

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Springboard Sunderland Trust**

**03 March 2003**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training 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.

## Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.



## SUMMARY

### The provider

Springboard Sunderland Trust is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee, established in 1975 by Community Service Volunteers. It is located in Sunderland and operates on six sites in the area, with another two in South Shields and Hartlepool. It offers work-based learning for young people, Life Skills, New Deal 18-24 and New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults. The programmes offered are amenity horticulture and visual and performing arts and media, which were not graded in the inspection, motor vehicle, business administration, information and communications technology, health, social care and public services and foundation.

### Overall judgement

The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Training in business administration, health, social care and public services, motor vehicle and foundation is satisfactory and in information and communications technology it is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with good equality of opportunity, but unsatisfactory quality assurance.

### GRADES

<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

<b>Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3
New Deal 18-24	None

<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

<b>Foundation programmes</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 18-24	3
Life Skills	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- very good individual support for learners
- effective basic skills strategy
- very thorough internal verification
- effective challenge to learners' stereotyped attitudes and aspirations

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ineffective planning and monitoring of learners' progress
- unclear strategies for efficient communications
- insufficiently individualised targets for learning and achievement
- incomplete quality assurance systems

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more efficient monitoring of work placements
- better involvement of staff in self-assessment process

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 11 inspectors spent a total of 44 days at Springboard Sunderland Trust (SST) in March 2003. They observed 32 learning sessions, and graded 23 of these, reviewed 110 individual learning plans and 75 portfolios. They interviewed 18 employers, 179 learners and 73 staff, and visited 30 work placements and 34 sites. They also reviewed a large number of the company's documents, policies and procedures, as well as data, paperwork from awarding bodies and external organisations. They studied the company's fourth self-assessment report, which was published in November 2002.

### Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	5
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Health, social care & public services	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	4
Foundation programmes	0	3	5	2	1	0	0	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. SST is a registered charity, and company limited by guarantee. The eight training centres each have a centre manager who has responsibility for day-to-day management. There is an outdoor education lodge in Northumberland, and two new centres are being developed. Each individual training centre has its own structure with administrative and support staff and tutors. There are 83 staff throughout the training centres. There are currently 798 learners with SST, 380 of whom are on programmes within the scope of the inspection. SST has links with many community and neighbourhood groups, including a group for young offenders. They offer alternative education programmes and complementary programmes. Some learners are on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, some are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 and 2, others are on New Deal 18-24, and New Deal 25+ or Life Skills programmes. These include basic employability training (BET), Gateway to Work (Gateway) and full-time education and training. Training is in-house. SST is funded by Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Jobcentre Plus.

3. Sunderland is twenty-fifth in the Department of the Environment's Index of Local Conditions (2000). In May 2002, Sunderland had an unemployment rate of 5.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 3 per cent. In 2001, 39.2 per cent of school leavers in Sunderland gained five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent. According to the 1991 census, there is a minority ethnic population of 1.1 per cent in the city, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. Manufacturing is important in the area, accounting for 26.5 per cent of those in work, compared with a national average of 17.7 per cent.

### Work-based learning for young people

4. SST provides work-based learning for young people in its eight training centres, based throughout Sunderland and district. Learners are receiving satisfactory provision in business administration, care, foundation programmes and motor vehicle, with good provision in information and communications technology (ICT). There are opportunities for additional activities in the outdoor education lodge in Northumberland, and learners have the opportunity to communicate with other groups, such as the police, in order to build mutual confidence and trust. Learners are well supported by SST staff, both in terms of their learning and their social needs. Retention and achievement rates are poor in some areas. There is some ineffective planning and monitoring of learners' progress.



### **New Deal 18-24**

5. New Deal 18-24 has good retention rates and a good range of stimulating activities for the clients on programme. There is effective training using small groups of clients. However, its job entry rates are below the national guidelines, and there is some poor planning of learning.

### **Life Skills**

6. Training standards are good within the Life Skills provision. The basic skills provision is linked to the vocational learning opportunities. Good contacts with other agencies and support services allow learners a wide range of learning opportunities, and increase their access to learning resources. There is good overall support for learners. Learners work towards achieving a portfolio of achievement through attending in-house basic skills and life skills training, combined with a range of external activities. Evidence from these supports the portfolio-building process.

### **New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults**

7. Job entry rates for New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults are below national targets, at 14 per cent. The programmes are successful at raising confidence and providing motivational and teamworking skills. There is insufficient involvement by employers in the BET programme. A large proportion of learners do not gain work experience on BET. Progress reviews are not effective, and not all learners receive copies of their review. One training centre does not give learners sufficient access to information technology (IT) resources.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

8. Overall responsibility for leadership and management belongs to the trust secretary, who is also the operational manager. She reports to the director of learning and enterprise, who is on the board of trustees. The eight training centres each have a centre manager who has responsibility for day-to-day management. Each individual centre has its own structure, with administrative staff, support staff and tutors. There is a hierarchical system of meetings, whereby teams from each centre meet for specific purposes; their findings are then fed back into meetings at inter-centre level, and on to management level. There are five-year strategic and business plans and an 18-month operational plan in place. SST has policies for health and safety, and equality of opportunity, and quality assurance policies and procedures. Self-assessment has taken place since 1998. The fourth self-assessment report was produced in November 2002.

### STRENGTHS

- good application of mission and values in meeting the needs of learners
- effective basic skills strategy
- good strategies to promote inclusion
- effective challenge of learners' stereotyped attitudes and aspirations
- very thorough internal verification

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficiently individualised targets for learning and achievement
- insufficient development of staff appraisal systems
- unfocused strategies for efficient communications
- incomplete quality assurance systems

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more specific reference to equality of opportunity legislation in policies
- better monitoring of employers' implementation of equal opportunities policy
- more efficient monitoring of work placements
- better involvement of staff in self-assessment process

9. SST's application of its mission statement and values to meet the needs of learners is good and effectively applied through all local provision. Staff understand and are able to explain the mission and values clearly in their own words; their attitudes and approaches to learners accurately reflect SST's mission statement in practice. The mission and aims of SST, to provide good quality training to learners who have experienced severe disadvantages, are clearly described by the provider and widely

displayed within the training centres. SST provides good support structures for learners.

