

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Stubbing Court Combined Training Group

10 December 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 **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.

## 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

Stubbing Court Combined Training Group is a private training company located near Chesterfield in Derbyshire. It currently provides land-based training in horse care for 63 learners in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Land-based training in horse care is unsatisfactory. The company's leadership and management of the provision is unsatisfactory, although its approach to equality of opportunity is good.

### GRADES

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

Land-based provision	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

### KEY STRENGTHS

- good work placements
- good links with external organisations

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate training in background knowledge
- poor achievement and retention rates
- unsystematic collection and analysis of management information
- weak internal verification

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more structured key skills training
- more opportunities for assessors to share good practice

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at Stubbing Court Combined Training Group (SCCTG). They visited 14 workplaces, conducting 34 interviews with learners and 17 interviews with workplace supervisors. Seven interviews were held with SCCTG's staff, and progress reviews, training sessions and assessments were observed. A range of documentary evidence was examined, which included learners' portfolios and records, individual learning plans, review documents, assessment records, external verifier's reports, minutes of meetings, and plans, policies and procedures.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Land-based provision	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. SCCTG was established in 1983 by its present owner to provide and promote a competent, trained and educated workforce for the horse industry. The company provides work-based learning in horse care. Most training is given on the job. The off-the-job training for most learners is in first aid, riding and road safety, and health and safety. A few learners attend SCCTG's premises for key skills training or to complete NVQ units after they have left the training programme. SCCTG employs five full-time and one part-time staff. These are a chief executive, a centre co-ordinator, an administrator/assessor, an administrator/trainee assessor, a learner supervisor/trainer, and a part-time receptionist. Three staff members are qualified as assessors, two as internal verifiers and one as a key skills practitioner. There is also a part-time receptionist. The trainee assessor started working towards a recognised assessors' qualification in November 2001.

3. SCCTG currently has 63 learners, most of whom are employed. Some employers that are not easily accessible by public transport provide accommodation for learners. There are 22 advanced modern apprentices, 20 foundation modern apprentices and 21 learners on other work-based learning programmes, taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3. The training is funded by two local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, with most learners in Derbyshire. The unemployment rate in Derbyshire in September 2001 was 3.2 per cent, and in Nottinghamshire it was 3.7 per cent. This compares with 3.0 per cent for the East Midlands, which is in line with the proportion for England as a whole. The largest industries in Derbyshire are service industries, manufacturing and construction, which together account for 88 per cent of the employed population. Less than two per cent of the population are employed in land-based industries. In 2001, the proportion of Derbyshire's school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 52 per cent, and in Nottinghamshire it was 46 per cent. The national average was 47.9 per cent. In Derbyshire, 4 per cent of school leavers did not achieve any GCSEs and the proportion in Nottinghamshire was 6 per cent. One and a half per cent of Nottinghamshire's, and less than 1 per cent of Derbyshire's, population are from minority ethnic groups.



### **Work-based learning for young people**

4. Nineteen per cent of learners starting between 1998 and 2001 achieved all the requirements of the advanced modern apprenticeship framework. Of the 51 foundation modern apprentices who started between 1998 and 2001, only 17 per cent completed the full framework. Ten of these 51 converted to advanced modern apprenticeships. Sixty per cent of learners starting NVQ training between 2000 and 2001 left without achieving an NVQ. Retention rates are particularly poor for NVQ learners, and 31 per cent of those who started in the current year have already left.

5. The quality of training is unsatisfactory. Where there are no work-based assessors, employers are not involved in action-planning and there is a lack of on-the-job training towards the NVQ. There is no formal training in background knowledge. Practical training is unplanned and is given only on the activities taking place at the yard. Some assessment practices are weak. Internal verification is inadequate. During the inspection, inspectors saw no records of observation of assessors, apart from those for riding units. The internal verification process is poorly understood by the internal verifiers. Comments on the internal verification record for the riding units refer to the ability of the learner and make no reference to the competence of the assessor or the way the assessment was carried out. Some learners do not know who their assessor is. Most learners achieve all the NVQ units together at the end of the programme. There is little accreditation of units throughout the training programme, so learners who leave early have nothing to show for their training and those who remain are not clear about the progress they are making towards the NVQ. The work placements, however, are of good quality and many learners gain good experience of the horse industry.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

6. SCCTG is a private training company founded in 1983 to train young people in horse care. The proprietor acts as centre manager. The company also has a chief executive, two full-time administrators, a trainer and a receptionist. SCCTG has 63 learners and manages 37 work placements. There are 14 assessors, three of whom are SCCTG's staff. SCCTG has an equal opportunities policy which covers employees, employers and learners. There is also a quality assurance manual, which contains policies and procedures for work-based learning. SCCTG holds the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. It produced its first self-assessment report in 1997, and has updated the report quarterly since then. The report of October 2001 was referred to by the inspection team.

