



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT FEBRUARY 2001

Salford and Trafford
Engineering Group
Training Association Limited

SUMMARY

Salford and Trafford Engineering Group Training Association Limited offers training in engineering. Engineering trainees receive good off-the-job training. They work towards a range of additional skills and qualifications with employers who are committed to training. Progress towards level 3 national vocational qualifications is slow. Equal opportunities is effectively promoted and monitored. Trainees receive a good induction and have access to a wide range of additional support. Training is well managed, but there is insufficient planning of on-the-job training. Evaluation of training is effective, but some important activities are not included in the arrangements for quality assurance.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ effective targeting of under-represented groups
- ◆ good initial assessment
- ◆ extensive additional support
- ◆ good staff development
- ◆ effective systems for quality assurance
- ◆ good evaluation of training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress towards NVQs at level 3
- ◆ inadequate planning of on-the-job learning

INTRODUCTION

1. Salford and Trafford Engineering Group Training Association Limited (STEGTA) was established in 1966 to provide engineering training for several local companies. The services provided at the time included supporting submissions to the training board for the engineering industry for levy exemption, identifying training needs, monitoring staff training and selection, and recruitment of apprentices. Many of these services are still provided to member companies. STEGTA now has 50 member companies, and a further 29 companies use STEGTA to manage their apprenticeship training. STEGTA is a company limited by guarantee and is registered as a charity. It employs seven staff: a chief executive, a group training manager, three training officers, a secretary and a part-time administrator. The chief executive reports to an executive council made up of eight elected representatives from member companies.

2. STEGTA has contracts with Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide work-based training for young people in engineering and business administration. Programmes offered include advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships, and other work-based learning for young people. There are 112 trainees, of whom 108 are on engineering programmes and four are on business administration programmes. Business administration was not inspected owing to this small number.

3. The region served by STEGTA is diverse. For example, the 1991 census reported that 2.2 per cent of the population in Salford and 5.4 per cent of the population in Trafford were from minority ethnic groups. In January 2001, the unemployment rate was 3.3 per cent in Salford, and 2.4 per cent in Trafford. The national average was 3.5 per cent. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 36 per cent in Salford, and 56 per cent in Trafford. The national average was 49.2 per cent. The area served by Manchester TEC has 1,049 engineering companies, employing 18,583 people. The average number of employees in these companies is 18. Engineering represents 4 per cent of employment in the area. Most jobs in engineering in the area are full time and are held by men.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. STEGTA prepared a comprehensive self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection, which inspectors found informative and helpful. Staff had undertaken training with the TEC on self-assessment, and all staff contributed to the development of the report. The report was self-critical and accurately identified the key strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. It was clearly written and judgements were supported by evidence.

5. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at STEGTA during February 2001. Inspectors visited 10 employers and interviewed nine workplace supervisors and managers. They visited two colleges and interviewed trainers. Twenty-six trainees were interviewed, either at their work placements or at college. Inspectors conducted 13 interviews with staff. Inspectors observed trainees' progress reviews and assessments, and examined a wide range of documents. Only one formal learning session was observed, which was awarded a grade 4.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 2

6. STEGTA has 108 engineering trainees. There are 80 advanced modern apprentices, seven foundation modern apprentices and 21 trainees on other work-based learning programmes for young people. Most trainees are employed. Trainees are working towards a range of NVQs at levels 2 and 3, including engineering production, engineering maintenance, providing technical services, servicing electronic systems and engineering construction. Trainees on an advanced modern apprenticeship in refrigeration, engineering construction and electronic servicing start work with their employer and attend a local college for off-the-job training one day each week. Other advanced modern apprentices spend the first 23 weeks of their training at a local college doing an engineering foundation NVQ and key skills at level 2. A few trainees, at their employer's request, continue for a further 23 weeks to complete a basic engineering training certificate. Following this, they move to their employer's workplace to start their training and assessment for an NVQ at level 3, and attend college one day each week to study for an appropriate further-education qualification. Foundation modern apprentices work towards a level 2 NVQ with their employer. They attend college for one day each week for off-the-job training in engineering and key skills and to study for a further-education qualification. Trainees on other work-based learning programmes work towards a level 2 or 3 NVQ in their workplace and attend college for one day each week to study for a further-education qualification. Trainees work in a wide range of organisations including small engineering firms,

