



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JANUARY 2000

REINSPECTION FEBRUARY 2001

# The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited

## SUMMARY

Achievement rates are satisfactory in The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited's business administration programmes, and good in its retailing and customer service programmes, although rates of progress in all programmes are slow. At the time of the first inspection, the early years care and education programme was satisfactory, but trainees on care programmes received insufficient support and guidance. The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited no longer offers training in care. Trainees in early years care and education are still provided with a satisfactory level of work-based learning, support and assessment. A high proportion of trainees on foundation for work programmes progress to further learning programmes, but their on-the-job training is insufficiently planned. The company's equal opportunities committee acts effectively and promptly to ensure that staff and trainees have equal access to training and work, using procedures which reflect current equal opportunities legislation. Trainees receive a high level of personal support. Although initial assessment was inadequately used at the time of the first inspection, this weakness has now been rectified. Management-information systems now provide accurate data, but this information is still not sufficiently used. Quality assurance procedures, including self-assessment, still fail to identify some significant weaknesses in training, but managers are effective in addressing weaknesses identified by external agencies. At the time of the first inspection, The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited offered training in construction. This was found to be less than satisfactory. The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited no longer offers construction training.

**As a result of the reinspection of The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited, the original published report text for health, care and public services, foundation for work, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings.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
Construction	4
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Health, care & public services	5
Foundation for work	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Health, care & public services	3
Foundation for work	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Trainee support	3
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3



### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- ◆ creative off-the-job learning activities
- ◆ supportive work placements
- ◆ good, individualised personal support for trainees
- ◆ successful open-access policy
- ◆ good internal communications
- ◆ highly effective internal auditing of procedures

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ poor management information
- ◆ lack of challenging individual targets for trainees
- ◆ slow progress towards NVQs
- ◆ insufficient use of data
- ◆ lack of judgements in self-assessment report

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited (BTA) was established in 1978 to provide training for disadvantaged young people and adults in response to government initiatives to reduce unemployment. The organisation was originally known as Worksop Community Project Agency and was sponsored by Bassetlaw Community and Voluntary Services. The agency became a company limited by guarantee in April 1988, and was renamed The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited. BTA's head office and administrative centre is in the centre of Worksop. A training centre close to the town centre houses the training facilities for the foundation for work and business administration programmes. Practical construction workshops at another site nearby were in operation until December 2000, when BTA stopped offering training in construction. The company's day nursery and out-of-school club provide work experience and training facilities for the early years care and education programmes. At the time of the first inspection, BTA employed 23 staff across its four training centres. Eleven have since left the company and have been replaced by 12 new members of staff, who have been recruited since July 2000, making a current total of 24 employees. The government-funded training programmes are funded through North Nottinghamshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), and account for approximately 40 per cent of the company's income. Approximately 40 per cent of BTA's work derives from contracts with the Employment Service to provide training as part of the New Deal. This has not changed since the first inspection.

2. BTA has the awarding body's approval to provide training and assessment leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in administration, retailing, customer service, warehousing, information technology and construction. In 1998, BTA became an accredited centre to provide training and assessment leading to key skills, in addition to basic skills qualifications. At the time of the first inspection, there were 97 trainees on TEC-funded programmes: eight modern apprentices, 17 national trainees, 62 on other work-based training programmes for young people and 10 trainees on the prevocational programme for adults. There were also trainees following catering and hospitality, agriculture and motor vehicle programmes. These were not included in the first inspection, owing to their small number. There are now 62 trainees on TEC-funded programmes: 11 advanced modern apprentices, 18 foundation modern apprentices, and 33 on other work-based learning programmes for young people. In December 2000, BTA stopped offering prevocational training to adults. BTA is contracted to provide training for New Deal clients on the Gateway stage, the voluntary sector option, for which it is jointly a lead contractor and the environment task force, full-time education and training and employment options. At the time of the first inspection, seven of the 35 New Deal clients were on the environment task force option, 17 were on the full-time education and training option and 11 were on the voluntary sector option. BTA subcontracts with another training organisation to provide job-search training for unemployed adults. There are currently seven clients on the full-time education and training option and 28 on the voluntary sector option. When BTA closed its

construction workshop in December 2000, the company was unable to offer training to clients on the environment task force option. BTA includes a private employment agency, a day nursery catering for 50 children up to five years old, and an after-school and holiday club for up to 16 children aged four to 11 years old.

3. North Nottinghamshire comprises four districts: Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, and Newark and Sherwood. Manufacturing is the largest industrial sector, accounting for 27 per cent of employment. Also accounting for a significant proportion of employment, are public sector work, at 24 per cent, and distribution, hotels and restaurants at 21 per cent. There have been significant changes in employment patterns in some sectors. For example, mining has shed 11,000 jobs since 1991 and now employs 2,500 people. At the time of the 1991 census, there were 391,000 residents in North Nottinghamshire. Of these, 51 per cent were women and 49 per cent were men. Fewer than 1 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. In January 2000, the unemployment rate was 5.2 per cent in North Nottinghamshire and 5.2 per cent in Bassetlaw. This has now dropped to 4.5 per cent in both regions. At the end of 1998, 11.5 per cent of North Nottinghamshire's workforce was currently receiving job-related training. This is a little below the national average of 13.3 per cent. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Nottinghamshire was 43.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The following year, the proportion was 44 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. The proportion of school leavers who did not achieve any GCSEs, stayed the same, at 6 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The managing director and deputy manager of BTA attended two training events on self-assessment which were organised by the TEC, and established monthly training events on self-assessment for staff. Staff worked in teams to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the training for their occupational areas. Managers drafted the strengths and weaknesses for the generic aspects. A draft report was sent to the TEC in 1997. An updated version was produced one year later and was amended in December 1999, in preparation for the first inspection. In November 2000, BTA produced a document which outlined the action taken following the first inspection, and the progress the company had made towards rectifying the weaknesses identified during the first inspection. Managers and staff worked together to produce a new self-assessment report in December 2000. They used the quality statements in *Raising the Standard* to identify strengths and weaknesses for all the occupational and generic areas, including those not scheduled for reinspection.

