

INSPECTION REPORT

Davidson Training UK Limited

25 June 2001



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Davidson Training UK Limited is a private training company which has its head office in Gravesend, Kent. It offers training for foundation and advanced modern apprentices in catering and hospitality, sport and recreation, retailing and customer service, business administration and hairdressing. It has local and national training contracts for London and the southeast coast of England. It uses one subcontractor for hairdressing training.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision within retailing and customer service, sport and recreation and hairdressing is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The leadership and management of the company are not adequate.

Work-based learning for young people

There are currently 158 learners, none of whom are following training in catering and hospitality. There were too few learners in business administration to report separately on this area of learning. The learners are all engaged in appropriate job roles. There are productive relationships among the learners, employers and assessors. There is good assessment practice in retailing and customer service, and sport and recreation, but poor assessment practice in hairdressing, where insufficient use is made of opportunities to assess learners carrying out their everyday work. Key skills training is well integrated with the retailing and customer service training, but poorly linked to the sport and recreation and hairdressing training. There is insufficient co-ordination of on and off-the-job training to allow learners to develop a sound knowledge base within their area of work. Retention and achievement rates in retailing and customer service and in sport and recreation are low, with few learners completing their modern apprenticeship framework. Employers, and many learners, do not fully understand the training programmes.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of Davidson Training UK Limited are inadequate. The recent restructuring of the company has positively refocused the company's direction, but staff do not yet fully understand their new roles and responsibilities or the quality assurance system. Many of the quality assurance procedures relating to the training process are not followed closely enough. There is inadequate co-ordination of some key training processes. Employers have too little involvement in the training process. There are good formal communications among staff and between the company and its subcontractor for hairdressing. There is no monitoring of the extent to which employers promote equality of opportunity in the workplace.

The self-assessment report underestimated some of the key weaknesses in the training.

GRADES

Retailing, customer service & transportation	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- good assessment practices
- focused and responsive management
- good staff appraisal system
- good use of recruitment data to develop equal opportunities strategies

KEY WEAKNESSES

- low completion rates
- insufficient integration of key skills training with occupational training in two areas of learning
- insufficient involvement of employers in training processes
- quality assurance procedures which are not routinely applied to many training processes
- lack of awareness of equal opportunities by staff

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more monitoring and recording of training
- better use of work-based assessors
- better use of management information
- more effective use of written surveys of learners and employers

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Davidson Training was established in 1997 and has operated under the name of Davidson Training UK Limited (Davidson Training) since 1999. Its head office is in Gravesend, Kent. The company offers training in business administration, retailing and customer service, leisure, sport and travel, hospitality and hair and beauty. It has contracts with the Central London Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Kent and Medway LSC to offer foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships to young people across London and along the south coast of England. In March 2000, the company took over a contract from a training provider to which it was previously subcontracted. Davidson Training subcontracts its hairdressing training and assessment to a private hairdressing school. It does not normally provide off-the-job training for other areas of learning, although it can do so if required. There are 158 learners currently in training, in all areas except hospitality. All learners are employed and are selected by their employers to undergo training. All assessments are carried out in the workplace. There are 11 members of staff: two directors, a centre manager who is a qualified assessor and acts as the lead internal verifier, a head of centre who is also an assessor and a qualified internal verifier and a team of six assessors, of whom two work part time. There is also a full-time administrator.

2. According to the 1991 census, almost 22 per cent of the population of Greater London are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 2.3 per cent in the Kent and Medway area and 6.2 per cent in England as a whole. In 1998-99, 6 per cent of 16-year olds in the London and Kent and Medway areas took part in government-sponsored training, compared with a proportion of 9 per cent in England as a whole. In 2000, approximately 40 per cent of school leavers across London as a whole achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grades C or above, compared with around 51 per cent in Kent and 49.2 per cent nationally. There are wide variations in the rates across the different boroughs of London, with some wards having achievement rates as low as 32 per cent. In May 2001, the unemployment rate for Kent and Medway was 2.6 per cent and that of the Central London LSC area was 2.6 per cent, compared with a national rate of 3.1 per cent. This ratio for London does not reflect the fact that some wards have areas of severe economic deprivation and high unemployment.