10. An effective basic skills strategy is in place. SST promotes basic skills as a specialism and has recently achieved the basic skills agency quality mark. There are regular staff meetings with basic skills as the focus. Tutors are strongly supported to achieve basic skills qualifications, and currently just under half of the teaching staff have a basic skills qualification, including staff from vocational areas. Others are working towards their qualification. Specialist training has taken place, and 25 staff have attended further training to support the development of motivational techniques in teaching and their understanding of learners with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Effective development has taken place to review and improve learning materials and teaching. There are good examples of learning materials which have been improved to make them easier to read for learners with dyslexia, or for those who have literacy support needs. Basic skills integration and support within vocational areas is effective. Tutors plan their teaching at the appropriate pace for learners. Each site has a basic skills staff representative. Regular observations of training are carried out by basic skills co-ordinators, and tutors receive detailed and helpful feedback about their performance. There is effective analysis of data and clear targets are set and monitored for basic skills.

11. Targets for learning and achievement are not sufficiently individualised. The initial assessment process does not identify details of individual learning requirements. There is some confusion in initial assessment, as some learners do not understand the purpose of initial assessment and do not always receive their results. The quality of progress reviews is inconsistent. Some do not support learners' achievement of targets, and some do not have specific targets. Target dates tend to be the same for everyone.

12. Staff development is satisfactory. There is an organisational plan, and a range of staff development takes place. However, these are not clearly linked. Staff appraisal is poorly structured. There is annual staff appraisal in place, with brief guidance notes for both appraisee and appraiser. However, the appraisee preparation form is not sufficiently evaluative. It promotes a description of development activity, rather than an evaluation of how the development has affected training. The resulting action plan does not show evidence of an interim review of progress. There are no explicit links between the appraisal action plan, strategic priorities and the overall staff development plan.

13. Management information is collected and used satisfactorily. There is a new national management information system in place, and staff are receiving training in its use. It shows great potential to be able to produce a wide range of reports for different purposes, but it is too soon to make a judgement about its effectiveness.

14. The management of resources and financial management is satisfactory. Regular accounts are produced which are properly audited and reported in full with the annual report at the SST annual general meeting.

15. Strategies for efficient communication are not clear. SST holds many regular meetings, at different levels, training centres and for different purposes. These are

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generally well attended. Emphasis is given to team approaches, and training centre-based autonomy. The lines of communication between meetings and groups are not clarified including those for the flow of information between all those involved with the learner, and the flow of information between managers and staff. There is uncertainty about lines of accountability for formal reporting. Agendas and minutes are unstructured, with no evidence of a clearly planned schedule for agenda items. For example, there are no standing items or annual cycle of items to ensure that key activities are discussed and reported at the appropriate time of the planning cycle. Minutes of meetings do not clearly identify action points with identified responsibility and timescales for completion. There is no systematic follow-through of action points.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 2**

16. There are good strategies to promote inclusion. SST liaises with a wide range of community and neighbourhood groups to promote its services. It has good contacts with local schools, and has recently extended its links by contacting every school in the area to offer to talk to learners and their parents and teachers at careers evenings, with very positive initial results. The local police are based at the SST offices in Hetton, and have close contacts with learners and staff. Trust has been built between police and learners as a result. SST has few learners from minority ethnic communities, but provides interpreters for learners when necessary. SST has a policy of basing its training provision in deprived communities, rather than city centre locations, maintaining a high profile and a sound reputation within these communities. A significant number of learners find out about SST through family or friends who have had direct experience of the company. Several of the staff are former SST learners, who act as role models for current learners. Promotional literature shows positive images of learners from under-represented groups, and is well presented and easy to read.

17. SST effectively challenges learners' stereotyped attitudes and aspirations. When learners join programmes many of them have extremely low self-esteem. They often have a history of low vocational and educational achievement, and do not believe that they can change that pattern. However, the staff at SST challenge this, and encourage all learners to work to their full potential. Many learners have been surprised at what they have achieved, and SST has collected responses from learners which show this. Staff often have to challenge violent or abusive behaviour. They have a policy of treating everyone with respect and patience. This has resulted in some learners changing their behaviour. The company has an equal opportunities policy which states that everybody must be treated with respect, and learners must abide by this. SST has gradually introduced practices which integrate learners who would not normally associate with each other, to teach them tolerance of others. This has been a long process, which is continuing, but many learners have testified to the results, either by writing to SST at the end of their programmes, or by displaying changed behavioural patterns during their time with the company. Intolerance and abusive behaviour is rectified immediately by staff, who have a profound understanding of the wider principles of equality of opportunity.

18. The SST equal opportunities policy is a comprehensive document. However, it does not refer specifically to current legislation, making it difficult for users to consult the relevant Acts directly. All employers have their own equal opportunities policy, or are asked to use SST's policy. However, this is monitored only informally, by staff observing the behaviour of employers and learners in the workplace. In some cases, employers do not read the policy.

19. Data are collected and analysed, and SST is well aware of its learner profile. However, it does not specifically target groups based on this information. Its advertising is generalised, but the links with schools and community groups ensure that the learners on programme are often from the most deprived communities. There is a standardised complaints procedure, and a harassment procedure. However, complaints are normally

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dealt with informally, as they arise, and are usually settled without the procedures being implemented. Staff have had training in equality of opportunity, and use the LSC-produced video and worksheets with learners. Some staff have had diversity training. SST operates over eight sites, two of which present access problems for people with mobility restrictions. However, SST has a policy of accommodating people at one of their other sites if this occurs.