large food-processing and printing companies and gas-storage facilities. A training officer from STEGTA visits each trainee at work every four to six weeks to review their progress. Assessment for refrigeration and electrical servicing trainees is carried out by college staff in the trainees' workplace. STEGTA's staff assess all other trainees. Three members of STEGTA's staff review trainees' progress and carry out assessments. They all have appropriate assessor qualifications and are experienced engineers. Of the trainees who began training in the three-year period from 1997 to 2000, 60 per cent of modern apprentices and 53 per cent of other trainees remain on the programme. Thirty-eight per cent of trainees on other work-based learning programmes progress onto modern apprenticeships, and a further 30 per cent achieve their qualifications. Of the 24 modern apprentices who started training in 1996-1997, 38 per cent have achieved all the requirements of their apprenticeship, and a further 25 per cent are nearing completion. The self-assessment report accurately identified the good standard of off-the-job training, the strong commitment of employers and the additional qualifications which are available to trainees as strengths. It also accurately identified trainees' slow rate of progress towards NVQs at level 3 as a weakness. Other weaknesses in the self-assessment report had been corrected by the time of the inspection. Inspectors awarded a higher graded than that given by STEGTA in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ strong commitment of employers to training
- ◆ good opportunities for trainees to achieve additional skills and qualifications
- ◆ good pre-apprenticeship training programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow rate of progress of trainees towards NVQs at level 3

7. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to two local colleges. This includes a 23-week foundation engineering course leading to a level 2 NVQ as well as day-release further-education programmes. The foundation engineering course at both colleges is good. The colleges are well resourced, with a good supply of machines and tools for trainees to use. Assessment is good and well recorded. Trainees' progress is clearly monitored and the standard of trainees' work is satisfactory. Trainees' portfolios are well presented and contain good records of the work undertaken. Each trainee is able to follow the combination of units of their choice. This combination of units is agreed with the employer and trainee at the start of training. Key skills at level 2 are integrated into the learning programme and trainees leave the foundation engineering programme with a level 2 NVQ and key skills at level 2.

8. All of the employers visited by inspectors are committed to providing good training. Employers have good resources to cover the requirements of the NVQ.

They support trainees in their learning and visit the colleges regularly to see how trainees are progressing. Trainees are given a good range of experience and are often moved to different departments to broaden their experience. Workplace supervisors provide witness testimonies for assessment and help trainees with their logbooks.

9. Trainees have many opportunities to achieve additional skills and qualifications. Most trainees study towards higher-level qualifications at college and a few progress to degree level. All trainees attend an outward-bound course at the beginning of their training and use this as evidence towards their key skills units. Many trainees attend additional training courses provided by their employers. During the foundation, training many trainees complete additional NVQ units required by their employer and some complete an additional 23-week broad-based engineering programme. Many trainees are undertaking additional level 3 NVQ units and some are undertaking additional NVQs at level 2.

10. Each year, STEGTA takes on more trainees than can be placed by the company with employers. This is part of the pre-apprenticeship programme, and is aimed at providing greater opportunities for young people to train for a career in engineering. In 2000, 13 trainees started on this programme. They attend college full time for 23 weeks to undertake a level 2 foundation-engineering NVQ and key skills at level 2. Trainees benefit from the good engineering training provided and are given good support to find employment in engineering. STEGTA arranges interviews and provides help with interview techniques. To date, every trainee has found employment by the end of the 23-week foundation engineering course and has progressed onto a modern apprenticeship.