THE INSPECTION

3. Seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days with Davidson Training in June 2001. Inspectors visited 30 places of work and the company's head office. Twenty-one interviews were carried out with employers or workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed and graded two training sessions and observed 11 assessments. Fifty-two portfolios of evidence were examined and 55 learners were interviewed. Inspectors examined Davidson Training's contracts with the LSCs and employers as well as its business plans and related policies, including those on health and safety, equal opportunities and quality assurance. They looked at staff training plans and materials, guidance and operating manuals, minutes of meetings, staff training records and data on learners' achievements. Business administration training was inspected but not reported on as there were fewer than 10 learners in training. Inspectors also examined Davidson Training's self-assessment report, which it prepared in November 2000 and updated in February 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	116	4

4. There are 116 modern apprentices working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 in retailing and customer service. There are 23 foundation modern apprentices and 19 advanced modern apprentices on retailing programmes. There are 34 foundation modern apprentices and 40 advanced modern apprentices on customer service programmes. All learners are employed. They work in a variety of shops, leisure centres and building societies in London and southeast England. All assessment is carried out in the workplace by Davidson Training's staff. Davidson Training does not normally provide any off-the-job training, although it has the facilities to do so if required. Progress reviews are carried out every eight weeks. There are eight qualified assessors including two internal verifiers. In March 2000, Davidson Training took responsibility for the training contract from another training provider for whom they were previously the nominated subcontractor.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					1		48		100	
Still in training					0	0	2	4	40	40
FMA framework completed					0	0	16	33	5	5
NVQ level 2 completed					1	100	30	62	19	19
Left without completing the framework					1	100	27	56	55	55

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					11		49		69	
Still in training					2	18	13	27	45	65
AMA framework completed					4	36	1	2	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					7	64	37	76	19	28
NVQ level 3 completed					2	18	3	6	0	0
Left without completing the framework					6	55	34	69	23	33

STRENGTHS

- effective use of observational assessment
- good integration of key skills training with occupational training
- productive relationships between assessors, learners and employers

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient initial assessment
- insufficient appreciation by learners and employers of the demands of modern apprenticeships
- low completion rate for modern apprenticeship framework
- training does not sufficiently consider the wider content within which skills are applied

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of work-based assessors
- better use of employers to confirm evidence for portfolios
- better progress reviews and clearer target-setting

5. All learners are working in appropriate jobs that give them the necessary opportunities to gather evidence for their qualifications. Assessors visit learners frequently and make good use of observations of them carrying out their everyday jobs. These observational assessments are clearly recorded and cross-referenced against the NVQ and key skills standards. Assessors in customer service also make good use of

discussion with learners and verbal questioning, which are well recorded. Many learners are producing a good standard of different types of supporting evidence. These include personal reports, case histories and work-based projects. Employers are not encouraged sufficiently to become more involved in their learners' NVQ by signing their learners' evidence to authenticate it. There is good integration of key skills training with the occupational training. Learners start working on key skills at the beginning of their training. A series of work-based assignments has recently been introduced and is now being used by assessors to good effect. The first group of learners has recently taken their external key skills tests. The results for level 1 key skills indicate a good pass rate. The results for level 2 were not available at the time of inspection. In its self-assessment report, Davidson Training identified the lack of computers in the workplace as a weakness. However, laptop computers and printers have now been purchased and assessors use these effectively with learners, to help them produce evidence for the key skill of using information technology.

6. Assessors develop good working relationships with both learners and workplace supervisors. They visit stores on a frequent basis and spend as much time as they need for assessment purposes within the normal working day. The good working relationships make it easier for assessors to spend more time with those learners who need extra support. This is particularly helpful to the many learners who struggle to collect evidence and build portfolios away from their workplace.

7. When learners start their programmes, they discuss with a senior member of Davidson Training's staff their aims, previous achievements and learning needs. Although key skills are assessed, there are no formal diagnostic procedures to assess the basic skills development needs of learners, to identify specific learning needs such as dyslexia or to assess and accredit prior learning and experience.

8. Employers, and many learners, do not understand what they will have to achieve to complete the full modern apprenticeship. A training plan is drawn up after the initial assessment. Learners are not sufficiently involved in writing this plan. There are no individual target dates for achieving units of the NVQs. Learners are unsure about the additional units they need to achieve to complete their full qualifications. Training that the learners undertake with their employers is not detailed on these plans. NVQ assessments are poorly linked to any off- and on-the-job training activities. The individual training plan is kept in the learner's portfolio with a copy in their personal file at Davidson Training's head office. The training plans are not regularly updated throughout the programme.

9. Assessors meet with learners every eight weeks to discuss the learners' progress and identify what they need to do to make further progress. An action plan is drawn up at the end of each visit. However, the information recorded on the action plan is often vague and gives little indication of the learners' progress. The actions agreed are not always specific and do not show who is responsible for carrying them out. In many cases, there are no indications of when actions should be carried out. The progress reviews do not routinely identify any further development needs or pastoral support

required by the learner. Employers are not fully involved in the action-planning and review processes. They are often unaware of the content of the training programme.

