

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Sunderland Engineering Training Association Limited**

**21 August 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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** 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

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.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Sunderland Engineering Training Association Limited

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Sunderland Engineering Training Association Ltd (SETA) is a group training association established in the mid 1960s. Since 1979, the association has been based in a training centre on the Wear industrial estate in Washington, Tyne and Wear. SETA currently employs 15 staff, four of whom make up the senior management team. The association provides work-based learning leading to advanced modern apprenticeships in engineering and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 in a pilot manufacturing programme, both funded by the Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

2. In April 2003, the unemployment rate in Tyne and Wear was 4 per cent, compared with 2.6 per cent nationally. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers who achieved general certificate in secondary education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above was 42 per cent in Tyne and Wear, compared with a national average of 48 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is low in Tyne and Wear at 1.8 per cent, compared with the national figure of 6.2 per cent.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

3. There are 128 learners in engineering, of whom 94 are working towards an engineering advanced modern apprenticeship in mechanical, electrical/electronic, maintenance and fabrication, and welding programmes. At the start of their training programme, these learners attend SETA's training centre in Washington, Tyne and Wear, for 40 weeks of foundation training. Here they complete a foundation engineering NVQ at level 2 and the appropriate key skills awards. The rest of the occupational training is provided through on-the-job training. The technical certificate training advanced modern apprenticeships is subcontracted to four colleges of further education, which learners attend for one day each week, throughout their four-year training programmes. The remaining 34 learners are following an EQ8 programme, a local LSC pilot programme to encourage employers to give their staff time and support for additional vocational training. In this case, the EQ8 learners are working towards an NVQ in performing manufacturing operations at level 2. All the learners are employed and they receive on-the-job training in their companies.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	21
Number of learner interviews	36
Number of staff interviews	17
Number of employer interviews	16
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	19

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

4. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, SETA's leadership and management are satisfactory. Its equal opportunities arrangements are satisfactory, but its quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in engineering is satisfactory.

## GRADES

*grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

5. **Retention rates on SETA's engineering programmes are good** and above 80 per cent for most of the past six years. All the modern apprentices and 94 per cent of the NVQ learners who started this year are still in training.

6. **The achievement rates are outstanding for the engineering advanced modern apprentices studying for an NVQ at level 2 in the first year of their programme.** Over the past four years, of 110 learners who started the training, 108 learners have achieved the award, an average achievement rate of 98 per cent.

7. **Key skills achievement rates for the advanced modern apprentices are very good.**

Since 1999, they have been above 89 per cent every year, and in one year all learners achieved their key skills awards.

### Quality of education and training

8. **The advanced modern apprenticeship programme in engineering is well designed to meet the needs of both the learners and their employers.** Additional NVQ units and other short courses are regularly offered to ensure that learners are suitably equipped for their evolving job roles.

9. **Instructors provide good role models for the learners,** who are well prepared for the world of work when they start their on-the-job training. There is a particularly strong emphasis on health and safety, during the learners' induction and learners complete regular exercises in risk assessments following their induction.

10. **Initial assessment on engineering programmes is unsatisfactory.** SETA uses an aptitude test to help select potential learners, but does not carry out any diagnostic assessment to determine learners' literacy, numeracy or language support needs. Learners on the pilot EQ8 NVQ at level 2 programme, are particularly disadvantaged by this and by an unsatisfactory induction programme.

11. **Assessments are not well planned** once learners leave SETA's training centre to start work with their employers. The range of methods used is narrow, and relies too much on written evidence and witness testimony, which is often prepared by the learners and countersigned by the witness. There is little assessment by observation. Employers have little involvement in assessment or progress reviews. Employers and learners do not receive copies of completed progress review documents.

12. During the first year of the modern apprenticeship programme, internal verification is well managed. **After the first year of the programme, internal verification is not well planned.** There are no procedures to ensure that all units or all assessors are sampled and, in some cases, all the activity is at the end of the programme. There is little observation of assessors and work-based assessors, in particular, work in isolation. Action plans from external verifiers are not dealt with.

