

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SBC Training and Consultancy**

**15 June 2006**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based 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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learn**direct 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
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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.

## Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

## Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

## Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **SBC Training and Consultancy**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. SBC Training and Consultancy (SBC) was founded in 1978 and has provided a range of government-funded training since 1982. SBC's main office and training centre are in Shrewsbury, and there is a smaller office in Whitchurch. The provider offers national vocational qualifications (NVQ) programmes in construction, and NVQ programmes, apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in social care, build-up services, administration, and business management, retailing and wholesaling, customer service and warehousing.
2. SBC has contracts with Shropshire, Black Country and Greater Manchester Learning and skills Councils (LSCs). Shropshire is the lead LSC. Learners are widely dispersed throughout these areas. SBC also offers commercial training.
3. The provider has 34 staff, led by a managing director. The managing director is responsible for the quality of the provision and there is also a training manager and a general manager. There are 18 training staff. The training team is divided into occupational programme teams, each led by a programme manager.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 4**

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** Leadership and management are inadequate, as are SBC's arrangements for quality improvement. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The provision in social care, building services and business management is satisfactory, but the provision in administration is inadequate.
5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Overall, the self-assessment report is not critical enough, although in some of the areas of learning it identified most of the findings of the inspection. Staff were involved in the self-assessment process, although as recent starters, several of the current staff members were not able to contribute to the most recent report. Learners' and employers' feedback has not been used or referred to.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** SBC has taken some action to promote improvement, and strategies to improve success rates are beginning to take effect. However, current arrangements for quality assurance are unsatisfactory.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR SBC TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY:

- improve success rates
- ensure that reviews of learners' progress and individual learning plans are used effectively
- develop effective quality assurance processes

## SBC TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY

- develop management systems which lead to quality improvement
- improve the promotion of equality of opportunity to learners

## GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

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

<b>Health, public services and care</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b><i>Social care</i></b>		<b>3</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	79	4	
Other government-funded provision	9	3	
Train to Gain	78	3	

<b>Construction, planning and the built environment</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b><i>Building services</i></b>		<b>3</b>	
NVQ training for young people	15	3	

<b>Business administration and law</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b><i>Administration</i></b>		<b>4</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	32	4	
<b><i>Business management</i></b>		<b>3</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	44	4	
Other government-funded provision	30	2	
Train to Gain	28	2	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Apprenticeship programmes in social care, building services, administration and business management were inspected and graded. Train 2 Gain programmes were also inspected and graded in social care and business management. Other government-funded provision consisting of European Social Fund (ESF) programmes in business management and social care was also graded. An NVQ programme in building services was inspected and graded. The small number of learners in retailing and

wholesaling, customer service and warehousing, were not inspected or graded. There was no inspection or grading of the small number of learners following ESF-funded programmes in social care. The inspection took place over a period of four days in June 2006. This was the only visit by the inspection team.

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	27
Number of learners interviewed	45
Number of staff interviewed	33
Number of employers interviewed	12
Number of subcontractors interviewed	8
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	26
Number of visits	1

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

8. **Learners at SBC develop good knowledge and professional skills and apply them effectively in the workplace.** Employers comment positively regarding the learners' increased skills and abilities.

9. **On Train 2 Gain programmes in social care, success rates were good 2004-05, and they were also good in business management** at 70-75 per cent over the period 2003-2006. **However, some learners are making slow progress on Train 2 Gain programmes in social care.**

10. **ESF programmes in business management have good success rates**, reaching 70 per cent in 2005-06. Success rates on the construction NVQ programme are satisfactory and similar to the national rate.

11. **Overall success rates for advanced apprenticeship programmes are poor**, and declined from 27 per cent in 2003-04 to 14 per cent in 2004-05. Overall success rates for apprenticeship programmes have improved, but are still poor, ranging from 12 per cent in 2003-04 to 28 per cent in 2004-05.

12. In 2003-2005, no apprenticeship frameworks were completed in social care. **In the area of learning business administration and law, which includes administration and business management, success rates for advanced apprenticeship programmes are poor.** They declined from 25 per cent in 2003-04 to 15 per cent in 2004-05. For apprenticeship programmes over the same period, success rates declined from 18 per cent to 8 per cent.

13. Success rates for advanced apprentices in administration have declined from 38 per cent in 2003-04, to 20 per cent in 2004-05. For apprenticeship programmes, the trend was also downward, from 13 per cent in 2003-04, to 11 per cent in 2004-05. Success rates for advanced apprentices in business management are also declining and dropped

from 20 per cent in 2003-04, to 15 per cent in 2004-05. Success rates in social care, administration and business management show an improving trend this year.

### **The quality of provision**

14. **In social care, learners develop good, professional caring skills** and demonstrate a good understanding of the skills and knowledge required in the workplace. Learners produce a good standard of work in their portfolios. Employers are pleased with the progress made by learners.

15. **Planning of assessment in social care is good.** Learners receive well-planned and regular assessment visits. SBC's assessors and work-based assessors work well together and are well qualified. A good range of assessment methods is used. **Poor use is made of learners' progress reviews and individual learning plans.** Reviews often do not take place at all, and do not always involve employers when they do.

16. **In construction, the programme has been redesigned effectively to improve the retention of learners on the programme. The promotion and management of health and safety is particularly effective.** SBC provides a good health and safety induction, and there are daily, weekly and monthly safety audits which are completed systematically. Learners are graded on their health and safety practice and receive incentives to maintain and improve their performances.

17. **Action-planning is ineffective in construction.** Learners' progress reviews and assessment documents do not set appropriate targets to support timely completion of their programmes. Individual learning plans are not used effectively to plan learning. **The arrangements for quality improvement are weak, and there is not enough monitoring of the subcontractor Accord Training Solutions training provision.**

18. **In administration, learners develop good workplace skills and there is good short-term assessment planning.** Learners receive effective, well-planned, regular, assessment visits. However, there is not enough assessment of evidence generated in the workplace.

