

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
MAY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION JULY
2001

Bridge Training Resources



ADULT LEARNING
I N S P E C T O R A T E

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 *learndirect* 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.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Bridge Training Resources was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for management of training and quality assurance. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with management of training and quality assurance have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

Bridge Training Resources provides satisfactory training in foundation for work. Training programmes are tailored to individual learners' interests, level of ability and preferred style of learning. Learners make particularly good progress in basic skills. However, there are insufficient work placements for learners. Bridge Training Resources succeeds in recruiting and providing specialist support for learners with a wide range of disabilities and ongoing difficulties. At the time of the original inspection, the organisation lacked strategies to apply its equal opportunities policy. However, this has now been rectified. Staff provide appropriate additional training and personal support. At the original inspection, staff training was inadequate and some aspects of the training programmes were insufficiently co-ordinated. Bridge Training Resources now manages its training programmes very effectively and provides good training for its staff. However, business-planning remains weak and the organisation does not make sufficient use of data in decision-making. At the original inspection, quality assurance arrangements were inadequate and self-assessment was insufficiently thorough. There are now effective procedures to bring about ongoing improvements to training, and staff are fully involved in self-assessment. However, systems for monitoring the quality of training are in the early stages of development and the quality assurance of subcontracted training remains inadequate.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Foundation for work	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good progress towards individual goals
- ◆ good recruitment of learners with diverse needs
- ◆ staff highly responsive to learners' individual needs
- ◆ very effective co-ordination of training
- ◆ effective procedures to bring about ongoing improvements to training
- ◆ full involvement of staff in self-assessment

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work placements available
- ◆ insufficient use of management information systems
- ◆ weak business-planning
- ◆ incomplete quality assurance framework
- ◆ inadequate quality assurance of subcontracted training

INTRODUCTION

1. Bridge Training Resources is a charity, based in central Gloucester. It was established in 1989 to help young people and adults with disabilities and ongoing difficulties to improve their prospects of employment. It contracts with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for Gloucestershire to train young people who require additional support. It also contracts with the Employment Service to provide training in basic employability for adults in Gloucestershire with disabilities, learning difficulties and other barriers to employment. In addition, it has a contract with the Employment Service for New Deal 50+. Bridge Training Resources started to offer the life skills option of the Learning Gateway in November 1999. Since April 2001, it has offered the life skills programme as a subcontractor to another training provider. It also subcontracts with a local college of further education to provide the full-time education and training option of New Deal 18-24. Bridge Training Resources also receives funding through the European Social Fund to provide support, guidance and pre-vocational training for young people aged 16 to 25. At the time of the original inspection, there were 22 young people and 40 adults on programmes of work-based training. Currently, seven young people are on work-based training programmes and 24 are on the life skills option of the Learning Gateway. Three adults are on the full-time education and training option of New Deal 18-24, two are on New Deal 25+, and one is on New Deal 50+. Twenty-four adults are undertaking basic employability training. Learners work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in administration and information technology, externally accredited qualifications in basic skills, such as wordpower and numberpower, and foundation-level vocational qualifications. Bridge Training Resources' chief executive and 13 other staff are accountable to a board of trustees.

2. Gloucestershire is a rural county. In May 2000, the rate of unemployment stood at 3 per cent, compared with a national average of 3.9 per cent. In May 2001, the rate of unemployment was 2.2 per cent, compared with a national average of 3.2 per cent. Within the county, the rate of unemployment varies from 0.8 per cent in the Cirencester travel-to-work area, to 2.9 per cent in Gloucester. Engineering is an important source of employment in the county. Recently, however, the proportion of the workforce employed in engineering has declined from its peak of 20 per cent. Tourism and catering are providing an increasing number of jobs and new jobs are predicted in administration, finance and insurance. In addition, call centres are a growing business in the county. Distribution centres in Evesham and Swindon attract residents from Gloucestershire. The county has pockets of social deprivation, including Stroud, Dursley, the Forest of Dean and some inner-city areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham. The main shortage of skills in Gloucestershire is in information technology. The 1991 census found that just under 2 per cent of Gloucestershire's residents were from minority ethnic groups. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 56.1 per