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

20. Internal verification is very thorough. Internal verification shows continuous improvement of the system through regular reviews over many years. The current process is very comprehensive and thorough. It takes into account all the revised internal verifier role definitions, and ensures that it effectively samples assessment during, and at the end of, learners' programmes. Record-keeping is very detailed and there is evidence that action points and feedback to assessors are regularly followed up. There is some evidence of standardisation activities in area of learning meetings, but the current process is relatively new and is not yet fully implemented.

21. The collection and use of learner and employer feedback is satisfactory. Responses from learners and employers are analysed, and there is some evidence that the information is used to contribute to reports and to bring about change.

22. Work placements are assessed before learners are placed, and regular monitoring takes place afterwards. Formalised contact has improved significantly over past 18 months; for example, a newsletter has been introduced. However, some work-placement providers are still not aware of the formal channels of communication and SST's monitoring documents are not always fully completed.

23. SST has produced a regular self-assessment report for the past four years. The operations manager leads this process and some staff are involved. They are currently collecting evidence towards the next report, but this is not consistent and some staff are not involved at all.

24. Quality assurance systems are incomplete. Quality assurance procedures have been established for more than seven years and have recently been reviewed. However, the review is not sufficiently critical. Some existing procedures have been updated and others are waiting to be updated, but there is no evidence of thorough evaluation of the previous system and its suitability to meet current requirements. There is no reference to self-assessment and continuous improvement as a central part of quality assurance and planning. The revised procedures are ICT-based to ensure consistency at all sites, but some staff do not fully understand how to use the systems.

25. Quality assurance procedures do not create a comprehensive and coherent process. Although there is systematic observation of teaching and learning to an annual plan, the judgements from observation are not made against clear objective criteria, and the feedback to tutors is not specific enough. There is no evidence of any systematic follow-up of action points resulting from observation. However, one area is using an additional observation form with open questions, to allow more detailed feedback. There is follow-up in this area, but this good practice is not shared throughout the training centres. Comments on observation forms only vaguely refer to lesson planning; inspectors identified some poor lesson planning, which has not been identified by the provider. There is no evidence that information from lesson observation is referred to during staff appraisals. There is not enough monitoring of the quality of information on forms. For

example, endorsement forms are not always completed consistently, and it is not clear how additional support is measured. An internal audit is in place, but it is not clear how corrective action is followed up. SST has two quality assurance-related groups. Their different remits are not clear, or their lines of communication. The quality assurance team produces a regular, annual quality assurance review, but this is not a thorough or detailed report.

#### Good Practice

*One tutor uses 'photographic essays' with learners to encourage those with poor verbal skills to communicate in a different and effective way. Different types of cameras are used to accommodate different learning styles. For example, digital cameras are used with learners who need to see results very quickly. The photos produced are prominently displayed throughout SST's sites and promotional materials.*



## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	11	3
New Deal 18-24	4	None

26. SST has 15 learners in motor vehicle engineering, of whom 11 are on work-based learning programmes, and the remaining four are on a full-time education and training programme. Eight of the work-based learners are working towards NVQs at level 1, the remaining three are working towards NVQs at level 2. The learners on the full-time education and training programme are working towards NVQs at level 1. Work-based learners are recruited through Connexions, or make direct contact with the training provider. They are expected to achieve their level 1 NVQ within one year, and for those that progress to a level 2 NVQ, completion is expected within 18 months. Learners on the full-time education and training programme are referred by their personal adviser for an initial period of four to 13 weeks. This is often extended for a further 13 weeks. All learners have an initial assessment of their basic skills and additional social needs. They receive a standard induction which includes health and safety and equal opportunities. Those requiring help with literacy, numeracy or other learning and social needs are given support during planned sessions once or twice a week. Three of the work-based learners have additional learning needs, three have additional social needs and four have additional learning and social needs. All learners work at one of the two engineering training sites. In addition, one learner is attending a work placement for one day each week. Learners assist a project officer at each training centre in maintaining the company's fleet of vehicles and ancillary equipment. Additional work is carried out for private clients. Learners attend for 35 hours a week. Training sessions are given on a weekly basis, covering a separate vehicle system theme each week. An appropriately qualified assessor carries out practical assessments in the training workshop. Theory knowledge is tested using a computerised system.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

<b>Work-based learning for young people</b>																
<b>NVQ Training</b>																
	<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>		<b>2000-01</b>		<b>1999-2000</b>		<b>1998-99</b>							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	20		23		12		11		9							
Retained*	0		6	26	3	25	5	45	6	67						
Successfully completed	2		6	26	2	17	2	18	4	44						
Still in learning	11		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

<b>New Deal 18-24</b>												
<b>New Deal 18-24</b>												
	<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>		<b>2000-01</b>		<b>1999-2000</b>		<b>1998-99</b>			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		5									
Retained*	1	11	0	0								
Planned learning completed	1	11	0	0								
Gained job	0	0	0	0								
Still in training	4	44	0	0								

\*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

## STRENGTHS

- good standards of teaching appropriate to learners
- good training support for learners
- good recognition of additional skills development

**WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient prior planning of assessments
- insufficient specific targets set during progress reviews
- poor achievement and retention rates

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more individualised learning plans

27. Teaching standards are good and appropriate to the needs of the learners. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Teaching sessions are well planned and have clear aims and objectives. The classroom sessions are short, informative and retain the interest of learners. Teaching takes place with small groups of learners. Good-quality handouts are used for these sessions. Practical training sessions take place soon after the classroom session, effectively demonstrating the practical application of the theory. Learners are able to consolidate recent learning with practical activities at a pace suitable to their own needs. Classroom sessions are repeated approximately every 10 weeks, allowing learners to repeat the session if they need to, and allowing new starters to the project to fit in at an appropriate stage.