11. Trainees make slow progress towards achieving their level 3 NVQ. In the past four years, only one trainee has achieved a level 3 NVQ. Of those who started in 1996-97, only 38 per cent have completed their level 3 NVQ. A further 25 per cent are nearing completion. The assessment of trainees did not start soon enough. Some trainees have a large amount of evidence in their portfolios, which has not been cross-referenced to their NVQ. The progress of the trainees who started after 1997 is better. Inspectors viewed a good range of evidence in these trainees' portfolios, much of which had been cross-referenced to their NVQ. A new system is now used to monitor trainees' progress towards each unit of the level 3 NVQ. Assessors now have targets for trainees' completion of their NVQs. There is, however, a view among many employers that an apprenticeship should last four years, and there is little incentive for trainees to progress more quickly.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

12. STEGTA has a well-written equal opportunities policy which indicates how it will monitor and ensure equality of opportunity. It includes information about

harassment on the grounds of ethnicity, gender and disability, bullying, advice and assistance, and procedures to deal with these issues. The policy is regularly reviewed and was most recently updated in March 2000. The policy is divided into easily readable sections. Copies are included in induction material and the company's handouts and are distributed to employers and subcontractors. Responsibilities for training, guidance, recruitment, selection, assessment, dealing with discrimination, monitoring, reviewing and updating are described in the quality assurance manual. All staff and trainees have to sign to confirm their understanding of a statement outlining the organisation's commitment to equal opportunities. Work placements are vetted before trainees are placed, and equal opportunities is an agenda item for all trainees' progress reviews. Records are kept of trainees and staff by age, gender, ethnicity, and disability. These data are regularly reviewed and are used as a basis for the organisation's action plans. STEGTA's offices have limited access for trainees with mobility problems. Although there is a lift, there are no special access facilities, such as double doors, and there are no toilet facilities for people with mobility problems.

13. The self-assessment report accurately identified the targeting of under-represented groups and the use of role models as strengths of the training. The weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had been corrected by the time of the inspection. Inspectors identified additional strengths and awarded a higher grade than given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ effective targeting of under-represented groups
- ◆ good use of role models

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no significant weaknesses identified

14. STEGTA's equal opportunities policy is displayed widely in the company and is covered effectively during the induction programme. Trainees are aware of the policy and can remember the significant parts of its content. Trainees are informed of the company's procedures for grievances and harassment in their induction. A copy of the policy is given to all members of staff, employers and subcontractors. Staff challenge offensive material and inappropriate language, and offer help to employers in all aspects of equal opportunities. Marketing materials show positive images of under-represented groups and refer to the company's commitment to equal opportunities. Questionnaires are sent to employers, subcontractors and trainees to gather information about their awareness of equal opportunities. STEGTA works closely with local schools and organisations to improve links with under-represented groups. Marketing materials and practices for recruiting trainees are reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they are free from

GOOD PRACTICE

STEGTA has taken a positive stance against the display of potentially offensive material in the workplace. The company has a carefully composed letter which is sent to employers, explaining the distress which pictures, jokes, innuendo and offensive calendars can cause. This is followed up by a discreet visit to the manager of the company involved to explain how this action makes trainees and in particular those from under-represented groups, feel unwelcome.

GOOD PRACTICE

The company has produced a handout which gives a business case for the promotion of equal opportunities. This includes examples of how the profit and loss account is affected and features opportunities to promote equal opportunities. Examples are given of the effects good equal opportunities practices can have on product development, market development and market share. Enhancing customer's satisfaction is reviewed and how becoming an employer of choice and averting the costs of discrimination can be managed to the company's advantage.

bias. All staff have attended training covering awareness of equal opportunities and good practice. Employees are told that they have a valuable role to play in promoting and implementing equality of opportunity. Employers are offered help in producing an adequate equal opportunities policy of their own and are required to subscribe to STEGTA's policy. The company has embarked upon an exercise to raise awareness of equal opportunities by distributing a booklet to employers and trainees. It is also offering a training programme to employers on equal opportunities. Despite all this effort, there are still some workplace supervisors with limited knowledge of their organisation's equal opportunities policy. Few employers have taken advantage of the equal opportunities training offered by STEGTA, and not all employers and subcontractors display their equal opportunities policies in prominent positions. Although equal opportunities is an agenda item in trainees' progress reviews, it is not covered in any depth during the reviews.