cent, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Gloucestershire achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above had increased to 57 per cent, compared with a national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. Bridge Training Resources had its first training in self-assessment in 1997. It published its first self-assessment report in November 1999, following the framework in *Raising The Standard* and using guidelines from the local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Although it used feedback from learners and external agencies to identify strengths and weaknesses, it did not involve all its staff. In March 2000, the organisation published an action plan to rectify weaknesses identified in its self-assessment report. All staff received a copy of the self-assessment report and action plan. The report provided detailed information about the organisation but it did not identify some significant weaknesses. After the original inspection, Bridge Training Resources produced a second action plan, to consolidate the strengths and rectify the weaknesses identified through self-assessment and inspection. The organisation produced its most recent self-assessment report in May 2001, in preparation for the reinspection. At the same time, it produced a summary of the remedial action it had taken since the original inspection.

4. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 12 days carrying out the original inspection in May 2000. They interviewed 30 learners and held 29 interviews with Bridge Training Resources' staff and two staff from external agencies. Inspectors visited three work placements and held three interviews with workplace managers and supervisors. They examined 24 learners' files and 18 portfolios. Inspectors observed and graded lessons and observed one progress review. They also examined contracts with the TEC, external verifiers' reports, the organisation's policies on health and safety and equal opportunities, its quality assurance and other manuals, minutes of meetings, records of staff development, learning materials, data collected for monitoring purposes, and the organisation's business plan and marketing materials.

5. A team of two inspectors spent a total of eight days carrying out the reinspection in July 2001. They interviewed 11 learners, nine of Bridge Training Resources' staff, and two staff from external agencies. They visited four work placements and interviewed four workplace managers and supervisors. They observed one lesson and one progress review, awarding the lesson a grade 3. They examined learners' files and portfolios, contracts with the local LSC, minutes of meetings, records of staff appraisal and development, management information, and quality assurance policies and procedures. Inspectors found that the lack of action plans to implement the organisation's equal opportunities policy, identified as a weakness at the original inspection, had been rectified. This no longer appears as a key weakness in the summary, although it remains in the weaknesses and text for equal opportunities, which was outside the scope of the reinspection.

Grades awarded to lessons at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Foundation for work	2	3	1	1	0	7

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Foundation for work

Grade 3

6. Bridge Training Resources' foundation for work programmes are available to people aged between 16 and 63, particularly those with a wide range of additional learning and personal needs. Many trainees have physical disabilities or learning difficulties. Some come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and may have behavioural or alcohol- and drug-related problems. The youth training programme provides training for trainees working towards an NVQ at level 1 in information technology. They have been endorsed by the careers service as having additional training needs. Sixteen trainees are on the life skills option of the Learning Gateway which was introduced in September 1999 for young people who require initial support before progressing to employment or further training. One trainee is on a similar programme, known as 'New Start'. Forty adult trainees are on the basic employability programme, designed to help them overcome barriers to employment.

7. Trainees on the basic employability programmes and Learning Gateway work towards individual learning goals or 'milestones' designed to help them to overcome identified barriers to employment and further training. Individual programmes are negotiated with trainees during the first few weeks of training. Some trainees receive occupational training in information technology, business administration and basic construction skills. Some adult trainees work towards an NVQ at level 1 in information technology. The other trainees work towards nationally recognised foundation training awards and vocational certificates. Additional occupational training, leading to national certificates, is available in skills such as fork truck operation, health and hygiene and furniture restoration. Trainees choose to undertake either entire qualifications or units identified as of particular benefit to them. Trainees who have been identified as having literacy and numeracy learning needs work towards basic skills qualifications. Two members of staff who are qualified to teach basic skills offer training in numeracy, literacy and personal development. Training in health and safety and job search is included in all the programmes. One member of staff has responsibility for arranging work experience for trainees. Work experience of up to five days is arranged for the Learning Gateway trainees, whereas adult trainees have a work placement for four weeks. Five adult trainees currently have placements, which include a home for the elderly, a furniture recycling project and a city farm. Trainees' progress is reviewed every six weeks.

