

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
NOVEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
JANUARY 2002

ETEC (Sunderland) Limited



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 ETEC (Sunderland) Ltd was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for agriculture, business administration, health, care and public services 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 agriculture, business administration, health, care and public services 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).

ETEC (Sunderland) Limited serves the training needs of the local community in a deprived area. Inclusive learning and equality of opportunity are at the centre of all of the company's activities. There are strong links with support agencies and the company is active in developing imaginative projects to meet the training and employment needs of all participants. The company's staff provide good support for learners throughout their training programmes and often maintain close links with them after they have completed their training. Induction courses are offered throughout the year, enabling learners to start their training promptly. The staff are enthusiastic and well deployed. Links between on- and off-the-job training are poor, and subcontracted training was not monitored and evaluated systematically. At the original inspection, programmes in agriculture, business administration and care were not satisfactory. The assessment of basic and key skills was inadequate and learners' progress reviews lacked consistency and appropriate target-setting. Quality assurance mechanisms were not effective. At reinspection, some progress has been made in improving the training provision, but all the areas which were reinspected remain unsatisfactory.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	4
Construction	3
Business administration	4
Retailing & customer service	3
Leisure, sport & travel	3
Health, care & public services	5
Foundation for work	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Agriculture	4
Business administration	4
Health, care & public services	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured weekly induction programme
- ◆ good jobsearch facilities
- ◆ effective community links
- ◆ committed and supportive staff
- ◆ open management style
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ strong commitment to equal opportunities

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training in most areas
- ◆ underdeveloped assessment and training in basic and key skills
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of subcontracted training provision
- ◆ lack of formal quality assurance procedures
- ◆ insufficiently detailed and thorough progress reviews
- ◆ poor management of programmes in agriculture and care
- ◆ inadequate training in information technology

INTRODUCTION

1. ETEC (Sunderland) Limited (ETEC) is a registered company based in the Hendon area of Sunderland. At the time of the original inspection, it provided youth and adult training programmes funded by Sunderland City Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the New Deal full-time education and training, voluntary sector and environment task force options funded by the Employment Service. It now provides youth and adult training programmes funded by Tyne & Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and New Deal programmes funded by the Employment Service. ETEC carries out many local projects, including some with funding from the European Social Fund and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). It recruits most of its learners from the local area of Hendon and the East End of the city, although some work placements are outside these areas. ETEC's mission statement commits it to providing good training and personal development and ensuring equal opportunities for all. There are close working relationships with community and voluntary organisations which operate in the city. ETEC helped to establish a partnership involving voluntary and community groups in Sunderland and has been involved in a range of pilot schemes with local agencies.

2. At the original inspection, there were training programmes in seven occupational areas. ETEC tried to meet all demands for training, despite the small number of learners in several areas. ETEC's training centre in Hudson House contains facilities for training in business administration, information technology (IT) and community work. There is a refreshment area on the ground floor of the building. The Lombard Street site is five minutes walk away and contains construction workshops and training facilities for sport and recreation, care, and basic and key skills. A dedicated induction room and offices for the support and training staff are located within these units. At the time of the original inspection, the company held contracts with the TEC to provide work-based learning for adults, basic employability, foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, other training for young people, Life Skills training and training for those with learning support needs. ETEC now holds contracts with the local LSC for training for young people and with the Employment Service for New Deal for 18-24 year olds and for work-based learning for adults. At the time of the original inspection, there were 279 participants on training programmes, of whom 23 were modern apprentices, 63 were adults and 114 were following New Deal options. The remainder were on other work-based learning programmes. ETEC operated in partnership with a community work assessment consortium in the northeast of England to provide SRB-funded assessment for 31 learners in community work NVQs at level 2 to 4. There are now 76 young people on New Deal programmes, 78 young people and 29 adults in work-based learning. Link officers are employed by ETEC to monitor subcontracted training in horticulture, retailing and warehousing. Through subcontractual arrangements, ETEC provides non-government-funded training courses for other agencies in general construction operations, care and call centre techniques.

3. ETEC's premises are on the south side of the River Wear and most learners come from areas nearby. Sunderland had a population of 289,000 at the time of the 1991 census, of whom 1.1 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. It is a city with high unemployment. At the time of the original inspection, unemployment averaged 9 per cent, compared with the national average of 4.2 per cent. In September 2001, the rate had fallen to 5.8 per cent, but was still double the national rate of 2.9 per cent. At the time of the original inspection, 52 per cent of 16 year olds remained in full-time education, compared with 68 per cent nationally. At reinspection, the proportion had increased to 53 per cent, compared with the national average of 70 per cent. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 39.2 per cent in 2001, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. At the time of the original inspection, the statistics were 38.4 per cent locally and 49.2 per cent nationally.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. ETEC's senior management team wrote the self-assessment report for the original inspection, in consultation with all of the staff. The report used the guidelines in *Raising the Standard* and included an action plan, which was cross-referenced to sources of evidence. Updated statistical data and the most recent action plan were provided during the inspection. Some important issues were not referred to in the report and the grading was not accurate. Inspectors awarded a higher grade for equal opportunities but lower grades for agriculture, business administration, leisure, sport and travel, health, care and public services, and quality assurance. Because of the very small numbers of learners in engineering and hospitality, the inspection did not review the training provision funded under the New Deal voluntary sector option. A self-assessment report was provided for the reinspection. It was restricted to a description of progress made towards remedying the weaknesses in those areas which received less than satisfactory grades at the original inspection. ETEC also produced a full self-assessment report for its own use.

5. The original inspection was carried out by a team of nine inspectors who spent a total of 36 days at ETEC during November 2000. Inspectors observed and met 27 learners at the company's training centres and interviewed 41 learners at their work placements. Training advisers and link officers accompanied inspectors to 25 work placements and one subcontracted college of further education. Inspectors interviewed a total of 26 employers' representatives and staff at the colleges. They interviewed three board directors as well as senior managers and other company staff. They examined management and individual learners' files, portfolios, data on progression, external and internal verifiers' reports, records of audits and minutes of meetings.