15. STEGTA comprehensively analyses data on applicants, trainees in training and those who have completed their training, with regard to gender, ethnicity and disability. The company compares this information with data for the local area. The organisation has taken positive steps to increase the number of applicants from groups in the wider community. This includes working with an organisation which is providing training in basic skills and which is located in a more socially deprived area of the city. This has resulted in an increase in the number of applicants from that area. Advertisements have been placed in a local multicultural newspaper to attract trainees from minority ethnic groups, resulting in increased applications from people of Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin. The leisure interests of people from minority ethnic groups have been examined and used for the purpose of recruiting trainees. Leaflet drops have been organised in cinemas. Other organisations specialising in supporting minority ethnic groups have been approached, and partnership arrangements have been made to increase the number of applications from these groups.

16. The organisation makes good use of role models in promoting training in engineering. Successful women apprentices and apprentices from minority ethnic groups are used in marketing material. They visit schools to promote engineering. Case studies on former apprentices are used to encourage applicants from under-represented groups. A current member of STEGTA's staff from an under-represented group regularly visits schools to encourage young people to apply for training.

Trainee support

Grade 1

17. Prospective trainees who approach STEGTA receive an initial interview and are offered relevant advice on courses and career options before starting on a learning programme. Marketing literature is readily available to potential trainees to give them an indication of what is available and what they can expect from a work placement. All trainees attend a structured induction programme, during

which they are informed about their rights and responsibilities and have their learning programme explained to them. This is followed by an induction in their workplace. All trainees undertake an initial assessment of their basic and key skills, and the results are used to produce a career development plan. Each trainee is allocated a training officer who is responsible for training, assessment and pastoral support throughout their programme. Employers are encouraged to provide each trainee with a mentor to monitor and assess the trainees at their workplace and to take part in the progress reviews with training advisors. Trainees are visited in their workplace by STEGTA's staff every four to six weeks to review their progress. Trainees have access to professional counselling throughout their training. STEGTA also employs a trained counsellor, and all training officers have undergone training in counselling techniques. The self-assessment report correctly identified the induction programme and the systems for supporting trainees as strengths. The weaknesses identified had been corrected by the time of the inspection. Inspectors identified additional strengths and awarded a higher grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear and objective advice for trainees at recruitment
- ◆ good initial assessment of trainees
- ◆ effective induction programme
- ◆ extensive additional support for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no significant weaknesses identified

GOOD PRACTICE

STEGTA has a website, which promotes its services to employers, prospective work placement providers and trainees. The site is particularly useful to potential trainees because it assists them to identify a suitable career, to identify their existing skills and to understand what they have to achieve to be successful in that ambition.

18. STEGTA's staff provide good advice to young people who are considering a career in engineering. They visit schools and careers events to discuss career choices and learning programmes with potential applicants. The company has a portable computer-controlled machine, which can produce small, but complex engineering parts. The machine is set up in exhibitions and in schools for potential trainees and their parents to operate. All new trainees are sensitively interviewed about their hopes and aspirations to determine the programme and course of action best suited to them. Their previous experiences and qualifications are taken into consideration in order to select the most appropriate route for them to follow and to identify the support they need. Good links with employers help STEGTA to place trainees in companies which can meet their needs and aspirations. Considerable effort is made to secure full-time employment for all trainees. This is particularly the case with the pre-apprenticeship trainees, who begin training without employment. To date, every trainee has found employment by the end of his or her 23-week foundation programme. Advice is provided throughout the programme to help trainees decide on the additional training opportunities and any appropriate further-education programmes that they wish to follow. Where trainees and employers have concluded that a work placement is not suitable for a trainee,

GOOD PRACTICE

If trainees miss the standard induction programme, for any reason, the company has a fully developed version of the induction on a laptop computer. This is used on a one-to-one basis to bring trainees up to the level of knowledge of the other trainees, who completed the group induction process.