28. Learners receive good individual support from their project officer in a range of practical activities and associated paperwork. Basic skills are assessed on entry to the programme and good support is given to help with any identified needs. Basic skills teaching is good and is effectively linked to the occupational area. Teaching is carried out with small groups of four learners. Learners are enthusiastic about the work they do in the basic skills sessions and can readily understand the clear links that are made to their occupational area. The level of individual support was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

29. Learners' skills development is recognised by SST. This strength was partly identified in the self-assessment report. Learners are issued with in-house certificates as they show their proficiency with the use of garage equipment and machinery. They appreciate the issue of these certificates, which helps to motivate and encourage them. Some learners attend an external course and are accredited with a first aid qualification.

30. There is not enough planning of assessment with learners. This means that learners may be assessed without a suitable introduction to the assessment, and they are sometimes unaware that they are being observed until the assessment is completed. Assessors use approximate timings to assess the competency of the learner. The timings do not meet industry standards, despite assessors having access to the relevant timings in booklets or on computers. Assessors have failed to recognise that one unit of the

NVQ at level 1 must be covered in greater depth and breadth to satisfy the requirements of the NVQ at level 2. Assessment for the NVQ at level 2 must be carried out in a place of work, but some learners are still waiting for placements. Vehicles that have been used recently as training aids and for assessment do not provide the level of difficulty that would be encountered on modern vehicles.

31. Progress reviews do not include clear targets for learners. The reviews focus on the pastoral well-being of learners, and are not used to promote the gathering of evidence for assessment. Where performance targets are set, they are not sufficiently time-bound and do not contain sufficient information to target the area of work, or the type of job required to provide portfolio evidence. The actions detailed in progress review forms are of a general nature.

32. Retention and achievement rates are unsatisfactory. The achievement rate has declined from 44 per cent in 1998-99, to 17 per cent in 2000-01. The rate improved to 26 per cent in 2001-02, but is still low. The retention rate of learners is poor, declining from 67 per cent in 1998-99 to 26 per cent in 2001-02. Retention and achievement rates were identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

33. The individual learning plans contain the objectives and target dates for the achievement of the main qualification, but need to be more individually designed to meet the needs of learners.

#### Good Practice

*One learner is given discrete support in writing job cards at the end of the training day. The project officer writes the job cards for the learner, the learner then repeats the writing with guidance. The learner is gaining confidence in writing skills.*

**Business administration, management & professional**

**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	50	3

34. SST recruits most of its modern apprentices and NVQ learners through the Connexions service. All learners have a work placement with a local employer. Work placements are provided by a range of organisations. The local hospital trust provides around 80 per cent, with the remainder located in doctors' surgeries, schools and SST's own training centres. All learners attend weekly off-the-job training sessions at one of SST's training centres. There are 50 learners in this occupational area, 14 foundation modern apprentices and 36 young people following NVQ training programmes. Three of the foundation modern apprentices are also studying for a technical certificate in administration. Five learners are employed by their work-placement provider. When they start training, all learners attend a week's induction programme at SST's training centre. This involves initial training in health and safety, equal opportunities, communications, and dress and behaviour codes. They also receive an initial assessment of their basic literacy and numeracy skills, a key skills assessment, and a personal interview with a member of SST's training and work placement staff. This helps to identify any additional learning or social needs. Twenty-seven learners are receiving learning support. Seven learners have social needs and are receiving personal support from their designated training officers. Learners who require additional basic skills support attend the training centre every week for their basic skills training. Frequency of attendance depends on their individual needs. Sessions consist of training in literacy, application of number and IT, and are delivered by a team of basic skills specialists. Most learners also have a short induction to their workplace. All learners are assessed at work by a nominated assessor. All learners also receive pastoral reviews every eight weeks

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	11		14		13				1							
Retained*	0		3		3	23			0	0						
Successfully completed	0		2		3	23			0	0						
Still in learning	8		6		0	0			0	0						

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	24		39		57		37		35							
Retained*	0		5		14		13		13	39						
Successfully completed	0		1		8		10		12	36						
Still in learning	18		16		1		1		0	0						

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## STRENGTHS

- good work placements
- good assessment practice
- very good individual support for learners

## WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor communication of initial assessment results

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better progression opportunities for learners
- better learner awareness of off-the-job learning schedules

35. There are good work placements in this occupational area. SST has developed effective working relationships with a number of local organisations. Some employers have participated in the training programme for a number of years and use SST as an effective source for recruiting and training young employees. There is regular contact between the employers and SST's training staff, and any problems that arise in the work placement are dealt with promptly and efficiently. The employers are very committed to the learners' personal and professional development. They make an effective contribution to the training and assessment of learners and provide flexible work schedules to allow them to complete all aspects of their qualifications. At the local hospital trust, for example, if a work placement does not normally allow coverage of a particular aspect of the qualification, the learner can be provided with an opportunity to carry out the work in another department. Employers have a good understanding of the content and assessment requirements of the administration NVQs, and they positively encourage their learners to gather evidence from the workplace. Some learners are provided with the time to build their NVQ portfolios and complete theory assignments while they are at work .

36. There are good assessment procedures for the administration NVQs. All learners attend the training centre on a weekly basis for assessment support sessions. During these sessions nominated assessors work with the learners on an individual basis to review evidence collected from the workplace, and identify any shortcomings or additional evidence requirements. Clear targets are set in advance of the next assessment support session. Learners are well aware of what is required of them in relation to their NVQs, and find the sessions useful and very supportive. The nominated assessors also observe the learners carrying out practical work activities in the workplace. Such observations are carried out at mutually convenient times, usually when the learner is ready to be assessed in a particular NVQ unit. Detailed verbal and written feedback is provided for the learner following the observation. All performance and product evidence for their NVQs is obtained from the learners' workplaces. Theory evidence is tested through a series of written questions which are issued to learners during their off-the-job training sessions.