19. **The use of progress reviews and individual learning plans is poor in administration programmes.** Individual learning plans are poorly formatted, and they are not updated regularly. They do not contain adequate information about the training that is planned for learners. Progress reviews do not always involve employers. Reviews do not include sufficient discussions and recording of evidence of learning. Learners are not aware of their long-term targets. The training provided by employers is not co-ordinated effectively with the learners' programmes.

20. **Business management learners are developing good management skills and knowledge. The involvement of employers is good, and workplaces are of a good standard.** Many employers are actively involved in their learners' programmes. **There is not enough individual planning for some work-based learners.** Individual learning plans are poorly formatted, they are not always updated and do not contain adequate information about the learners' programmes.

21. **In all the areas inspected, equality of opportunity is not reinforced effectively during progress reviews. This aspect is particularly poor on business management**



programmes.

### Leadership and management

22. **SBC has developed a good approach to integrating skills for life, which is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, with learning programmes.** A member of staff provides specialist support for literacy, numeracy and language needs and pastoral care for learners. The support is integrated with the programme to make it relevant to the occupational area.

23. **SBC is very effective at identifying opportunities to devise programmes** which meet the needs of learners in the various regions in which it is concerned. The provider is skilled at anticipating developments and has introduced interesting and innovative projects to widen participation.

24. The provider has a business plan. This plan has been used to produce a number of separate action plans, rather than one coherent plan. Links between the various plans are complex and it is difficult to monitor SBC's progress against these plans.

25. Data about learners is analysed thoroughly, and SBC is aware of the progress that its learners are making. Data is used to set targets for the assessors.

26. Communications are satisfactory. SBC has an open management style, and also operates a complex system of meetings for decision-making and action-planning. Employers' and learners' feedback is not used effectively to identify trends and to contribute to improvements.

27. SBC has had a high turnover of staff. Some learners have had frequent changes of assessor. In order to improve the rate of staff retention, SBC has devised a strategy to support new staff. Evidence to date suggests that this has been successful. Internal verification is satisfactory in all areas of learning.

28. **Equality of opportunity is introduced to learners at the induction stage, but it is reinforced only through the progress review process.** Staff do not have enough updating and awareness-raising opportunities to develop their skills and confidence in dealing effectively with equal opportunities matters. **SBC has taken some good, positive action to attract under-represented groups** into learning.

29. **Quality improvement arrangements are poor in all areas of learning.** Quality assurance arrangements are not co-ordinated and action-planning is ineffective in raising standards throughout the provision. Good practice is not shared efficiently. The provider has no arrangements to systematically quality assure all the key learning processes.

30. The construction programme is delivered by Accord Training Solutions. This subcontractor's staff state that they are well supported by SBC. There is an appropriate service level agreement, but it is not monitored sufficiently by SBC. In the construction programme, observations of teaching and learning are not carried out routinely, but programme planning has improved recently. Learning session plans do not focus sufficiently on differentiation in delivering the background knowledge.

31. The self-assessment report was not critical enough. Feedback from learners and

employers was not used or referred to. In some areas of learning it has identified most of the findings highlighted by inspectors.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good integration of skills for life with learning programmes
- good anticipation and use of external opportunities
- good initiatives to widen participation by under-represented groups

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient medium- and long-term management activity
- insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equal opportunities to learners
- weak arrangements for quality assurance

## **Health, public services and care**

### ***Social care***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of professional caring skills
- good assessment planning
- good involvement of employers in the learning process

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress by learners on the Train to Gain programme
- poor success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- poor use of reviews and individual learning plans

## **Construction, planning and the built environment**

### ***Building services***

#### *Strengths*

- successful initiatives to retain learners on programme
- particularly effective promotion and management of health and safety by subcontractors

#### *Weaknesses*

- ineffective action-planning
- poor quality improvement arrangements

## **Business administration and law**

### ***Administration***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of administration skills by learners
- good short-term NVQ unit and assessment planning, and reviews

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor success rates
- poor use of individual learning plans and learners' progress review process

### ***Business management***

#### *Strengths*

- good success rates on ESF and Train to Gain management programmes
- good development of skills and knowledge
- good employer involvement

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor success rates for work-based learning
- insufficient individual planning of learning for some learners
- insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SBC TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY:**

- 'always learning new things'
- 'it's made me think about the jobs I do'
- 'extra support for my learning'
- 'friendly and supportive staff'
- 'my understanding has improved the quality of care I give to clients'
- 'my assessor explains things thoroughly'
- 'regular visits'
- 'learning related to work'
- 'getting feedback'
- 'workshops'
- 'enjoy the manual side of the job'
- 'using different plant and machinery'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK SBC TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY COULD IMPROVE:**

- nothing
- the amount of training
- 'more time to do my NVQ at work'
- 'too many assignments'
- 'qualification is too time consuming'
- 'I need pushing more'
- 'extra help with my numeracy'
- the frequency of assessment
- the location - the training is too far from home
- continuity of staff - there have been too many changes of assessors

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 4**

#### Strengths

- good integration of skills for life with learning programmes
- good anticipation and use of external opportunities
- good initiatives to widen participation by under-represented groups

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient medium- and long-term management activity
- insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equal opportunities to learners
- weak arrangements for quality assurance

32. As part of its strategy to provide literacy, numeracy and language support to learners, the provider has appointed a new member of staff to provide pastoral care to learners, and to identify and provide specialist support for literacy, numeracy and language needs. The support is integrated with the different occupational areas. The same member of staff is responsible for key skills and skills for life development throughout the organisation, and key skills are being integrated in the same way.

