

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION JUNE
2002

The Training & Recruitment Partnership 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
- ◆ learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- ◆ education and training in prisons, at the invitation of her majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

The Training & Recruitment Partnership Limited offers satisfactory training in engineering, business administration and customer service. The training provision in construction is less than satisfactory. There was no training in health, care and public services. The range of employers is wide and all learners are employed. The work provides extensive opportunities for learners to collect evidence for their portfolios of evidence. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is inadequate. The Training & Recruitment Partnership Limited promotes equality of opportunity. Operational management policies and procedures are good. Quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory and there is insufficient monitoring of training carried out by subcontractors.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	4
Engineering	4
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Health, care & public services	4

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	4
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	5

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Construction	4
Engineering	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Trainee support	3
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of employers
- ◆ wide range of on-the-job training opportunities
- ◆ effective action-planning in business administration and customer service
- ◆ good staff awareness and promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ good work trial scheme

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of work-based assessments in construction and engineering
- ◆ poor learners' achievement rates
- ◆ weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ lack of knowledge of training programmes by employers and learners
- ◆ poor understanding of equal opportunities by learners
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of employers' implementation of equal opportunities procedures
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of the quality of training carried out by subcontractors

INTRODUCTION

1. The Training & Recruitment Partnership Limited (TRP) was formed in March 1998 to take over the business of Merton Training Consortium, which had been in existence since 1983. TRP has one office in Morden, south London and, at the time of the original inspection, it employed a total of 10 staff, five full-time and five part-time. TRP now employs three full- and seven part-time staff. All learners are in full-time employment. Most learners have off-the-job training provided by one of nine subcontractors. The number of subcontractors has been reduced from the 20 that were used by TRP at the time of the original inspection. Learners in business administration and customer service do not have formal off-the-job training, but TRP arranges individual portfolio-building training sessions when required, at its premises.

2. At the time of the original inspection, TRP had a contract with AZ Training and Enterprise Council (AZTEC) to provide advanced modern apprenticeships, foundation modern apprenticeships and other training programmes for young people in the borough of Merton and the neighbouring boroughs of Wandsworth, Kingston and Sutton. TRP had 177 learners. Training was offered in construction, engineering, business administration, customer service, and health, care and public services, all of which were inspected. There were also 21 learners in hairdressing, media, hospitality and management and professional. These occupational areas were not inspected because of the low number of learners. Since April 2001, TRP's training contract has been with London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Currently there are 110 learners, most of whom are on advanced or foundation modern apprenticeship programmes, with some learners who are still completing their national vocational qualification (NVQ) training. Training is only offered in construction, engineering, business administration and customer service.

3. At the time of the original inspection, the unemployment rate in Merton was 3.6 per cent. In April 2002, the rate was 3.3 per cent in Merton, compared with the national average of 3.1 per cent. The main sources of employment in the area are the service industries, public administration, education, the health service, the distributive trades, hotels and restaurants. This is also the case across London and the Southeast, although, in London, there are also many employment opportunities in banking, finance and insurance.

4. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers in Merton achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 38.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers gaining five GCSEs at grade C or above was 40 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

5. The proportion of people in the Merton area from minority ethnic groups is

16.3 per cent, compared with 6.2 per cent for the United Kingdom as a whole, according to the 1991 census. In London, the proportion is 20.2 per cent and in the Southeast it is 3.1 per cent. The proportion of people in the Merton area from minority ethnic groups now is 16.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 for the United Kingdom.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. In preparation for the original inspection, TRP's staff attended self-assessment training events arranged by AZTEC. All staff were consulted during the preparation of the self-assessment report and gave information and evidence relevant to their work roles. The training centre manager produced a second self-assessment report before the reinspection. This covered only the areas to be reinspected. Staff were given some opportunity to contribute to the report. Some strengths in the self-assessment report matched those given by inspectors but others were no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report did not identify any new weaknesses but gave a breakdown of the action taken to remedy the weaknesses identified at the original inspection.

7. The original inspection was carried out by a team of six inspectors who spent a total of 23 days at TRP in September 2000. They visited 42 employers, interviewed 55 learners, 28 workplace supervisors and managers, and eight staff. Inspectors examined assessment records, learners' portfolios, individual training plans, learners' files, internal verification records, external verifiers' reports, statistics, minutes of meetings, the business plan and company policies and procedures.

8. The reinspection was carried out by four inspectors who spent a total of 16 days at TRP in June 2002, reinspecting construction, engineering, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance arrangements. They visited 19 employers and interviewed 22 workplace supervisors and 39 learners. All TRP's staff were interviewed. Inspectors examined a range of documents including management policies and practices, learners' progress review paperwork, portfolios of evidence, and external and internal verification records.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 4