5. The first inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors, who spent a total of 16 days with BTA in January 2000. They interviewed 44 trainees and New Deal clients. Twenty-seven interviews were conducted with BTA's staff. Inspectors visited 13 workplaces and interviewed 14 trainers, managers and supervisors. Inspectors observed and graded 20 learning sessions. They examined 32 trainees' files and portfolios and other documents, including contracts with the TEC, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance and operational manuals, minutes of meetings, staff-development records, schemes of work, BTA's business plan, marketing materials and data on trainees' achievements.

6. Three inspectors spent a total of 12 days with BTA in February 2001, to carry out the reinspection. They interviewed 19 trainees and one New Deal client. They carried out 25 interviews with BTA's staff, and two with members of associated agencies. Inspectors visited 10 companies providing work placements, and spoke to 10 managers and workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed four learning sessions, awarding a grade 3 to each session. They reviewed 20 trainees and clients' files, 12 portfolios, and other documents, including updated versions of the documents reviewed at the first inspection.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		1	3	2		6
Business administration		3	1			4
Retailing & customer service			2			2
Health, care & public services			2			2
Foundation for work		1	2	3		6
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Construction

### Grade 4

7. BTA offered training to young people in general construction, wood and trowel occupations until December 2000, when the company stopped the programmes and closed the workshop. The trainees and New Deal clients still in training at that time were transferred to other training providers approved by the TEC and the Employment Service. This area was therefore not reinspected in February 2001. The following text refers to the findings of the first inspection.

8. Potential trainees are referred to the programme by the careers service. Some trainees progress to construction training programmes directly from the initial training programme. Trainees are given an initial assessment interview before selecting the appropriate NVQ. Of the eight trainees on the other TEC-funded work-based training programmes, seven are endorsed by the careers service as having additional training needs. Five of these are working towards NVQs in building craft occupations at level 1 and two are receiving training in trowel occupations at level 1. One trainee is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in bricklaying. When trainees have gained sufficient experience on the project work, they are encouraged to take up work experience for three or four weeks, with view to being offered a work placement with the company. There are 10 New Deal clients. Seven clients have been directly referred to the environment task force option of New Deal. Their training is based on the two units from the NVQ in building craft occupations that relate to health and safety in the workplace and creating and maintaining working relationships. These clients have not specifically selected this option. Three clients are on the full-time education and training option. Local community projects are arranged to give all trainees opportunities for training and assessment in a broader context. They also receive guidance while learning new skills in the company's two small general construction workshops.

9. The self-assessment report acknowledged the good work of project-based training opportunities, but the other strengths identified were found by inspectors to

be no more than normal practice. The report failed to identify the weaknesses in the programme. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given by the company.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality project work and work placements
- ◆ well-motivated trainees

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficiently demanding targets set
- ◆ low achievement rates of full NVQs
- ◆ no formal initial assessment of construction skills
- ◆ poor assessment and review practices

10. BTA has established good links with the local communities and contractors to obtain meaningful project work and work placements for its trainees. A good range of projects has been arranged for trainees, including those in maintenance, repair, redecoration and hard landscaping. Some tasks and activities undertaken, such as facing brickwork, are ambitious and challenging for the trainees. The facilities in BTA's two workshops are adequate. Of the 15 trainees on construction programmes since April 1999, six have achieved jobs in the construction industry; and as a result of their work placements, two trainees have been employed by their work-placement providers. The opportunity to gain employment is highly motivating for those who stay on the programme to its end. Trainees receive appropriate training relevant to the project or work placement. This is often in addition to the requirement of the trainees' NVQ. Staff have appropriate qualifications and occupational experience. Some training sessions are well planned and are at an appropriate pace to meet the individual needs of the trainees, others are dull. Trainees receive frequent informal visits from their trainers while they are on their work experience or placement. The individual training in occupational skills is effective. However, some assessments are not thorough. Trainees who are not fully competent in numeracy skills are often helped in doing calculations during assessment. Assessments are not planned and some trainees have a poor understanding of the process.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*In 1998, six trainees had three weeks work experience in Belgium. They worked on the renovation and redecoration of an historic hall of residence at a University. BTA, the TEC and the European Social Fund jointly funded the project. This experience resulted in a marked improvement in the trainees' confidence and personal development.*

11. Initial assessment of the trainees' construction skills is not formally recorded. Trainers do not have an accurate written account of the trainees' level of skill when they enter the programme. Most trainees and clients follow a set initial training programme in general building crafts, irrespective of their previous experience or skills. Reviews to help trainees and clients assess their progress are not rigorous. Review interviews do not provide trainees with effective or challenging action plans to help them towards achievement of the qualification. Trainees are not aware of the progress they are making or what they need to do to improve. Progress towards NVQ units is slow. Trainees are not encouraged to complete the qualification within a timescale appropriate to their capabilities. For example, a



trainee's individual training plan set a one year target for the trainee to complete two units of the NVQ at level 2, even though he had had previous employment experience in construction.

12. Overall NVQ achievement is poor. In 1998-99, seven of the 19 trainees on the programme achieved a full NVQ qualification. The average stay on the programme was 18 weeks, compared with 50 weeks the previous year. Since September 1998, 61 clients have been referred to training on New Deal. Of the 50 clients who started the 26-week programme, three left because they found employment and 32 were dismissed because of unauthorised absence, in accordance with contractual arrangements. Twenty clients successfully completed their planned training programme.

### **Business administration**

### **Grade 3**

13. BTA offers training in business administration, accounting and information technology. There are currently 11 TEC-funded trainees undergoing training in these occupational areas. One trainee on a work-based training programme is taking an NVQ at level 4 in accounting. Three trainees are working towards business administration NVQs, one national trainee and two trainees on other work-based training programmes. Two modern apprentices, one national trainee and four trainees on other work-based programmes are receiving training in information technology. There are also two New Deal clients training in information technology on the voluntary sector option. Ten trainees are endorsed by the careers service as having additional learning needs. These trainees attend the training centre four days a week, receiving additional support, until they are ready to start in an external work placement. Trainees who are in work placements come to BTA's training centre on a day-release basis for off-the-job training. The accounting modern apprentice attends the local college one-day a week for additional training. There are two trainees in full-time employment.

14. Self-assessment was accurate in identifying the key strengths; additional strengths highlighted in the report related to the generic aspects of training. Although the report did not address the main weaknesses identified during the inspection, inspectors confirmed the grade given by the company.

