given to trainees and workplace supervisors. There is some variation in the completion of the review record. Trainees and employers do not always have copies of the review sheets. In some cases, employers have not commented on or signed review sheets. Some reviews lack focus and do not involve short-term target setting. These shortcomings were identified by Springboard in its self-assessment report and action has been started to remedy the situation. Placement officers and assessors are flexible in the support they offer to trainees. They visit trainees in the workplace during unsociable hours to plan and carry out assessments.

46. Trainees have good opportunities to gain additional relevant qualifications, for example first aid, which will enhance their employment prospects. The company celebrates trainees' successes in several ways. At the Pallion site there is a 'person of the week' award in which trainees who have shown particular examples of progress or commitment are rewarded. Trainees' achievement is recognised through award ceremonies. Springboard makes good use of press coverage to publicise its work and the success of trainees.

Management of training

Grade 2

47. Overall responsibility for Springboard lies with a board of four trustees, all of whom are directors of Community Service Volunteers. The operational and financial management of Springboard's activities is the responsibility of the trust secretary who is also the general manager. There are two other senior managers. One has responsibility for the Roker centre and one for the Pallion centre. The trustees meet once a year at the annual general meeting. The senior management team meets every month to discuss progress in the context of the business plan, performance against the TEC contract, training and programme development, equality of opportunity, and quality assurance issues. Minutes of the meetings are kept. A formal meeting with all staff is held every quarter. Minutes of these meetings are also kept. Other formal meetings are arranged as required. Managers and staff meet informally every day. Springboard holds the Investors in People Standard. Springboard has established written procedures for staff recruitment, selection and appraisal. Members of staff each have an annual appraisal at which their performance is reviewed. A training and development programme for the coming year is agreed with each of them. Springboard has a number of information systems, some computerised and some paper based. A development project is underway to centralise and computerise all data collection, storage and retrieval using one of the current systems as a basis. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and one of the weaknesses. Some weaknesses had already been addressed. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than the one given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good internal communication
- ◆ good staff recruitment and induction procedures
- ◆ effective staff development practices
- ◆ good management of improvements to programmes
- ◆ effective linking of training programmes to local needs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unsatisfactory management of on-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient target setting
- ◆ underdeveloped management information systems

48. Springboard operates an effective open management style. Staff are encouraged to make their views known to Springboard's management either in open forum or in private. In return, managers ensure that all staff are aware of Springboard's progress and of any changes and developments under consideration,

before final decisions are made. Staff feel that, if there is an issue that needs to be discussed, managers will listen and explain.

49. All staff work well as part of a team and have good training and development opportunities. Springboard has recruitment and induction procedures designed to ensure that any new member of staff will fit its requirements, not only as an individual but also as a member of the team. Candidates are required to carry out a number of assessment tests including basic skills. All Springboard's staff who interview candidates for staff positions are trained in interview techniques. Frequent performance reviews are carried out for new staff during their probation period. Each member of staff has a personal development plan. Staff are encouraged to take responsibility for ensuring that their own plan meets both the needs of Springboard and their own personal aspirations. All placement officers are trained to carry out health and safety audits in the workplace. The two members of staff responsible for the integration of key skills into occupational programmes were given training before being given the responsibility. Staff development plans are reviewed regularly to monitor their implementation and to consider modifications.

50. Springboard's managers are committed to the process of continuous improvement. Springboard's managers identify beneficial changes which they communicate to staff, seek the views of staff both on the changes and on the way in which they will be implemented and then draw up an implementation plan. There is a division of responsibilities between placement officers, who are responsible for trainees' progress and support in the workplace, and training officers who are responsible for off-the-job training and assessment. The combination of these two roles is being re-considered. Staff have been informed of the proposed changes in responsibilities and both formal and informal feedback is being obtained from staff. Springboard has a clear, long-term commitment to providing appropriate training services for the young people of Sunderland.

51. Managers spend a lot of time working with external bodies such as careers, employment and youth justice agencies, local community associations, local government bodies, and the various funding bodies. From these bodies, managers gather information relating to projected changes in the future training needs of the local community. Recently, links have been established with a local school that has a high minority ethnic population to assess the future training needs of an expanding ethnic minority population in one area of the city.