### Leadership and management

13. **The first year off-the-job training for the engineering advanced modern apprenticeship programme is well managed.** SETA's instructors are enthusiastic and well qualified, and they prepare the learners well for their work-based programme. There are effective procedures for monitoring learners' progress. SETA has established useful links with employers in the region.

14. Management of the work-based EQ8 programme, leading to the NVQ at level 2 in performing manufacturing operations, is less effective. Some aspects, such as initial assessment, are inadequate.

**15. Quality assurance arrangements throughout the engineering programmes are inadequate.**

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

**Leadership and management**

**Strengths**

- good working relationship with employers
- well-managed modern apprenticeship programme

**Weaknesses**

- ineffective internal communication
- poor quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate monitoring of subcontractors
- insufficient arrangements to promote equality of opportunity

**Engineering, technology & manufacturing**

**Strengths**

- good retention rates
- very good key skills achievement rates
- very successful foundation engineering programme
- wide range of additional qualifications gained by learners
- good skills development in the workplace
- particularly strong work ethic among learners

**Weaknesses**

- some weak assessment practice
- weak internal verification in the workplace
- insufficient use of initial assessment
- inadequate progress review process
- no accreditation of prior learning and achievement on the EQ8 programme



## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SUNDERLAND ENGINEERING TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED:**

- the helpful and friendly staff who help them to understand how the factory works
- the good training, particularly in the foundation phase, which gives them the skills needed for the workplace
- the fact that they are given time every Friday to work on their log books and portfolios
- SETA finds them a job
- the strong focus on health and safety
- they are treated as adults

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK SUNDERLAND ENGINEERING TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:**

- feedback, so that learners are aware of their progress
- certainty about progression
- the poor canteen arrangements in the training centre
- availability of instructors when other adult courses are running

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR SUNDERLAND ENGINEERING TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED:**

- establish an effective quality assurance system
- recognise the individual needs and abilities of learners when they start their programmes
- respond to advice and action plans from outside agencies
- improve communications between programme teams and between staff and managers

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### **Strengths**

- good working relationship with employers
- well-managed modern apprenticeship programme

#### **Weaknesses**

- ineffective internal communication
- poor quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate monitoring of subcontractors
- insufficient arrangements to promote equality of opportunity

16. SETA has good links with local employers. The organisation works closely with employers seeking to recruit learners, carrying out initial testing, and interviewing to select shortlists. It also provides a wide range of additional specialist courses, offering a flexible in-house modular programme to meet employers' needs. SETA regularly adapts its engineering programmes to meet employers' requirements, for example by adapting learners' programmes to match their NVQ units to their changing job roles. Where market changes have caused company closures or redundancies, SETA has made good use of its links with local employers to find new jobs for learners.

17. The first year of the modern apprenticeship programme, in the training centre, is well managed. Instructors are fully involved in planning the programme and are able to influence the way it is taught. There are detailed schedules for training and assessment, and clear monitoring of training, assessment and progression. Team structures are clearly defined and support the effective programme management. Instructors are well qualified in training and use their knowledge and skills to provide good-quality lessons and materials. Where staff have developed other skills such as counselling, or health and safety qualifications, they are used effectively to help the learners.

18. SETA manages its resources satisfactorily. The chief executive liaises with the board to set realistic budgets. The senior management team has recently introduced a three-year business planning cycle, to meet the requirements of the local LSC. The plan specifies potential recruitment levels for the current programmes, but it does not explore other possible developments or the longer-term implications of changes in employment patterns.

19. SETA does not have an effective internal communication system. Since July 2002, there has been no formal system for informing staff of major issues, monitoring progress against strategic or business targets, or collecting regular updates on programme status.