10. A satisfactory proportion of learners achieve NVQs in retailing or customer service. For example, 67 per cent of those who started in 1998-99 and 69 per cent of those who started in 1999-2000 achieved an NVQ at level 2. However, a high proportion of learners leave without completing the modern apprenticeship framework. In the year 1998-99, only 42 per cent of those who started have gone on to complete the whole framework. A further 17 per cent are still working towards their qualifications. A comparison of foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships shows a higher achievement rate for foundation modern apprentices. Of 49 advanced modern apprentices who started in 1999-2000, only one has completed the whole framework. Customer service learners are more likely to leave training early than retailing learners. In 1999-2000, 75 per cent of those training in customer service left before completing the framework compared with 52 per cent of those training in retailing.

11. Learners receive little training to develop a broader understanding of the context in which their skills will be applied. Employers give relevant on-the-job training, usually by one-to-one coaching, but this is not structured to ensure it meets the requirements of the NVQ, nor does it help the learner to develop a wider knowledge of the subject area. Assessors issue learners with some training materials, but these are basic and do not meet learners' needs, particularly those following level 3 NVQs. Davidson Training has few useful resources for assessors to use for training purposes. Learners often struggle to find the information they need to enable them to learn about specific topics.

Good Practice

A learner whose first language is not English has her responses to assessment questions recorded on tape to reduce the amount of written work she does. The assessor and learner identify words which the learner uses regularly in her job. The assessor then helps the learner to practise writing and pronouncing these words so that she is more confident in her work.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	17	4

12. Davidson Training began offering sport and recreation programmes in 1999, when it provided assessment and internal verification for another training provider. In 2000, Davidson Training was awarded its own contract and also took over the learners who had been training under the contract with the other training provider. Seven learners transferred from another training provider in 2000. There are now five foundation modern apprentices and 12 advanced modern apprentices. One foundation modern apprentice is following a level 2 NVQ in activity leadership, in the context of football. The other four are following level 2 NVQs in operational services. All the advanced modern apprentices are following level 3 NVQs in operations and development. All learners are employed when they begin their training and are selected for training by their employers. Learners are working as leisure assistants, duty managers or coaches in local authority leisure centres, private health clubs and a football club. Davidson Training carries out an initial assessment, which looks at learners' job roles, levels of basic skills and key skills and their awareness of equal opportunities. Learners are asked about their previous qualifications and told if these can be accredited towards their apprenticeship framework. Employers provide in-house training to help learners carry out their jobs, such as that leading to qualifications in first aid or those for pool lifeguards.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time on inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					1		1		7	
Still in training					0	0	0	0	4	57
FMA framework completed					1	100	1	100	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					0	0	0	0	2	29

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							11		11	
Still in training							4	36	8	73
AMA framework completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed							0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework							7	64	3	27

STRENGTHS

- good assessment practice
- good individual support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor understanding of apprenticeships by learners and employers
- insufficient integration of key skills training with occupational training
- poor training materials

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of individual training plans
- clearer understanding of achievements by learners
- more effective contacts between the assessor and relevant sector organisations

13. There is good assessment practice. An assessor visits learners every two weeks to carry out assessment in the workplace. Assessments are well planned and good use is made of opportunities for learners to show their competence through their everyday work. The assessment process is clearly explained to each learner and he or she is encouraged to ask questions before the assessment starts. Once the observation is over, the assessor asks further questions to clarify the learner's understanding. The assessors give helpful feedback to the learners on their performance and discuss when the next assessment should take place. Portfolios contain a good mix of observation, witness

testimonies and examples of work. Currently, there are no work-based assessors but Davidson Training has offered assessors' training for the workplace supervisors in one large employer, which is due to start in July 2001. Davidson Training offers good additional support to learners. For example, when learners' shift patterns do not correspond with the assessors' timetable or when employers do not give learners sufficient time to prepare for assessments. Davidson Training offers learners the chance to use more observation instead of written evidence to help them to complete their portfolios.