9. There are 25 learners on construction training programmes. TRP offers a range of NVQ programmes at levels 2 and 3 including plumbing, painting and decorating, plastering, trowel occupations, wood occupations and electrical installations. There are four advanced modern apprentices, of whom one is working towards electrical installation, two are working towards plumbing, and one is working towards wood occupations qualifications. There are 16 foundation modern apprentices, of whom two are following electrical installations programmes, four are on plumbing, eight are in wood occupations and two are working towards trowel occupations. Learners are recruited through a variety of sources. Those not already employed are matched to employers with vacancies. All learners are employed. Learners have an induction programme followed by a

combination of on- and off-the-job training. TRP arranges day-release off-the-job training with five further education colleges. Three colleges are subcontracted to provide electrical installation training and two for the other construction trades. The subcontractors are responsible for internal verification. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that in the self-assessment report and was the same as the grade at the original inspection.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ failure of trainees to gather sufficient evidence on the job
- ◆ lack of work-based assessments
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ weak understanding of NVQs by some employers
- ◆ inadequate occupational experience of training advisors
- ◆ poor trainees' retention and achievement rates

10. Of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection, action has been taken to ensure that training advisers are occupationally qualified and have sufficient industrial experience for the qualifications offered. Progress has been made in enabling learners to gather NVQ evidence on the job. Learners are now collecting sufficient evidence in the workplace. There are still no NVQ assessments in the workplace. There is inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and employers have a poor understanding of the NVQ process and no knowledge of modern apprenticeship frameworks. Learners' retention and achievement rates are still poor.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of supportive employers
- ◆ wide range of on-the-job training opportunities
- ◆ good off-the-job training resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates of learners
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

11. There is a good range of work placement and employment opportunities available to learners. There are well-established links with many local employers, from sole proprietors to large contractors. They represent a broad range of construction industry activities and provide learners with a good range of training opportunities that cover the NVQ requirements. Employers see training as an investment and as a way to overcome the lack of skills in the construction industry.

Off-the-job training resources are good. All subcontractors have well-equipped construction workshops, and learners also have access to well-equipped resource centres. The computers in these resource centres have a range of construction software. Other learning support materials include packs from the construction national consortium, and videos which illustrate a range of skills required for construction NVQs.

12. Most off-the-job training is not individualised. Learners work on a prescribed course, which usually starts in September. Some learners have been delayed starting their training. To counter the delay, TRP has organised an unfunded month's trial for learners before they sign up for modern apprenticeships. One subcontractor has training programmes which learners can join throughout the year. All subcontractors record learners' progress during off-the-job training using clear recording systems. Subcontractors do not make adequate links between off-the-job training and learners' practical experience in the workplace. Subcontractors do not have copies of learners' individual learning plans. Most learners' assessment is carried out in off-the-job activities. There is insufficient work-based assessment. TRP encourages learners to use witness statements to support their assessment and evidence is collected from the workplace. Employers sign to validate this evidence.

POOR PRACTICE

A learner had been absent from the off-the-job training at a subcontractor for 10 weeks before the employer and provider were notified.

13. Training advisers visit learners in the workplace to carry out progress reviews. All advisers have sufficient knowledge and experience of the construction industry as well as relevant qualifications. The progress reviews include discussion of learners' general progress in the workplace and off-the-job, and their progress towards targets on their individual learning plan, but there is insufficient detailed target-setting for the achievement of their NVQ units. Some learners know that they have to complete key skills training successfully. Other learners do not know about modern apprenticeship frameworks and key skills qualifications. Some subcontractors offer key skills training, but most key skills training is planned to be completed at the end of learners' NVQ training. Training in key skills is not given from the outset as an integral part of vocational training.

14. Learners' retention and achievement rates are poor, in construction. During the three years for which data were supplied, no learners on foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships achieved their frameworks. A hundred per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved their level 3 NVQs in 1999-2000, in 2000-01, 40 per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved and in 2001-02, 67 per cent achieved. In 1999-2000, no foundation modern apprentices achieved a level 2 NVQ, 5 per cent achieved in 2000-01 and 3 per cent achieved in 2001-02. Nine per cent of learners on NVQ training programmes achieved a level 2 NVQ in 1999-2000, 50 per cent achieved in 2000-01 and 30 per cent achieved in 2001-02. Sixty-three per cent of advanced modern apprentices were retained in 1999-2000 and 57 per cent in 2001-02. Retention rates were 74 per cent for foundation modern apprentices in 1999-2000 and 42 per cent in 2001-02. Retention rates for learners on NVQ training programmes were 63 per cent in 1999-2000 and 33 per cent in 2001-02.

Engineering

Grade 3

15. There are 24 learners working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in motor vehicle studies and engineering. There are eight advanced modern apprentices, nine foundation modern apprentices and seven learners on NVQ training. This is 16 fewer than at the time of the original inspection. There are 16 learners on motor vehicle service and repair programmes including vehicle body and paint operations. One learner is on an electrical and electronics servicing programme and seven learners are on engineering programmes. Learners on motor vehicle programmes are employed in organisations ranging from small partnerships to large dealerships, in service and repair garages and body shops. Small and medium-sized engineering and manufacturing organisations employ the other engineering and electrical learners. Learners attend local colleges one day a week to acquire background knowledge and understanding and for NVQ and key skills training and assessment. The newly appointed training adviser visits learners in the workplace and liaises with the colleges. The colleges are responsible for internal verification.