33. Since the appointment of this specialist member of staff, the proportion of learners who leave in the first 12 weeks of their programme has fallen from 12 per cent to 5 per cent. SBC is using good materials which are available from the Department for Education and Skills, the Standards Unit and the key skills support unit. Specialist learning coaches have been appointed for construction, administration, and social care. The skills for life specialist is also coaching another member of staff who is working with a group of Chinese learners to improve their literacy skills.

34. The provider makes the most of opportunities as they occur. It is skilled at following government trends and aims, and anticipating developments. SBC takes a strategic role in the local providers' forum, and has also extended its activities geographically when the opportunity has arisen. The provider is now active east and north of its base in Shropshire. SBC is involved in interesting and innovative ESF and Train 2 Gain projects, which have widened participation and been successful.

35. Communication routes are satisfactory. SBC has an open management style, and a complex system of meetings for decision-making and action-planning. Most of the meetings are minuted, which show responsibility for actions, but there is rarely any follow-up at the next meeting. Most notes from meetings are hand written and difficult to read. Some are incomplete. Staff complain about the difficulty of reading some of their managers' meeting notes. The provider has a newsletter which is described as a quarterly publication, although to date it has been issued less often than quarterly. This newsletter celebrates learners' and staff's successes. There are not enough opportunities for two-way communications. The first learners' forum was attended by only two learners, and one of those is employed by SBC. Learners' and employers' feedback is not used well.

36. Staff have job descriptions, and are appraised regularly against appropriate objectives derived from the business plan. Staff also have monthly individual meetings with their line managers, which are minuted and produce action points. Individual development needs are identified through the appraisal system.

37. Staff development is satisfactory. All training and assessment staff are working for the learning and development qualification at level 3 or 4 NVQ. All staff teaching key skills at level 1 have either a key skills qualification at level 2, or a general certificate of secondary education pass at grade C or above. Of the staff teaching key skills at level 2, half of them have a key skills qualification at level 3. SBC has provided some in-house training recently for grammar and punctuation for trainer/assessors, to increase their confidence in giving appropriate feedback to their learners. Staff appreciate the generous development opportunities available to them, but there has been no recent training for any staff members concerning equality and diversity.

38. SBC has a business plan, which is based on self-assessment, and the resulting action plans. However, the links between the different plans are complex and do not always function well. Actions are not always transferred from one plan to another, and the complexity makes them difficult to monitor.

39. The provider analyses its data thoroughly, and has a good understanding of the overall situation. Targets are set for assessors, based on the management information system, and standards and success rates are improving in most areas of learning. However, the improvements have been implemented slowly and have been slow to take effect.

40. Not enough attention has been given to ensuring that medium- and long-term management plans have been actioned. SBC has had a high turnover of staff for some time, and management energy and resources have been diverted into crisis management. The most recent strategy to retain staff is to provide a very high level of supervision, and staff now say that they feel supported. However, some of the medium- and longer-term plans, such as to develop materials and update quality assurance systems, have not been implemented, and other planned improvements have been delayed. Some learners have had negative experiences.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

41. SBC has taken some good, positive actions to attract an under-represented group of learners. The provider has been working with the Chinese community in Manchester to provide customer service, team leading and management training to employees in Chinese restaurants. SBC recognised the need for such training within the Chinese community, having worked with one such employer. A Chinese community group is now promoting the work of SBC and providing support to the provider by improving the cultural awareness of SBC's staff. Learners are supported by a fortnightly adult literacy workshop which is held in a Chinese restaurant. SBC has a good number of learners from a minority ethnic background, which is currently 17 per cent of its total profile.

42. The provider has a detailed dignity at work, and equality and diversity policy which was re-written and updated in May 2006. It was last updated in 2004. The policy is very clear, and covers all the essential elements and makes reference to all the appropriate

legal requirements. The policy makes specific reference to bullying and harassment, and there are clear guidelines to identify and resolve cases of harassment, intimidation and bullying. Learners state that they are safe and supported, and that where issues of bullying or harassment are identified, SBC takes appropriate actions to deal with the problems.

43. The effectiveness of the policy is monitored by the equality and diversity forum. This forum had been active until April 2005, but there were no further meetings until it was re-formed in March 2006. There were four meetings of the forum between March 2006 and June 2006 and it is beginning to monitor the effectiveness of the policy. The forum has devised an equality and diversity business plan which identifies specific actions, and monitors progress against this plan.

44. Equality of opportunity training has been devised for employers. A two-part training programme has been designed, and the first part has been piloted by delivering it to members of the equality and diversity forum. The training has not been delivered to employers yet. SBC is currently collecting equality of opportunity policies from employers, and it intends to review the content of each policy. To date, policies have been collected from 64 per cent of the employers.

45. Marketing materials promote SBC's commitment to equality of opportunity as an employer and a training provider. SBC uses positive images on marketing materials aimed at learners to attract under-represented groups and avoid stereotyping. There are appropriate statements in job advertisements. The staff profile does not reflect the profile of the community that the provider serves.

46. SBC has four equality and diversity performance measures, only one of which has a specific, quantitative target. That target is to recruit 17 per cent of its learners from a minority ethnic background. Progress towards this target is monitored on a regular basis. At the time of the inspection, the target had been achieved. Some analysis of equal opportunities data occurs, and some statistics are analysed for specific information, such as comparing the success rates of men and women. However there is not enough systematic collection and analysis of data. The analysis and measurement of performances does not lead consistently to specific action plans and improvements in the provision.

47. SBC carried out an accessibility audit of both its premises in 2000, following which some necessary actions were identified and sanctioned. The Whitchurch office is accessible to people with mobility difficulties, but the main training centre in Shrewsbury is not accessible to wheelchair users, or for those with mobility difficulties. SBC is seeking new, more accessible premises in the Shrewsbury area. At the moment, interviews and training are carried out at the Whitchurch premises if necessary, or at other appropriate, accessible locations.