6. The reinspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors, who spent a total of 12 days with ETEC during January 2002. They interviewed 40 learners and 16 work-based assessors or employers in 14 work placements. They conducted 18 interviews with training staff and managers. They visited three sub-contractors. Inspectors scrutinised 31 individual personal files and 20 portfolios. They observed six learner progress reviews and three assessments. They observed and graded four learning sessions, all of which were at least satisfactory. Inspectors studied ETEC's brief self-assessment report, which was produced in November 2001 and its fuller report, which was produced a month later.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture		2				2
Construction			5	1		6
Business administration			5			5
Leisure, sport & travel		2	2			4
Health, care & public services			2	1		3
Foundation for work		1	1			2
Total	0	5	15	2	0	22

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture

Grade 4

7. ETEC offers agriculture training through two subcontracted training providers. All learners on the programme are on the New Deal environment task force option. Learners work towards one or two units of a national vocational qualification (NVQ) in either amenity horticulture or environmental conservation. Additional training is offered and specialist trainers are used for this. The subcontractors' staff assess and verify learners' work. Some internal verification services are provided by external organisations. Training lasts for six months, during which time learners receive either an allowance or a wage. There are a number of work placements and projects to give learners work experience. The training provider carries out an induction for learners, which covers equal opportunities, health and safety, and attendance requirements. A similar induction is given when the learners start training with their work placement or project. Learners attend the programme for a minimum of 30 hours each week. They receive off-the-job training for one day each week or the equivalent. Learners also jobsearch, writing curriculum vitae and letters of application and practising interview techniques. There are eight learners on the programme.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment in the workplace
- ◆ poorly planned off-the-job training
- ◆ narrow range of evidence in trainees' portfolios
- ◆ low achievement rates

8. Most assessments are now carried out in the workplace or in realistic work situations. There is insufficient off-the-job training and where it does take place there is not always sufficient planning and structure for it to be fully effective. Learners' portfolios are well structured, but still contain mainly direct observations

and background knowledge evidence. The proportion of learners achieving their individual learning plans is lower than at the time of the original inspection. ETEC's self-assessment report identified some strengths and weaknesses which were confirmed by inspectors. Inspectors also found additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade given is lower than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ actual work environments available to learners
- ◆ additional qualifications offered

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ inadequate initial assessment
- ◆ poor range of evidence in portfolios

9. Learners have work placements in local parks, gardens, historic monuments and conservation areas where they undertake commercial contract work. Learners work to the same deadlines and financial constraints as employees on these projects. The work motivates learners and improves their attendance, punctuality and attitude. They take pride in their work and can see that it is of benefit to the community and the wider environment. As the work undertaken is realistic, it equips learners with the skills needed by employers. Work-based assessors use the evidence available from this work for assessment. Learners are able to move between a number of sites and receive training and assessment in a variety of industrial tasks and skills. This helps them to obtain the evidence they need for their NVQ units.

10. Additional qualifications are offered to learners. This was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners take advantage of the range of additional training and qualifications offered to them in order to increase their employability. Through jobsearch activities they identify the additional qualifications required for particular jobs. Learners value these short additional training courses and the qualifications which they can obtain. A good level of additional support and extra funding is provided to help learners benefit from the courses, which include driving lessons, training in the use of chainsaws or in footpath construction.

11. Achievement rates are low. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. ETEC works with many learners who have severe social and personal difficulties and is making significant efforts to help learners overcome these. However, the overall level of achievement for learners is poor. During 1999-2000, 14 per cent of learners completed their individual learning plans and 26 per cent gained jobs. In 2000-01, only 12 per cent completed their individual learning plans and 28 per cent went into employment. Figures for 2001-02 are incomplete.

12. Initial assessments are inadequate. During induction, most learners' literacy

GOOD PRACTICE

A learner, while carrying out jobsearch, found that many jobs required applicants to have a driving licence. He felt this would make him more employable and improve his prospects of gaining work. He applied for and received some additional funding to support him in this training. He now feels that if he does not gain employment in horticulture he can apply for jobs in the wider market.

and numeracy skills and previous achievements are assessed informally. No credit is given to learners for the achievements and qualifications they already hold. A few learners are not assessed and their support needs are only discovered when difficulties arise. Where assessment does take place, it is sometimes inaccurate. In one instance, the learner was assessed as able to undertake qualifications at a higher level than he could actually cope with. The record of the learner's skills level is not passed to the workplace and learners are often reassessed by the workplace trainer. This means that their training needs may not be identified until a late stage. Initial assessment information is not used to design individual training programmes. ETEC does not set challenging targets for learners.

13. Learners' portfolios of evidence are poor. This was partly recognised in the self-assessment report. Although the portfolios are well structured and in good order, they do not contain a wide enough range of evidence to help learners make rapid progress. Some dates and signatures are missing from assessment documents, which makes them invalid. Learners' logbooks are not completed and do not contain witness status lists or sample signatures. This makes it difficult to confirm that witness statements in the portfolios are acceptable evidence. There is no cross referencing of the evidence to other NVQ units. Where there are certificates of achievement in the portfolio these are not credited towards the NVQ units. Several sets of evidence of learners' background knowledge have not been assessed and learners have not been told how well they have performed. Learners' progress is slow.

Construction

Grade 3

14. A total of 97 participants are following training leading to NVQs at levels 1 to 3 in construction trades, with 57 in painting and decorating, 20 in bricklaying, 13 in general construction occupations and seven in wood occupations. Fifty-seven of the total participants are trainees on programmes for young people, comprising 40 on other work-based youth training programmes and 17 advanced modern apprentices. Twenty-two are trainees on work-based learning for adults and 18 are New Deal clients, of whom 16 are on the environment task force option and two are on the full-time education and training option. A total of 55 trainees are placed full time with an employer or are engaged on external project work and attend the company training centre for off-the-job training one day each week. Those without work attend the centre full time. All wood occupation, painting and decorating and brickwork trainees working towards the NVQ at level 3 receive this training from two subcontracted local colleges of further education. Most assessments take place off the job, with additional evidence increasingly being taken from the workplace. The company's work-placement officers and vocational tutors monitor trainees' progress. All seven tutors in construction trades are vocationally qualified and hold assessors' awards. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report and identified others. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good opportunities for work placements and projects
- ◆ opportunities for progression to employment with the company for former trainees
- ◆ development of leadership skills in trainees
- ◆ well-resourced subcontracted training

GOOD PRACTICE

A trainee was placed on remand in a local young offenders' institution towards the end of his NVQ programme. He had completed all the practical elements of his programme but needed to finish some aspects of knowledge of the job. His trainer contacted the institution and arranged with the staff to provide the final elements of the trainee's training by post. The trainee was eventually released without charge, training was completed and all the targets in the individual training plan were achieved.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low retention and achievement rates on youth programmes
- ◆ poor training and assessment in key skills
- ◆ inadequate resources at the training centre
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment

15. A good variety of work placements and community projects are used to help trainees gain appropriate on-the-job experience. Many participants are on work placements with organisations which have previously converted trainees on youth training programmes to employed modern apprentices. Local community programmes give trainees good opportunities to gain useful work experience, which is also of benefit to local residents. Trainees are encouraged to participate in work placements or community projects but only half do so, since no additional financial incentives are offered to them. In an area of high unemployment and severe social deprivation, ETEC's staff work hard to convince trainees of the long-term benefits of unpaid work experience. All work placements are carefully assessed so that they are able to offer experience consistent with the trainees' programmes of study. Several long-term unemployed trainees have successfully gained posts within the construction department of the company and those who have not completed all their training are encouraged to finish it and to undertake further study to qualify as trainers and assessors. More experienced trainees are encouraged to plan and manage community projects as part of their training. Trainers support trainees well and help them to identify when the work they are doing meets elements of their study programme. Experience in dealing with others is appropriately used towards portfolio-building. An employed New Deal client was supervising the work of an unemployed client and two youth trainees during redecoration of a local community centre. This experience not only provided valuable evidence towards his portfolio but also raised the self-esteem of all participants. For trainees working towards an NVQ at level 3, the subcontracted training at the colleges is well resourced, with spacious workshops and assessment areas providing ready access to good quality materials, tools and machinery. Trainees are able to check their own progress through clear monitoring sheets displayed in workshops. All trainees have access to dedicated and well-resourced areas and the college's staff encourage them to extend their understanding of the topics being considered.

16. Retention and achievement rates are typical of the occupational area. Of the 17 clients following the environment task force option, 15 achieved all the targets

in their individual training plans. Fifty-five per cent of those on adult work-based training have achieved all the targets in their individual training plans. Over the past three years, the 244 adults who have started training have between them achieved 140 NVQs. However, retention and achievement rates on youth programmes are lower, with only 23 per cent of trainees achieving all the targets in their individual training plans and nearly 66 per cent leaving without a full NVQ award. Training in key skills is undertaken by occupational trainers, but it is inadequate and not assessed against published standards. For advanced modern apprentices, development of key skills is undertaken by ETEC only towards the end of the training programmes. ETEC's staff have little understanding of what is required in key skills, or how to assess them. They have identified in their action plan the need to accelerate developments in this aspect of training so that participants are not disadvantaged. Training resources in company workshops are not always adequate to meet trainees' needs. Trainees on work placements are not routinely provided with sufficient tools and rely on being able to borrow from tradespeople they are placed with to enable them to complete tasks. In the brickwork shop, bricks are overused, with new ones being available only for assessed work. Used bricks with damaged edges and coated in mortar make good facework difficult to achieve. The quality of mortar is poor and trainees have to demolish and clean their own work. This is time consuming and often demotivating. Activities undertaken during work experience are seldom linked to off-the-job training. Most employers only have a superficial understanding of NVQs and there has been no attempt to link unit content into something that can be readily understood by employers and workplace supervisors. Progress reviews in the workplace fail to relate the trainees' current experience to their off-the-job training. Few attempts are made to encourage employers to allow trainees to experience work which will supplement the requirements of their NVQ or training plan. Increasingly, workplace evidence is being collected to aid portfolio-building, but it consists mainly of photographs. Some work-based assessment has been undertaken but the practice is not common.

Business administration

Grade 4

17. There are currently 15 learners on IT programmes. Thirteen are on the New Deal voluntary sector option and two on NVQ training. There are 10 learners on business administration programmes. Six are on the New Deal voluntary sector option, three are following an NVQ in business administration and one learner is an advanced modern apprentice. Learners are referred to the programme by the careers service or the Employment Service. Those who are on the New Deal option spend six months in training. All learners attend training full time. Some learners, particularly in business administration, are in work placements and all attend ETEC for off-the-job training.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ fragmented training and assessment for key skills

- ◆ lack of formal systems to monitor the progress of trainees
- ◆ slow progress of trainees in information technology
- ◆ lack of work placements in information technology
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates in information technology programmes

18. Some progress has been made in the management and provision of training on the business administration programmes. There are now systems in place to monitor the progress of learners, but they are not sufficiently detailed and do not set clear measurable targets. Retention and achievement rates are still poor, but they are improving. There are now more work placements in IT. There are no learners following key skills training on administration programmes.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good training resources
- ◆ wide range of additional training and qualifications
- ◆ good employer involvement in training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor achievement rates
- ◆ low retention rates
- ◆ inadequate target setting
- ◆ inadequate initial assessment on New Deal programmes

19. ETEC provides good training resources. The training accommodation is spacious and well furnished. There is a well-equipped computer suite with good-quality computers operating industry standard software. All computers are networked and have Internet access. A good range of textbooks is available to learners. There is also a range of computer journals and magazines which are used by learners to keep up to date with industry developments. Learners following administration programmes can use the call centre training suite to practise their reception and switchboard skills. This was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report.

20. Learners participate in a wide range of additional training courses, some of which lead to additional qualifications. Learners' employability is increased by the additional skills they acquire on these courses and their motivation is improved. Courses include understanding drug and alcohol abuse, manual handling and fire warden courses. There are externally accredited courses leading to qualifications in food hygiene, word processing, databases, spreadsheets, accountancy, and Internet and web design. There are also courses to improve learners' social skills.

21. Employers are effectively involved in training. They provide good support to learners in work placements. They are enthusiastic, have a good knowledge of the learners' programmes and are familiar with the requirements of the NVQ. Some learners have work-based assessors who make good use of evidence as it occurs in

the workplace, and provide a prompt assessment service. Many employers offer learning opportunities in addition to those included in the qualifications. This enhances learners' employability.

22. There is a poor rate of progress into employment for learners on New Deal programmes. The achievement rate for learning goals in other programmes is poor. In 1999-2000, 20 per cent of New Deal learners on the business administration programme and 24 per cent of those on the IT programme gained employment. In 2000-01, these proportions stood at 46 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively. In 1999-2000, 38 per cent of learners on NVQ and modern apprenticeship programmes in business administration achieved their learning goals. Of eight learners who started programmes in 2000-01, seven left without achieving their learning goal. Eight learners began NVQ programmes in IT between 1999 and 2001, six of whom have left without achieving their learning goals.

23. The retention rate for learners is poor. On New Deal programmes in business administration and IT, in 1999-2000, 80 per cent of clients left without achieving the targets on their individual learning plans. In 2000-01 the proportion was 69 per cent and for the period 2001-02, 38 per cent had already left by the time of the reinspection. In 1999-2000, 62 per cent of business administration learners and 83 per cent of IT NVQ and apprenticeship learners left without achieving the objectives of their programmes.