Some staff find it frustrating that information is usually passed on through informal conversations, and is not always relayed accurately. Management meetings are usually held each month. There is no formal agenda and the content of meetings depends on particular projects that are taking place, or activities relevant to the time of the year. Meetings do not include discussion of learners' retention or achievements. Until July 2002, meetings had an effective standing agenda and minutes were well recorded. They showed detailed discussions about a range of relevant matters and clear actions.

20. There is no initial assessment to establish learners' preferred learning styles, or whether they have any additional support needs. There are two instructors in the training centre who have recently gained qualifications to support learners with their literacy, numeracy and language skills. SETA has not developed a strategy to ensure that literacy, numeracy and language needs are identified and subsequently supported.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

21. SETA has a policy for equal opportunities and explains the policy to learners during their induction. It emphasises their rights and responsibilities in relation to bullying and harassment and is linked to the company's complaints and grievance procedure. Learners have a satisfactory awareness of these issues. When learners leave the training centre to work full time for their employers, they have a further induction into the workplace, which includes a discussion of their employers' arrangements for equal opportunities. They are told how to make a complaint. None of the learners seen during the inspection reported unfair treatment, or had made use of either their employer's or SETA's complaints procedures.

22. Equal opportunities is covered during the learners' quarterly progress reviews, but it is not reinforced in any formal sessions after induction. Learners are asked at their progress reviews if they feel that they have been treated unfairly in their workplace, but this approach requires learners to have a good understanding of what would be unfair treatment. There are no other arrangements for monitoring employers' treatment of learners, or for ensuring that all employers have appropriate policies and procedures in place.

23. SETA does not do enough to promote equality of opportunity. All the modern apprentices and most of the NVQ learners in engineering are men. SETA is very conscious of this imbalance and has tried to promote its training specifically to women, for example through a business ambassador scheme, and by attending targeted careers events. However, SETA does not routinely evaluate its recruitment activities to ensure that it promotes positive images for women in engineering. SETA does not recruit learners or EQ8 learners directly, but it does keep records of applications from prospective learners and uses them to provide its network of employers with a shortlist of possible learners.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 4**

24. SETA has a set of quality assurance procedures which have not been reviewed since January 2000 and which are not always followed. No member of staff is specifically

responsible for maintaining the quality assurance procedures and no checks are carried out to ensure that they are followed. The procedures are incomplete and do not include, for example, analysis of retention and achievement rates, or regular observation of training. SETA does not monitor learning sessions in the training centre, and this was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The senior management team has recognised that quality assurance arrangements are poor and has commissioned a consultant to introduce a new quality assurance system.

25. SETA collects feedback from employers and learners through questionnaires at the end of the learner's period in the training centre and annually for employers. There is a good response rate for both questionnaires, typically exceeding 70 per cent, and many of the learners' comments are detailed. SETA analyses the results of the learners' survey, and has made changes to some of the facilities in response to criticisms. However, there is no systematic approach to rectify key issues, some of which are raised repeatedly, or to improve the programmes. SETA's staff do not inform learners or employers about the results of the surveys or what they intend to do about the issues raised.

26. The technical certificate element of the modern apprenticeship programme is subcontracted to local colleges. Learners are required to complete lesson evaluation forms twice a year for the college element. The forms are inappropriate and ask learners to make judgements which are too sophisticated for their level of experience. For example, they ask learners to comment on whether the learning methods used suited their preferred learning styles in comparison to possible alternatives. SETA does not make any use of the information in its decision-making or to make improvements. The colleges report learners' attendance every week to SETA and the learners' employers, and any absences are followed up by SETA. There is no other monitoring of the colleges' work, or any mechanism to review the structure of the taught programme or the resources available.

27. Internal verification is good at the training centre. There are detailed plans for internal verification and it is almost always carried out through direct observations. The training centre's internal verification records are well maintained and assessors are given constructive verbal and written feedback.