GOOD PRACTICE

Two learners who were having difficulty covering the range of activities within their NVQ because they could not gain the experience at their workplace, were offered an extra day a week off-the-job training at the subcontractor. This was negotiated with the subcontractor and employer by their training adviser and has allowed the learners to progress towards completion of their qualification.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ lack of employers' involvement in NVQ training
- ◆ poor trainees' retention and achievement rates
- ◆ missed workplace evidence and assessment opportunities
- ◆ poor knowledge and understanding of NVQs by employers and trainees
- ◆ inflexible start dates for off-the-job training

16. Since the original inspection, TRP has recruited a part-time training adviser for engineering, who is occupationally experienced and currently working towards assessors' qualifications. The training adviser liaises with colleges, visits learners in the workplace and meets employers. Learners and employers now have a better understanding of the NVQ training programmes, and some employers are becoming more involved in NVQ training. The subcontracted colleges, offering motor vehicle training programmes, are liaising more closely with employers and increasing the amount of workplace assessment. Retention and achievement rates remain poor for foundation modern apprentices and NVQ training programmes. At the original inspection, inspectors identified a weakness regarding inflexible start dates for off-the-job training, which meant that learners often were delayed between being signed on to a training programme and starting training. The start dates for off-the-job training are no more flexible but TRP now only starts learners on training programmes when a college place is available so that learners can start their off-the-job training immediately.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good response to additional or changing training needs
- ◆ wide range of supportive employers
- ◆ good off-the-job resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate integration of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners

17. TRP is meeting the additional qualification requirements of some learners who require skills in addition to their NVQ requirements to cover all aspects of their jobs. For example, TRP arranges welding training for motor vehicle mechanical maintenance learners and paint finishing training for learners on body repair training programmes. TRP reacts promptly when learners' job requirements change. TRP also responds quickly when learners change employers, or the NVQ on their individual learning plan is inappropriate. TRP supports such learners, where possible, to achieve their original NVQ as well as to start a new NVQ that is relevant to their changed circumstances. TRP has also taken on a learner from another training provider that was unable to provide an appropriate training programme. TRP's staff make particular efforts to enable learners who miss training sessions to stay on the training programme. This includes giving individual tuition, including key skills training sessions, to enable learners to complete their programme. This is appreciated by learners and employers. This strength was recognized in the latest self-assessment report.

18. A wide range of organisations employ learners, including small independent garages, main dealers and small to medium-sized engineering organisations. Training starts with learners under close supervision. They are then given increased responsibility and less supervision. Employers' staff support learners well. All employer' premises, equipment and working practices are in line with modern industrial practice. Learners all work on actual projects which contribute to their employer's business. Occasionally, learners in small organisations who are indispensable in busy times, miss some college sessions. Employers are supportive of their learners and some employers pay learners' travel costs to college. Learners are often given time to revise and for portfolio-building.

19. Four subcontracted colleges provide all off-the-job training, although one college has only one learner. The colleges have excellent resources, particularly in motor vehicle engineering. The workshops are spacious and well maintained. They have excellent equipment and instruments. The awarding body recognises one college's facilities as a realistic working environment for assessment by observation. Good classrooms and modern facilities back up the resources. College staff are experienced and have a good working relationship with learners. The

course documents are adequate and most learners are pleased with their courses. Course leaders understand the NVQ assessment and verification procedures and are adapting to new qualification requirements.

GOOD PRACTICE

The provider issues a quarterly newsletter to all learners. It is lively and informative and includes advertisements for jobs, celebration of learners' successes and news of interest to learners such as changes to the minimum wage. It reports on the activities of individuals both connected with and outside their training programmes. It attempts to build a team spirit among staff and between staff and learners. Most learners welcome the newsletter.

20. The subcontracted colleges are increasing the amount of workplace assessment. However, there are too few links between on- and off-the-job training. TRP's learners form a small proportion of learners on college programmes. Colleges do not individualise training and link it to workplace learning. Many employers do not know what is involved in off-the-job training and cannot contribute fully to the training process. Some employers ask learners what they have covered in off-the-job training. The feedback is generally good but some employers would like to be better informed so that they can contribute more.

21. Retention and achievement rates are good for advanced modern apprentices. For the past three years, retention and achievement rates have been 70 per cent, 100 per cent and 100 per cent. There were no starters in 2000-01. For the foundation modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes, retention rates have been low, at 29 per cent, and only one learner has completed the foundation modern apprenticeship framework. During the inspection, some learners' portfolios were being verified and other learners had almost finished, so achievement rates are likely to improve for the current year, particularly for NVQs.

Business administration

Grade 3

22. TRP offers training in accountancy, business administration and information technology NVQs at levels 2 to 4. There are 24 trainees in total, four advanced modern apprentices, 18 foundation modern apprentices and two on other youth training programmes. Some trainees approach TRP looking for a job with training, while others are referred to TRP by their employer. All trainees are employed. The trainees do not attend any formal off-the-job training. If any is required, it is arranged on a one-to-one basis and carried out by TRP's assessors during visits to the workplace. There are three members of staff responsible for this area. They are all suitably qualified.

23. The trainees' achievement and retention data are based on figures for the past two years. In 1998-99, 14 per cent of trainees on other youth training programmes achieved the outcomes specified on their individual training plans and 16 per cent are still on programme. The number of trainees leaving the programme early in 1999-2000 was 50 per cent with, as yet, no trainees' achieving. Modern apprentices have only been recruited in the 1999-2000 contract year, when two started the programme. Twenty per cent of foundation modern apprentices starting in 1998-99 left the programme early and 20 per cent achieved their target outcomes. The remaining 60 per cent are still on programme. For those starting in 1999-2000, 68 per cent are still on programme.