14. A low proportion of learners achieve the modern apprenticeship frameworks. No advanced modern apprentices have achieved all the qualifications necessary for the full framework. Retention rates for advanced modern apprentices are low. Of the 11 learners who began their programmes in 1999-2000, only 4 are still in training. Achievement rates for the NVQ at level 3 and key skills units are low. There is little understanding of the modern apprenticeship requirements by Davidson Training's staff, learners and employers. Many learners' training plans show the wrong level of key skills. Learners select the optional units they wish to take for their NVQ, but these are not listed on the training plans. Davidson Training has identified in its self-assessment report that insufficient links are made between in-house training, the NVQ and key skills. Training plans show the same completion date for all mandatory units and are not updated as learners achieve them. There is no awareness of the need for sport and recreation learners to take extra qualifications and demonstrate their awareness of the industry to achieve their apprenticeships.

15. Davidson Training does not have sufficient resources to help learners develop their knowledge. Supporting materials such as books, articles and videos are not available. Key skills training is poorly linked to the NVQ and is often started towards the end of the NVQ. Key skills workbooks are not tailored to specific areas of learning. Learners do not see their relevance and do not use them. Although some learners need key skills training to help them achieve their key skills units, only one learner has received individual coaching. New laptop computers and printers, which were intended to help learners develop their key skills and portfolio work, have not been made available to the learners. The self-assessment report did identify that integration of information technology was a weakness, but failed to recognise the extent of the problem.

16. The self-assessment report identified that learners are unsure of the progress they are making, but failed to recognise that this is also true of employers. Assessors carry out learners' progress reviews every eight weeks, but employers are not involved. The assessor and workplace supervisor do not meet to discuss learners' progress or what learners are doing at work. There is no easy monitoring mechanism which shows which units are completed. The assessor is not informed of the impact of the results of initial assessment. The assessor does not use national or regional contacts to ensure that up-to-date information is used to good effect for the learners. The current internal verifier is not occupationally competent to cover all the NVQ. This has been highlighted by the external verifier and a new internal verifier has been appointed.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	16	4

17. Davidson Training offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships through a subcontracted private hairdressing school. There are seven foundation modern apprentices and nine advanced modern apprentices following NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing. Their induction covers health and safety and equal opportunities and includes occupational skills tests and basic skills testing. All learners attend the training school for one full day a week for their off-the-job training. Salons give weekly training sessions where learners work on clients. Off-the-job training is a mixed-ability session, where learners work together to improve their practical hairdressing skills and complete assignments and key skills work or theory work. A training diary for each NVQ level outlines the main topics for each week. Key skills elements are included through assignment work. Learners receive weekly feedback on their progress from their trainer at the hairdressing school. Eight-weekly reviews are carried out by the manager of the hairdressing school. Trainers have appropriate hairdressing experience and are qualified assessors.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							2		11	
Still in training							0	0	7	64
FMA framework completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							1	50	0	0
Left without completing the framework							1	50	4	36

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					7		5		2	
Still in training					2	29	3	60	2	100
AMA framework completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					6	86	1	20	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					5	71	2	40	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good practical skills training
- good support for learners' individual needs

WEAKNESSES

- poor assessment practice
- insufficient range of evidence in level 3 portfolios
- insufficient integration of key skills training with occupational training
- poor health and safety practices

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better monitoring of work-based assessment

18. Practical training is good, with most employers holding a weekly training session as well as offering manufacturers' courses. The hairdressing school has two well-designed salons including a small area for demonstration work. Salons are well equipped and have sufficient resources. Learners work with an appropriate variety of clients, demonstrating competence and confidence in their practical skills. Learners purchase their own tools and equipment for their training. They demonstrate a good level of practical skills; one trainer is involved in fashion and photographic work. They ensure that learners gain the type and level of skills they will need to be successful in their work.

19. Davidson Training gives good support to individual learners. For example, one learner has a scribe to help with their writing. Those learners for whom English is not their first language are given extra help with writing and spelling. Trainers give good encouragement to learners throughout the training sessions and spend extra time with those who need it. Learners have weekly meetings with their trainer, during which they are given useful feedback on their general progress and any comments about their attendance or punctuality. Notes from these meetings are sent to employers every month. Employers are not present at the learners' eight-weekly progress reviews but are sent copies of the review paperwork and asked for their comments.

20. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. Most assessments are carried out at the hairdressing school during off-the-job training. Employers are given a log to record

training activities that take place in the salons. Learners rarely get the chance to carry out reception duties at the hairdressing school, as the trainer handles such matters.