STEGTA has helped the trainee to find an alternative, more suitable employer. This has been achieved diplomatically.

19. The initial assessment of basic and key skills is good. Trainees are given good information about the purpose and nature of the tests before taking them. Various initial assessment tests have been used in the past and the best of these have been selected to form STEGTA's own testing programme. In addition, the company uses a separate initial test of key skills. The results of the tests are analysed to identify any additional support trainees may need on an individual basis. Each trainee is helped to produce a career-development plan, which takes into account the results of the initial tests and any additional support required. Additional literacy and numeracy support is arranged with a local college. STEGTA's staff also provide additional numeracy support. The support is reviewed and amended as the career-development plan is followed. The career-development plan is regularly reviewed and updated, with the trainee's new support needs identified as the apprenticeship progresses.

20. Trainees receive a comprehensive, well-structured induction programme. Trainees remember its content and find it useful. It covers information about their statutory rights and responsibilities, with practical and comprehensive health and safety information. All trainees receive a useful induction handout which covers the facilities which are available to them. Equal opportunities talks and discussions, team-building and problem-solving exercises are included. The theme of the programme is getting ready for work. Examples of work situations are used to illustrate the company's products and services, the roles of workplace supervisors and mentors, and how assessment will take place. Booklets are provided which set out the help and support which can be obtained in identifying trainees needs. The handouts are particularly well designed and illustrated, with diagrams and cartoons which are relevant to young people. There is also a workplace induction by the employers. During the induction programme, trainees are introduced to an independent advice and information service for young people. In the career-development plan, the induction process is considered to be a continuous process which follows the trainees through the various changes to their daily working life.

21. STEGTA provides extensive additional support to trainees. Each trainee is visited in the workplace every four to six weeks. The period between visits is determined by the needs of the trainee. Each trainee is allocated a training officer who is responsible for training, assessment and support. STEGTA arranges for trainees to have access to an independent financial advisor, a drug misuse advisor, and help with domestic and social problems if there is a need. All training officers have been trained in providing counselling, and one member of staff is professionally qualified. STEGTA regularly produces handouts covering career development, NVQ structure and assessment, recording of assessments, routes for accessing information and the use of the Internet for gathering information. Computer packages and videos are available to trainees giving careers advice and information on opportunities in different industries, health and safety, and hazardous materials. Trainees on pre-apprenticeship programmes, who spend 23

weeks at the college, are visited every week for the first two months of their programme. Before allowing a trainee to go to an employer, a stringent assessment and recording of conditions in the workplace takes place. All trainees have the opportunity to take part in an outward-bound course and the exercises performed on the course are used as evidence for their key skills portfolios. All trainees have access to a telephone hotline, for legal and financial information and counselling. Trainees with special learning needs, such as those with dyslexia, are given appropriate support. One dyslexic trainee has the use of an electronic notepad. One training officer is allocated extra time to give learning support in numeracy and literacy to trainees who need it. The individual learning plans of trainees who need extra help are carefully structured and take into account the support the trainees require to address weaknesses.