52. Eighty-seven per cent of trainees are either employed or in work placements. There is insufficient management of the on-the-job training given to these trainees. In some, but not all, occupational areas, employers and work placement providers are given details of off-the-job training and the requirements of the NVQs which the trainees are working towards. Even when these are provided, there is little communication with employers that might influence the nature and extent of the on-the-job training. Employers are not encouraged to keep Springboard informed of any actual or forthcoming changes in trainees' work.

53. Springboard sets itself few targets other than those directly related to its TEC contracts. Staff do not have personal performance targets to meet. Not all management information is easily available. Individual managers and staff collect and use data for a variety of reasons. Often, these data are not made widely available. Some data are held on computer while some are still paper based. There is some duplication of effort in data collection. A single unified, computerised management information system is being developed. It is an extension of one of the current systems. There is a phased development programme but the complete system has not yet been fully implemented.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

54. Springboard has had a written quality assurance system for the last three years. Its parent organisation, Community Service Volunteers, sets out the minimum quality assurance standards for the organisation. These include standards on self-assessment. Springboard has procedures for regular internal audit of the quality assurance system. A quality assurance team is led by the general manager. It is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the quality assurance system. A senior manager is responsible for the system's development. Internal verification procedures are written and there are nine staff qualified as internal verifiers. It is a requirement of the quality assurance system that training staff hold, or are working towards, training or teaching qualifications. Training by Springboard's staff is monitored. Feedback data from trainees, employers and work placement providers are collected at regular intervals. These data are analysed and the results reported at management meetings. Self-assessment is incorporated into Springboard's quality assurance system. All staff have attended a half-day training course on self-assessment and played a part in the preparation of the self-assessment report. Springboard identified a number of strengths and weaknesses in its self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with some of these strengths and weakness and identified others. They awarded a higher grade than the one given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear policies and procedures
- ◆ thorough internal audit practices
- ◆ regular monitoring and control of training
- ◆ frequent, effective feedback from trainees and work placement providers
- ◆ good self-assessment process and report

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some weak internal verification practices
- ◆ failure to follow up some leavers

55. Springboard has thorough, recorded quality assurance procedures that cover all key aspects of training as well as management, administration and audit processes. The procedures are clearly written and are known and understood by staff. Springboard's quality standards meet the minimum requirements of Community Service Volunteers and in many instances go well beyond them. The quality assurance system is audited on a regular basis by internal teams. Staff take part in the audit process as a part of the audit team, having first been trained in audit procedures and practices. The audit results are recorded, non-compliances identified and corrective actions identified. The quality assurance team monitors the internal audit process to ensure that all necessary corrective actions are taken. Training sessions are observed regularly and the results fed back to the trainer. Some occupational areas have standard sets of lesson plans to help provide consistency between trainers. These have been developed as a result of observations and as a means of spreading good practice among the trainers. There are plans to introduce standard lesson plans into all occupational areas.

56. The quality of the training is well monitored by means of feedback from questionnaires given to trainees and employers. The results are analysed and used to identify areas where improvements can be made. Even though the questionnaires have only been recently introduced, some improvements have already been identified and implemented. For example, following trainees' comments on the induction process, the schedule has been changed to introduce some less serious or lighter issues in between some of the necessary but more mundane aspects of induction. This is an attempt to retain trainees' interest and improve their recollection of the content of induction.

57. Self-assessment is an integral part of Springboard's quality assurance systems. Managers believe that self-assessment has made them focus on the important aspects of training. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and have made significant contributions. Springboard's culture is one of openness, honesty and a frank exchange of views among managers and staff, particularly with respect to weaknesses. There is a balanced attitude to evidence and judgements, which allows strengths and weaknesses to be accurately identified. The self-assessment report is clear and concise. Actions arising from the self-assessment process and identified in the report have been implemented and the results monitored to identify improvements.

58. Not all internal verification practices are satisfactory. The internal verification procedure for trainee assessors does not meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. There is little internal verification during training programmes, although work-based assessors are observed giving feedback to trainees every three months. Much of this feedback comes once portfolios are complete. Some internal verifiers do not have the necessary occupational experience to give thorough judgements on the acceptability of portfolio evidence. These deficiencies are usually in occupational areas where trainee numbers are relatively low. Destinations of all leavers are monitored. However, except for trainees supported by the ESF, where it is a contractual requirement, there is no follow-up survey at a later date to establish whether there is any permanence in the destinations or whether the



training provided and qualifications gained were appropriate, given the trainees' destinations. An action plan is in place to extend the practice adopted for ESF trainees to all government-funded trainees.