#### ***STRENGTHS***

- ◆ well-planned and -delivered off-the-job training
- ◆ frequent use of work-based observation
- ◆ comprehensive internal verification system

#### ***WEAKNESSES***

- ◆ no challenging targets set
- ◆ slow progress towards NVQs

- ◆ failure to adhere to information technology frameworks
- ◆ some inadequate resources

15. The training in all three occupational areas is structured and well planned. Trainers are highly responsive to the learning and support needs of trainees and effectively take into account trainees' individual learning styles. The pace and method of the training is appropriately adapted to match the abilities of the trainees. Trainees' understanding is checked regularly and they receive encouragement throughout their programme. Learning is reinforced by well-presented handouts designed by the trainers. Information relevant to the qualifications is well presented to trainees in small groups. Trainees receive individual attention.

16. Assessment practices are sound and internal verification has been improved over the last year. It is now clearly planned, and well recorded. The quality of assessment is appropriately checked while the trainees are progressing towards the qualification and on completion of the portfolio. The internal verifier uses a comprehensive range of methods to check the competence of the trainees in order to validate the assessments. These include observation of assessments by the assessor, oral questioning of the trainees to check their knowledge and understanding, and checking the work evidence in the portfolio. Written feedback to the assessor is prompt and comprehensive, with clear action points for any improvements necessary. Problems raised during internal verification are addressed at regular team meetings. Trainees have a good understanding of the assessment and verification process.

17. Observation of the skills trainees use at work is used as a method of assessment on a frequent and regular basis. The trainer writes down an accurate and detailed description of the tasks seen and this evidence is appropriately matched to all the relevant NVQ competencies. Clear feedback is given immediately and good questioning techniques are used to ensure that the trainees' knowledge and understanding are also checked. However, trainees' NVQ logbooks are not kept up to date. When units of the administration NVQ have been achieved, they are not signed off in the logbooks. Completed information technology NVQ units are signed off, but this is not promptly after assessment and some trainees have no record of any NVQ achievement. Trainees have a poor understanding of what they have achieved and the progress they have made towards the qualifications.

18. Trainees are not set demanding targets to help them achieve their qualifications. Action planning is inadequate. Guidance is not given on how long an individual can be expected to take to complete an element of the NVQ. No timescale is given to individuals. Some trainees are not well motivated and feel their progress is slow. For example, six of the trainees currently working towards NVQs in information technology at level 1 have been on the programme between one and three months, but none has achieved a single unit. Between April 1998 and January 2000, 33 per cent of trainees completed the programme. Forty-five per cent

of trainees completed an NVQ in information technology or business administration and 42 per cent of the New Deal clients achieved their individual development plan. The national traineeship and modern apprenticeship frameworks for information technology are not being adhered to. The national trainee is thought to be close to the completion of the qualification, but the organisation is not aware of the additional units needed to meet the requirements of the framework. The modern apprentice was accepted onto the programme at level 3, without having achieved the NVQ at level 2 which is a mandatory component of the modern apprenticeship framework.

19. Some learning resources are inadequate. There are not enough computers in the information technology room to meet the needs of all the trainees on the programme. Workshop sessions are well managed with a range of appropriate tasks and activities for trainees to do while waiting to use the computing equipment. The computers are extremely slow to operate and do not have the specifications to achieve all the units of the information technology NVQ. Only one machine has a modem and there is no provision yet to enable trainees to use the Internet. The room used for administration training is not conducive to learning. The reception area forms part of this open-plan training room, giving rise to interruptions, which disturb training sessions.

## **Retailing & customer service**

## **Grade 3**

20. BTA offers training and qualifications in retailing and customer service at levels 2 and 3 and distributive operations at level 1. It has 16 TEC-funded trainees and eight New Deal clients. There are four modern apprentices (two in retailing and two in customer service), seven national trainees (three in retailing and four in customer service), and five trainees on other training programmes, all in customer service. In addition, there are three distributive operations clients on the New Deal voluntary sector option, four in retailing also in the voluntary sector, and one client on the full-time education and training option taking an NVQ in customer service. BTA has previously offered training to adults, but there are none at present. All trainees are either employed or are on work placements, and receiving a training allowance. The training is primarily delivered by employers, with off-the-job training for key skills available at BTA. Temporary arrangements for the assessment of retailing and customer service trainees were put in place when the previous member of staff responsible for assessment left in December 1999. There is one work-based assessor for the retail programme, and one part-time assessor for the distributive operations award. The assessors have the appropriate qualifications and occupational competence, and use a variety of assessment methods including observation, questioning and evaluating evidence in the trainees' portfolios. Trainees are employed, or have work placements in organisations such as high street retail outlets, charity shops, a children's nursery and a riding centre. All trainees have an induction at BTA and are assessed for their levels of numeracy and literacy. Reviews are carried out on a quarterly basis.

21. The self-assessment report did not accurately address the quality statements in *Raising the Standard*, and did not provide sufficient background information for the occupational area. Inspectors confirmed some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, and awarded the same grade as the provider.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ highly supportive employers
- ◆ enthusiastic and motivated trainees

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ slow progress towards NVQ achievement
- ◆ poor understanding of NVQs by trainees
- ◆ no assessment of some trainees

22. A high number of trainees achieve NVQs in retailing and customer service. Over the last three years, an average of 20 trainees have participated in these programmes each year. In 1997-98, 19 NVQs were achieved, 14 trainees achieved a full NVQ in 1998-99, and so far, in 1999-2000, 10 certificates have been awarded. These results compare favourably with the national average for this occupational area

23. Workplace supervisors provide good, practical, on-the-job training. In some workplaces the supervisors are qualified assessors and, although they may not be assessing the trainee, they offer a high level of support. In a high street retail outlet the manager has recently become the workplace assessor for four trainees. Reviews are thorough. Employers take part in review interviews and make a full contribution to the assessment of the trainees' overall progress. Trainees are well motivated and show a high level of enthusiasm to achieve their qualifications. Their portfolios contain a variety of evidence. However, trainees make slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. Trainees undertaking the customer service NVQ at level 2 are on programme for 18-22 months. Some have only one out of five units signed as complete. Trainees are not assessed regularly and assessment visits are not appropriately timetabled. There are designated assessors for the trainees on the distributive operations and one modern apprentice in retailing has a work-based assessor. However, 11 trainees are not currently being assessed at all.