21. Assessments in the hairdressing school are poorly planned, a weakness recognised in Davidson Training's self-assessment report. The weekly review sheets do not show the exact criteria against which learners are being assessed. Learners are often unsure if they are being assessed, although the practical tasks they are given are appropriate for assessment. They show little knowledge of how to cross-reference their evidence against the standards of the NVQ. Learners complete tests and assignments in a logical order, but this fact is not always recorded. A new monitoring sheet has recently been introduced. There has been poor marking of some knowledge tests for NVQ units. Some answers lack sufficient information. The assessor marked some incorrect answers as correct. In one case, the internal verifier did not identify this. Insufficient use has been made of the awarding body's guide to recommended answers.

22. The evidence in portfolios for the level 2 and level 3 NVQs is very similar. The evidence in level 3 portfolios is too narrow in its scope, with little use of photographic evidence or statements from employers. The written work is superficial. Some learners are in jobs where they cannot gather the evidence of supervisory competence they need for some of the units of the level 3 NVQ and some are not aware of the range of evidence needed for these units.

23. Key skills training is poorly linked to the NVQ training, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Some learners are nearing the end of their training and have not completed their key skills units. Learners have many opportunities to gather evidence for the key skill of working together, but these opportunities are not always taken. They are aware of the key skills of communication, application of number and information technology, but neither they nor the subcontractor recognise the other key skills such as 'improving own learning'. Activities such as using the Internet to research hairdressing products are relevant to key skills training, but poorly linked to the key skills assessment criteria. Most individual training plans show an incorrect structure for the modern apprenticeship framework and give the same anticipated completion date for all aspects of the training programme. All the learners following NVQs at level 3 are taking the same three optional units. No learners have achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework, although 86 per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved an NVQ at level 2 in 1999-2000.

24. Some health and safety practices are poor. Procedures for sterilising equipment were poor, although learners were able to say how the procedures should have been carried out. Learners were handling chemicals without wearing protective clothing such as gloves or an apron. Clients having their hair coloured were not thoroughly checked during the consultation process to ensure all necessary testing had been carried out. Hairgrips were observed being placed in the mouth before securing sections of hair on the head. These concerns have previously been recorded by an external agency.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**Grade 4**

25. Davidson Training has two full-time directors. One director takes full responsibility for the day-to-day management of the company and handles quality assurance and equal opportunities matters. The other director takes a more strategic role in directing the business strategy. Two new staff posts have recently been created to allow the directors to develop their strategic roles. One is a 'head of centre', who has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of contracts with employers and is the lead verifier. The other is a 'centre manager', who supervises the team of assessors and acts as internal verifier for their work. There are six assessors, of whom two work part time, and a full-time administrator. The company has a quality assurance policy and procedures and an equal opportunities policy. All the company's policies and procedures are available for staff to see and use. The company was accredited with the Investors in People standard in 2000. The directors developed their first self-assessment report in September 2000, using the framework in 'Raising the Standard', and published it in November 2000. It was updated in February 2001. They consulted with staff and the subcontractor before drawing up the report.

STRENGTHS

- focused and responsive management
- productive links with subcontractor
- good appraisal system linked to development of training
- good use of recruitment data to develop equal opportunities strategies

WEAKNESSES

- lack of involvement by employers in training processes
- poor awareness of equal opportunities by staff
- quality assurance procedures which are not routinely applied to many training processes
- systems and procedures do not assure quality of training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of management information
- better use of written surveys of learners and employers
- clearer judgements in self-assessment report
- better promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities with employers

26. The directors work well together and give clear direction to the business through good formal communications and comprehensive business-planning procedures. One director has recently withdrawn from assessment activities to help to direct the business strategy. However, this transition has led to a lack of delegated staff responsibilities in

some instances, and staff do not yet fully understand their developing roles. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. There is an annual schedule of meetings and staff are given time to attend. Action plans are developed and monitored thoroughly.

27. Davidson Training has an effective working relationship with its subcontractor. It holds monthly meetings at the subcontractor's premises and these meetings are well recorded. The records clearly show how the subcontractor is meeting the requirements of its contract with Davidson Training. The subcontractor was fully involved in the discussions leading up to the production of the self-assessment report. Davidson Training's staff participate well in the training given at the subcontractor's premises, encouraging learners and joining in their discussions.

28. There is a good staff appraisal system, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. It effectively links staff development needs with setting and monitoring of targets. Staff are set appropriate personal targets based on the number of learners they are working with. The paperwork for the appraisal contains full records of targets that have been agreed in the past and sets out the requirements for the year ahead. If any targets have not been achieved, this is noted and reasons are given. Progress towards meeting these targets is thoroughly monitored. Each assessor meets with the centre manager every two weeks to discuss his or her progress.