37. SST's staff provide good individual support for the learners. The frequency of assessment support sessions ensures that regular contact is maintained between learners and their nominated assessor. This provides an excellent opportunity for any emerging personal or work-related problems to be dealt with at an early stage. The pastoral reviews carried out by the work-placement officer involve both the learner and the employer. The outcomes of each review are recorded, and a support rating is set for each learner to help determine the frequency of future meetings. A good deal of

individual support is provided. Foundation modern apprentices are provided with individual key skills support, based on the results of diagnostic tests administered during induction. SST's training and work-placement officers provide a variety of support for learners with additional social needs. This involves supporting learners with attendance problems, a lack of motivation or confidence, as well as those with personal, domestic and drug-related problems. SST has recently introduced evening drop-in sessions to allow learners the opportunity to do extra work in the training centre and, if necessary, seek support in completing their learning programmes. The resources provided by SST for training are satisfactory.

38. Retention and achievement rates are poor. During 2000-01, only 25 per cent of NVQ learners completed their programmes, and 14 per cent achieved their qualifications. During 2000-01, only 23 per cent of foundation modern apprentices reached the end of their training period and successfully completed all elements of their modern apprenticeship framework. There have, however, been significant developments in recent months to improve learners' rate of progress. There is closer monitoring of learner attendance, there are opportunities for learners to attend the additional evening support sessions and there are more learner-focused assessment and internal verification processes. In addition, assessment support sessions for learners have been introduced at an earlier stage of the programme. Although such changes have not affected the retention and achievement rates yet, there is already some evidence that learners are making better progress towards their qualifications and key skills targets. Seventy-five per cent of the foundation modern apprentices currently in learning are on target to meet their completion targets

39. SST has comprehensive initial assessment arrangements, but the results of the assessments are not given to most learners. Learning support requirements are identified through the initial assessment of numeracy and literacy skills. The results are used to identify the level of programme which the learners will follow and the degree of basic skills support they require. Additional basic skills sessions in literacy and numeracy are provided in the training centre for half a day every week. Learners' attendance depends on their individual requirements. The sessions are delivered by basic skills specialists and are designed to cater for the needs of the individual learners. Many learners have not received information on their performance in these initial assessments and are not, therefore, aware of where weaknesses have been identified. Some learners are also unsure of the criteria used to decide their level of learning.

40. There are few opportunities for foundation modern apprentices and level 2 NVQ learners to progress to higher levels of learning with SST. Although many learners find jobs on completing their learning programme, SST does not actively promote progression to advanced modern apprenticeships or to NVQ at level 3. A number of learners leave their work placement and choose alternative learning opportunities, rather than working towards higher-level qualifications with SST.

41. Some learners are unsure about the content and focus of their off-the-job training schedules. The weekly sessions consist of the theory elements of their NVQs,



assessment support and portfolio-building and, in the case of some learners, basic or key skills support. Learners receive an off-the-job training timetable, but some are unaware of how their activities apply to parts of their learning programme. Some learners, for example, are unable to recall their theory sessions and do not appreciate how they relate to their NVQs.

**Information & communications technology**

**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	12	2

42. SST offers training in City and Guilds desktop publishing. There are 12 learners, two are advanced modern apprentices and 10 are foundation modern apprentices. One of the advanced modern apprentices and two of the foundation modern apprentices are employed. Potential learners are asked to supply a curriculum vitae and attend an interview at Upstream Communications, Springboard’s own print and design project. The project operates in a commercial environment and has a range of customers providing real work experience. Learners are recruited from careers conventions, Connexions, a work experience scheme, by personal recommendations and as a result of advertising produced by Upstream Communications. The programme operates on a roll-on, roll-off basis with learners being recruited as places become available. All learners receive an induction comprising health and safety and equal opportunities policies, clients’ rights and responsibilities, course information, basic skills assessment and an occupational induction. Each learner has an identified member of staff who provides pastoral support. Review of learners’ progress is carried out at least every eight weeks by SST staff at Upstream Communications and in the workplace. There is one full-time trainer/assessor and a production manager who is also a significant contributor to the training provided. The planned length of the foundation modern apprenticeships and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes are 17 and 24 months, respectively, although this may be extended to allow for additional learning or social needs. Seven of the 12 learners have been endorsed as having additional learning needs, and two have recently been recognised as having additional social needs. In the past month, five learners have left SST to enter full time employment, four of them within the printing and design industry.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts					2											
Retained*					2											
Successfully completed					0											
Still in learning					2											

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		9		2											
Retained*	0		1		2											
Successfully completed	0		1		1											
Still in learning	1		8		1											

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			1													
Retained*			0	0												
Successfully completed			1	100												
Still in learning			0	0												

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## STRENGTHS

- good individual support for learners
- good retention rates
- good progress reviews
- good range of additional activities

## **WEAKNESSES**

- poor involvement of work-placement supervisors in the assessment process

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more privacy for sharing confidential or sensitive information
- more careers guidance on progression routes
- more integration of key skills training and assessment

43. There is a good level of individual support for learners. Learners are supported on a one-to-one basis in the training workshop, enabling them to develop general skills and specialisms according to the project they are working on. Training takes place in a commercial environment, which allows good opportunities for training and assessment. Preparation for work is good. Learners are also strongly encouraged to work together in order to learn from each other, and a co-operative, friendly ambience is evident in the workplace. Basic and key skills support has made a significant impact on learners. They are making progress in these areas, allowing them to enhance their progression opportunities and to present themselves more positively to potential employers. Two learners have transferred from level 2 NVQ to foundation modern apprenticeships as a direct result of this support. There is good out-of-hours support to encourage completion of key skills for those in employment who may not have access to regular provision, because of their work patterns.