24. Trainees lack a clear understanding of their NVQ programme and the assessment process. Where they are national trainees or modern apprentices, their individual training plans do not refer to the required additional units. Trainees are unaware of what is required of them. They do not have a good understanding of the relevance of their evidence to the NVQ requirements and often collect surplus and sometimes irrelevant evidence. Portfolio evidence is not always assessed with the

trainees present and they are not fully involved in the process. Portfolios are generally of a satisfactory quality. Internal verification meets the requirements of the awarding bodies, sampling portfolios and providing feedback to assessors.

## Health, care & public services

## Grade 3

25. At the time of the first inspection, BTA had 20 trainees and New Deal clients in this area of training. Two modern apprentices were working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in early years care and education. Eight national trainees were taking NVQs at level 2 in care and eight trainees were on other work-based learning programmes working towards qualifications in care. In December 2000, BTA ceased to offer training in care. Trainees who were on the care programme at that time transferred to another training organisation. BTA currently has five trainees and one New Deal client working towards qualifications in early years care and education. The New Deal client is on the full-time education and training option and is working towards two units of the NVQ at level 2. Four advanced modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 3 in early years care and education. One is employed and the other three are on work placements in the nursery owned by BTA. These trainees develop their knowledge of the childcare profession during three mornings each week in one-to-one sessions with a trainer who has experience in childcare. Group training is arranged when requested by trainees. Other structured sessions are arranged, in response to trainees' requests for help in understanding aspects of the NVQ. The nursery manager and deputy manager are qualified work-based assessors. The deputy manager is responsible for on- and off-the-job learning. The length of training is planned on an individual basis. Trainees are registered for the award through an assessment centre which is part of a local consortium providing internal verification. BTA carries out the initial assessment of the trainees and induction when the trainees start the programmes. Trainees also receive an induction to their employment or work placement. All trainees are offered opportunities for additional training and qualifications in first aid, food hygiene and health and safety.

At the first inspection the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ insufficient guidance and support for care trainees
- ◆ little planned work-based NVQ training in care
- ◆ inadequate work-based assessment in care
- ◆ particularly slow progress of trainees towards NVQs
- ◆ poorly motivated care trainees

26. Most of the weaknesses identified in the first inspection related to training in care. The strength identified in the first inspection remains. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and agreed with the grade given by the company in the self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ imaginative use of additional learning opportunities
- ◆ good understanding by trainees of early years care and education theory
- ◆ extensive range of individual support for trainees

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient assessment by observation of trainees' competence at work
- ◆ slow progress of trainees towards NVQs

27. Trainees are well motivated and are adequately supervised at work by assessors and other qualified nursery staff. Assessors and trainers provide good role models for the trainees. Trainees make good use of an extensive range of resources, such as up-to-date books, a well-equipped study room, and video equipment, to help them develop a greater understanding of childcare. Staff successfully encourage trainees to recognise and use the practical learning opportunities provided in the nursery. The weekly one-to-one learning sessions provide trainees with effective guidance and relevant advice to help them co-ordinate evidence for their portfolios. Portfolios are of a satisfactory standard. The learning sessions, which are arranged in response to trainees' requests, are well structured and generally effective in helping trainees to gain a better insight into complex issues in childcare. Trainees' understanding of the theory of early years education and care is good. BTA provides extra resources, such as travelling expenses and fees, to enable trainees to attend additional courses to develop their knowledge of childcare further. These sessions are well attended. The learning sessions given by external organisations are of a good quality and cover a wide variety of topics. BTA has introduced arrangements to maximise the benefits of this additional training. For example, trainees are required to prepare resources, present information acquired through the extra courses and lead discussion among other trainees and staff in the nursery. These activities provide further opportunities to develop and assess trainees' knowledge of childcare. They are also used effectively to develop and assess trainees' key skills.

28. BTA's training staff and trainees' supervisors at the nursery provide trainees with a high level of individual support at work. Trainees are confident in their work with children and make good use of the frequent opportunities to learn relevant skills. The on-the-job training is good and well supplemented by off-the-job training. Trainees are taught practical skills during one-to-one learning sessions with a qualified member of staff. Trainees and staff meet monthly to discuss aspects of children's behaviour and to plan activities. Trainees consistently manage the children's behaviour well. BTA has successfully increased the support given to trainees. A mentoring system introduced in January 2001 ensures that each trainee is linked to a qualified member of staff in their work area in the nursery. Trainees have frequent opportunities to clarify any queries they have about specific aspects of their work, including advice on the work required for the NVQ. The mentors are well supported in this role through study days which are prepared by BTA to



develop mentors' understanding of NVQs and how to support trainees. Trainees make good use of the drop-in sessions held on Saturday mornings and two evenings each week, which have been set up to provide them with further opportunities to receive additional help.

29. These effective arrangements to support trainees' acquisition of knowledge and skills in childcare are not extended to the assessment of trainees' competence at work. The observation of trainees' performance at work is poorly organised. Although assessors and trainees work together to identify activities to be observed, assessment plans lack detail. Some of the plans are not dated and many do not include the date, time and location for the observation. There is an over-reliance on trainees notifying assessors when they are ready to be observed. Opportunities to assess trainees carrying out activities in the nursery which are relevant to the NVQ are missed. Trainees' progress towards the NVQ is slow. The trainees have been in training for at least seven months, and some for over a year. Only one of the four advanced modern apprentices has completed a unit of the NVQ, although they are making progress towards individual elements across all units of the NVQ. They have collected good evidence in their portfolios, but this does not include sufficient evidence of assessment through observation at work, as required by the awarding body. However, when observations do take place, the procedures and records are to the required standards.