Management of training

Grade 2

22. STEGTA is a company limited by guarantee and is a registered charity. The chief executive has operational responsibility for the business and reports to a board of directors drawn from senior representatives of the member companies. He is supported by the group training manager, three full-time training officers, a secretary and a part-time administrator. All staff are qualified and experienced and hold relevant training qualifications. Staff have an annual appraisal which results in an individual development plan which, in turn, contributes to the company's development plan. STEGTA recruits trainees on behalf of its members and arranges their training. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to local colleges. Most trainees attend one of two local colleges, but other colleges are used when it is better for the trainee. On-the-job training takes place at the trainee's employer. STEGTA has written agreements with all subcontractors and employers about the training and support to be provided to trainees. The company has a two-year business plan which is shared with staff. Staff meetings take place monthly. STEGTA's primary income is from its contract with the TEC for training young people. The number of trainees recruited each year has remained almost constant over the past five years. STEGTA first achieved the Investors in People Standard in 1995, and this has been successfully renewed since. The self-assessment report accurately identified strong links with employers and other partners, staff development and communications as strengths of the training. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong links with employers
- ◆ productive collaboration with partner organisations
- ◆ good staff development
- ◆ good internal communications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate planning of on-the-job learning

23. STEGTA has worked hard over a sustained period to develop and maintain a good network of employers which support its training. Contacts with employers are effective, and this, enables STEGTA to offer good learning opportunities to young people. STEGTA's staff meet with employers and their representatives frequently in the workplace and this contributes to good communications. Staff are well known and respected by employers and have built up strong links with senior training staff. STEGTA has access to a large group of employers through its membership and the wider network of engineering employers in the region. STEGTA works with employers to develop and promote engineering training in the area and to attract suitable trainees. Communication with employers is regular and effective.

24. STEGTA works well with other organisations involved in the education and training of young people. This includes local colleges, other private training providers, the careers service, local schools and the TEC. STEGTA works with these organisations in the planning and provision of training for young people in the area, and in particular its own trainees. It also works with a group of training companies in different parts of the country to share good practice and bench mark its activities. STEGTA has developed a partnership with one local further education college. The two organisations are actively embarking on a joint marketing strategy and have identified some joint business-development objectives. The chief executive and group training manager are governors of local further education colleges.

25. The arrangements for staff development at STEGTA are good. Procedures for recruitment, selection and induction are well established. Staff are well qualified and all are involved in continuous training and career development. All staff have regular appraisals and frequent reviews. Staff have development objectives which are jointly agreed with their manager. These relate both to their own needs and to needs identified in the business plan. Staff are encouraged and supported to pursue training and development programmes and qualifications. Many members of staff are working towards formal qualifications. Staff's roles are reviewed and changes are made when required. The chief executive provides good coaching and development opportunities, which support the group training manager in his development.

26. There is good internal communication, which supports and enhances the effective running of the organisation. The staff team meets monthly. This meeting has an agenda, minutes are taken and action points are noted and reviewed. Significant business and training issues are discussed. Less formal staff meetings take place weekly with an emphasis on sharing information. The staff team is small and regular communication takes place among its members on a day-to-day basis. Incoming mail is circulated to all staff. There is good use of displays and

visual management information. Teamwork is good and the individual contributions of staff are recognised and valued. The management-control systems, management information, planning and management reports are well established. Information is used effectively to manage the operation of the training organisation. Target-setting and management reviews are a normal part of the management of the organisation. There is two-year business plan, in the design of which all staff are involved. Individual members of staff have performance targets. Training information is used effectively to monitor trainees' performance and progress.

27. The current approach to the planning of training in the workplace is less than satisfactory. At present, training in the workplace is poorly defined and loosely agreed in some cases. There are some attempts to identify the type of activity, the experiences of the trainees and the sequence of tasks which will be provided at some work placements, but these are inadequate. There are insufficient links between activities in the workplace and occupational standards. Short-term targets, which are set at trainees' progress reviews, are effective, but there are no long-term plans or objectives to which these can be linked.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