28. SETA has compiled three self-assessments reports and the most recent one was produced in May 2003. All self-assessment reports have been carried out before external inspections and are not part of the normal management system of the organisation. Staff carry out a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risk assessment of the organisation to give their views. Senior managers then incorporate the information into the self-assessment report. No other key stakeholders such as employers, learners or subcontractors are formally or systematically involved in the self-assessment report process. The self-assessment report recognised the learners' achievement rates for NVQs at level 2 and key skills, their personal development and SETA's management of the engineering programme as strengths, but it did not identify any weaknesses in the engineering programmes. The self-assessment report matched most of the inspection's findings in equal opportunities and quality assurance, but it did not recognise the significance of some of the weaknesses. Most of the self-assessment

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report's strengths in leadership and management were considered by inspectors to be normal practice. SETA is slow to respond to guidance and feedback. Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report and in a series of external verifier reports have still not been dealt with.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

### Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	128	3

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### Strengths

- good retention rates
- very good key skills achievement rates
- very successful foundation engineering programme
- wide range of additional qualifications gained by learners
- good skills development in the workplace
- particularly strong work ethic among learners

#### Weaknesses

- some weak assessment practice
- weak internal verification in the workplace
- insufficient use of initial assessment
- inadequate progress review process
- no accreditation of prior learning and achievement on the EQ8 programme

#### Achievement and standards

29. Retention rates are good and this was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. Ninety-four per cent of the learners who started on the EQ8 programme in February 2003 are still in learning. All advanced modern apprentices who started their training in September 2002 are still on programme. For most learners, this is a four-year programme. For the 1996 and 1997 intakes of learners, the retention rates are 86 per cent and 83 per cent respectively. The figure for the 1998 intake is 67 per cent, and was severely affected by widespread redundancies in manufacturing in the region.

30. Achievement rates in key skills are very good. Since 1999, achievement rates have exceeded 89 per cent every year, in one year reaching 100 per cent.

31. All the modern apprentices work towards an NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations as part of their training. The achievement rate for this qualification is outstanding. Over the past four years, 110 learners started training. Of these, 108 gained their NVQ at level 2. This represents an outstanding four-year average of 98 per cent. Learners show good knowledge, technical competence and practical ability, and they make a significant contribution in the workplace. They develop

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confidence, and work skills and are valued by their companies.

32. All the learners work towards some additional qualifications as part of their programmes, for example, gaining certificates in abrasive wheel regulations, electrical regulations, use of power presses and pneumatic equipment, or manual handling operations. Approximately 70 per cent of learners go on to gain external qualifications.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	18		28		29		35		45		35		50			
Retained*	0		0		0		6		30	67	29	83	43	86		
Successfully completed	0		0		0		6		23	51	25	71	31	62		
Still in learning	18		26		23		25		2	4	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	36															
Retained*	0															
Successfully completed	0															
Still in learning	34															

\*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

## Quality of education and training

33. The advanced modern apprenticeship programme successfully meets the needs of employers in the industry. Optional and additional NVQ units are carefully chosen to meet these needs and are changed if learners' job roles change. Learners return to the training centre for additional training when this happens, as well as for general qualifications, such as manual handling techniques and a variety of welding courses. Some learners also attend more specialised courses which meet employers' demands. Some employers allocate mentors to support their learners.

34. Learners develop a particularly strong work ethic. Staff are hard working, well motivated, have extensive occupational competence and industrial experience, and provide good role models for new learners, most of whom join SETA straight from



school. Learners are respected, treated as adults and respond to this positively. They feel able to approach staff freely and receive good support for their learning when they need it. These strengths were recognised in the self-assessment report. On occasions where modern apprentices have been made redundant, staff have worked hard to relocate them quickly with other companies and to minimise any adverse impact on their training programmes. Staff are very well qualified. All have a recognised teaching qualification and assessment qualifications, and there are four who are qualified internal verifiers. Other staff have health and safety qualifications, have completed counselling courses, drugs awareness courses and basic skills specialist training courses. Induction for learners is well planned, comprehensive and documented. The induction on the EQ8 programme is unsatisfactory. No learners are receiving literacy, numeracy or language support but, if needed, this is planned to be provided by the suitably qualified staff.