### **Foundation for work**

### **Grade 3**

30. In January 2000, BTA was contracted to provide two separate foundation for work training programmes. There were 40 TEC-funded trainees in this area. Ten trainees were on a 16-week basic employability programme for adults. In December 2000, BTA decided to discontinue its foundation for work programme for adult trainees. At the time of the first inspection, 30 trainees were on initial training programmes, designed to help young people aged between 16 and 18 to overcome barriers which had prevented them from entering mainstream training, education and employment. The TEC no longer provides funding for this programme, having introduced other programmes to support trainees with these needs. Two trainees are currently on an eight-week 'preparation' programme which is designed to help 16 and 17 year olds select an appropriate occupational area and progress to further training or employment. BTA first offered this programme in June 2001. In September 2001, the company first recruited trainees onto the life skills programme, which is part of the *Learning Gateway*. Of the eight trainees who have joined the life skills programme, four are currently on this 16-week programme, receiving training in personal development and job-search skills. Most trainees on the preparation programme spend five days a week on work placements each lasting for an average of four weeks. The life skills trainees attend the training centre for at least 16 hours each week. When they are ready to gain work experience they work with employers for up to five days each week. Many trainees have been socially excluded or come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Most left school with few or no formal qualifications. Some trainees receive additional support in literacy and numeracy, working towards literacy and numeracy

qualifications at entry level. The contracts for these two programmes do not include training towards other qualifications. However, BTA produces company certificates to recognise trainees' specific achievements, such as completion of 10 weeks on the life skills programme. Two full-time posts are allocated to these programmes. Many of the sessions are jointly taught by the prevocational trainer and the basic skills specialist. BTA no longer offers foundation for work training to New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option. Thirteen clients were on this option during the first inspection.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor attendance and retention rates of trainees
- ◆ little awareness by trainees of identified learning goals
- ◆ insufficient work placements in basic employability training
- ◆ little expertise in basic skills training among staff
- ◆ poor assessment practices

31. BTA no longer offers the programmes which were judged to have these weaknesses during the first inspection. As basic skills is no longer a significant part of the trainees' programme, the teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy are reported under trainee support. The procedures for monitoring trainees' attendance are now effective. The self-assessment report prepared for reinspection is not sufficiently self-critical. Although BTA accurately identifies as strengths that it has continued to arrange appropriate work placements for the trainees and to provide some good off-the-job training, the report does not identify that trainees are still not fully aware of their individual learning goals. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as given by the company in the self-assessment report prepared for reinspection.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ creative off-the-job learning activities
- ◆ appropriate work-placement opportunities
- ◆ good progression to further training or employment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate planning of work-based learning activities
- ◆ lack of specific and demanding individual learning targets

32. Although BTA is offering different foundation programmes to those they offered at the time of the first inspection and several members of the training staff are new, BTA has maintained the strengths identified in the first inspection. Group learning activities are well designed and presented. Sessions incorporate a good



range of learning methods, which help the trainees develop teamwork and interpersonal skills. Activities are interesting and challenging. Projects, such as organising trips to local employers or places of interest, give trainees realistic training in planning and decision-making. Project teams are required to make formal applications to BTA's management for the required funding. Staff quickly establish an effective rapport with trainees, encouraging them to work as a team. Most trainees' personal skills and confidence are developing well on the programme. Staff make good use of the system which BTA has introduced since the first inspection to record the outcomes of training activities. Most learning sessions are now evaluated by trainees, although some trainees are reluctant to complete the evaluation form.

33. Staff have developed excellent links with local employers to establish a good range of work placements. All 32 of the trainees who have been on the preparation programme have attended on at least two work placements, many within the first week of their programme. Work placements are carefully selected to match the trainees' interests and career aspirations. There is a good range of work taster opportunities for the life skills trainees, who need to try out different occupational areas. Employers understand the needs of the trainees. Trainees are well supported while on work placements by visits from a member of BTA's staff. Retention rates on the preparation programme are good. Of the trainees who have left the programme, 66 per cent achieve all the targets on their individual learning plans. Four trainees left to start a job and 16 progressed to further training, either with BTA or at a college of further education. The retention rate on the life skills programme, at 56 per cent, is satisfactory. Although BTA has improved its systems for monitoring attendance, three of the four trainees who have left the programme early, were dismissed for poor attendance. The four trainees who are currently on the programme have been attending for at least 10 weeks.

34. Although the trainees are given good opportunities to gain work experience, the activities they carry out on work placements are inadequately planned. The planning of on-the-job learning is left primarily to the employers, which are given insufficient information on the trainees' learning objectives. There are therefore insufficient links between the training given by BTA's staff, and training on the work placements. Trainees on the preparation programme rely on their work-placement provider to structure their off-the-job learning. This is discussed with BTA's staff during trainees' progress reviews. The emphasis is on the arrangements for the work placement, with insufficient attention paid to identifying the trainees' needs to acquire skills specifically related to the occupational area. BTA does not encourage work-placement providers or trainees to keep a record of the tasks which trainees carry out at work. Few trainees are assessed while on their work placement and trainees do not have a record of the new skills they have learned or their levels of competence.

35. The initial assessments of trainees are used effectively to identify possible progression routes for the trainees on both programmes. The information gathered during the self-assessment, which has been developed since the first inspection, is accurately recorded on the trainees' individual learning plans and is used

effectively when staff work with trainees to plan the work placements. However, the individual learning plans of trainees on the life skills programme do not clearly identify trainees' learning objectives. These trainees are not aware of the specific skills they need to learn in order to improve their chances of progressing to employment or further training. Although the trainers use the individual learning plans and records of previous progress reviews when reviewing trainees' progress, the discussions primarily focus on the activities carried out by the trainees. Records of progress reviews do not include enough information on the skills that the trainees have learned while carrying out these activities. The trainees are not set sufficiently demanding targets which clearly identify their learning goals. Although the off-the-job learning activities are well designed, the plans for the learning sessions are inadequate. The stated objectives are vague and do not show whether the training will help individual trainees meet their learning needs. Trainers do not give trainees sufficiently specific feedback on their performance during learning sessions.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

36. Bassetlaw Training Agency's equal opportunities policy includes all relevant legislative and TEC requirements. The induction process for staff and trainees includes reference to equal opportunities. All trainees are issued with the grievance and disciplinary procedures. Less than 1 per cent of Worksop's population comes from a minority ethnic group, and this is reflected in the number of trainees on programme in recent years. Over the last three years, 8 to 15 per cent of those on the training programmes for young people have had disabilities, as did 27 to 44 per cent of those on the programmes for adults. Of the current staff at BTA, four are people with disabilities, while none is from a minority ethnic group. There is access for people with disabilities at the training sites. The self-assessment report identified many strengths and one weakness concerning the lack of an equal opportunities action plan. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective equal opportunities committee
- ◆ rapid and effective response to legislative changes
- ◆ comprehensive staff development in equal opportunities
- ◆ thorough, well-documented policies and procedures
- ◆ successful open access policy