24. ETEC staff do not use individual learning plans to set clear targets for learners. Targets are not broken down into small, achievable, short-term objectives. In many cases, all the targets set are at the end of the programme. There are monthly training reviews and pastoral reviews which are carried out by different members of staff, but there is no formal way for them to share their findings. Both types of review are similar in content and some learners do not understand that each has a different purpose. The reviews do not effectively identify the learner's achievements. They are not linked to the individual learning plan and they are not used to set challenging targets.

25. Initial assessment for learners on New Deal programmes is inadequate. A basic skills assessment is carried out for all learners on NVQ training and modern apprenticeship programmes. Basic skills assessment for learners on New Deal is carried out only if the vocational training staff, through observation, believe they have identified a need for basic skills support. The basic skills department and the occupational staff have no formal communication systems to share information about learners' progress. There is no formal assessment of learners' occupational aptitude or learning style. ETEC recognised this as a weakness, in the self-assessment report. Several members of ETEC staff are part of a regional network which is currently developing an initial assessment process.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

26. All participants are New Deal clients following the voluntary sector option. Fifteen retail clients are working towards two level 2 NVQ units, as are eight warehousing clients. A one-week induction at the company's training centre is undertaken by all new starters and includes sessions on health and safety and equal opportunities. Most work placements are charity shops which offer placements when required. Clients are reviewed monthly and ETEC's link officers make further pastoral visits every two or three weeks. Those with additional support needs have individual mentoring to help them achieve their full potential. Assessment is subcontracted to a local organisation and there is regular communication between assessors and ETEC's link staff. Clients undertake job search at the training centre and have access to the Internet to look at job vacancies as they are posted. The self-assessment report was evaluative and inspectors found it realistic. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

A New deal client with no retail experience successfully completed her training programme gaining two units of the retailing NVQ at level 2. She applied for a job at a new prestigious department store and after four days of interviews was appointed as a full-time sales assistant. She believes her confidence had been boosted as a result of her experience on the training programme. Employment Service staff arranged an awards ceremony at the Sunderland Stadium of Light to celebrate her success and that of other clients, which was widely reported in the local press.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ supportive and involved employers
- ◆ frequent and effective visits by training staff
- ◆ additional qualifications offered and gained
- ◆ good achievement of targets on individual training plans

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient opportunities for up-to-date training in some work placements
- ◆ no external learning resources available for clients
- ◆ poor internal verification practices

27. Employers are enthusiastic and offer extensive opportunities, especially to clients with additional learning and support needs. On- and off-the-job training is co-ordinated carefully and communication between all parties is good. Employers are fully involved with ETEC's link staff in the progress-review process. Many clients gain sustainable employment and others return to work as volunteers because they enjoyed their training so much. Assessors review clients' portfolios monthly and help them to identify other potential sources of evidence. Experienced and well-qualified link staff provide effective pastoral support and many clients benefit from additional visits aimed at increasing their confidence and self-esteem. Staff are available by telephone and respond quickly to requests for visits. Individual training plans are used effectively as working documents and are routinely updated. The company provides a minibus to encourage attendance and to collect those with travel difficulties. Many clients achieve additional qualifications, for example in the use of fork-lift trucks, which enhance job prospects in the warehousing industry. Other certificated courses, in first aid, stock control, cash handling and security, broaden trainees' learning experience and give enhanced opportunities for full-time employment. Achievement rates of clients

who gain qualifications and experience are satisfactory, with a fifth gaining employment and one third achieving all the targets on their individual training plan. Nearly a half of all clients left early before achieving all the targets on their individual training plan.

28. Monitoring of subcontractors is ineffective and the company's action plans have recognised this as an issue. Meetings have already taken place to introduce more monitoring and evaluation of subcontractors but these are not yet established. There is good communication between ETEC and subcontractors' staff but it is informal and no records are maintained to indicate what was discussed and what actions were agreed. There is no routine observation of training and assessment. Internal verification lacks rigour, with no observation of the training process undertaken and a lack of formal feedback to the assessors. Some work-placement providers are unable to provide sufficient opportunities for clients to gather assessment evidence. Some retail systems used by work-placement providers are dated and although staff have raised their concerns about this and have identified the issues in action plans, the situation remains unresolved. As a result, some clients will not achieve their planned units and will need to consider other options. Opportunities for clients to experience cash handling and dealing with returned or exchange goods are restricted in some work placements. Clients are not systematically provided with learning materials at their work placement and opportunities to extend their understanding are missed. Learning packs to support clients to achieve their learning goals are underdeveloped.

GOOD PRACTICE

A New Deal client with no retail experience and who had been unemployed for a year successfully completed her training gaining two units of the NVQ in retailing at level 2. The client applied for a job at a new prestigious department store and after four days of rigorous interviews, was appointed as a full-time sales assistant. The Employment Service arranged an awards ceremony to celebrate her success and that of other clients, which was widely reported in the local press.

Leisure, sport & travel

Grade 3

29. NVQs in sport and recreation and in playwork have been offered by ETEC for six years but the number of trainees is low and has decreased over the past two years. There are six participants currently in training, of whom two are New Deal clients and one is a youth trainee working towards level 2 NVQ units in sport and recreation, operational services. A modern apprentice is working towards an NVQ at level 3 in supervision. A New Deal client and an adult on other work-based training are working towards level 3 NVQ units in playwork. Participants undertake training in fitness centres, healthy-living resource centres, ski-centres and local youth and community centres. They all take part weekly in progress-review and portfolio-building sessions, with work-based assessors being responsible for the assessment. A qualified full-time member of ETEC's staff acts as programme co-ordinator and internal verifier. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and identified others. They awarded a lower grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of well-equipped work placements
- ◆ frequent in-depth portfolio-building and progress reviews involving workplace

supervisors

- ◆ good portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of medium-term planning to improve achievement rates
- ◆ schemes of work not systematically recorded
- ◆ poor achievement rates on some programmes

30. Work placements are of a good standard and provide extensive opportunities for trainees to work with a variety of clients. Work-based assessors are experienced in the industry and hold a wide range of additional qualifications, providing appropriate role models for trainees. Additional short-term work placements are used effectively to broaden trainees' experience of working in different types of sport facilities. To broaden their experience, some trainees take on additional project-management responsibilities, such as accounting for income-generation activities and organising football tournaments. One trainee has drawn up short lists of job applicants in preparation for interview by the centre manager. Relationships between participants, work-based assessors and staff are open and productive. All work together closely to support trainees' achievement of NVQs. The internal verifier makes frequent visits and participants are enthusiastic and confident about the content of their portfolios and training experiences. Regular progress reviews contribute to participants' awareness of their progress and the action needed to achieve all the targets on their individual training plans. Each work placement has a nominated work-based assessor and all assessment is undertaken in the workplace. Weekly portfolio-building and progress-review sessions with the internal verifier encourage trainees' progress and work-based assessors are regularly involved in progress-review sessions with the programme co-ordinator. There is good assessment practice covering the required theoretical knowledge and skills. Assessors complete detailed assessment plans and a wide range of potential sources of evidence are discussed with trainees. Observation is routinely used as part of the assessment process and assessors provide constructive and positive feedback to trainees. The internal verifier regularly undertakes observation of assessments. Portfolios are well organised and contain good evidence supplemented by witness testimony and photographs.