### STRENGTHS

- good links with external organisations
- good staff training and development
- clear policy and procedures on equality of opportunity
- good promotion of equine training to under-represented groups

### WEAKNESSES

- inadequate collection and analysis of management information
- little reinforcement of equal opportunities
- weak internal verification
- lack of focus on the learner in self-assessment

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more opportunities for assessors to share good practice
- more structured key skills training

7. SCCTG has good links with a wide range of external organisations involved in education and the support of learners. The company takes part in national initiatives to encourage young people to work with horses. The chief executive is a member of the executive committee of one of the networks, involved in organising conferences and other events to promote good practice and inform providers of issues relating to education and training. Conferences include speakers on national issues, for example senior officials from the Department for Education and Skills. There are links with colleges and awarding bodies which provide useful contacts for staff development. SCCTG has established a network of employers and work placement providers that give learners excellent experience of practical work. Employers have to renew their contracts annually and are checked for suitability and safe practice. They value the frequent communication which keeps them up to date with SCCTG's procedures and

industry events, and promotes awareness of best practice. SCCTG has recently organised two employers' training days on occupational standards, health and safety, first aid, and guidance on effective gathering of evidence. Similar events were held in 1999 and 2000. Many employers have gained health and safety certification from courses organised by SCCTG.

8. Staff training and development is good, and it is effectively monitored. SCCTG provides staff with clearly written, accurate job descriptions, which are amended as appropriate following further training or a change of duties. SCCTG actively promotes a wide range of courses for staff and assessors. These include updates from the awarding body and health and safety and first-aid courses. Training is often well attended and had included LSC and Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) briefings as well as training in child protection. There is a system of continual professional development.

9. The management information system is weak. It does not effectively capture data which can be used to plan for continual improvement. SCCTG's analysis and summary of data are poor. The strategic plan does not set demanding targets for retention, achievement, progression and employment. Managers do not routinely use the data to guide their decisions. SCCTG had difficulty providing data on achievement and retention rates for the inspection. The strategic plan only refers to contractual compliance for retention and achievement rates. SCCTG has no system to compare groups of learners or identify trends in achievement.

10. A mentoring system has been introduced through which level 3 learners guide level 1 and 2 learners. At present, there are three mentors advising three learners who started in July 2001. It is too early to accurately measure the effect of the scheme on retention and achievement rates, and at present the number of learners involved is too small to have a significant impact. However, positive feedback has been gained from the mentored learners.

11. Monitoring of on-the-job training is unsatisfactory. Many learners do not receive formal training sessions. SCCTG does not effectively monitor work practices, the teaching of background knowledge or the planning of assessment. There is ongoing recording of assessments, but NVQ units are not signed off as completed until the end of the programme. There is no system of target-setting for individual NVQ units. The newly-appointed assessors are enthusiastic. They have a clear understanding of the assessment process and the need to plan and record training and assessment. Two assessors use action plans effectively. Assessors do not share this good practice. There have been only two recorded assessors' meetings since 1999. There is poor monitoring of learners' progress and achievement. The present system does not clearly show unit achievement, progress in key skills or completion of additional qualifications. Units are not achieved individually so it is impossible to find out whether learners are likely to achieve their NVQ on time without searching through individual log books. Action plans are underused and do not relate to individual units. SCCTG does not have copies of action plans made by work-based assessors. Learners are reviewed by different members of SCCTG's staff depending on who is available at the time. Review

paperwork mainly comprises yes/no tick boxes, and there is little space for recording progress, action-planning or target-setting. Learners are not given targets for their progress through the units. Reviews do not generate enough information on learners' progress. Information is not available without researching learners' files or contacting assessors. Many assessments are not signed off until the end of the programme.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

12. SCCTG has a recently updated equal opportunities policy, which clearly sets out its commitment to the provision of equal opportunities. It covers work-placement providers, employers, learners and employees, and allows for positive action where this is appropriate. Employers' annual agreements with SCCTG require them to implement the policy in the workplace. The chief executive of SCCTG is responsible for ensuring equality of opportunity, but the procedures emphasise the responsibility of all staff for its promotion and monitoring. Key staff have either attended, or will be attending, equal opportunities training. SCCTG's equal opportunities committee includes an employer and an external adviser.