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of formal monitoring in the workplace
- ◆ no systematic analysis of data regarding specific groups of trainees

37. A committee was set up in April 1998 to ensure that the response to equal opportunities issues is robust. Positive action is taken to ensure that trainees are protected from harassment and that their working environment promotes the company's stance on equal opportunities. For example, visual material which may cause offence to some people was removed from the construction environment. The complaints procedures are highly effective. A thorough investigation of a trainee's serious complaint was carried out. The situation was addressed appropriately and sensitively. All complaints are formally recorded and the equal opportunities committee regularly monitors the complaints received and how each one is addressed.

38. There is a strong ethos within BTA to ensure that all trainees are supported and treated fairly throughout their training programme. BTA's management ensures that staff have a good understanding of the issues relating to equal opportunities. The staff development programme is effective. Training events are arranged regularly and training days organised by the TEC specifically to promote equal opportunities are given a high profile. Response to changes in legislation is prompt and effective. Recently, an Employment Service representative came to discuss disability issues to ensure that trainers had a good understanding of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. BTA was also quick to respond to the recent change in legislation relating to child protection, ensuring that all staff were aware of the changes which particularly related to the 16-18 age group.

39. The organisation readily responds to the needs of trainees and staff to ensure that there is an equal opportunity to work and training. Staffing arrangements were changed to ensure a female member of staff was available to support a trainee allocated to a women's aid placement. Staff are offered subsidised childcare facilities.

40. The recruitment and induction procedures for staff and trainees rigorously adhere to good practice in equal opportunities. The equal opportunities committee has a comprehensive action plan that clearly outlines strategies to increase participation from under-represented groups. Effective new marketing materials are in the process of being produced. Strategies have been discussed with the careers service and the Employment Service to promote training opportunities in care to male trainees, and in construction to female trainees. BTA is currently working with local organisations to develop a marketing strategy to offer training services to the local West Indian community. BTA is in contact with external agencies, such as The Prince's Trust, which have a common commitment to equal opportunities. Although awareness of such issues as gender imbalance in occupational areas has been identified, there is no systematic analysis of data relating to specific groups. Trainees' applications are not analysed to measure against regional data or against other training providers. Similarly, information on leavers is not examined to determine if there are any trends that need to be addressed.

41. BTA has developed very good links with local schools and organisations, such as the careers service and the Employment Service, to promote its policy of open access to training programmes. This works well. A large number of trainees left

school feeling disaffected and some have been unemployed for up to 10 years. A high proportion of trainees and New Deal clients have additional learning needs.

42. The equal opportunities policies and procedures are very detailed and written in clear English. There are specific statements on harassment and racism to raise awareness of these issues. All policies are reviewed and updated annually. Implementation procedures are effectively monitored and feedback is used to evaluate their effectiveness, but this process is not formally recorded. All employers are initially appraised to ensure that they have an equal opportunities policy. Regular monitoring of equal opportunities at work is informal and superficial. There is no procedure to ensure that trainees are protected from harassment at work. Many trainees are at work most of the week and this lack of monitoring means that BTA's staff cannot be sure that they are well protected. A recently produced questionnaire is being sent to employers to gain information relevant to equality of opportunity in the workplace, but none has yet been returned and analysed.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

43. Prospective trainees are usually referred to BTA by the careers service or the Employment Service. Trainees are invited to bring their national record of achievement to the initial interview with BTA's staff. At this stage, staff and trainees discuss a possible learning programme and agree a broad plan for the training. At induction, trainees receive information on the company's procedures and the support that BTA can offer. This stage of the programme includes further initial assessments of the trainees and a specific induction to the appropriate occupational area. Two members of BTA's staff are qualified to accredit prior learning. Help with job-search activities is available from the training centre on two days each week. Trainees' progress reviews are carried out after the first month and then every 13 weeks. New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option have their progress reviewed every week for four weeks and then every month. Clients on the voluntary sector option of the New Deal discuss their progress with BTA's staff every two weeks. Trainees are given careers advice and guidance at different stages in their individual programmes. One member of BTA's staff is a trained counsellor.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor initial assessment of trainees
- ◆ inadequate individual training plans
- ◆ some additional learning support needs not met
- ◆ trainees unaware of their own progress

44. BTA has made significant improvements to initial assessments and to the procedures used within the company to identify trainees' learning needs. Most

trainees have a better understanding of their progress, but some needs for additional learning support are still not met. All the strengths identified at the first inspection have been maintained and are still strengths. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and agreed with the grade given by the company in its self-assessment report prepared for reinspection.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good individualised personal support for trainees
- ◆ effective use of links with specialist agencies
- ◆ high take-up of opportunities to gain additional qualifications

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate training in basic skills
- ◆ inadequate reviews of trainees' progress on some programmes

45. BTA's staff provide trainees with a high level of personal support. BTA ensures that both staff and trainees have a good understanding of the social and personal problems which young people can face. Staff from the careers service and external support agencies are frequently invited to address staff meetings and learning sessions to discuss current issues and to update staff on developments. BTA has close links with voluntary and statutory agencies. When staff feel that specialist support is required, referrals are made promptly and confidentially. Arrangements are made for the appropriate staff to attend statutory case conferences when it is felt appropriate to provide continuity in the support given to a trainee. BTA's staff work closely with the New Deal personal advisors to ensure that as much support as possible is available to clients. All trainees are given the opportunity to take additional qualifications to support their learning. For example, trainees' achievement of a certificate in basic health and safety and basic first aid is good.