31. There is little evidence of medium- and long-term planning of training. The small number of trainees spread across a wide range of programmes has resulted in a reluctance to engage in systematic and carefully recorded planning of training. Planning takes place on a case-by-case basis, structured around weekly reviews with supervisors present and progress reviews held at six-weekly intervals. On- and off-the-job training is not formally specified in training plans. Demanding short-term targets are agreed with trainees each week but standardised documents are not used to record decisions and outcomes. Achievement rates are variable and have declined. Since 1997, 12 youth trainees have entered sport and recreation training but only two have completed a full NVQ. Since 1998, 14 New Deal clients have started training, of whom three have achieved all the targets on their

individual training plan and two are still in training. Six clients left early without achieving all the targets on their individual training plan or gaining employment. Since 1997, 17 trainees have entered playwork training, 10 have completed NVQs, and none remain in training. Since 1998, 10 New Deal clients have started training in playwork, three have achieved all the targets on their individual training plan and two are still in training. Five clients left early without achieving all the targets on their individual training plan or gaining employment.

Health, care & public services

Grade 4

32. There are 11 young people working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care. Seven are on LSC-funded youth programmes, three of whom are on NVQ programmes and four are advanced modern apprentices. The remaining four are with the New Deal programme. Learners meet ETEC's induction team before being referred to the care training co-ordinators. Most learners complete a week-long induction programme at ETEC's premises. Further induction also takes place at their work placement. Most assessment is carried out by work-based assessors. Internal verification is done by the care training co-ordinator and the quality assurance manager. There is a designated training room at ETEC's premises for care learners. It is equipped with learning materials which can be used by learners when they wish. They are also given the opportunity to attend short certificated courses on food hygiene, first aid and moving and handling.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ very slow progress of trainees and clients towards achieving NVQs
- ◆ poor understanding of NVQ standards and assessment by trainees
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous co-ordination of programme
- ◆ no training and assessment in key skills
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

33. Learners are now progressing more quickly towards achievement of their NVQs. Learners' understanding of the NVQs and assessment methods is now satisfactory. New documents have been introduced which help in the co-ordination of different aspects of the programme.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly flexible training arrangements
- ◆ good standard of portfolio work
- ◆ particularly good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor rate of achievement
- ◆ inadequate key skills provision

◆ incomplete initial assessment for New Deal clients

34. ETEC adopts a range of different teaching approaches to respond to learner needs, including group sessions, classroom teaching and individual coaching. In addition to the pre-arranged sessions, learners can call in to ETEC at any time and receive help and support. Many learners work shifts, and some are on night duty. Trainers work well with employers to identify when training can be provided in the workplace, at a time convenient to learners. This helps learners to avoid having to attend training days on their days off or before a long evening or night shift. When training is provided in the workplace, the trainer ensures that the learners still receive all the handouts. Classroom learning sessions are satisfactory. There are lesson plans, although some are being updated. There is good use of a range of teaching methods, including practical exercises and role play, which help to sustain learners' interest and enthusiasm.

35. Learners' portfolios are well organised, with evidence clearly linked to relevant elements and units of the qualification. Signatures and dates make it clear when assessment has taken place. Learners are proud of their work. Portfolios contain a good range of diverse evidence. Observation of the learner is the most commonly used method for collecting evidence. Learners also use assignments, witness testimonies, the results of oral and written questioning, illustrations from publications and their own work.

36. Employers are highly supportive of the young people in their work placements. Employers and work-based supervisors have a good understanding of NVQ processes and the standards required. They encourage learners to work towards their NVQs. They also provide information and support in gathering evidence and understanding the links between background knowledge and practice. Many employers devise shift rotas to ensure that assessors and learners work together regularly. The work placements provide high standards of care which demonstrates to learners the standards required of them. Homes and day care centres used as work placements are well resourced and adequately equipped.

37. In the care of older people programme, 10 per cent of New Deal learners achieved their individual learning plans in 1999-2000, 25 per cent in 2000-01 and none to date in the current year. Thirty per cent of the learners gained employment in 1999-2000, 25 per cent in 2000-01 and 20 per cent to date this year. On the advanced modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes from 1999 to date, no one has achieved all the objectives of their individual learning plan. The number of learners on these programmes has been small. Some learners have achieved their NVQ, or units of their NVQ.

38. Key skills training is inadequate. Some learners do not start their work towards key skills until very late in the programme. One learner has been on the programme for nine months and has still not started key skills training. There is some poor attendance at key skills sessions, as employers do not release learners from the workplace. Key skills are taught by specialist staff at ETEC. Trainers try to use key skills exercises and examples which are relevant to the area of learning.

However, there is not enough assessment of key skills in the workplace, particularly with the communication and working with others. Information about learners' progress in key skills is not passed to the main programme trainer. Key skills are not discussed with the learner in the progress review or with the employer. There are plans to integrate some key skills training into care training, but this has not yet taken place.