48. SBC has an appropriate complaints procedure, but inspectors only saw one complaint, as the complaints file has been lost. The complaint seen by inspectors was dealt with in an appropriate and timely way.

49. Equal opportunity is an agenda item in team meetings, where issues arising are discussed and staff are updated. However, there has been no formal equality and diversity training for staff, to meet their specific needs. There is no learning plan for



equality of opportunity training. Staff do not have sufficient understanding and knowledge of equality of opportunity and diversity to support learners appropriately. Although equality of opportunity is covered during induction, few learners have any recollection of it. At the first learners' forum meeting, learners asked for improved coverage of equality of opportunity. It is planned to reinforce understanding of equal opportunities issues through the learners' progress review process, and there is a section on the review form to record this. Many of the comments in this section of the progress review form are superficial. Staff have no formal guidelines about how they might reinforce equality of opportunity through the review process and are not provided with resources to support them.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 4**

50. SBC has put considerable effort into improving its assessment practices. The comprehensive approach, known as 'active assessment', is intended to encourage all assessors to use a wider range of assessment methods. It has been very well received by assessors who had generally been using outdated assessment methods. Learners were expected to complete an inappropriate amount of written work. The provider has an innovative approach to ranking assessors for observation, and other internal verification, according to their need. This is done in a way which is perceived as developmental rather than critical. Other aspects of internal verification are satisfactory.

51. Quality assurance procedures are inadequate. The provider has introduced new arrangements to try to raise the level of quality assurance and the potential for quality improvement in SBC. These arrangements are fragmented and although staff and managers are in many cases aware of the improvements that need to be made, the action-planning is ineffective. For example, the recently established quality forum identified a need to improve the communication of information from initial assessment to the trainer/assessors, and also the need to improve the consistency of quarterly reviews. One of these actions did not appear on the action plan, and the other has not been completed. The quality forum does not monitor the progress of its action points from previous meetings. It is assumed that they are dealt with elsewhere. However, the review column on the action plan states that the quality forum will be responsible for such monitoring. Similarly, an action point from a management forum meeting required all areas of learning to use the ALI's good practice database as a useful source of ideas for improvement, but this has not been implemented.

52. Managers and staff are attempting to produce their own materials and systems instead of using good ideas from other organisations. Although the quality forum has identified that many progress reviews are poor, it has not sought and used good practices from other sources. The guidelines in the quality assurance manual, which were produced at the same time as the review form two years ago, are not used and staff are not aware of them. The guidelines are not particularly detailed or helpful. Staff talk about procedures in terms of forms and checklists, without being aware of the approach or behaviours which should underlie the forms and checklists.

53. Although success rates on Train 2 Gain and ESF programmes are satisfactory or better, overall success rates for advanced apprenticeship programmes are poor. They declined from 27 per cent in 2003-04, to 14 per cent in 2004-05. Overall success rates for apprenticeship programmes have improved from 12 per cent in 2003-04, to 28 per cent in 2004-05, but they are still poor. Approximately 50 per cent of the learners at SBC



are on apprenticeship programmes.

54. At the time of inspection, there was no system to observe and improve all the key stages of the learner's experience. Improvement of the observation process is part of the action plan. A review of the relevant documents has been completed, but this only means that the form has been redesigned. SBC has not agreed the criteria against which staff should be observed, although some observations of teaching and learning have been piloted. Those of the provider's staff who will be observed have received no training in the observation of teaching and learning process. There is no planned programme of observations.

55. The quality improvement policy, although very broad, is sound, but the detailed plan to implement it is missing. There is no clear process for revising policies, procedures or documents regularly, and document control is poor. New learners had a copy of an equal opportunities policy dated 1999 in their induction packs.

56. SBC's service level agreement with the subcontractor for construction includes details of roles and responsibilities, but there is no reference to evaluating the provision for the purposes of improvement. Some improvements, such as those for assessment and internal verification processes, have been implemented, but there is no requirement for the subcontractor to carry out structured activities to monitor and improve the provision. Poorly presented and incomplete notes from the meetings give no evidence of self-assessment activities.

57. The self-assessment report does not indicate specific key strengths and weaknesses. Within the narrative report, some of the strengths and weaknesses found at inspection are referred to indirectly. In general, the self-assessment report illustrates management's intentions which are expressed in improvements which have just been implemented or are about to be. Inspectors examined the effects of these improvements and activities on the learners. Most of the improvements are not fully established and have not had any effect on the learners' experiences. Most of the grades in the self-assessment report did not match the grades given by inspectors.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Health, public services and care

### Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Social care</b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	79	4
Other government-funded provision	9	3
Train to Gain	78	3

58. SBC currently trains 166 learners in social care. Of these, 55 are apprentices, and 24 are advanced apprentices. Eighty-seven learners are on NVQ programmes including 78 Train to Gain learners and nine learners who are on an ESF-funded programme. Eleven per cent of the learners are men, and 20 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Of the 166 learners, 13 per cent have been identified as having additional learning needs. All learners receive an initial assessment and a job analysis, and have their learning styles analysed. This is followed by an induction programme. Some learners attend for off-the-job training, or follow a distance learning programme, or participate in individual support and assessment sessions. All learners are employed.

### **Social care**

#### *Strengths*

- good development of professional caring skills
- good assessment planning
- good involvement of employers in the learning process

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress by learners on the Train to Gain programme
- poor success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- poor use of reviews and individual learning plans

### **Achievement and standards**

59. Learners on the social care programme are developing good professional caring skills. Employers comment positively about learners' increased skills and abilities. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of the skills and knowledge required in the workplace. Their work practice improves and they are confident enough to deal with sometimes challenging and difficult circumstances in social care settings. The standard of the portfolio work produced by learners is good and some learners at level 2 NVQ are being encouraged to cross-reference their work to the NVQ units. Learners are articulate in discussing the knowledge that they have gained and the new skills they have acquired. They develop in confidence, and are well motivated and have clear career aspirations.