8. In 1997-98, 24 per cent of adult trainees achieved jobs. In 1998-99 and 1999-

2000, this figure stood at 15 per cent and 17 per cent respectively. However, retention and qualification achievement rates have improved. In 1997-98, 62 per cent of trainees left the programme early without qualifications rising to 65 per cent in 1998-99. However, in 1999-2000, only thirty per cent left without achieving a qualification, while 21 per cent achieved some of their individual learning goals and 55 per cent completed their individual training plans. Of the 29 trainees who started the youth training programmes in 1998-99, 10 achieved the NVQ in information technology and 13 trainees left without qualifications. The five trainees who started in 1999-2000 are still in training. Ninety per cent of the 21 trainees who have started the 19-week Learning Gateway programme since it was introduced in September 1999 are either still in training or have achieved jobs. Two have left early without achieving a qualification. Self-assessment was not sufficiently focused on the occupational area. Many of the strengths and weaknesses related to the generic aspects. Some did not clearly address the issues. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good occupational training in basic construction
- ◆ excellent matching of trainees to work placements
- ◆ creative learning activities in basic skills training
- ◆ good progress towards individual goals

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work placements available
- ◆ no records made of on-the-job learning
- ◆ late assessment of trainees' progress in information technology

9. Training in basic construction skills is effective. Good use is made of individual and group projects to develop trainees' skills in woodwork and metal craft. Trainees design their own projects, which often involve making an item for the home or to support an interest or hobby. Staff provide an appropriate level of guidance, according to the trainees' individual learning needs. Trainees are encouraged to become increasingly independent in making decisions and finding solutions to problems. Skills in teamwork are developed through challenging group projects. For example, 11 trainees designed and built an ornamental canon out of wood. This involved each trainee contributing by taking the responsibility for one component. Trainees are well motivated and learn a good range of basic construction skills. Youth trainees, working towards NVQs at level 1 in information technology, are given a wide range of challenging tasks. Trainees develop their computing skills while working on other aspects of their training programme such as understanding health and safety or legal issues. However, some business administration and information technology workshop sessions for adult trainees lack structure. Trainees working through set assignments do not always receive adequate support. Trainees sometimes have to wait for long periods before staff are free to offer assistance. Feedback to trainees on the quality of their

assignments is slow. Trainers mark trainees' work weekly. Although trainees receive verbal comments on their work during the sessions, they have to wait for up to a week to receive a more detailed response.

10. Trainees make good progress in basic skills. Innovative activities, such as visits to the Crown Court and the local radio station, are used to enable trainees to practise their literacy and interpersonal skills. The trainers are adept at finding different ways to catch the trainees' imagination. Trainees work well together planning and arranging events, outings and activities, incorporating a wide range of communication and number skills. A good variety of suitable learning materials are used to supplement this work. Home-produced handouts and everyday practical equipment complement the published materials, including videos and audio tapes. Youth and adult trainees work well together. Staff successfully adapt learning tasks and resources to meet the different levels and interests of all trainees. The trainers are responsive to the trainees' learning styles. Trainers use some good training techniques to help trainees to tackle specific basic or key skills which they have previously found difficult. Much of the trainees' work is assessed towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications or certificates in personal development. However, some trainees are working towards qualifications which are inappropriate to their abilities. They are not given sufficient information on the level of their qualification.

11. Trainees' learning programmes are well planned, and are realistic and relevant. Information obtained during the initial interview and induction is effectively used to identify appropriate learning targets. Learning plans take into account trainees' interests and job aspirations, as well as their learning needs. Staff make effective use of a list of recognised targets for adult trainees. In 1999-2000, trainees who completed the programme achieved an average of three targets or 'milestones'. Trainees achieve a good range of additional vocational qualifications, such as certificates in chainsaw skills, basic electrics and computer literacy. Most trainees become significantly more self-confident while on the training programmes.