24. The self-assessment report stated a large number of strengths many of which

inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice and others which were more appropriate to a generic area rather than this occupational area of the report. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ Good range of employers
- ◆ Effective action-planning
- ◆ Good integration of key skills

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ Missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ No work-based assessors
- ◆ Insufficient awareness by trainees of the requirements of their programme

25. There are good working relationships between TRP, the trainees and the employers. The company has long-standing links with a good range of employers, most of whom are small to medium sized. They cover a wide range of specialisms including accountants, estate agencies, communication and retail and wholesale outlets. Employers are supportive of the trainees and most play an active role in the review process. The range of work offered by employers covers the NVQ level 2 requirements. If the work is not broad enough or of sufficient depth to cover the requirements for NVQs at level 3, the employers and TRP discuss ways in which competencies can be gained. This has involved moving trainees to different departments for a limited period of time.

26. Trainees understand the assessment process. There is an effective and frequent action-planning process for each trainee. The assessors visit the trainees at regular intervals, on average every two weeks. The assessor discusses with the trainee the completed work and ensures that it is placed in the most appropriate section of the portfolio. The trainees understand the cross-referencing they need to do before presenting the file for internal verification. During the assessment meeting the assessor discusses and lists actions that should be completed before the next meeting. Both the trainee and the assessor sign and date the plan. At subsequent meetings the assessor confirms with the trainee the progress made. The assessor and trainee discuss in detail the amount of work to be covered before the next meeting. This is influenced by the workload of individual trainees, the type of work they are involved in and the ability of the trainee.

27. The range of work trainees are involved in day-to-day enables them to gather evidence not only for their NVQ but also for the key skills. Trainees are given a list stating all the key skills. During every assessment meeting the trainee and assessors check the list to see whether the trainee has covered any key skills during

the completion of work for the NVQ. Trainees have a knowledge of the range and breadth of what has to be achieved. If a trainee has difficulty in understanding or does not have the necessary knowledge to cover a key skill element, the assessor organises one-to-one training sessions. These sessions are held at the TRP's premises where, in addition to the training, the trainees are given assignments to work through to improve their understanding.

28. There is insufficient use of assessment of trainees' activities in the workplace. The one-to-one assessment meetings between the assessor and the trainee are effective in covering the paper-based evidence, including witness testimonies which are presented by the trainee. There is some workplace observation of competence but it is not planned in advance. No observation timetable is drawn up even though most trainees have some repetitive aspect to their role which is completed at set times, such as standing in for the switchboard operator at lunchtime. Assessors are willing to assess trainees if they are carrying out relevant activities during a normal assessment visit, but they do not plan or structure work-based assessment. Workplace supervisors give help and most are flexible in ensuring the work given to the trainee covers all the NVQ requirements. The supervisors provide witness testimonies but, even though some are trained as assessors, they do not assess. All portfolios are internally verified and all units are sampled. In some cases, trainees can gain accreditation for an individual unit. Internal verifiers give little systematic feedback to assessors after they have observed an assessment.

29. Trainees have poor knowledge of their training programme. Some trainees do not know whether they are on a modern apprenticeship programme or undertaking an individual NVQ. Trainees are unaware of the requirements of the framework. In some cases, individual training plans fail to list all elements of the training programme required for the qualification.

Retailing & customer service (customer service)

Grade 3

30. There are 26 trainees on training programmes in customer service. There are 13 trainees working towards NVQs at level 2 through the foundation modern apprenticeship programme. Eleven trainees are working towards NVQs at level 3 on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme. There are two trainees on other youth programmes working towards NVQs at level 2. All trainees are employed. There has been an increase in the number of trainees starting the programme with 14 in 1998-99 and 24 in 1999-2000. Some trainees are referred to TRP by their employer, others approach TRP looking for a job with training. TRP uses an extensive range of employers. Most are small to medium-size businesses but there are also large multi-national companies. Assessment takes place in the workplace. There are no work-based assessors. TRP employs two training advisors who undertake assessments. Both are occupationally competent and appropriately qualified. Training advisors also undertake reviews with trainees. The director of

TRP is the lead internal verifier for customer service. Both training advisors are also qualified internal verifiers

31. Achievement and retention figures for trainees are based on the analysis of data for the contract years 1998-99 and 1999-2000. For advanced modern apprenticeships, the retention rate during 1998-99 was 60 per cent and this increased to 71 per cent for the contract year 1999-2000. Recruitment for foundation modern apprenticeships did not begin until 1999-2000. The retention rate for this period was 60 per cent. Numbers for other work-based programmes are relatively small. There were two new trainees during 1999-2000 and both left the programme early. For 1998-99, five started but only one trainee remains on the programme. To-date, there has yet to be a completion of either an advanced modern apprenticeship or foundation modern apprenticeship.