28. STEGTA has a written policy and strategy for quality assurance which are prominently displayed in the main staff work area. The systems for quality assurance include a set of procedures, document-control systems, analysis and reports. The arrangements for assuring the quality of work-based training are described in a quality assurance manual. All staff have a copy and are familiar with its content and implementation. There is an action plan for the improvement of training. The system is audited over a 12-month cycle. Internal verification includes the observation of assessors, as well as regular checks on the assessment of trainees' competence. Training officers are qualified as internal verifiers. The chief executive has overall responsibility for quality assurance. The group training manager has operational responsibility and is assisted by one of the training officers to co-ordinate the arrangements for quality assurance. Staff have been trained to carry on internal audits and to operate the quality assurance system. Feedback is collected from employers, trainees and subcontractors. There are review meetings, which are carried out by the team responsible for quality assurance, contract reviews with subcontractors and programme-review meetings with college staff, trainees and employers. Data are collected through regular visits to colleges, employers and trainees. Data are analysed and action plans are produced. All members of the training staff take part in the self-assessment process and contribute to the self-assessment report. Staff have been trained in this process, which has been incorporated into the quality-assurance arrangements. The self-assessment report correctly identified evaluation and the sharing of good practice as strengths of the training. The weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had been corrected by the time of the inspection. Inspectors identified additional strengths and a weakness and awarded a higher grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective strategy for improving quality
- ◆ good evaluation of training
- ◆ effective sharing of good practice

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate coverage of key training activities by quality assurance procedures

29. Self-assessment has been a regular feature of STEGTA's approach to quality assurance over a sustained period. All members of the training staff participate in the self-assessment process and contribute to the self-assessment report. Staff have been trained and are well informed about what is required. The self-assessment process has been incorporated into the quality assurance arrangements and supports the company's actions to achieve continuous improvement in the quality of the training. Inspectors found the self-assessment report a helpful and accurate document. The preparation for inspection was thorough and well informed and evidence was presented in an effective and helpful manner.

30. STEGTA has developed a good strategic approach to improving the quality of training and assessment. There is a policy statement covering quality assurance, which is regularly reviewed. Priorities are established and performance is analysed. Self-assessment, aided by external assessments of the quality of training, has been used effectively further to guide the strategy for quality assurance and the continuous review of priorities. These are clearly communicated to all staff. There are regular meetings which focus on quality assurance. Staff are trained in and well informed about quality assurance procedures. Internal auditing and peer observations are established tools in the quality assurance process. Subcontractors are involved in the arrangements for quality assurance. There is good two-way communication and flow of data relevant to the improvement of the quality of training between STEGTA and its main subcontractors.

31. The evaluation of training is good. Feedback is regularly collected from trainees, employers and subcontractors through questionnaires and meetings. Staff observe training sessions at subcontractors' premises, and attend course-review meetings. Employers and trainees also take part in course-review meetings at the subcontractors' premises. STEGTA collects and analyses data on trainees' achievements and progress towards their qualifications. The regular contact which training officers have with trainees, employers and subcontractors provides further information which contributes to the continuous improvement of the quality of training. The analysis of data is well presented in reports and is used to produce good action plans. Action plans are regularly reviewed and monitored. Internal auditing is effectively implemented and recorded.

32. STEGTA has arrangements with four other training organisations in various parts of the country to share good practice and to bench mark performance. This is of considerable benefit to STEGTA and its trainees. STEGTA's managers have gone to considerable lengths to find out how other organisations are working and to learn from this. This information is disseminated within the organisation and is used to improve STEGTA's approach to training. This approach to partnership is being encouraged by STEGTA's managers among the network of employers with which they work. In one example, training staff and trainees from two different organisations have been on exchange visits. The sharing of good practice is routine among STEGTA's staff. The introduction of standardised records of observations is just one example of this.

33. Some key training activities are not currently covered by the arrangements and procedures for quality assurance. There is little recorded information about the arrangements for supporting trainees, or the procedures for identifying, supplying and evaluating arrangements for additional learning support. The procedures for the planning of training with employers do not reflect current practices. The management of training in the workplace is not covered by any procedures. The description of internal verification in the current procedure does not reflect the way in which STEGTA carries out internal verification.