12. Bridge Training Resources has developed good links with a small number of local employers. Staff successfully arrange work experience opportunities which are appropriate to trainees' learning needs and personal circumstances, and they collaborate effectively with employers to ensure that the supervisors have a good understanding of the trainees' learning goals. The trainees' roles within the organisation are sensitively negotiated. Work tasks are challenging, but realistic, and trainees receive good on-the-job training to help them carry out their work. Although employers and trainees sign an agreement with Bridge Training Resources, the majority of the details about the arrangements for work experience are not recorded. Trainees and supervisors are not encouraged to keep records of on-the-job training. Trainees do not receive written acknowledgement of the skills they acquire at work. Bridge Training Resources does not find sufficient work placements for its trainees. Neither youth nor adult trainees are given sufficient opportunities to use the skills they develop in a work-related context. Some

training in information technology, craft and basic skills is not sufficiently linked to the world of work. It is not made clear to trainees how some training activities are relevant to future jobs or work-based training programmes. The proportion of trainees progressing to jobs is low. In 1999-2000, 17 per cent of adult trainees achieved a job.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

13. Bridge Training Resources has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which meets the requirements of the TEC and the Employment Service. The policy, which is reviewed annually, is contained within the quality assurance manual, which is issued to all staff. Overall responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the training manager. Trainees are given a copy of the company's equal opportunities policy during their induction. Equal opportunities has recently become a fixed agenda item at monthly staff meetings. Equal opportunities data are collected in accordance with TEC requirements. Information on gender and ethnicity is held on a database. Bridge Training Resources' client group is mainly drawn from people with specific learning needs and disabilities. Between 1999 and 2000, 46 per cent of trainees had disabilities, and 10 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. Inspectors agreed with the strength identified in the self-assessment report and with one of the weaknesses. Staff have been given training in equal opportunities. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good awareness by staff of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ prompt action taken to resolve complaints
- ◆ good recruitment of trainees with diverse needs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no equal opportunities action plan
- ◆ no routine monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ restricted access to training for those using wheelchairs

14. The policy is informative. It clearly summarises relevant legislation and includes clear descriptions of forms of discrimination and victimisation. Separate sections outline the company's stance on harassment and bullying. However, the policy is not adequately promoted to staff, trainees or employers. There is no overall plan either to implement equal opportunities procedures or to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy. A promotional leaflet is sent to referral agencies and potential trainees, but it does not contain a statement about Bridge Training Resources' commitment to equal opportunities.

15. Staff have a good awareness of equal opportunities issues. Recent training has effectively increased their understanding of their role in promoting equality of opportunity. Trainers and managers liaise to ensure that good practice in equal opportunities is incorporated in all aspects of the training programmes. Equal opportunities issues are discussed at monthly staff meetings. This includes reviewing learning materials and developing innovative ways to present equal opportunities issues to trainees. Equal opportunities is effectively introduced in the induction programme. Trainees' understanding is checked using a comprehensive questionnaire. Trainees are made aware of the grievance procedures and have a good understanding of the process for dealing with any grievances. Prompt action has been taken when complaints have been made. Formal procedures are strictly adhered to. Each case is discussed thoroughly with all parties concerned, including witnesses, until a satisfactory conclusion is reached. Details of complaints are appropriately recorded in the trainees' files, but there is no recording of the agreed outcome.

16. Bridge Training Resources effectively recruits trainees with diverse learning needs and specialises in working with people with disabilities. Staff have worked with a good range of external agencies, including other training providers, to increase the scope of support offered to those with disabilities at work. Fifty per cent of the workforce has a disability. Trainees' recruitment data are maintained and monitored. The 1999-2000 annual report published equal opportunities data on staff and clients. Recruitment of women is below the average for the county of Gloucester, but recruitment of people with disabilities and from minority ethnic groups is above the average. The organisation has procedures to broaden its recruitment objectives but these are not planned. The data are not routinely analysed to identify trends and help with marketing. The organisation has no strategy to promote the learning opportunities available at Bridge Training Resources. The annual report sets recruitment targets for the following year but no action plans are produced to outline what action will be taken to meet the targets.