39. A basic assessment is undertaken by Employment Service staff before referral and the results are passed to ETEC. This is not adequate. The assessment does not identify all the learners' learning support needs. ETEC has no formal procedure to identify needs which may have been missed at initial assessment. Additional needs may be identified during ETEC's induction process, in the work placement or by the learners themselves. If so, a referral is made to the specialist basic skills trainers at ETEC. Some learners are given additional help and support by the care trainer. Learners are assessed informally by care trainers, to check whether they have the aptitude for care work.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

40. ETEC offers youth and adult foundation for work programmes. There are 27 participants on a youth programme which is the life skills option of the Learning Gateway. The programme has been offered since December 1999 and is designed to bring young people back into education, training or employment. The average time spent on the programme is 13 weeks but the programme is flexible and can be extended to suit individual needs. The programme includes personal development activities, consideration of issues relevant to the target group, job-search sessions, work preparation and basic skills support for those with identified development needs. Two full-time youth development workers and one youth worker seconded from a local organisation for six sessions a week are involved in this work. Between December 1999 and November 2000, five trainees gained a first aid qualification, 20 per cent entered employment and 25 per cent entered further training. Two adult programmes are offered with 33 trainees on basic employability training and eight on an eight-week introductory programme from which suitable trainees are encouraged to transfer to the 21-week basic employability training programme. During the contractual year leading up to the inspection, the average length of stay was 19 weeks. Both programmes are aimed at trainees with barriers to employment although those on the basic employability training programme have a clearer idea of their development needs. Trainees on both programmes undertake at least 28 days of work experience and are expected to achieve milestones relating to health and safety, first aid and work experience. All trainees are expected to attend job-search and basic skills training where a need has been identified. The programme is led by a full-time co-ordinator, who monitors trainees and reviews their progress in their work placement. In-house staff identify work placements and others offer basic skills support and job-search facilities. Trainees have achieved 128 milestones during the current contractual year and five trainees have gained employment. Inspectors found more strengths

than the company and identified other weaknesses than those contained in the self-assessment report. They awarded the same grade as given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of external support agencies
- ◆ good understanding by experienced staff of trainees' needs
- ◆ imaginative development activities
- ◆ good learning environment for life skills programme
- ◆ supportive work experience for basic employability trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for developing basic skills
- ◆ ineffective action-planning in life skills programme
- ◆ insufficient work experience for life skills trainees

41. Every trainee is able to start good, developmental work experience immediately after completing a comprehensive one-week induction course. Youth and adult trainees have problems ranging from homelessness, drug misuse and health-related problems to lack of confidence, a criminal record and lack of basic skills. Staff have formed extensive and effective links with local agencies which offer practical support and preventative advice. Regular visits from local health centre representatives provide valuable advice on healthy living and police officers provide an open forum at which trainees can talk freely about matters which are of concern to them. A local college of further education provides good occupational taster sessions and other agencies give protection and guidance for trainees with problems relating to physical abuse, homelessness and addiction. Staff bring current and relevant experience to their work and are well qualified. Some have personal experience of unemployment and empathise with the client group. They have good understanding of trainees' needs, which encourages participation and good retention rates. A wide range of relevant activities are provided to engage trainees in group learning experiences as a first step to their eventual participation in mainstream training, education and employment. They include outdoor pursuits, swimming, bowling, go-karting and football. Activity days with the local army's youth team and with local fire-fighters are also arranged. Discussion groups to encourage reflection on equal opportunities, sexual health, communication skills, self-image and citizenship are held regularly. The training area is well decorated, airy and comfortable, with a spacious and well-equipped recreation area adjoining which encourages socialising and team building. Basic employability trainees experience appropriate work placements which help them to overcome some of their identified barriers to regular employment, such as low self-esteem and low levels of basic skills. Work placements provide opportunities for socialising with the elderly, engagement in gardening, maintaining an orderly environment and stocktaking. Trainees' progress is reviewed rigorously while in their work placement and comprehensive records are maintained of the activities they

undertake.

42. Opportunities to develop trainees' basic skills are sometimes missed. Youth trainees take part in few writing or reading tasks and adults usually attend the training centre only to undertake job-search activities. There are few written resources routinely employed to deepen understanding of the issues discussed and attendance at designated sessions in literacy, numeracy and basic skills is erratic. Use of flipcharts is sometimes ineffective and there are few specialist resources to assist with the development of reading skills. Reviews are regular but focus on personal development, such as socialising, timekeeping and attendance. Few developmental targets are set and little reference is made to each trainee's individual development plan. Reflection on the benefit of activities undertaken is not routinely carried out or recorded. While the life skills trainees receive good training in personal and social development they have little preparation in training for work, other than what is acquired by group visits to work-related environments and through discussion. This weakness has been caused largely by the illness of a key member of staff and the company is actively seeking to remedy the problem.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

43. The company's mission statement emphasises its commitment to local people in an area of high unemployment and social deprivation. A working party has developed a formal equal opportunities statement and a comprehensive policy on harassment, which directors have approved. There are almost equal numbers of men and women staff. People from minority ethnic groups comprise less than 1 per cent of the local population. Minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities are represented on the staff. The company works with a large number of partners and has initiated many community projects aimed to help under-represented groups. All those offered training undergo a comprehensive week-long induction programme, which includes sessions on equal opportunities and diversity. Trainees are provided with copies of the company's policies on equal opportunities, complaints, grievances and harassment. Two of the strengths identified in the self-assessment were considered to be no more than normal practice but inspectors found others. The weaknesses were accurately reported and inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong commitment to equal opportunities and inclusiveness
- ◆ enhanced awareness among trainees of needs of disadvantaged groups
- ◆ supportive projects which engage trainees with complex health and social needs
- ◆ good learning resources in the life skills programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no routine review of equal opportunities with trainees or workplace supervisors
- ◆ no systematic or developmental staff training
- ◆ missed opportunities to promote equal opportunities

GOOD PRACTICE

The company is supportive of people from different cultures and is positive about diversity. During the period of Ramadan, a room was set aside for the use of staff and participants who wished to pray during this period.

44. Inclusive learning and equality of opportunity are at the centre of all of the company's activities. Directors take responsibility for ensuring staff have a good awareness of these issues as part of their everyday activity and include appropriate items at regular staff meetings. Managers have a good understanding of the wider issues surrounding inclusive learning and social regeneration. The company demonstrates a long-term commitment to disadvantaged people in the local community. It recently won a national training award for its work with the long-term unemployed. Funding sources which enable the company to establish new and creative partnerships to deliver responsive, effective community-based projects are actively and successfully sought. Monitoring data on equal opportunities are collected regularly but do not routinely guide management decisions. Directors are active in generating new ideas for projects which meet the needs of future participants. For example, a recent successful bid will enable ETEC to offer a waged option to all New Deal clients, which is critical in an area of high levels of poverty and unemployment. All staff are highly committed to working with people who experience barriers to work and training. Homeless people and those with drug and alcohol problems, criminal records and health-related needs are welcomed and well supported. Since 1997, 21 per cent of adult participants have been people with a disability. During the induction week, creative activities are carried out through the careful use of video and group exercises to raise trainees' awareness and challenge thinking about equality of opportunities. Gay and lesbian issues are dealt with sensitively. Most trainees have good short-term recall of work done during induction. Many projects and work placements involve trainees and clients working with people who have a wide range of needs, such as those with learning difficulties, those with visual impairments and ex-offenders. These experiences are very effective in raising the trainees and clients' awareness of diversity and equality of opportunity. The needs of some members of the community when trying to access work after a long period of illness or incapacity are well understood by the staff. The company funds the staffing of community projects to provide mentors for those with specific difficulties. Good learning materials for equal opportunities and diversity are used effectively in the life skills and induction sessions. The participants enjoy these sessions and they raise their awareness of current issues in the wider community. However, these materials are not routinely shared with other occupational trainers within the company.