32. The self-assessment report records a large number of strengths many of which inspectors consider to be no more than normal practice. Some of the strengths identified were more appropriate to generic areas rather than the occupational area of the report. Inspectors agreed with the identified weakness in the self-assessment report of late implementation of key skills. Inspectors found additional weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ Good understanding by trainees of the assessment process
- ◆ Good additional occupational support for trainees
- ◆ Effective teamwork leading to action-planning and improvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ Low awareness by trainees of the requirements of their training programme
- ◆ Inadequate recording and monitoring of trainees' progress
- ◆ Some unsatisfactory internal verification arrangements
- ◆ Late implementation of keys skills

33. Trainees have a clear understanding of the structure of their NVQ and of the NVQ assessment process. There is effective action-planning which is clearly recorded. At each visit, assessors confirm with the trainee the progress made. All assessments are conducted in the workplace and observation of trainees' performance is clearly recorded. Trainees are given immediate feedback. Training advisors have a good understanding of the standards and are able to advise trainees on how best to collect their evidence. Trainees are notified of any gaps in their evidence base and the action required to rectify the gaps. Portfolios are satisfactory and contain a diverse range of evidence including records of workplace observation, activity logs, results of case studies, and witness testimonies from their employers. In some portfolios, case studies are not counter-signed by the

employer. Most trainees cross-reference evidence against NVQ requirements at the end of the assessment process. For some trainees, this has resulted in a delay in submitting their completed portfolio. Training advisors carry out assessments in the workplace every two weeks. This helps maintain trainees' motivation. Trainees and employers express a high level of satisfaction with the assessors' support.

34. TRP arranges additional occupational support for trainees. These include training sessions at the TRP's office on appropriate telephone techniques, introductory sessions on information technology, portfolio-building workshops and advice sessions on cross-referencing evidence against NVQ standards. Some sessions are held in the evening so that trainees can attend after work. Sessions are either arranged on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Some employers also arrange additional support for trainees including time for portfolio-development and writing case studies and additional training programmes to support their job role. However, at some placements, training at work was poorly planned.

35. Training advisors work well as a team with the aim of improving the quality of training. The assessment team meets on a monthly basis to monitor trainees' progress, to consider equal opportunity issues, to review and standardise training, and to plan joint visits in order to both monitor and to share good practice. Minutes are taken, agreed actions recorded and reviewed at subsequent meetings. Work to develop good key skills practices has been less effective. The team also developed effective arrangements for action-planning and remedying the weaknesses identified through self-assessment.

36. Most trainees are unaware that they are either on a foundation modern apprenticeship programme or an advanced modern apprenticeship programme. Each trainee is issued with an induction factsheet which makes reference to NVQs and key skills. The factsheet makes no reference to the apprenticeship frameworks. Individual training plans record apprenticeship details but not all trainees have a copy of the plan in their portfolio. Trainees are unaware that the framework requires additional units over and above the main NVQ award.

37. Arrangements for recording trainees' progress and achievement are inadequate. Forms do not record the specific elements or units achieved. There are no monitoring sheets used to record trainees' achievement. Trainees do not know the elements or units they have achieved. Assessors are unable to confirm those elements and units that trainees have achieved.

38. Some aspects of the internal verification arrangements are unsatisfactory. All portfolios are internally verified and all units are sampled. However, in most cases, this is done when the trainee has completed the process of gathering all of their evidence. There is no ongoing internal verification of portfolios. The internal verifier observes assessors undertaking assessments and provides feedback. However, this is not formally recorded. There is no internal verification sampling plan.

39. TRP has made little progress with the introduction of key skills into training. Although there are some examples of integration and good practice for some trainees, other trainees have made little progress in generating evidence for key skills. No trainee has yet achieved either a foundation or advanced modern apprenticeship in customer service.

Health, care & public services

Grade 4

40. The TRP offers NVQ programmes in care and early years care and education at levels 2 and 3. All trainees are employed and all are assessed in the workplace. There are nine trainees in total. Six advanced modern apprenticeship, two foundation modern apprenticeship trainees and one other youth trainee. One male trainee and two belonging to minority ethnic groups are enrolled on care programmes. There are two level 2 care trainees placed in private care homes. Seven level 3 early years care and education trainees work in day nurseries and in a school for children with learning difficulties. The assessment and off-the-job training for care of the elderly are subcontracted to a college of further education. Training for care of the elderly is offered for two hours each week for level 2 and for two hours on a different evening for level 3. Assessments are conducted by qualified workplace assessors. The company subcontracts the assessment and training of early years care and education to a different college of further education. Trainees are offered an evening programme of workshops for two hours twice monthly at college. Assessments of early years care and education trainees are carried out by assessors employed by the college. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses in the self-assessment report and identified an additional one. Inspectors agreed with elements of one strength cited in the self-assessment report but regarded most of the strengths as no more than normal practice. A lower grade is awarded than that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ Good action-planning for assessments

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ Poor retention of trainees and very low achievement
- ◆ Inappropriate placement of some trainees on programmes
- ◆ Late introduction of key skills