17. Equal opportunities practices are not routinely monitored in the workplace. Bridge Training Resources has no systems or procedures to ensure that its trainees are receiving fair treatment at work. Employers training agreements have recently been amended to include a section on equal opportunities. A handbook given to employers, outlining their responsibilities for providing equality of opportunity for trainees from Bridge Training Resources, has recently been completed but has not yet been circulated. Bridge Training Resources has made available an information leaflet on equal opportunities to employers, but the effectiveness of this approach is not monitored.

18. Access for those in wheelchairs is restricted. The craft workshop was specifically designed to enable those with restricted mobility to access the facilities, but the two other units are cramped. Entrances to some of the training and rest rooms are not level. Lavatory facilities for trainees with disabilities are inadequate.

Trainee support

Grade 3

19. Trainees are referred to Bridge Training Resources by the careers service or the Employment Service. Some trainees come to the organisation on personal recommendations. The placement and recruitment officer interviews potential trainees. An initial interview form is used to record their prior experience and aspirations for the future and establish their eligibility for the particular programme. If no place is available immediately, potential trainees are added to a waiting list. A confidential medical questionnaire is completed. Trainees have an induction to their training programmes on an individual basis and complete an initial assessment package which is used to identify areas for development. An information booklet includes health and safety, grievance and disciplinary procedures. A procedure to check trainees' understanding of the induction has recently been introduced. This is undertaken on the first day of training and comments are sought from trainees within the first week on how they feel about their process. Progress reviews are carried out every four to eight weeks, depending on the programme. Trainees carry out a self-assessment on their progress on a monthly basis and discuss these with the trainers during the reviews. Trainees on the level 1 NVQ in information technology are introduced to the NVQ programme when deemed appropriate. One member of staff is a qualified social worker and two have undertaken introductory courses in counselling. Basic skills and business administration trainees receive training in job-search skills for one and a half days each week. The self-assessment report was not sufficiently self-critical. It did not include the weaknesses identified by inspectors. However, inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the organisation.

GOOD PRACTICE

One trainee made significant progress on the information technology programme after being given a keyboard for left-handed trainees.

Magnifying screens for computers and specific software have been purchased to help trainees with sight difficulties or those with low reading levels.

Another trainee received all his documents on green paper, after it had been identified that this improved his ability to distinguish print.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ staff highly responsive to trainees' individual needs
- ◆ good additional support given to meet trainees' specific learning needs and difficulties
- ◆ effective reviews

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate initial assessment
- ◆ no routine recording of additional support given to trainees
- ◆ insufficiently planned job-search training

20. Training and administration staff and managers are highly responsive to the individual needs of the trainees. The organisation has developed good links with a wide range of external agencies which provide specialist support and advice. Staff work closely and patiently with trainees to help them to overcome personal problems and counter disadvantages. Individual sessions are held with trainees to identify their barriers to employment and work out individual targets to ensure that, wherever possible, trainees complete their training.

21. Additional training in basic and personal skills is available to trainees on all programmes. A high proportion of trainees receive this support. One member of staff has experience in supporting dyslexic learners. Good use is made of additional funds to support trainees with specific barriers to learning. Specialist equipment is available to meet trainees' specific additional training needs. Staff successfully adopt innovative and imaginative training methods to fit in with trainees' specific learning needs. The progress review process has been under review since December 1999. Revised paperwork is used to ensure that a wider range of aspects of the trainees' programme is discussed. The new review form provides trainers with a comprehensive checklist to prompt more in-depth planning. The forms are effectively used to identify and record action points and revised targets. Staff use record sheets when carrying out daily reviews of trainees' progress. Trainers and trainees complete a chart to record progress and any barriers encountered which have prevented progress that particular day.