60. Some learners on the Train to Gain programme make slow progress. Learners have

had their allocated assessors changed, and have sometimes been without an assessor for a period of time. Success rates improved during 2004-05, but success rates for the apprenticeship programmes are poor. In 2003-04 and 2004-05, no learners completed advanced apprenticeship frameworks in social care, but for the current period in 2005-06, 17 per cent of learners have completed their frameworks. No apprentices completed their frameworks in 2003-04, but 25 per cent did so during 2004-05. The current success rate, for 2005-06, is 31 per cent. This figure is just above the national success rate.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	5	60	47	0	26
		timely	5	40	31	0	17
	2004-05	overall	7	14	43	0	19
		timely	11	0	31	0	13
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	28	11	39	0	15
		timely	48	4	16	0	5
	2004-05	overall	51	53	38	25	19
		timely	51	10	18	0	9
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	7	43	49	0	0
		timely	10	30	32	0	0
	2004-05	overall	19	47	53	0	0
		timely	18	11	33	0	0
Adult training (long courses)	2003-04	overall	6	17		0	
		timely	18	0		0	
	2004-05	overall	44	77		0	
		timely	47	40		0	

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

## The quality of provision

61. Assessment planning for learners is good. Programme plans clearly indicate how and when different aspects of the programme will be assessed and completed. There are well-planned and regular assessment visits. SBC's assessors work closely with work-based assessors and employers to support the learners. SBC's assessors and work-based assessors are all well qualified. Regular standardisation meetings are held to ensure consistency of practice, and to support the work-based assessors. Assessment methods range from professional discussions and witness testimonies, to holistic observations. Learners are set clear, short-term targets. Assessors are flexible in planning their assessment visits. For one large domiciliary care provider, assessors plan to see learners in the evenings and early mornings while they are working with clients in their own homes.

62. Initial assessment and induction are satisfactory. The initial assessment aims to ensure that learners are on the right programme at the right level. It identifies learners' previous

qualifications and skills, analyses job roles and learning styles, and identifies those learners with additional literacy and numeracy support needs. SBC provides an induction that is adapted to the needs of each programme and qualification. The induction covers topics such as roles and responsibilities, the requirements of the programme, the appeals procedure, and portfolio guidelines. Learners are given a copy of SBC's equal opportunities policy, but their recall of discussions about equality and diversity is restricted.

63. Training resources to support learning are satisfactory. Some distance learning materials are available for learners who cannot attend training events and workshops. A book list is available for all learners. Most learners have access to additional resources in the workplace, including access to the internet.

64. Support for learners who are identified as having additional learning needs is satisfactory. A training officer provides additional support, handouts and activities for learners. Assessors provide individual support where this is appropriate. Learners complete key skills tests each month, and are given useful support and guidance before taking the tests.

65. The use of progress reviews and individual learning plans is poor. Progress reviews often do not take place and do not always involve employers. Learners are not aware of their long-term targets. Training opportunities provided by employers are not co-ordinated effectively with the learners' programmes. Equality of opportunity is not reinforced effectively during progress reviews. Individual learning plans are not used as working documents, learners do not have copies, and the plans are not updated regularly.

### **Leadership and management**

66. Employers are involved effectively in the learning process. Most employers are committed and supportive of training. They work closely with SBC's assessors and are kept well informed about learners' progress. Employers recognise and appreciate the improved standards of work completed by learners. Wherever possible, the employers attend meetings and find time for learners to complete their learning activities during working hours. Employers appreciate the regular newsletters which they receive from SBC. Learners receive mandatory training and additional courses from employers, such as control of infection.

67. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. A new and more simplified system has been introduced recently. This ensures that all new learners have their work sampled after their first month in training, at the midway point, and at the end of the programme. All actions required by assessors are noted and followed up regularly by the internal verifier.

68. Quarterly programme meetings, and standardisation meetings are held which are well documented. A number of strategies exist to improve success rates, such as the appointment of a staff member to work with assessors and those learners who are at risk of leaving the programme. Key skills delivery has been changed to be better integrated with the NVQ and with more regular monthly testing. Workshops have been developed to ensure better delivery of the technical certificate programmes. Learners' and employers' feedback is collected centrally, but it is not made available to members of the social care team to enable them to make improvements. The self-assessment process did

not include employers or learners sufficiently.

69. The self-assessment report was written as a narrative, and strengths and weakness were not identified separately. Strengths and weaknesses were identified in the narrative and the report's findings broadly matched those of the inspectors for this area of learning.

**Construction, planning and the built environment****Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Building services</b>		<b>3</b>
NVQ training for young people	15	3

70. SBC has 15 learners in building services, all of whom are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in highways maintenance. Learners who began training in 2006 are also working towards level 1 key skills in application of number and communication. All learners are recruited jointly by SBC and Accord Training Solutions, to which SBC subcontracts NVQ training, assessment and internal verification. All learners are employed by Accord Training Solutions. There are no female learners, no learners from minority ethnic communities and no learners with disabilities. SBC carries out an initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy standards and one learner has been identified as requiring additional learning support. SBC co-ordinates the key skills provision. Learners receive an induction from SBC and the subcontractor. Learners attend off-the-job training with Accord Training Solutions for one week each month during the first six months of training. SBC's training officer visits learners in the workplace to review their progress every 12 weeks.