46. Initial assessments have improved since the previous inspection. Trainees' levels of basic and key skills are now systematically assessed at the start of the programme. Trainees self-assess their ability to achieve key skills, using a comprehensive questionnaire. Staff and trainees use this information to identify trainees' learning and support needs. Many trainees have been endorsed by the careers service as having needs for additional learning support. The type of support required is now more clearly identified, but there are still insufficient records of the criteria for deciding whether support is continued. Trainees' basic skills needs are not adequately addressed. Some trainees receive additional training in literacy and numeracy, but this facility is generally available only to those who have been identified as having skills at and below entry level. Staff do not have the necessary expertise in teaching literacy and numeracy to give trainees adequate additional learning support. Trainees are not making sufficient progress in basic skills. This training still primarily based on the literacy and numeracy qualifications.

Assessments for these qualifications are carried out using simulations, mostly based on set worksheets. However, staff allocated to the basic skills training since December 2000 are developing basic skills learning materials which relate to the appropriate occupational areas. Four members of staff started training programmes in basic skills training in November 2000.

47. Induction is well structured and comprehensive. Trainees receive good initial training in health and safety, equal opportunities and grievance procedures, and have a good recollection of their induction. Individual learning plans have improved since the first inspection. They contain more details of the trainees' programmes and are used effectively in progress reviews. Trainees now have a better understanding of their learning programme but some trainees are unaware of their individual learning objectives. Most trainees are now aware of the progress they have made towards their qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks. BTA has introduced a good range of appropriate additional forms to help trainees and staff keep an accurate record of their progress. Managers audit these forms effectively, and requiring amendments when they have not been completed adequately, after discussion with the staff concerned.

48. BTA has significantly improved trainees' progress reviews. Although the newly designed forms give trainers good direction as to what to include in the reviews, some progress reviews are not sufficiently recorded. The progress-review forms used on some programmes are not sufficiently detailed. Some trainers do not use the information discussed during progress reviews to identify clear and challenging targets for trainees.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

49. When BTA was incorporated in 1988, a board of directors was appointed to manage the company. Day-to-day management is carried out by the managing director, supported by the deputy manager and the financial controller. The deputy manager is responsible for monitoring the TEC and Employment Service contracts. The company currently employs 24 people. Eleven staff have left in the past year and 12 have joined the company. A business plan is produced every year. There is a range of operational policies and procedures within the organisation. All staff have current job descriptions and copies of the organisation's policies. New staff are given an information pack about the company as part of their induction. Annual staff appraisals take place and there is a staff-development programme. There is a regular cycle of meetings involving all staff groups. BTA's staff now carry out the training in business administration but the company still has subcontractual arrangements for internal verification in childcare. An information booklet outlining the nature of BTA's work is given to each employer and work-placement provider. BTA was first accredited with the Investors in People Standard in 1997. The company continues to have annual assessments against the standard to provide it with a vehicle for reviewing its policies and procedures.



At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor management-information systems
- ◆ ineffectively managed key skills training
- ◆ little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ weak management of subcontracting arrangements

50. BTA has built on the strengths identified at the first inspection. The company recognised key skills as an area of continuing weakness in its rewritten self-assessment report. However, arrangements for managing key skills and subcontracting are now satisfactory. In spite of developmental work, management information and the co-ordination of training remain weak. The self-assessment report contained descriptions of changes made but lacked judgements. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the company in the self-assessment report it produced for the reinspection.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective procedures for recruiting staff and for staff development
- ◆ good internal communications

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient use of data
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job learning

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Staff work well together to devise creative opportunities for trainees to practise their key skills and to collect evidence towards key skills qualifications. For example, trainees chair some of the staff meetings and write the minutes. Trainees on some programmes are required to pass on information learnt in off-the-job training sessions to trainees on other programmes and BTA's staff. For example, one trainee gave a presentation on health and safety in the kitchen to nursery staff and trainees in childcare.*

51. BTA has continued to have clear policies and standardised procedures for recruiting and managing staff. The induction of new staff into the company is thorough and systematic. There are effective arrangements for new employees to work alongside experienced colleagues for up to three weeks before taking over their new roles. The staff appraisal system continues to be thorough and effective. Appraisals are well planned and recorded and take place each year. The system has been further improved by the use of a detailed set of questions for staff to answer before the appraisal interview. Appraisals are clearly linked to the company's business plan. The business plan sets the aims for each department. Staff's job descriptions are effectively used as working documents and are amended to reflect new aims. The appraisals successfully recognise employees' achievements. Training needs are appropriately identified either by managers or by the employee. The staff development programme is comprehensive. It offers a wide range of training opportunities which are relevant to the development of the company and to the needs of individual staff. Take-up of training is good. There is a clear system for evaluating the usefulness of staff training.

52. Communications within BTA continue to be good. Procedures for meetings are thorough. Staff are kept well informed of developments and of links with external agencies. Open debate of issues is successfully encouraged. Staff clearly

understand the procedures for raising points for discussion, either during meetings or in confidence with managers. Staff have a good understanding of the company's progress towards both strategic and contractual targets. A monthly staff meeting continues to be held for all staff. There is a planned programme of meetings for other teams, such as assessors, and managers attend these on a regular basis. Managers accurately identify areas for development and plan what action to take. Staff development takes place as part of the structure of meetings when appropriate. The days when meetings are held are varied to enable part-time staff to attend. Minutes of meetings are sent out to staff who are unable to attend. The arrangements for ensuring that effective action is taken are still not sufficiently clear for all meetings.

53. BTA now collects a greater range of data, and information about trainees is more readily accessible. There is now a centralised database, which is kept up to date. Data about trainees who leave the programme after less than one year are analysed and reasons for leaving are recorded. However, the analysis frequently reflects causes outside BTA's control, such as trainees moving or becoming ill. The company does not use the data sufficiently to identify what action it needs to take to improve trainees' retention rates. Some of the new systems which have been developed to record information on trainees' progress are not fully established across the organisation. This is a particular problem when new staff join the company. There is still insufficient use of data to monitor systematically the rate of trainees' progress, particularly in the workplace.

54. The company has acted to increase employers' knowledge of learning programmes since the first inspection. Employers are fully involved in the progress-review process, which is conducted thoroughly. The quality assurance manager questions employers to assess their understanding of aspects of the programmes such as key skills. This procedure has been in operation for only two months and a very small proportion of employers have been contacted. Trainers rarely refer to opportunities for training and assessment in the workplace during off-the-job learning sessions. Some opportunities for learning and assessment in the workplace continue to be missed.