45. No clear agreement with subcontractors exists regarding equal opportunities at work and updating is not formally monitored. Routine monitoring of trainees' experience and their understanding of equal opportunities is not undertaken and checks are not made to ensure that their rights are protected. Although trainees have good short-term recall of material discussed during induction their medium- and long-term recall is poor. All new staff participate in a comprehensive

induction session which includes equal opportunities training but further training is not systematic or developmental. Awareness of developing equal opportunities is conducted through informal discussion and during regular meetings but it is not systematically planned and does not guarantee up-to-date understanding or continuing development to take account of new issues for all staff. Opportunities are missed to promote equal opportunities and celebrate diversity in training materials and in the learning environment. There are few examples of written materials adapted for people who have reading difficulties owing to visual impairment or learning difficulties. While interpreters are available for trainees when English is not their first language, there is no work done with interpreters which seeks to engage the minority of people in the community who come from minority ethnic groups. Although most facilities are accessible to those with disabilities, wheelchair users cannot reach some areas easily.

Trainee support

Grade 2

46. Most participants are recruited through referrals by the careers service and the Employment Service, although a small number make individual applications. The company has an open-door recruitment policy. Many trainees and clients need significant support to ensure they remain on programme. The organisation emphasises meeting their needs through pastoral support. Many potential clients and trainees are long-term unemployed and specialist recruitment staff advise them and carry out their initial interview. A second interview takes place with occupational staff, at which trainees are advised about the structure and content of training programmes. On entry, trainees take part in a one-week generic induction programme, which covers appeals procedures, trainees' rights and responsibilities, team-building activities, equal opportunities, and health and safety training. Occupationally specific induction also takes place, which provides general information about the qualification to be aimed for and the programme to be undertaken. The induction to the work placement supplies details on employers' policies and working procedures. Progress reviews take place at intervals during the programme. Assessors and link workers give trainees personal counselling and advice to support them throughout their training programme. Additional support is available to those with physical and learning disabilities through the work of the recruitment, induction and job-search teams. A drop-in job-search support and resource area is available for trainees approaching the end of their training programme. Several strengths identified in the self-assessment report did not apply to this generic area. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

As an example of practical support, a driver/advisor is employed to telephone all trainees who fail to attend appointments or training. The driver/advisor collects trainees by minibus and takes them to appointments or to training if they are having transport difficulties. The minibus is also used to take trainees to off-the-job training locations which would otherwise be difficult to reach on public transport. This helps to remove transport difficulties as a barrier to participation in training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ comprehensive induction programme offered as and when required
- ◆ good additional support for trainees with learning difficulties
- ◆ extensive support for job search

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little formal initial assessment of trainees' existing skills
- ◆ lack of focus and targets in trainees' progress reviews

47. Management responsibility for the support of trainees is clearly understood and occupational staff recognise their responsibilities by responding quickly to trainees' needs. Carefully conducted initial interviews allow staff to match available training with the aspirations of each individual applicant. Prompt acceptance and starting on training is facilitated by the well-planned week-long induction programme being offered throughout most of the year. Topics covered are reinforced through detailed paperwork, good lesson plans, clear handouts and visual aids. Staff are very experienced and are able to motivate trainees to take an active involvement in challenging individual and group activities. During induction, training in health and safety is good and closely linked to work placements through small project exercises. Trainees are made fully aware of their rights and responsibilities and those with learning difficulties and disabilities receive appropriate additional support promptly. Link workers usually ensure that there are good links with local support agencies to help trainees with drug and alcohol problems. Speech therapy sessions are arranged with a local hospital for those with communication difficulties. Job search is introduced to all trainees during induction and helpful tutorials are held in a well-equipped drop-in resource centre. Success stories of trainees who have secured jobs are well displayed around the resource area. All trainees take part in a job-search training programme towards the end of their training. The programme includes a skills audit, curriculum vitae writing, telephone styles, letter writing and interview techniques. Trainees use the Internet regularly to research local job opportunities. A successful job-finding coach contacts local employers regularly to find out about non-advertised vacancies and to set up additional work placements. Staff often continue to support trainees into their first few weeks of employment with pastoral visits and advice. Some trainees are supported in order to complete their NVQ units after funding has expired or when they are removed from the programme for short periods.

48. Only trainees who appear at interview to have difficulties with numeracy and literacy undertake an initial assessment of their basic skills. There is no systematic assessment of basic skills for all on entry and some trainees do not receive additional help until difficulties arise during training. Key and occupational skills are not systematically assessed on entry, although those starting care programmes undertake some assessment of aptitude. Outcomes of assessment are not used systematically to update individual training plans. Trainees' reviews take place regularly across all programmes but there is no common reporting format used within the company. Reviews are recorded in a range of different forms to meet the needs of programme providers and lack a common approach to the purpose and outcomes desired to support trainees effectively. Usually, there is no distinction between pastoral and progress reviews. Most reviews lack sufficient focus and many do not lead to the development of specific action points. They are not systematically recorded or monitored.