35. The machines in the training centre vary in age, but are generally adequate. A large open workshop is used for training in machining, fabrication and welding, electrical installation, and bench fitting. Alongside are three small, well-equipped training rooms that are used for electronics, hydraulics and pneumatic training. Information and communications technology (ICT) facilities are also satisfactory. There is a computer-aided design suite containing three workstations and an A1-sized printer, which use current industry-standard software. A second computer suite is used to teach key skills, with nine workstations and standard commercial software. Careful attention is given to health and safety in the centre. Learners have good awareness of health and safety, which is introduced during induction and reinforced in each vocational area through regular exercises in risk assessment.

36. Insufficient use is made of initial assessment. Adult learners on EQ8 programmes receive no accreditation or recognition for any prior attainment or experience despite having worked for several years in the engineering industry. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The current initial assessment is used to select potential learners, and does not lead to effective diagnosis of learners' literacy, numeracy or language support needs, or their preferred learning styles. The results of initial assessment are not always made available to learners. The initial assessment of key skills is restricted to information technology (IT), and it is not used in planning IT lessons to meet learners' individual needs. SETA plans to introduce literacy, numeracy or language assessment for new learners starting in 2003.

37. Some assessment practices are weak. The assessor visits modern apprentices at least once a month, and the work-based EQ8 learners have weekly visits. No detailed action plans are produced as a result of these visits and learners' progress is not monitored, recorded or reported adequately. Assessment is not sufficiently planned in advance and some learners are unaware of the detailed assessment requirements of their programmes. Employers are not kept up to date with learners' progress. Assessments rely too much on written evidence, and there is insufficient observation in the workplace. Feedback rarely gives learners sufficient guidance on how they could improve, and is often just verbal feedback. Unit achievement is not always recorded in the learners' logbooks. Some NVQ portfolios include witness statements prepared by learners and signed by occupationally competent witnesses. There are no status lists

with sample signatures of workplace expert witnesses. None of these weaknesses were recognised in the self-assessment report.

38. Internal verification in the workplace is not well planned. Assessors are not always aware of internal verification events. There are no formal meetings between assessors and internal verifiers to identify and share good practice or to standardise the work of assessors. External verifier reports are analysed by the works managers, but are not shared with assessors. Work-based assessors often work in isolation. Poor records are kept when portfolios are subject to internal verification. Some portfolios are only internally verified towards the end of the programme when they are nearly completed.

39. Learners' progress reviews are inadequate. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. They rarely include three-way discussions between learner, line manager and trainer/assessor, and the learners and employers are not given a copy of the progress review document. This makes it difficult for the employers to allocate suitable work to enable the learners to achieve their agreed goals. Progress reviews do not set realistic or challenging intermediate targets. Targets are not always effectively reviewed at the next progress review and learners are not given sufficient encouragement to meet their targets. Some progress reviews are not individual, but take place in groups of up to four learners. There is no reinforcement or monitoring of equality of opportunity or discussion of pastoral issues during progress reviews, and no space on the forms to record such matters.

### **Leadership and management**

40. Engineering programmes are well planned. Enthusiastic, dedicated and well-qualified staff have produced a successful off-the-job foundation programme that prepares learners well for their work-based learning. Learners have great respect for the knowledge and skills of SETA's instructors. The close partnership with employers and frequent visits by the assessor/verifier contribute to the smooth operation of the training programme and steady, confident progress of learners in the workplace. Learners benefit from good employment opportunities. Some arrangements for the management of the EQ8 programme are inadequate. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, but is not reinforced effectively. Learners' skills are frequently checked in the workplace, but internal verification is weak in the workplace. It is adequate for the NVQ at level 2 at SETA's training centre. The quality assurance of learning is inadequate.