22. Bridge Training Resources has no clear written procedures for conducting initial assessments and reviews. A comprehensive initial assessment process was developed in 1997 and shared with other training providers. However, practice is inconsistent across the programmes. The process has not been fully discussed to ensure that all staff using the information are aware of how assessments are carried out. Most trainees are assessed for their levels of basic skills when they join the programme. The results are used to produce trainees' individual training plans and to alert staff to the need for additional learning and support. Details of trainees' prior learning are not systematically recorded on their individual training plans. There is no initial assessment of their occupational skills. All trainees follow the same set information technology work packs, regardless of their prior learning and experience.

23. There are no systematic procedures for identifying or recording additional support. Support is provided when trainees specifically request it or when a member of staff is astute in identifying trainees' particular need for help. There are no clear procedures to ensure that support is taken up nor that its effectiveness is reviewed. No one in the organisation has designated responsibility for managing the support given to trainees.

24. There are no training plans for use in job-search training. Resource packs are available, as are practice interviews and assistance in curriculum vitae and letter writing. Additional resources are limited to information received from the Employment Service and local newspapers. Some staff have insufficient training and experience in helping people to develop job-search skills.

Management of training

Grade 3

25. Bridge Training Resources' chief executive and 13 other staff are accountable to a board of trustees. The management structure has recently changed. Strategic

management is the responsibility of the managing director, who is supported by a management team, consisting of the training manager, the work-placement co-ordinator, the administration and quality assurance manager, and the head of information technology. There are six tutors, who carry out the training, together with the training manager and the work-placement co-ordinator. The work-placement co-ordinator also arranges workshops in practical skills. Two administrators support the administration and quality assurance manager. New staff complete a period of voluntary work, to learn about the demands of the job, before their employment is confirmed. Seven of the staff are former learners. All staff have job descriptions. Staff are appraised annually, as part of a programme of staff development. There are regular meetings for all staff. Employers receive a booklet about the organisation's work. Bridge Training Resources visits work-placement providers to check that their arrangements for health and safety are appropriate to individual learners' needs. The organisation has an agreement with employers to ensure that workplace supervisors are aware of learners' individual requirements.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate staff training and development
- ◆ weak business-planning
- ◆ no co-ordination of some aspects of training
- ◆ inadequate use of management information systems

26. Bridge Training Resources has made good progress towards rectifying the weaknesses identified during the original inspection. It has changed its staffing structure and established specialist groups of staff to improve its co-ordination of training. Staff training and development, which was inadequate at the time of the original inspection, is now good. The self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection follows the *Common Inspection Framework* and identifies a single set of strengths and weaknesses for leadership and management. Although the report provides detailed information about the organisation, it is insufficiently evaluative. Inspectors did not agree with the weaknesses relating to management of training. However, they identified two other weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ very effective co-ordination of training
- ◆ good staff development and training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak business-planning
- ◆ insufficient use of management information systems

27. Bridge Training Resources has rectified the lack of co-ordination of training which was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. It has set up

GOOD PRACTICE

Young people on information technology programmes use a database to produce bar charts showing their attendance each month. The charts are displayed in one of the workrooms. If a learner's attendance significantly improves or deteriorates, it is discussed with the training manager. This makes learners aware how important it is to attend for work. Within one year, the rate of attendance has improved from 40 to 80 per cent.

occupational teams led by team leaders with clearly specified roles and responsibilities. The team leaders are responsible for, planning training, deploying tutors and managing training resources in their respective occupational areas, and for assessments and reviews of learners' progress. The organisation has started to plan and evaluate training on a weekly basis. This has enabled tutors to detect slow progress and to respond more effectively to learners' widely varying needs and abilities. It has also led to more effective target-setting. Each learner has a personal action plan for each week, which includes targets relating to training and additional support. All learners now have mentors, who are responsible for co-ordinating all aspects of their training and for dealing with any internal and external enquiries. This has made learners' training programmes more coherent.