44. There are good retention rates on both programmes. The provision is limited to small numbers of learners because of the number of computers available. There are 15 workstations available. Retention is currently 100 per cent. The learners on programme are making good progress towards their qualification, and a number of learners were close to completion of their programme at the time of the inspection. There is good progression into employment.

45. Learners participate fully in good progress reviews. They discuss the progress they have made with their training officer, and have a degree of autonomy in determining how they will achieve elements of their units. The written accounts of the progress made since the last review are focused and comprehensive. Good use is made of a matrix that shows exactly what elements of units have been completed and what still needs to be done. This allows learners to be fully aware of their progress and helps them and their trainers to plan effectively for future actions. Clear action plans are recorded, regularly monitored and adhered to. Good use is made of priority reviewing for learners who may be making slow progress or experiencing difficulty in keeping to

planned actions.

46. A good range of additional activities is built into the course. Learners are developing good occupational skills. Learners are able to work in SST's reception facility. In this situation they are challenged to respond appropriately to approaches by members of the public, business representatives and members of the SST staff. There are opportunities to gain an externally accredited first-aid certificate. In-house certificates providing evidence of the learner's competence in using relevant machinery and processes are also awarded. These are useful additions to their portfolio for employment applications. Visits are arranged to relevant exhibitions to widen the knowledge and experience of learners.

47. Work-placement supervisors are not sufficiently involved in the assessment process. Supervisors are aware of planned assessments in the workplace, but do not take an active part in the process. Some evidence of signed witness statements was present in learners' portfolios, but there were no comments. There is poor awareness of the demands of the NVQ course and of what learners need to achieve in their workplace. There are, however, good opportunities for assessment. Most assessments occur out of the workplace, although evidence from the workplace is present in learners' portfolios. SST have introduced twilight learning sessions to accommodate learners who are not able to attend during their working week.

48. Learners are making satisfactory progress into employment. Of the 14 learners who started on their courses in 2000-01 and 2001-02, 57 per cent have entered, or are about to enter, employment in a related printing or design field. Twelve learners are still in training either at Upstream Communications or on work placement.

49. Key skills are integrated into the occupational area. However, learners are not currently able to use all of their work experience as evidence for their attainment of key skills.

50. Those learners interviewed would welcome more careers guidance about progression routes. They have made some attempt to search for information, but with limited success.

51. At present, learners are interviewed in cramped conditions with people entering the room constantly, inhibiting opportunities to discuss matters in depth.

#### Good Practice

*Learners are encouraged to create an additional portfolio that can be used to demonstrate their design and desktop publishing skills to potential employers. Evidence is collected for this together with the evidence for their qualifications.*

**Health, social care & public services**

**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	163	3

52. SST has 163 learners training in care and early years care and education. There are nine advanced modern apprentices and 31 foundation modern apprentices. Seventeen of the foundation modern apprentices are on the early years care and education programme. There are 55 learners on a level 1 NVQ programme, working towards a vocational qualification in practical caring skills, or the contributing to care progression award. The level 1 NVQ caring skills course is classroom based, and provided by basic skills tutors. Sixty-one learners are working towards NVQs at level 2, of whom 29 are in care and 32 are in early years care and education. Level 2 NVQ learners receive structured, timetabled off-the-job training. Seven learners are on level 3 NVQ programmes, of whom four are in care and three are in early years care and education. Level 3 NVQ learners receive theory training in the workplace. Most modern apprentices are working towards key skills at level 2. Twenty-six of the care learners are employed. None of the early years care and education learners is employed. Those learners who are not employed are allocated work placements in nurseries, schools, residential care homes, nursing homes or hospitals. All learners are allocated a tutor/assessor. SST operates an open-door recruitment policy, and many learners are referred through the Connexions service. They can join the programme at any time, and the planned length of programmes varies between one and two years, or longer, according to individual needs. Learners attend induction at one of the training centres. This includes information on health and safety, equality of opportunity and learners' rights. Learners have an initial assessment, to identify learning and support needs. There are seven full-time and two part-time tutor/assessors, including a senior training officer, a learning and support manager, three work-placement officers and a care co-ordinator. Basic skills tutors are also involved in providing training in this area. Seventy-one per cent of learners have additional learning and/or social needs.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																	
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	8		1		9		1										
Retained*	1		0		2	22	0	0									
Successfully completed	0		0		2	22	0	0									
Still in learning	8		1		0	0	0	0									

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																	
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	30		46		19		1		1								
Retained*	0		11		8	42	0	0	1	100							
Successfully completed	0		1		3	16	0	0	0	0							
Still in learning	20		11		0	0	0	0	0	0							

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training																	
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98						
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	98		171		129		177		113		46						
Retained*	0		24		54		52	29	58	51	40	87					
Successfully completed	0		11		45		46	26	46	41	36	78					
Still in learning	65		55		3		0	0	0	0	0	0					

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## STRENGTHS

- good individual support for learners
- good range of supportive work placements

## **WEAKNESSES**

- some poor retention and achievement rates
- ineffective planning and monitoring of learners' progress
- inadequate assessment plans

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better paper-based resources for learners

53. Learners receive good individual support. Those interviewed feel well supported. Staff are well qualified and occupationally competent. A work-placement officer visits learners in their work placements every four to eight weeks, depending on the learners' needs. Tutors and assessors are very approachable and easy to contact. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of the individual learners, and respond quickly and appropriately to learners' needs. Assessment visits take place at times which meet the needs of the learners, including during evenings, weekends and night shifts. The provider has employed an assessor to work at these times. Learners attend weekly assessment support sessions where they receive personal guidance and support with their NVQ and key skills evidence. Learners who cannot attend during the day have the opportunity to attend a session which takes place one evening a week.