13. SCCTG's promotion of careers and training in the equine industry to under-represented groups is good. It has recognised the need to target under-represented groups including men, members of minority ethnic groups, and people living in cities. SCCTG sends a male representative to careers fairs. It worked with a local LSC and a local college to organise a one-day course for young men from minority ethnic groups in inner city areas. This was held at a riding event, where the learners were given a riding lesson and watched professional riders in action. SCCTG provides training opportunities for disaffected school pupils and for learners with no GCSE passes. It also provides for learners with specific learning difficulties. There is one profoundly deaf learner on the training programme.

14. Learners are given a copy of SCCTG's equal opportunities policy and have to sign a receipt for it. However, some do not read the policy and few understand what it means to them. Equal opportunities issues are not regularly raised with learners during the training programmes. All learners are aware of the procedure they should follow in the event of harassment or bullying taking place.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 4**

15. The chief executive internally verifies key skills work. There is one key skills assessor who has almost completed a qualification in teaching and assessing key skills. There are well-written workbooks for key skills, but the training in key skills is not sufficiently structured. Initial assessments often identify weak key skills, but it is not always clear how these have been dealt with.

16. SCCTG has tried to evaluate some policies and procedures by the use of questionnaires but the range of questions asked, and the use of closed questions, means that the results are of limited value in improving the provision.

17. The internal verification process is weak. Its purpose is not fully understood by the internal verifier. There is a clear policy, but it is poorly interpreted and put into practice. Learners' progress towards NVQ units is not monitored as part of internal verification. All the riding is observed by a verifier as this is a requirement of the awarding body and there is sampling of learners' practical skills. Recording of these activities is poor. There is no planning to ensure that all NVQ units are sampled within a specific period. There is no routine observation of assessors' performance to help maintain the standard of assessment. Two work-based assessors could recall being observed carrying out a practical assessment, but they were not given constructive feedback. There are documents for use in giving feedback and checking resources, but they are not used. SCCTG does not use the internal verification process as an aid to the assessors' professional development.

18. The self-assessment report does not focus on the learner. It is descriptive rather than evaluative. Many strengths are identified which are no more than normal practice. SCCTG was overgenerous in its grading of the provision. The self-assessment report does not identify several key weaknesses that have a significant impact on the achievement of learners. The self-assessment report does not recognise the poor achievement and retention rates of learners. Actions plans show intent but are not sufficiently specific.

#### Poor Practice

*One assessor was training a small group of learners to prepare them for assessment. The internal verifier interrupted the session on two occasions, once giving direct instructions to one of the learners. This unnerved the assessor and disrupted the session.*

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Land-based provision

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	63	4

19. SCCTG provides training for learners on horse care programmes. There are 22 advanced modern apprentices, 20 foundation modern apprentices and 21 learners following NVQ programmes. The company recruits from schools, the careers service and directly from employers. SCCTG does not formally interview learners or give them an induction to programmes. Almost all assessments are carried out in the workplace, but a few take place at a small yard at SCCTG. There is no formal key skills training but learners are given key skills workbooks. Most learners are employed and work placements are arranged for the others. Employers include large competition and dealing yards, British Horse Society (BHS) approved riding schools and small private yards.

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)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			24		10		17		15
Still in training			2	8	1	10	3	18	14	93
FMA framework completed			5	21	1	10	3	18	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			15	62	5	50	4	24	0	0
Left without completing the framework			17	71	8	80	11	65	1	7

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	24		25		37		18		5
Still in training	0	0	1	4	5	14	11	61	5	100
AMA framework completed	10	42	6	24	9	24	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	17	71	19	76	18	49	1	6	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	16	67	10	40	14	38	2	11	0	0
Left without completing the framework	14	58	18	72	23	62	8	44	0	0

STUBBING COURT COMBINED TRAINING GROUP

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	43		20		21		15		29	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	20	69
Individual learning plan completed	29	67	10	50	12	57	5	33	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	14	33	10	50	9	43	9	60	9	31
NVQ level 1 completed	15	35	8	40	7	33	2	13	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	17	40	2	10	4	19	3	20	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	7	16	1	5	1	5	0	0	0	0

### STRENGTHS

- good standard of portfolio work
- good work placements

### WEAKNESSES

- inadequate on-the-job theory training
- poor use of target-setting
- poor achievement and retention
- inadequate individual learning plans

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- use of worksheets to accompany videos

20. Learners produce good work for their portfolios, and present it well. There is good use of evidence such as photographs and diary sheets. Some portfolios contain audio tapes and videos of riding. SCCTG has produced good-quality workbooks to help learners build key skills portfolios in their workplace. Many learners start their training programme by producing a portfolio covering units similar to level 1 NVQ units, which have been devised by SCCTG. This helps learners to develop the skills needed to gather and present evidence effectively. Some learners are lent videos, but these are not accompanied by appropriate worksheets which limits their value as a learning resource.