28. Bridge Training Resources has set up three specialist groups of staff, an assessment group, an employment group, and a learner support group. This has ensured that regular meetings take place between all staff involved in training, assessing and finding work placements for learners. Each group includes a tutor from each occupational team. Staff who attend the specialist groups share information with other staff, at meetings for all staff, and at meetings of the occupational teams. The specialist groups have improved the co-ordination of learners' training programmes. The learner support group meets fortnightly to discuss each learner. This group has led to the sharing of good practice and more effective links between the various occupational teams. It has also resulted in the prompt detection of problems and swift responses to learners' changing needs. Managers welcome suggestions from staff about how to improve the organisation and learners' training.

29. New staff have a comprehensive and thorough induction. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. Bridge Training Resources carefully prepares staff to take on more responsibility, through training, work-shadowing and mentoring. All staff have job descriptions, although some have yet to be updated to reflect the recent changes to the staffing structure. Yearly staff appraisals involve self-assessment, observation and feedback on performance. These are also used to set objectives and plan staff development for the coming year. Since the original inspection, Bridge Training Resources has produced a strategy and a detailed annual plan for staff development. These reflect both the priorities of the organisation and the needs identified by individual staff. During 2000-01, staff have participated in a wide range of activities to develop their skills. Seven staff are working towards trainers' qualifications, five tutors have completed additional training in health and safety, and all staff have had training in how to promote equal opportunities within their specific roles. The staff development plan for 2001-02 focuses on increasing the occupational competence of staff and on improving the way in which they carry out their roles at work, in order to give a better service to learners and meet their changing needs. For example, one member of staff from each occupational team is undertaking nationally accredited training in identifying weaknesses in basic skills and linking basic skills support to occupational training.

30. Staff at Bridge Training Resources fully understand and support the organisation's aims. However, the organisation has been slow to develop strategic and business plans. It sets itself few targets. Planning by managers focuses on financial and contractual targets rather than the longer-term success of the business. The business plan for 2001-02 has not yet been agreed by the trustees. The draft business plan does not set objectives or precise targets for some of the organisation's activities. Nor does it set targets relating to all the actions proposed in the annual report and the staff training and equal opportunities plans. It describes areas into which the business hopes to expand but it does not specify the extent of the expansion envisaged or the timescale for achieving it.

31. Various data are collected and discussed at staff meetings. However, Bridge Training Resources does not use these data sufficiently when making plans and taking decisions. It therefore misses opportunities to identify ways of improving its training. For example, it has not analysed some of its equal opportunities data. While it has identified that there are fewer women than men on its training programmes, it has not identified that women are less likely to gain work placements and employment. Bridge Training Resources collects information on applicants who attend interviews and start training. However, it does not analyse this information to identify patterns in applicants' failure to attend interviews and ways of increasing the number of applicants starting training. The organisation is in the early stages of developing a single, comprehensive database to record full information on all aspects of learners' recruitment and achievements.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

32. Bridge Training Resources has a quality assurance policy setting out its commitment to make continuous improvements to its services. It has developed a system to apply the policy which covers most of the main processes involved in providing training. The organisation has reviewed its quality assurance arrangements each year since 1993. All staff have a copy of the quality assurance manual. The administration and quality assurance manager is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the organisation's quality assurance procedures. Two members of staff are qualified internal verifiers. The organisation issues regular questionnaires to obtain feedback from learners and closely monitors learners' progress, achievements and destinations.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ weak internal verification
- ◆ insufficient analysis of data
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous self-assessment

33. Since the original inspection, Bridge Training Resources has developed

additional procedures to assure quality. It now has a satisfactory internal verification system. The action plan produced after the original inspection has improved training. The organisation now has satisfactory systems to gather and analyse data, which it uses to make decisions about the quality of its training. The self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection follows the *Common Inspection Framework*. This report is supported by a further report, on action taken since the original inspection, which lists clear evidence of improvements. The self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical. Inspectors identified different strengths and weaknesses from those identified in the self-assessment report but awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective procedures to bring about ongoing improvements to training
- ◆ good handbooks
- ◆ full involvement of staff in self-assessment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete quality assurance framework
- ◆ underdeveloped system for monitoring the quality of training
- ◆ inadequate quality assurance of subcontracted training