**Building services***Strengths*

- successful initiatives to retain learners on programme
- particularly effective promotion and management of health and safety by subcontractor

*Weaknesses*

- ineffective action-planning
- poor quality improvement arrangements

**Achievement and standards**

71. The provider has taken effective actions to retain learners on programme. In 2005, a one-day job trial was integrated with the initial assessment process. This provides learners with the opportunity to sample working conditions and to make a more informed decision about their suitability for the programme. SBC's policy of recruiting older learners has attracted learners with more realistic expectations of the construction sector. In addition, learners have been able to use power tools and equipment earlier in their programmes. Since February 2005, only two of 18 learners who began the programme have left before achieving their objectives.

72. Overall success rates for the construction NVQ programme are satisfactory. For 2004-05 they were 50 per cent. However, no learners achieved their qualifications within the planned timescale. Most learners are making satisfactory progress towards achieving their qualifications. In 2003-04, the success rate for advanced apprentices was excellent. However, this was based on only three learners and the programme is no longer offered

by SBC.

73. Learners develop appropriate workplace skills. They work under the supervision of experienced workplace supervisors who provide good technical advice and support. Most learners carry out a suitable range of tasks, including reinstatement work, laying kerbs and channels, pavement construction and operating traffic management systems. Learners produce a satisfactory standard of work which meets the standards set by the provider and its clients.

74. Learners' portfolios are satisfactory. They are suitably indexed and cross-referenced and contain a wide range of evidence which includes direct observation, witness testimonies, job cards, and health and safety records. Some learners make good use of photographic evidence in their portfolios.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	3	100	53	100	40
		timely	3	100	29	100	22
NVQ training for young	2004-05	overall	18	50	52	0	0
		timely	18	0	0	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

### The quality of provision

75. The subcontractor's promotion and management of health and safety is particularly effective. At the beginning of training, learners receive a comprehensive five-day health and safety induction which introduces effectively them to safe working practices. They receive a detailed health and safety manual which they refer to constantly while in the workplace. Daily, weekly and monthly safety audits are completed systematically by site supervisors. A number of learners have also completed the daily audits and have used these as NVQ evidence. Learners are graded on their health and safety practice and receive incentives to maintain and improve their performances. A monthly health and safety competition is open to all employees. Monthly safety bulletins are displayed prominently in the workplace and cover such topics as skin cancer. All site-based personnel are issued with sun block for protection during hot weather. The provider also provides employees with non-work-related safety information such as the safe use of gardening tools, ladders, bonfires and fireworks. In 2005, Accord Training Solutions was one of only 40 companies worldwide to be awarded the British Safety Council's 'Sword of Honour' in recognition of its excellent health and safety standards.

76. Training accommodation and resources at Accord Training Solution's training centre in Shrewsbury are satisfactory. Both training rooms are suitably equipped with audiovisual equipment and whiteboards. Furnishings are of a satisfactory standard. A well-resourced information technology room is also used. The training centre's indoor practical training area allows training to continue during inclement weather. Within the training area,

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learners are able to apply different finishes to roads and pathways and to work on drainage systems. A separate training area is used for traffic management systems training.

77. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Planning and assessment records are up to date and are sufficiently detailed. Assessment decisions are identified clearly. Assessors visit learners frequently in the workplace to carry out direct observations. Learners' understanding of the assessment and evidence-gathering process is satisfactory.

78. SBC's monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory. Accord Training Solutions has recently introduced a colour-coded monthly progress log which monitors achievements at unit level. The log is forwarded to SBC for information. If learners are making slow progress, a further report is forwarded to the learners' workplace supervisor to allow appropriate action to be taken. Learners are sometimes moved to new workplaces to gain further work experience. Learners' progress in relation to off-the-job training is not recorded sufficiently, but they do have a satisfactory understanding of their overall progress.

79. Literacy and numeracy arrangements are satisfactory. All learners undergo an initial assessment from SBC. This assessment confirms that most learners are operating at entry level 2 and 3. Appropriate learning support is provided on an individual basis by SBC's training officer. Learners working for key skills qualifications have recently completed a level 1 examination paper which all learners passed successfully. In addition, the subcontractor has recently completed a learning styles questionnaire which is used to reinforce knowledge and understanding during off-the-job training.

80. Action-planning is ineffective. Learners' progress reviews and assessment documents do not set specific, measurable and time-bound targets. Individual learning plans are not used effectively to plan learning. SBC does not share its learners' individual learning plans with the subcontractor to help with programme planning. Internal verification observation reports do not include actions for improvement, and actions identified during the subcontractor's assessor meetings and programme review meetings with SBC are not time-bound.

### **Leadership and management**

81. Programme planning in building services has improved recently. A programme plan has been developed recently which covers off-the-job training. This plan is shared with SBC, workplace supervisors and learners. Session plans have also been developed, but there is not enough focus on meeting the needs of individual learners.

82. Communications between SBC and the subcontractor's training staff are regular and effective in quickly resolving operational issues. Accord Training Solutions values this contact and feels well supported by SBC. Programme meetings are held between both organisations, but since November 2004 only four meetings have taken place. When they are held, the meetings provide a useful forum to discuss and implement programme development. To improve communications, the subcontractor recently hosted an apprentice day which was attended by senior managers, training staff, supervisors, representatives from SBC and learners. The quality of witness testimonies has improved.

83. Equality of opportunity is developed adequately at induction, but reinforcement of the



subject during progress reviews is weak. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity issues. Neither SBC's nor the subcontractor's staff have received equality and diversity training. In its action plan, SBC identified the need to target women and people from minority ethnic groups to the programme, but it is not clear how this is to be achieved. Currently, there are no learners from under-represented groups.

84. Quality improvement arrangements are poor. SBC's service level agreement with Accord Training Solutions adequately identifies each organisation's responsibilities, but there is not enough monitoring of the subcontractor's training provision. No trainers hold appropriate training or teaching qualifications. Observations of teaching and learning are not carried out routinely. Learners' and employers' feedback is not used effectively to identify trends and bring about improvements. SBC's construction action plan makes no reference to quality improvement. Since the reinspection of 2004, internal verification has improved and is now satisfactory. The internal verification strategy is comprehensive and internal verification records are appropriate.