41. Care and early years care and education trainees work in a range of suitable placements. They have appropriate access to assessment and off-the-job training opportunities if necessary. Most childcare trainees are able to work with children aged from birth to five years of age. The two trainees who work with elderly people are assessed by qualified workplace assessors. They join classes of NVQ students at the college on two afternoons a week for a series of workshops. The activities are linked to national standards and draw upon the trainees' work

experience. College staff visit early years care and education trainees at their place of work each month to observe their practice, assess their achievements and to make plans about what the trainees need to do next to prepare for future assessments. The plans take into account the trainees' job roles and their different rates of progress. Assessors give constructive spoken and written feedback on trainees' progress. Placement staff help to identify opportunities for assessment and write witness testimonies to assist trainees' progress. Assessor training is provided for workplace staff, and regular assessor meetings are held to share information about trainees' progress. An appropriate range of assessment is used. The assessments are cross-referenced to other pieces of written work in the portfolios, and to the national standards in care and in early years care and education. Internal verification is satisfactory. All units are verified and accredited as they are completed. Observations of trainee assessors by internal verifiers, however, have been delayed and assessments completed by trainee assessors are not always counter-signed by a qualified assessor. TRP's staff visit trainees to carry out reviews of their progress, but do not always set clear targets with the trainees and do not then use these to update their individual training plans.

42. In the past two years, 53 per cent of trainees have left early without achieving a qualification. During the same period, no trainee completed the components listed on their individual training plan. One trainee achieved an NVQ at level 2 in care in the year 1998-99 and one trainee achieved an NVQ in early years care and education in the year 1999-2000. The lack of adequate initial assessment and accreditation of prior learning means that some trainees decide which levels of NVQ to join without satisfactory advice. Some trainees are enrolled on unsuitable programmes. They struggle to understand the knowledge required and make very slow progress.

43. Some trainees are unclear about which programme they are on. College staff help trainees collect and organise written information in their files and additional support is offered by TRP's staff to help trainees index and cross-reference the evidence they have collected from their workplaces to use towards their awards. Key skills are explained to trainees at induction, but are not integrated into the early years care and education NVQ by trainers and assessors. Trainees also attend training sessions in key skills at the TRP's office. TRP's staff visit trainees towards the end of their training to identify links between evidence of achievement collected by trainees in their portfolios. They also arrange for trainees to visit the TRP's office for extra training in information technology and application of number. However, the delay in the introduction of key skills results in trainees missing opportunities to achieve key skills qualifications alongside their NVQ awards, and slows their completion of the modern apprenticeship.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

44. TRP has an equal opportunities policy which states that it opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic origin, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or disability. The policy makes specific reference to both employment and training. The policy meets the requirements of the local TEC. The company also has in place a policy dealing with harassment and a procedure for logging all complaints. The harassment policy clearly outlines what can be deemed as harassment in the workplace and it states that any form of harassment is totally unacceptable. The nominated senior person responsible for equal opportunities is the director of TRP, who is responsible for reviewing the policy every six months. People from minority ethnic communities constitute approximately 18 per cent of the resident population. During the contract year 1999-2000, 9 per cent of all recruitment was from minority ethnic groups. This has increased to 19 per cent of all new trainees since the beginning of the contract year starting in April 2000. All trainees can access the main offices on the ground floor but the training rooms on the first floor are only accessible by stairs.

45. The self-assessment report records a large number of strengths many of which inspectors found to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with the identified weakness in the self-assessment that trainees have minimal knowledge of equal opportunities. Inspectors found an additional weakness to be the absence of systematic monitoring of employers' commitment to equality of opportunity. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong equal opportunities culture
- ◆ good staff awareness of equal opportunities
- ◆ good promotion of equality of opportunity

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor understanding of equal opportunities by trainees
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of employers' implementation of equal opportunities procedures

46. TRP has made a conscious decision to simplify the wording of its equal opportunities policy so that trainees can understand it more easily. However, the policy makes no specific reference to appropriate legislation. The director with responsibility for equal opportunities visits all potential companies to discuss contractual requirements. Employers are required to have a satisfactory policy of

their own or to agree to abide by TRP's equal opportunities policy. TRP has an effective complaints procedure. Complaints are recorded, reviewed at each staff meeting and appropriate action taken. In a recent example, TRP took action to resolve concerns about bullying of a trainee at college. The importance of equality of opportunity is emphasised during the interview of potential trainees. Interviews include activities to evaluate trainees' understanding of equality of opportunity. TRP takes action to remedy instances of poor practice in equal opportunities.

47. There is good staff awareness of equal opportunities. At each staff meeting there is a fixed agenda item on equal opportunities. Data on both recruitment and applications are considered. These figures include a summary of recruitment from minority ethnic groups as well as trainees who are registered disabled. Staff undertake training on equality of opportunity. Four members of staff have attended equal opportunities awareness seminars. Two staff have attended seminars on disability awareness. Handouts issued at these seminars have been circulated to all staff. The staff handbook reinforces the organisation's commitment to equality of opportunity and contains copies of the organisation's mission statement, equal opportunities policy and harassment policy.

48. TRP effectively promotes equality of opportunity. The application form contains a statement confirming that TRP is an equal opportunities provider. This is also reinforced on all promotional literature. Images used in promotional material reflect the diversity of the client group. TRP is committed to the promotion of gender equality in the workplace. A recent TRP newsletter featured an article on this subject and copies of the newsletter were sent to all employers. TRP has a female trainee employed as a motor vehicle mechanic and a male trainee employed in childcare. TRP has also worked closely with an employer who requested a young woman for the position of apprentice painter and decorator.