54. Basic skills and off-the-job training are satisfactory. Learners attend weekly training sessions and can receive additional basic skills support at the evening session. A range of topics is used that is relevant to the learners and their interests and, where possible, refer to the occupational areas. A range of handouts and worksheets is used which is of satisfactory quality. There are some level 1 NVQ learners who do not attend the training centre at the beginning of the programme. These learners are in their work placements for up to six weeks without a visit from the work-placement officer. Weekly contact is made with the work placement to check if there are any problems.

55. There is a good range of supportive work placements. Learners are supervised when on duty. All learners who are not employed are provided with a work placement near to home. If necessary, the work-placement officer is able to offer an alternative work placement. The learners interviewed are very satisfied with their work-placement experiences in local nurseries, schools, residential homes and hospitals. They develop a wide range of skills and knowledge from early on in their programmes. Many learners are able to gain additional qualifications, provided by the work placement. Learners have a named link person in the workplace and also receive support and guidance from other colleagues, some of whom have themselves graduated from SST programmes. The learners feel part of a team, and their work is valued and important. SST's work-placement officers and assessors have developed very positive relationships with work placement staff, who find SST staff easy to contact and responsive to any queries or



problems.

56. The retention and achievement rates for the NVQ at level 1 and level 3 are satisfactory. However, there are poor retention and achievement rates on level 2 programmes, which account for nearly 50 per cent of NVQ learners. The retention rate for 1999-2000 was 23 per cent, rising to 33 per cent in 2000-01. Achievement rates for the same years were 19 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively. The retention and achievement figures for early years care and education are better than those for the care programme. There is some slow progress by learners. Some of them have been on the programme between five and seven months and have not completed any units. One learner has been on the programme for seven months and has only recently received her first assessment of performance. Progression into employment is satisfactory for some programmes, including the level 2 NVQ programme. On one programme, over 50 per cent of learners moved into employment. Most of these were early leavers and did not complete the programme.

57. The planning and monitoring of learners' progress is ineffective. Many learners are unclear about their progress. The individual learning plan is not used effectively to determine learning goals. Most plans have one target date for the completion of all NVQ units, with insufficient information about shorter-term goals. Most plans identify the results of initial assessments, but do not provide sufficient detail of the support to be provided. Neither the learners nor the work-placement providers have a copy of the individual learning plan. There is no training plan for on-the-job training, and co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is weak. Learners do not always complete the skills match form which matches NVQ requirements against opportunities to practise tasks in the workplace and identifies actions to be taken. The work-placement link person is not present at progress reviews but is invited to add comments on the progress review form. Progress reviews are carried out regularly, and the frequency of reviews is increased if a need is identified. However, reviews are not effective in moving the learner towards achievement of a qualification. Many learners are unsure of the purpose of their review. Target setting is poor, and targets are not specific. Learners are asked about any health and safety or equal opportunities issues, but these discussions are not recorded unless there is a problem.

58. Assessment plans do not provide learners with the necessary information. Learners plan their assessments during the support sessions. The assessment plans often do not contain sufficient detail about the assessment to be carried out. The plans focus on individual activities, and, in some cases, one piece of evidence. This results in learners collecting many pages of plans to cover one unit. Learners are not aware of any target dates for completion of units and many learners have difficulty identifying their own progress within the programme. There is a reliance on standard written questions to cover knowledge evidence, although there is recent evidence showing knowledge evidence being achieved through performance and oral questioning. Learners receive brief feedback following the assessment. This is followed up at the next support session, where they receive the written observation record. Good, clear verbal feedback is given, but this is not supported by written feedback to the learner.

59. Lessons plans for the technical certificate show lectures as the main method of teaching. One observed session for the level 1 NVQ used handouts as the main method of teaching. Many learners in this session had literacy problems.

**Foundation programmes**

**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 18-24	35	3
Life Skills	37	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	68	3

60. SST has 140 learners on foundation programmes. There are 68 on New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults, and 35 on New Deal 18-24. There are 37 on Life Skills. Learners follow a range of options, including Gateway initiatives, BET, basic skills, work experience, and vocational and jobsearch training. Foundation training takes place at four sites. Learners are usually referred to programmes by Jobcentre Plus and Connexions, although some learners are recommended to training by friends and family. They spend between 16 and 30 hours training each week. The average length of time on Life Skills is 16 weeks. Some learners spend all their time in SST's training centres while others attend a work placement for between two and 26 weeks. Progress reviews take place monthly. All learners receive a standard one-day induction, which covers health and safety, equality of opportunity and learners' rights and responsibilities. It also includes an initial assessment of learners' abilities. If learners are identified as having literacy and numeracy needs, additional support is made available.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Life Skills	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	62		174		129											
Retained*	31		109	63	96	74											
Successfully completed	18		89	51	63	49											
Still in learning	37		2	1	0	0											

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	84		112		90		12		
Retained*	6	7	60	54	69	77	12	100		
Planned learning completed	6	7	58	52	69	77	12	100		
Gained job	4	5	13	12	15	17	1	8		
Still in training	66	79	2	2	0	0	0	0		

\*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	107		26						
Retained*	55	51	20	77						
Planned learning completed	55	51	20	77						
Gained job	4	4	10	38						
Still in training	35	33	0	0						

\*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

## STRENGTHS

- good small group training
- good retention rates
- effective links with external organisations
- good support for learners

## WEAKNESSES

- low job entry rates on two programmes
- some inadequate planning of learning
- some ineffective progress reviews
- insufficient access to IT resources at one training centre

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- increased use of work placements within BET

61. There is good small group training throughout the foundation provision. Inspectors observed good basic skills training with small groups of no more than seven learners. Seventy-three per cent of observed lessons were graded good or better. The curriculum is based on a model of delivery for people with learning difficulties, with learning taking place in short sessions, and having flexible timescales and teaching methods. Trainers and learners work together to identify which new skills should be developed to contribute to learners' training objectives. Learners listen attentively during teaching sessions and demonstrate new knowledge through practical activities. There is good group participation, with interactive discussions throughout the sessions. Good-quality handouts are used to develop new learning and consolidate existing knowledge within Life Skills and basic skills sessions. Basic skills training is integrated within vocational areas. Teaching and learning activities are linked to the core curricula. Inappropriate learner behaviour in teaching sessions is quickly resolved on an individual basis, which reinforces behavioural expectations agreed between tutors and learners. Checking of learners' understanding takes place throughout teaching sessions on an individual and group basis. Trainers regularly ask learners to evaluate training sessions, and different teaching methods are developed, based on learners' feedback. However, training is not effective with large groups. There are not enough resources to accommodate diverse learning needs and not all learners have access to desk space. Not all learners are engaged in learning. They cannot all be supported effectively and some do not find the classes interesting. The strength of good teaching was recognised in the self-assessment report.