85. The subcontractor's training staff have little recall of any involvement in the self-assessment process, or the outcomes. SBC's self-assessment report makes no reference to specific strengths and weaknesses in its construction provision.

**Business administration and law****Grade 3**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Administration</b>		<b>4</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	32	4
<b>Business management</b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	44	4
Other government-funded provision	30	2
Train to Gain	28	2

86. SBC has 134 learners in administration and business management. In business management there are 27 apprentices and 17 advanced apprentices. Twenty-eight Train to Gain, and 30 ESF learners are following management programmes at level 2, 3 and 4 NVQ. In administration, there are 19 apprentices and 13 advanced apprentices. Learners are based in the Northwest and the West Midlands.

88. Learners are employed with a range of appropriate organisations in sectors such as retailing and fast-food, children's nurseries, care, and manufacturing.

89. SBC recruits school and college leavers and those already employed in an administration role. Induction is carried out in the workplace and learners have the opportunity to attend off-the-job training workshops for technical certificates. SBC's staff provide more training and assessment in the workplace, and visits are made at least every four weeks. Progress reviews are conducted quarterly.

**Administration***Strengths*

- good development of administration skills by learners
- good short-term NVQ unit and assessment planning, and reviews

*Weaknesses*

- poor success rates
- poor use of individual learning plans and learners' progress review process

**Achievement and standards**

90. Learners develop good skills and apply them effectively in a range of administration tasks. They learn alongside experienced colleagues. Frequent visits by SBC's staff, together with off-the-job training help to reinforce learners' knowledge and understanding. Learners use a range of up-to-date office technology effectively and implement administrative systems and procedures well. For example, some learners manage the schedules of colleagues who work remotely, by using online diaries effectively. In other cases, learners deal with telephone calls competently and learn how to deal with customers.

91. Success rates remain unsatisfactory in the current year up to period nine, although they are improving. Progress towards completion of frameworks is slow in some cases, but good in others. Six from a total of 31 learners are making slow progress. Of these, four learners have gone beyond their programme end dates. Five learners are making good progress.

92. Success rates are poor in business administration. The framework completion rate for advanced apprentices in 2003-04 was 38 per cent, which then declined to 20 per cent for 2004-05. For apprentices the completion rates were 13 per cent for 2003-04, falling to 11 per cent for 2004-05.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	13	46	49	38	28
		timely	14	36	30	29	16
	2004-05	overall	15	100	114	100	100
		timely	16	115	100	100	100
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	15	40	54	13	41
		timely	15	33	24	7	18
	2004-05	overall	9	100	100	100	100
		timely	15	60	100	100	100
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	1	0	40	0	0
		timely	1	0	29	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

### The quality of provision

93. SBC achieves good, short-term NVQ unit planning, and assessment planning and reviews. Assessment visits are held regularly and are carried out effectively with learners. The assessment requirements of each unit are discussed and clearly recorded and learners keep copies of these in their portfolios. Assessors explain the NVQ assessment requirements effectively, review the work product evidence, and give useful feedback to learners. Learners value these sessions and are clear about what they have to do to progress with the NVQ. A range of assessment methods is used, although in some cases there is not enough observation of the assessment evidence generated in the workplace.

94. Learners receive an induction which is carried out at work and involves several visits from SBC's staff. The induction programme mainly involves learners in going through paper-based information, with some questioning. Initial assessment is carried out satisfactorily during this process.

95. An appropriate programme of off-the-job technical certificate workshops is available to learners. These sessions meet learners' needs satisfactorily, although not all learners are able to attend. Some learners are coached at work by their assessors. For others,

depending on their start date, it may be some time after they have begun their programme before they can access these sessions. Some key skills learning opportunities are included in the workshops. Other opportunities at work are developed for learners by assessors, and in some cases by the training officer who provides additional learning support. Fifty per cent of the current learners are not required to do key skills training and most of them are not involved in any such training.

96. Individual learning plans and progress reviews are not used satisfactorily. The individual learning plans are poorly formatted. They are not updated and do not contain adequate information about planned learning which can be used to measure learners' progress. There is no document to summarise the specific learning that has to be acquired by the individual, or to give an up-to-date view of when learners are expected to achieve the various elements of their programme. For example, there is no information about on-the-job training opportunities, and very little about off-the-job training. The current learning plans, which are held in assessors' files, are not used by staff to plan learning schedules with learners or employers. Learners and employers do not receive copies of learning plans, apart from the specific unit plans used for assessment planning. Key skills training is planned separately in some cases.

97. Progress reviews do not include enough discussion, recording and evidence of progress concerning specific learning that has taken place and learning that is planned. Employers' contributions to the planning of learning, and training opportunities at work are not recorded well or often enough. Employers' views about the progress achieved by the learner are poorly recorded, if at all, in progress review records. There is no clear specification of framework elements, on- or off-the-job learning activities, or specific, measurable, individual targets. The details of induction are not specific enough in review records. The learner's induction to work by the employer is not reviewed at all. Records indicate that progress reviews take place at appropriate intervals.

### **Leadership and management**

98. Managers have not succeeded in achieving an acceptable standard of success for learners. They have underestimated the importance of some key processes in work-based learning, such as learning plans that reflect learning activities in the workplace, and progress reviews which clearly identify progress and opportunities for learning. Learners' progress is monitored regularly and their progress towards NVQ achievements is recorded satisfactorily. Staffing levels are adequate and communications are satisfactory. An improvement strategy is having some effect on the improving trends in success rates and is reducing the number of learners who leave before completing their objectives. The number of learners who leave without completing their programmes successfully remains high.