49. Trainees across all occupational areas have little understanding of equal opportunities. At every induction, trainees are issued with an induction factsheet. This contains a section on equal opportunities. The trainees do not have good recall of information given to them on equal opportunities. An induction questionnaire which contains specific questions relating to equal opportunities is issued to all trainees. The training advisor ticks each question in order to confirm trainee's understanding. There is no written answer by the trainee to confirm that they have understood the implications of the equal opportunities policy and harassment procedures. TRP has recently introduced a quarterly trainees' evaluation form which has a section for equal opportunities. Training advisors are instructed to record questions asked and answers given. As this has only been introduced recently, there has been no evaluation to assess its effectiveness.

50. Once placements have been vetted and contracts signed, there is no systematic monitoring by TRP to confirm the implementation by employers of equal opportunities policies and procedures. During the visits by assessors there is little monitoring of the extent to which trainees are accorded equal treatment.

Trainee support

Grade 3

51. Learners are referred to TRP by the local Connexions office, by employers and by personal recommendation. Some learners want a job that offers training and, following a successful interview, if they are not employed, TRP finds them employment. Other learners are already in employment and want to achieve an NVQ. Most learners start their training programmes in September, and they have a group induction at TRP's offices, with a member of TRP's staff. They are given an induction pack, which contains fact sheets covering TRP's responsibilities, those of the training adviser, the employer and the LSC. The packs also cover equal opportunities, health and safety, and sickness, attendance and grievance procedures. Trainer advisers check learners' understanding by giving them a questionnaire and answer any queries. Some learners do not complete the questionnaire. The pack also has a personal effectiveness checklist for learners to complete. Learners who are starting employment have a meeting with their TRP assessor or their adviser before they start their NVQ to discuss the NVQ requirements. Staff from the subcontractor carry out the NVQ induction for learners who attend off-the-job training. Learners who start at other times during the year, receive individual induction training carried out by the training adviser, usually in the workplace. The grade in the self-assessment report matched that given by the inspectors.

GOOD PRACTICE

When asked by TRP staff about his experience and understanding of equal opportunities, one learner interpreted the questions personally. He gave a reflective and strongly felt account of the barriers to achievement he had experienced at school and with previous training organisations. Good support in the past two years had enabled him to progress well. He had been made male student of the year at the college he was attending, had achieved an NVQ level 3 and had been given increased responsibility in the school for special educational needs where he is employed.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ Poor initial assessment
- ◆ no formal accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ lack of use of individual training plans as working documents
- ◆ poorly conducted progress reviews

52. TRP has remedied all the weaknesses identified at the original inspection. Initial assessment is now more systematic. Two staff are currently training to enable them to accredit prior learning. Results of initial assessments are now entered on individual learning plans and training advisers monitor and record learners' other progress during their visits. Reviews are now more formal and cover learners' on- and off-the-job progress.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work trial scheme
- ◆ effective liaison with a range of referral agencies
- ◆ learners' achievement celebrated widely

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor support for learners with additional needs in off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient understanding of framework requirements by learners and employers

53. TRP has a trial work scheme so that learners can experience a work placement before starting their training programme. TRP matches learners to the most appropriate available jobs. Learners and employers find the scheme useful. Learners can make an informed decision after their trial work placement. Employers have an opportunity to assess learners on the job, before offering them employment. If the work placement is unsuitable, TRP helps learners to find an alternative. There are currently 110 learners registered with TRP and 64 of them have been on the trial work scheme. The remaining 46 were already employed when they joined TRP.

54. TRP has good links with many referral agencies. It has good links with the local Connexions service. TRP's representatives frequently attend careers conventions and school careers days, where they hand out literature and discuss training options with potential learners. Learners, careers advisers and employers are sent an interesting and informative newsletter which updates their knowledge of health and safety and other work-related issues. It includes quizzes to help learners understand health and safety and equal opportunities, with prizes. The newsletter gives details of learners' achievements. Learners' achievements are also celebrated at presentation ceremonies to which a wide range of people including the local press are invited.

55. All learners with GCSE grade D or below take an assessment of their literacy and numeracy. Learners who need additional support are identified from the results of the assessment. Training advisers identify some learners' needs once they have begun their training programme. If learners need additional support, some are given good in-house training. Some subcontractors are not told about learners' additional learning needs and there is no support for these learners in the classroom. Between September 2001 and May 2002, eight learners (44 per cent), with identified additional needs, left training programmes early. Some were dismissed or made redundant. Pastoral support for learners with additional learning and social needs is strong. Training advisers give learners their telephone numbers so that they can contact them for pastoral advice or to arrange meetings.

56. Some learners and employers have an inadequate understanding of modern apprenticeship framework requirements. Framework requirements are discussed with learners during their induction training. However, the framework is not discussed at subsequent meeting between training advisers, learners and

employers. Many employers do not know the range and requirements of their learners' NVQs. They do not understand the modern apprenticeship frameworks and key skills training requirements of the overall training programme. All employers receive NVQ information, but still do not understand the detailed content fully.