29. Staff and learners do not have a full understanding of the programmes that Davidson Training offers and staff do not make full use of the information available from the awarding bodies. There is a lack of monitoring of assessment in the workplace and many procedures are not consistently followed.

30. Davidson Training does not involve its employers sufficiently in the training process. Employers are not given sufficient information about the training programmes, nor do they receive regular reports on learners' progress. This means they are not always able to help learners identify opportunities for assessment, which can slow learners' progress. Resources to help with practical training in the workplace are generally good and meet the needs of learners. However, the resources needed to help learners develop their knowledge are inadequate, particularly for the demands of level 3 NVQ work. The company has identified specific ways of improving in this area.

31. There is some good use of the management information system. The company uses it to monitor some aspects of learners' progress and identify areas of concern. It also uses it effectively in relation to equal opportunities data. However, it is not used to thoroughly monitor and evaluate the training programmes.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

32. Davidson Training collects data on learners in terms of their gender, ethnicity and any disability. It analyses this information on a quarterly and annual basis and uses the results effectively when planning its recruitment strategy. It prepares action plans, which are reviewed and updated four times a year. From its research, Davidson Training identified that few people from minority ethnic groups were joining sport and recreation training. It worked with a large employer to stage an event to encourage greater interest from minority ethnic groups. There is a satisfactory balance of men and women, people with disabilities and people from minority ethnic groups in other areas of learning. The company has taken part in several other initiatives to promote training to other people under-represented in training, such as ex-offenders and young people who do not attend school.

33. The company has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and an anti-harassment and bullying policy. It has helped its subcontractor to draw up an equal opportunities policy. Learners and staff are all given a copy of Davidson Training's policy and written information on equal opportunities at their induction. Learners are asked to find out about their employers' commitment to equality of opportunity, but have little awareness of the wider implications of equal opportunities in the workplace. Learners have little knowledge of their legal rights in terms of equal opportunities. Only one member of staff has received equal opportunities training. There is no system for keeping learners or staff up to date with new legislation or for reinforcing equal opportunities issues after induction. The paperwork for progress reviews makes no mention of equal opportunities. There is one question relating to equality in the paperwork for assessments, but its meaning is not clearly explained to learners and assessors do not ask them to explain their answers sufficiently.

34. Davidson Training seeks little information about employers' commitment to equal opportunities. The recently revised employers' agreement asks employers to comply with Davidson Training's policy if they do not have their own, but whether they do so is not monitored. The company keeps no records of whether employers' equal opportunities policies have been seen and checked. Davidson Training's equal opportunities policy refers to monitoring how employers implement equal opportunities in the workplace but the company is not doing this.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

35. There are comprehensive and well-prepared quality assurance policies and procedures, many of which have been developed recently to support the new structure of the company. However, they do not help to identify what the overall quality assurance structure is and staff do not understand what quality assurance means to Davidson Training or how the procedures connect to help them support the learners. Quality assurance procedures are not routinely applied to many of the daily training activities. For example, the results of the monthly meeting at which learners and assessors discuss targets are not taken forward for consideration at the eight-weekly progress review. Employers are not involved in these meetings and the way that related paperwork is completed does not always follow established procedures. The directors have developed the policies and discussed them at team meetings but staff do not receive copies of these policies. The large number of policies is sometimes confusing to staff and they are not viewed as an essential tool for improving standards. Staff meetings regularly discuss quality assurance issues but these are dealt with in isolation and little consideration is given to their effect on training as a whole.

36. Managers make regular internal verification visits to assessors and observe them carrying out their job at the same time, although there is no separate system to record this observation. The procedures for internal verification are comprehensive. However, they are not sufficiently thorough to pick up discrepancies that occur in some aspects of the training. The checking of learners' work is not always thorough and gives rise to incorrect answers to questions and wrong information being given to the learners. The internal verification process has not identified that learners are being given little theory training.

37. Davidson Training regularly evaluates learners and employers' views on their training programmes. Telephone surveys of learners are particularly effective. The results are comprehensively monitored and action is taken. As a result, a number of day-to-day assessment activities have been amended to help learners to understand the assessment process. However, the written evaluations, particularly those for employers, cannot provide enough information to identify particular issues which affect the training. They do not contribute to any purposeful review of the training programmes. Their results are not thoroughly monitored.

38. The procedures for developing the self-assessment report are new. The self-assessment report was developed by the directors. Staff, and the subcontractor, were encouraged to comment on the judgements. Some of the judgements lack clarity. The self-assessment report identified some strengths but underestimated some of the key weaknesses in the training.