34. Since the original inspection, Bridge Training Resources has developed effective systems and procedures to improve its training. Learners now have daily and weekly targets, which are recorded on personal action plans. If difficulties arise, a report is made and this is noted on the learner's action plan. The quality assurance manager analyses the action plans and reports. This allows more effective monitoring of individual learners' progress. Staff are fully involved in deciding on actions to improve training and carrying them out. Managers regularly seek suggestions from staff and learners, through both formal meetings and informal discussions. The organisation has made various changes as a result of suggestions made. For example, it has changed the layout of its training rooms and workshops as a result of suggestions from staff. Learners can now choose between separate lessons in basic skills and additional help with basic skills during their other lessons. Staff use diaries to record when learners start and end their training. This ensures that progress reviews take place when they are due. The organisation also uses diaries to record all contact with employers.

35. Bridge Training Resources produces good handbooks. There are separate handbooks for staff, employers and learners. An additional handbook for staff includes practical advice about equal opportunities. The handbooks contain clear and comprehensive information and use almost no complicated vocabulary or jargon. The employers' handbook sets out clearly the standards required for work placements. At the time of the original inspection, Bridge Training Resources had only recently introduced the handbooks and had not yet measured their effectiveness. It has now sought employers' views. Employers have welcomed the

handbook and some have asked if they can adapt them for use with their own staff. Bridge Training Resources provides additional information, for example on equal opportunities, for employers which require it. It has produced a document which illustrates clearly how equal opportunities legislation affects small businesses. Learners find the handbook they receive during induction valuable.

36. Self-assessment is no longer carried out solely by senior managers. Bridge Training Resources now consults its staff thoroughly and involves them in making judgements about the quality of its training. It has produced a detailed questionnaire to establish the views of staff. Responses to the questionnaire are thoughtful and detailed. The quality assurance manager analyses the responses to identify patterns and the findings contribute to the self-assessment report. The organisation asks staff to comment on the completed self-assessment report. Staff also discuss self-assessment at staff meetings. During self-assessment, Bridge Training Resources takes into account comments made by external organisations. Currently, however, its formal consultation with employers does not coincide with self-assessment.

37. Bridge Training Resources' quality assurance manual is comprehensive and clearly presented. It now includes flowcharts covering initial interviews, initial assessments, inductions and progress reviews. However, the organisation's quality assurance framework is not yet complete. There are no policies or procedures covering self-assessment or the gathering and use of feedback. There is no system for controlling documents or for dating policies, procedures and paperwork. Internal audits concentrate on contractual compliance. They pay insufficient attention to the quality of the systems for recording information and to the quality and consistency of recording across the organisation. For example, they have not highlighted the lack of detail in some action plans and records of progress reviews.

GOOD PRACTICE

Bridge Training Resources issues all staff with a handbook on equal opportunities. The handbook includes clear examples to illustrate the concept of discrimination and the law relating to it. It includes guidance on using appropriate language to talk to and about others and suggests alternatives to inappropriate words. The handbook covers ethnicity, disability, gender and sexual orientation. This has helped to ensure that equal opportunities is promoted consistently throughout the organisation.

38. The system for observing training is not fully established. Managers observe staff during their day-to-day management of the organisation. They also carry out occasional recorded observations of subcontractors and staff. However, few observations are planned in advance. Managers use agreed criteria to assess performance during recorded observations and the managing director analyses managers' records of observations. However, Bridge Training Resources lacks clear and comprehensive procedures for planning and carrying out observations and for training its staff to carry out observations. There are no observations of training in the workplace.

39. Bridge Training Resources occasionally uses skilled craftspeople, normally local employers, to provide additional short courses in its workshops. It does not adequately assure the quality of this training. The organisation does observe the courses as part of its system for observing training generally. However, there is no written procedure for approving craftspeople to carry out training. Nor does the organisation specify the quality of training required.