55. The company has recently made efforts to integrate key skills into NVQ training and assessment. One member of staff has a qualification in key skills training and other staff are working towards qualifications. Trainers have a good understanding of key skills and how to link these to training. They plan creative opportunities for trainees to collect evidence during off-the-job learning sessions. Trainees are now clearly aware of the key skills requirements and know how to cross-reference evidence from their NVQs. Assessments against the criteria, however, are not carried out frequently enough. Assessors do not always record the evidence at the time of assessment. Arrangements for training and assessing application of number are not clear and trainees' achievement of key skills continues to be slow.

56. Arrangements for managing subcontracting are now adequate. The company has reduced the range of its subcontractual agreements and has improved its



arrangements for managing its remaining subcontractor. There is a detailed service level agreement which sets out clearly what is to be provided. Managers monitor and review the agreement for internal verification. They hold meetings with the subcontractor, although the subcontractor does not attend BTA's internal verifiers' meetings.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 3

57. A quality assurance manual containing a detailed set of policies and procedures is available at head office and in all BTA's training centres. Since the first inspection, managers have produced written guidelines to help members of staff follow procedures and complete documents accurately. BTA continues to use the system which the TEC introduced in 1998 for collecting trainees and employers' views on its learning programmes. Managers are still planning adaptations to the questionnaire to help trainees understand the questions more fully. A member of staff with responsibility for co-ordinating quality assurance and marketing was appointed in January 2001. Internal verifiers plan and carry out observations of training and assessment. They meet once a month to discuss issues and share examples of good practice. Since the first inspection, BTA has reduced the range of NVQ programmes it offers. The company continues to be audited by the TEC and the awarding bodies. The company meets their requirements. BTA updated its self-assessment report following the first inspection.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no quality assurance framework
- ◆ no scheduled monitoring of the quality of training
- ◆ some weak internal verification procedures
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of trainees' progress and achievements

58. The company has now developed a quality assurance framework. BTA judged that, as a result of its improvements, internal verification was now a strength. However, inspectors judged it to be no more than normal practice. In the self-assessment report, the collection of feedback was identified as a strength. This was not agreed with by inspectors. The company identified three areas of weakness but described what action it had taken to remedy the weaknesses rather than making judgements about the quality of training. Inspectors identified this lack of critical self-evaluation as a weakness, together with the inadequate arrangements for reviewing and monitoring training. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given by the company in the self-assessment report prepared for reinspection.

## STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly effective internal auditing of procedures
- ◆ good awareness among staff of quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ effective action to address identified weaknesses

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of judgements in self-assessment report
- ◆ weak reviewing of training programmes
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of the quality of training

59. The company has successfully extended its policies and procedures to cover all aspects of the learning programmes. Managers have developed well-written guidelines to help staff to follow procedures effectively. All staff, including newly appointed members of the company, make good use of the guidelines. They have a good understanding of how the procedures and policies relate to the trainees' programmes. Managers continue to review the company's policies annually to check that they comply with current legislation and contractual requirements. The procedures to implement the policies are amended accordingly. Managers work effectively with staff in discussing any proposed changes. There is now an extensive system for auditing initial assessment, induction, trainees' progress reviews and other aspects of the training. Internal audits are frequent and rigorous. Practices which are inappropriate or inadequate are clearly identified, and managers let staff know what remedial action they should take. Managers recognise when employees need additional training and support. Staff have a good understanding of the framework used to develop the quality assurance arrangements, including the procedures to internally verify assessments.

60. Recent reports from awarding bodies, the TEC and the Training Standards Council have highlighted significant weaknesses in BTA's learning programmes. Managers have acted quickly to rectify most of these weaknesses. For example, since January 2000, the company has introduced new procedures and designed new paperwork to support the training process. There has been adequate progress in achieving identified targets across all aspects of the training. Most of the action specified in the action plans which has been developed in response to these reports has been carried out successfully. Managers continue to hold six-monthly meetings to review progress against targets in the business plan. These meetings are used to review action which has been taken, and develop action plans to implement improvements. In this way, appropriate changes are frequently made to the way programmes are organised and managed on a day-to-day basis.

61. Staff are fully involved in self-assessment. Although the company has made significant improvements since the first inspection, the self-assessment report produced shortly before the reinspection was weak. It failed critically to appraise the learning programmes. The company gives insufficient attention to the quality of training and assessment, or to the rate of trainees' progress towards achieving the targets on their individual learning plans. Too few of the statements in the report were judgements. Most of the strengths identified were considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. The report identified that facilities, such as additional opportunities for off-the-job learning and support in care, were available, without making critical judgements about the effectiveness of these facilities.

However, inspectors agreed with the company's assessment that all the reinspected areas were satisfactory.

62. Some of the procedures which managers are using to review the quality of the learning programmes are not effective. For example, the system for collecting and analysing trainees and employers' views is not comprehensive or adequately managed. BTA continues to rely on the procedure used at the time of the first inspection, even though it was recognised then to be unsatisfactory. The questions are difficult for trainees to understand and the company receives very few replies. It is not an effective means of evaluating the quality of the learning programmes. The newly appointed quality assurance co-ordinator has recently introduced an additional set of questions. This has successfully identified employers' lack of understanding of key skills. However, too few responses have been collected to give a thorough picture of employers' attitudes towards the service provided by the company.

63. Since the first inspection, a system has been introduced for the observation of off-the-job learning. This system is still under-developed. Much of the off-the-job training is satisfactory. The company has planned little action to improve it further. Staff who carry out observations do not all use the same paperwork. Written criteria are not available to trainers who are to be observed. Reports on observed learning sessions are inconsistent across the company. Some usefully identify action to improve the quality of the training, while others merely describe what takes place. There is insufficient clear and critical feedback. For example, those responsible for observing the quality of learning sessions do not give teaching staff enough feedback on the effectiveness of session plans. There is insufficient emphasis on the assessment of trainees' skills, knowledge and understanding.

64. Satisfactory arrangements for internal verification have now been introduced. The internal verifiers check all trainees' portfolios several times during training, as well as after the portfolios have been completed. They observe assessors carrying out assessments of trainees at work. Internal verifiers use standardised forms which clearly show the criteria for assessing assessors' competence. This system for internally verifying the quality of assessments has effectively identified poor practice and the company has taken appropriate action to remedy it.