21. There are good work placements. Learners are employed in well-run professional

## STUBBING COURT COMBINED TRAINING GROUP

yards ranging from riding schools to high class competition stables. They work alongside well-qualified and experienced staff. They gain valuable experience of working in the horse industry, often in demanding environments. Staff at SCCTG have longstanding relationships with many of the employers. Some learners visit other nearby yards for jumping lessons. There are also links with employers in Ireland and Germany, offering some learners overseas experience.

22. There is inadequate planning of on-the-job training. Most learners are left to gather their own evidence with little support from SCCTG. The quality of learning is dependent on the particular yard where a learner is employed. Almost all training is informal. It is not recorded or used to develop the learner's skills beyond those needed for day-to-day tasks. Where there are no work-based assessors, employers are not sufficiently involved in their learner's NVQ training. SCCTG does not require employers to provide learners with a written on-the-job training plan. Employers are not fully aware of the learners' progress with the NVQ, since there is no long-term plan to link it to on-the-job training. There is too much reliance on learners identifying their own training needs and asking for support. Learners use books provided by SCCTG to help them assess their training needs, but their use does not lead to a structured plan. Often, gaps in related knowledge and understanding are not identified until the learner is assessed. Most of the training provided by SCCTG is individual coaching in response to needs identified at progress reviews. There is confusion between the review, assessment and training processes. Inspectors observed one assessor who linked training with assessment and used action plans effectively, but this practice is not shared with other assessors. Assessors do not meet regularly to share good practice, or discuss training and assessment issues. Some learners do not know who their assessor is or understand the assessment process.

23. There is poor use of target-setting. Some action plans are only completed in response to a specific issue raised at review. There may be gaps of several months between action plans and the plans do not refer to previous actions or confirm their completion. The plans do not show clearly exactly what a learner needs to do to complete an element or unit of an NVQ and do not effectively encourage achievement. Employers produce monthly reports on learners' progress but are not involved in the production of action plans. Some monthly progress reports are completed by learners but signed by the employer. Many simply record activities and do not give a clear indication of progress towards NVQ units. Portfolios do not contain a summary record sheet of the units and there is no individual accreditation of units. Some learners are not sure which training programme they are following. Many learners were not aware of being set any targets at all and were unsure as to when they were due to complete the programme.

24. Retention and achievement rates are poor. Between 1998 and 2001, the achievement rate for foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks was 17 per cent. The equivalent proportion for advanced modern apprenticeship frameworks was 19 per cent. The proportion of NVQ learners completing their planned learning declined dramatically from 67 per cent in 1997-98 to 33 per cent in 2000-01. Between 1997



and 2002, 58 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 39 per cent of NVQ learners left without completing their programme. Fifty-six per cent of foundation modern apprentices also left early, but some transferred to advanced modern apprenticeships. SCCTG has introduced a work-experience period for learners before they join the programme, and staff now visit new learners at work more often. There are signs that these measures are improving the retention rate for modern apprentices. The practice of not accrediting NVQ units separately means that early leavers have nothing to show for their time on the training programme.

25. Most individual learning plans are standard documents. Targets set coincide with the expected end date of the programme. No targets are set for NVQ unit achievement. Most learners take the same additional qualifications. Initial assessment results and support needs are poorly and inconsistently recorded. Individual learning plans do not state what support will be given to the learner. Staff assess learners either on their key or basic skills, but the results are not clearly recorded or communicated to the learners. When additional support is needed, there is no clear record of what is offered. Records used to monitor support often simply describe problems that have arisen rather than help that has been given. Some learners' files have no records of support at all.

#### Poor Practice

*One assessor used an audio tape machine to record a learner's answers during assessment. When the learner was hesitant and gave a poor answer, the assessor switched the tape machine off and prompted the learner before turning it back on to record her answers. The result no longer formed an accurate record of the assessment, although it would be evidence in her portfolio of a successful assessment.*