Management of training

Grade 3

49. A managing director and a board of four executive directors manage the company. A general manager is responsible for operational matters and delegates training to a senior team charged with ensuring training and contractual requirements are met. The company employs 54 staff and operates from leased units in Lombard Street and the recently purchased Hudson House in the Hendon area of the city. The management style is based on empowering staff to work towards the company's objectives and performance is reviewed against them. Corporate objectives cover all aspects of ETEC's work. Weekly staff meetings are held to review progress and the minutes of these meetings record decisions taken and responsibilities for agreed action points. The company was accredited as an Investor in People in 1994 and has retained the award ever since. The company offers training and assessment in most occupational areas, with the largest numbers of trainees being in the programmes for construction and foundation for work. There are service level agreements for all subcontracted work. The managing director and the general manager appraise all staff annually and development opportunities are linked to business plan objectives. All staff have detailed job descriptions and new recruits participate in a structured induction programme upon appointment. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective empowerment of the staff
- ◆ good communication through regular meetings
- ◆ effective links with external partners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of reliable data to assist decision-making
- ◆ poor co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training

50. The organisation is well managed and staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are empowered to manage within their delegated authority, which in most cases has resulted in prompt responses to trainees' needs, although trainees in care and information technology have not been dealt with so effectively. Weekly staff meetings for all staff have comprehensive agendas and are summarised through widely distributed minutes. Meetings are informative and provide a valuable opportunity for staff to reflect on progress and to influence policy. The outcomes of monthly management meetings are well documented and targets are set. Staff are kept well informed of decisions made by management through widely distributed minutes. Effective working groups are established to consider particular topics and are disbanded on satisfactory completion of their

task. Staff volunteer for the working groups they wish to be involved in. Currently, aspects of equal opportunities and internal assessment are being developed. Regular meetings of vocational staff are well attended and provide a good forum for discussion and the sharing of ideas and best practice across all aspects of the company's business. Staff are given appropriate authority to carry out their duties. The culture of the organisation motivates staff and encourages them to make suggestions for improvements. These are carefully considered by managers and lead to continuous improvement within the organisation. All staff have clear and current job descriptions and are appropriately qualified and experienced to undertake most tasks assigned to them. Several staff are former trainees who have successfully applied for vacancies in competition with external applicants. Thorough annual staff appraisal within the context of the company's business objectives helps identify strengths and issues for development, which are promptly and appropriately addressed.

51. Extensive links and partnerships with external agencies are used effectively to broaden opportunities for all participants. Trainees are carefully supported and the projects undertaken are sensitively managed to benefit all participants. Together with a national charity, ETEC offers several projects to support and develop disadvantaged trainees by engaging them in activities. There is also a project to empower individuals by building their self-esteem and confidence to enable them to return to learning. The company has established effective partnerships with local schools and the careers service with the aim of providing young people with a purposeful training environment to help motivate them into regular participation in society. Young people from 14 years of age in danger of social exclusion are introduced to the world of work through offers of work experience and are given empathetic support by the staff. A two-year pilot programme supports those with disabilities to assist them into work. Such initiatives offer a good range of opportunity to satisfy the developmental and training needs of trainees in the locality.

52. Accurate management information is available to assist the monthly monitoring of performance against the TEC contract and is disseminated to inform training teams about their performance against business targets. Formulation and analysis of other performance-related data is poor and underdeveloped. There is little awareness of trainees' progress by occupational area, and few comparisons are made from one year to the next. Opportunities to monitor action by training staff and subcontracted providers are missed and key performance indicators are not systematically analysed to inform managers of areas requiring their attention. External communication links with subcontractors and work-placement providers are poor and have resulted in an unco-ordinated approach to training and assessment. On- and off-the-job training are often seen as separate and opportunities to integrate the two are lost. A lack of co-ordination between work done in college, work at the training centre and experience gained at work leads to opportunities being missed for on-the-job assessment, which hinders achievement.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

53. The general manager is responsible for quality assurance. Since the original inspection, a link support quality manager has been appointed, reporting directly to the general manager. A quality assurance manual was developed some years ago, by external consultants, to ensure that the company conforms to the procedures required by contracts. The link support quality manager's job role includes the development and monitoring of the training process. Monthly audits review specific items in relation to quality assurance procedures. Any cases of non-compliance are reported to the general manager. The self-assessment process included a series of development days conducted away from the company's premises. All ETEC's staff were involved in the identification of strengths and weaknesses and in the allocation of grades in the report.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance procedures
- ◆ poor monitoring and evaluation of subcontracted training and work placements
- ◆ unco-ordinated evaluation of training programmes

54. ETEC has made some progress in the development of its quality assurance processes. Written procedures have been produced for internal verification, and for the observation of training. ETEC has developed a system to improve the monitoring of subcontracted provision. It has produced evaluation questionnaires to enable work-placement providers and learners to comment on the quality of training and assessment. ETEC produced a self-assessment update for inspectors in preparation for the reinspection. A complete new self-assessment report and development plan was also available during the reinspection. Inspectors awarded a lower grade for quality assurance than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ sharing of good practice through quality working groups
- ◆ regular and effective internal audits

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete quality assurance systems
- ◆ insufficiently thorough evaluation processes

55. There are nine quality assurance working groups which meet to develop and share good practice. All ETEC's staff are involved, and they are allocated to groups according to their area of expertise. The groups have worked on initial assessment and internal verification, observation of training, revision of the handbooks for learners and work-placement providers, and the production of materials for monitoring subcontracted training provision. Some of the groups have produced good quality work. The link support quality manager is responsible

for the implementation of the working groups' recommendations.

56. There are frequent, thorough, internal audits of quality assurance procedures. The staff conducting the audits are changed regularly, to help spread the understanding of procedures and practices more widely. The general manager deals effectively with non-compliance. There is now a system for monitoring the quality of subcontracted provision. This has so far been used with two subcontractors. It effectively compares the performance of the subcontractor with the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework*. Health and safety procedures are applied thoroughly, and emerging issues on work placements are dealt with promptly.

57. The quality assurance system is incomplete. The manual of quality assurance procedures relates mainly to contract compliance and has not been updated since 1994. Much of the recent material from the quality assurance working groups is still being implemented. The new procedures for internal verification have been partially implemented. The material for conducting observations has been developed and is of good quality, but has not been used. The development plans in the revised self-assessment report identify some important aspects of the quality assurance system which have yet to be implemented. There is no overall strategy to improve some aspects of the training provision and no procedure to ensure that such a strategy is developed and monitored.

58. ETEC's evaluation processes are not thorough enough. Questionnaires have been designed for learners and work-placement providers. These are not yet in full use, although the learner questionnaire was tested on a sample of learners in March 2001. Data on matters which affect contractual obligations are discussed at management meetings, but other indicators of programme quality are not given enough attention. There are no programme review meetings to evaluate trends and improve the quality of training. Learners are asked for their views during regular progress reviews, but this information is not used systematically to evaluate training provision. External agencies are not asked to comment on the quality of the training provision.

59. All ETEC's staff were actively involved in preparing the self-assessment report, which is written in a clear and informative style. A detailed action plan is included which sets out how ETEC will improve areas of weakness and identifies how improvements will be measured. The report provides an accurate insight into most of ETEC's activities, but is over-optimistic about the effect of some recent developments on the learners' experiences.