62. Retention rates for New Deal 18-24 are good. Between 1999-2002, on Gateway to Work, 770 learners entered training, of whom 87 per cent were retained. Seventy-nine per cent achieved all of their planned learning. On full-time education and training during 2001-02, within the same age group, 77 per cent were retained. The retention rate for New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults is also good. Between 1999-2002, 77 per cent of learners were retained. Seventy-two per cent achieved all of their planned learning goals. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment report. Retention rates on the Life Skills programme have decreased for the past three years because of a shortened programme.

63. Guest speakers are invited to speak at staff training days about new local and national developments. Specialist support agencies work in partnership with staff to provide information and resources on health, sex and drug education, employment advice and in-work benefits. Strong links are in place with the community police at Hetton, who are based at the training centre and who give talks to learners on specific topics. SST has good partnerships with national projects, which are used to benefit learners and the local community. There is regular involvement with New Deal delivery

partnerships to help develop programmes to benefit the learners. Good use is made of external links to help in staff development, with particular reference to basic skills. Additional funding is used to help with additional activities.

64. Staff help learners to settle in quickly, providing a learning environment that enables them to gain confidence and build their self-esteem. Learners enjoy attending the training centres and find the staff supportive, enthusiastic and understanding of their needs. Training standards are particularly good in Life Skills. For Life Skills learners, SST's good contacts with external agencies and support services increases learning opportunities. Staff help the learners to overcome any barriers they may have to gaining employment, such as help with benefits, housing or other personal problems. There are various opportunities for learners to gain additional qualifications, which help build teamwork, confidence, motivation and employability skills. In-house certificates are used as an incentive to motivate learners to develop new skills. Life Skills learners compile a portfolio of achievement by attending in-house basic skills and Life Skills training in addition to external activities. Good use is made of a mentoring service to provide individualised personal support for learners in an effective manner. This support continues when they have completed the training programme.

65. Basic skills staff are highly qualified. They are qualified teachers and regularly attend relevant training to update their skills and knowledge. This includes the new core curriculum for basic skills, the pre-entry curriculum, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and Access for All. They are currently working towards the highest-level qualifications for basic skills. Non-basic skills tutors also have basic skills teaching qualifications. There are four graduate trainees on work placement with the company who assist the staff in providing individual support for learners with literacy and numeracy problems.

66. There are poor job entry rates from BET and Gateway to Work programmes. This was not recognised in the provider's self-assessment report. Between 1999-2003, only 2 per cent of learners on the Gateway to Work programme gained jobs on leaving the programme. However, learners maintain that the programme is successful at raising confidence and providing motivational and teamworking skills. Job entry rates on New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults are better during the same period, but still below national targets, at 14 per cent. Significant numbers of learners on BET have severe learning difficulties. There is insufficient involvement of employers in the BET programme. A large proportion of learners do not gain work experience on BET, even though SST has a large number of employers previously used for work placements. Employers do not visit the learning centre to talk to learners about job-related topics or to help them with jobsearch activities. The self-assessment report recognises restricted progression opportunities for learners. Paperwork designed to document learners' achievements on leaving the programme does not include work placements as part of the programme. Full-time education and training job entry rates are satisfactory.

67. Some individual learning plans are inadequate. They do not contain enough detail about how learners will overcome barriers to gaining employment. The plans do not

detail the content of learners' training programmes, such as work tasters, work placements with employers, and jobsearch activities. Individual learning plans do not contain adequate long- and short-term targets. Target dates for qualification completion are not specified over the period of the planned programme, but are restricted to a learners' end date. Individual learning plans state that learners need to develop skills such as jobsearch without detailing what activities need to be carried out to achieve these skills. The plans are not updated to show learners' achievements within programmes. They are updated with revised progress review dates. Learning plans are not routinely used as part of the training process. Separately produced basic skills learning plans are detailed and regularly updated. The inadequate use of learning plans as effective working documents was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

68. Some progress reviews are ineffective. Poor co-ordination of all those involved in learners' programmes restricts their contribution to the review process. For example, basic skills staff are not involved. Reviews are not carried out in the workplace for BET learners. Progress reviews do not provide a fully accurate reflection of all aspects of learners' progress. Reviews contain descriptive accounts of work carried out since the previous review, but do not give timescales for achievements of agreed action. Not all learners are given copies of their reviews. Learners on Jobcentre Plus programmes are not given jobsearch targets at reviews. Not all learners are reviewed in the workplace. SST has recently recognised this as an area of weakness and is taking action to modify the procedures for carrying out progress reviews. The frequency of progress reviews does meet contractual requirements.

69. Adults on the BET programme do not have sufficient access to IT facilities at the Pennywell training centre. There are 68 learners on the BET training programme and only 13 computers and two laptops are available. IT access is not planned effectively to enable all learners to access the facilities more than twice a week. Insufficient use is made of IT to enable learners to access job vacancies on the Internet and to improve their basic skills. Not enough time is given to developing BET learners' IT skills.