99. Internal verification and other quality monitoring activities take place, although on-the-job training is not monitored or quality assured in any meaningful way. Induction has improved. The number of learners leaving in the first three months of training has reduced. The induction at work does not adopt an integrated approach to include identifying and planning for employers' requirements. Employers are involved in the overall programme, but not well enough in some individual cases. SBC has low expectations of the contribution to be made by employers. Equality of opportunity is introduced to learners at induction, but is only reinforced superficially beyond this point. SBC's staff are not given enough updating and awareness-raising opportunities to enable

them to develop their skills and confidence, in order to deal effectively with equal opportunities matters.

### ***Business management***

#### *Strengths*

- good success rates on ESF and Train to Gain management programmes
- good development of skills and knowledge
- good employer involvement

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor success rates for work-based learning
- insufficient individual planning of learning for some learners
- insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity

### **Achievement and standards**

100. Success rates for Train 2 Gain and ESF programme learners are good. The overall success rate for Train 2 Gain is 70 per cent over the period 2003-06. ESF programmes had some very good success in 2004, with a 93 per cent pass rate, and a 70 per cent rate for 2005-06. Current learners are making very good progress.

101. All learners are developing good skills and knowledge in management. Many learners stated how their knowledge of legislation, recruitment, conflict handling, motivation, and chairing meetings, have all improved, and enabled them to deal with situations successfully and sensitively. Many employers mentioned how they have seen a lot of improvement in learners' performances. Some learners at higher levels of study are able to demonstrate how business performance and processes have improved as a result of their training.

102. Success rates for work-based learners are poor. The overall success rate for advanced apprentices in 2003-04 was 20 per cent. This was above the national rate of 15 per cent, but 80 per cent of learners left their programmes without completing their apprenticeship frameworks. In 2004-05, success rates fell below the national rate. SBC no longer recruits learners for this programme.

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Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	54	33	33	20	15
		timely	59	22	22	14	9
	2004-05	overall	72	100	124	100	100
		timely	73	133	100	100	100
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	3	0	41	0	0
		timely	1	0	23	0	0
Adult training (long courses)	2003-04	overall	10	70		0	
		timely	5	60		0	
	2004-05	overall	60	70		100	
		timely	72	7		100	

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

### The quality of provision

103. SBC's involvement of employers is good. Workplaces are of a good standard, offering learners an appropriate environment for learning and assessment. Learners are members of workplace teams and are given roles and responsibilities that improve their confidence and help them to develop many skills. A significant number of employers are actively involved in their learners' programmes. Some employers attend inductions, and provide resources and time at work for their learners to work on for their qualifications. Other employers have reviewed their policies with regard to improving the support provided to work-based learners. SBC's staff and the employers work well together to support individual learners, and many employers are involved in assessments and reviews of learners' progress.

104. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching takes place through taught group workshops, and individual coaching and mentoring in the workplace. Assessment practice is satisfactory. It is planned in advance and contains a range of assessment methods to enable the learner to demonstrate their competences. Assessors plan regular and flexible visits to the workplace and can be contacted at any time, by the learner or the employer. The range of programmes provided by SBC is satisfactory, and some learners progress to higher-level qualifications in management.

105. Adequate arrangements exist for the initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and key skills at induction. The assessments identify the appropriate level of training for learners. Individual learning needs are identified and adequate levels of support are provided. Further development opportunities are given to those learners who need it, through literacy and numeracy skills support, or individual coaching in the workplace. Induction is satisfactory.

106. There is not enough individual planning for some work-based learners. The individual learning plans are poorly formatted, they are not always updated, and they do

not contain adequate information about planned learning against which progress can be reviewed. SBC does not provide sufficient information about on- or off-the-job learning opportunities to enable assessors to plan assessment opportunities adequately. This mainly concerns advanced apprenticeship programmes, where the planning and introduction of the technical certificate requirements were delayed. This affects 17 of the learners, many of whom still have a considerable number of assignments and their final, work-based projects to complete. Some of the current staff feel that they do not have the necessary skills to be able to do this effectively. Some of the learners also require additional study skills to enable them to present their assignments in the required format, and this has not been arranged. For more recently recruited learners, individual planning of learning is improving, but it is too soon to be able to judge how effective it is.

### **Leadership and management**

107. In addition to the programme manager, there are seven assessors. These assessors are responsible for supporting learners throughout their programmes. All of the assessors are qualified, three of them are qualified as internal verifiers, and four have teaching qualifications. They work throughout both regions and are based in SBC's offices in Shrewsbury.

108. There have been many changes of staff in this area of learning, including a new programme manager and some new personnel. Improvements have been planned and some implemented, but it is too soon to be able to judge the effects on learners' experiences and success rates.

109. Quarterly meetings take place between the manager and the assessors, to monitor learners' progress, standardise work practices, and develop this area of learning. The early signs are that these measures are contributing to some improvement in the success rates. SBC has well-established links and communications with employers and learners. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and new staff receive a good induction. They are well supported through individual coaching, work shadowing and mentoring.

110. Internal verification is satisfactory. An updated sampling plan covers the verification of units achieved, the observation of assessment practice, and interviews with learners at different points during their programmes. Assessors are risk-assessed according to their level of experience, and their understanding of the new NVQ standards. They receive written feedback and action points about their judgements and internal verification reports are signed off when actions are completed. Internal verification practice can be monitored through learners' portfolios. Quarterly meetings are held to help ensure that practices are standardised.

111. Equality of opportunity is not promoted well enough with individual learners. In progress reviews, learners are asked closed questions which are answered by them ticking boxes. Some learners discuss bullying and harassment, but these subjects are not linked with the wider issues of equality and diversity in the workplace and with their customers. Many learners do not remember details of the equality of opportunity sessions provided at induction.