Management of training

Grade 3

57. TRP was formed in January 1998 and has been reorganised three times, most recently from November 2001. There are three full-time and seven part-time staff. Management and staff structures are clearly defined. Annual appraisal is used to identify staff development needs and to meet staff and TRP's requirements. TRP's objectives are set out in a business plan which is reviewed every six months. TRP was accredited with the Investors in People standard in May 2000. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The grade awarded by inspectors matches the grade in the self-assessment report.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ lack of identification of best practice and sharing between occupational areas
- ◆ ineffective use of management information
- ◆ irregularities in review documentation

58. The weakness of poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training has not been remedied and is reported on in the individual occupational area reports. Information and good practice are shared during assessors' meetings in customer service and business administration. Recent increased involvement by TRP's staff with subcontractors, has increased awareness of good practice in training and assessment in the other occupational areas. The management information system is used to produce up-to-date data, which are systematically recorded and analysed at regular staff meetings and are used as a basis for management decisions. All review documents examined by inspectors were filled in correctly and in accordance with contractual obligations.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good management of change
- ◆ effective internal communications
- ◆ good policies and procedures for operational management

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective system for learners with identified additional needs
- ◆ no formal management of learners' attendance at college on some training programmes

59. TRP has an open and supportive management style. Changes to TRP's structure have been handled well. Staff understand their new roles and responsibilities and TRP's business and training targets. They are well motivated. In-house training enables staff to cover other job roles in case of absence or sickness.

60. Informal communication and sharing of information is good. All staff are based in the same offices and TRP is a small company. There are formal strategies for staff communication. Monthly staff meetings are important. Meetings are minuted and all agendas include updates on how TRP is meeting its targets, monitoring of equal opportunities and sharing information from new work practices. There are also team meetings for managers, administrators and assessors.

61. TRP has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that cover all aspects of the operational management, for example, recruitment, sickness and holiday procedures. They are clearly written and provide good basic information.

62. There is an initial assessment system for all new learners. All learners have an initial interview and those who have GCSEs at grade D or below also take a basic skills test. There is no clear system to support learners with additional needs. Subcontractors are not always given the test results and do not know if learners need additional help. TRP does not keep formal records of the help it offers to learners. There is no process to check that learners' needs are being met.

63. All subcontractors monitor learners' off-the-job attendance but the information is not shared in a standard way with TRP and employers. Some reports are sent monthly to TRP, and some subcontractors report absentees directly to the employer on the first day of absence. In some cases, action is not taken early enough. One learner missed ten weeks of training. TRP recognises this weakness and now training advisers and subcontractors to liaise more frequently.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

64. The training centre manager is responsible for quality assurance. Staff understand the training centre manager's role in ensuring the quality of training. Monthly management meetings monitor contractual targets, and there are also monthly staff meetings to raise and discuss quality assurance issues. The self-assessment report did not identify the weaknesses that inspectors found, and inspectors awarded a grade lower than the grade in the self-assessment report.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate monitoring of the quality of training
- ◆ poor monitoring of subcontractors
- ◆ no systematic collection of data

- ◆ no service level agreements with most subcontractors
- ◆ insufficient review of training effectiveness
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of safety in work placements

65. TRP has begun to monitor its in-house training but it is still not monitoring subcontractors effectively. Management information systems have been changed and data are now collected in a systematic way. Overall achievements are discussed by managers when reviewing the effectiveness of training. Regular feedback is now sought from learners and employers. TRP has a system to get feedback from a random sample of learners and employers on TRP's training and service. TRP has service level agreements but they are not always effective. Health and safety procedures have been reviewed and TRP's monitoring of safety in the workplace is more thorough.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective in-house internal verification system

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate monitoring of quality of subcontractors' training
- ◆ ineffective service level agreements
- ◆ self-assessment not an integral part of a quality assurance process

66. The internal verification system is effective for in-house business administration and customer care training programmes, which do not use subcontractors. There are procedures for each stage of the internal verification process. Staff have copies of the process, which gives clear guidelines on their responsibilities. Internal verifiers give clear feedback to the assessors and also good feedback to learners on the work that learners are putting in their portfolios. The process is managed well. Regular meetings are held. Prompt action is taken to carry out recommendations made by external verifiers.

67. There are no quality assurance arrangements to monitor effectively the quality of subcontractors' training, mainly further education colleges. TRP relies on the colleges' quality assurance systems. TRP is not sufficiently familiar with these systems and does not always get feedback on the process. TRP's staff do not observe training sessions carried out at subcontractors' premises, do not have planned meetings with subcontractors' assessors, do not influence internal verification arrangements, and are not invited to attend course review meetings. Communication with subcontractors has improved since the original inspection. Regular visits are now made and TRP's staff are more involved.

68. TRP has devised and sent out service level agreements to all subcontractors, but few have been signed and returned. TRP has had problems with one subcontractor's service even though they signed and agreed the service level agreement. TRP has resolved the problems and the service is now satisfactory.

TRP is reviewing the number of subcontractors it uses and spends more time with each subcontractor to get agreements in place and working.

69. TRP has not made self-assessment part of a quality assurance cycle. Before reinspection, a self-assessment report, covering only the areas to be reinspected, was written. The final version was prepared by the training centre manager, who asked staff from the occupational areas for verbal contributions. Many of the strengths in the report were considered to be no more than normal practice. Two of the five grades given by inspectors were lower than those given in the self-assessment report.