

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Sunderland Engineering Training Association**

**14 December 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
- **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
- 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**

## **Sunderland Engineering Training Association**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Sunderland Engineering Training Association (SETA) is a group training association established in the mid 1960s. Since 1978, the organisation has been based in a training centre on the Wear industrial estate in Washington, Tyne and Wear. SETA currently employs 13 staff and has approximately 100 advanced apprentices and four apprentices. A board of non-executive directors has overall responsibility for the organisation. The training centre is managed by a senior management team comprising the chief executive, a works manager, and an office manager. The organisation provides work-based learning programmes leading, in the main, to advanced apprenticeships in a range of engineering disciplines funded by the Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC). All learners are employed.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 4**

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** SETA's arrangements for leadership and management and quality improvement are inadequate. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The provision in engineering is good.

3. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. Although some of the identified strengths were judged to be no more than normal practice by inspectors, most of the weaknesses were identified. The quality improvement action plan details appropriate actions to rectify the weaknesses, but it does not give any target dates for completion of the actions, or milestones against which to judge progress.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** The provision in engineering has improved since SETA was last inspected and overall success rates are still well above national averages. However, several weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, particularly in leadership and management, have not been rectified. Managers have introduced strategies to tackle some of these weaknesses, but these have only recently been introduced and it is too early to measure their impact.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR SUNDERLAND ENGINEERING TRAINING ASSOCIATION:

- ensure that all learners complete their programmes by their expected end dates
- implement the good assessment practice identified in some workplaces to those where there is insufficient planning of assessment
- ensure that weaknesses in internal verification are rectified as soon as possible
- ensure that directors and senior managers work together to set a clear strategic direction for the organisation
- adopt a more systematic approach in the use of data to inform management decisions
- fully establish effective processes for the selection, appraisal and development of all staff

## SUNDERLAND ENGINEERING TRAINING ASSOCIATION

- continue to improve internal and external communications
- introduce quality improvement arrangements to cover all aspects of provision
- fully implement the equality and diversity improvements identified in the equal opportunity and quality improvement action plans

## 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>Engineering and manufacturing technologies</b> |                           |                           | <b>2</b> |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| <b>Contributory areas:</b>                        | <b>Number of learners</b> | <b>Contributory grade</b> |          |
| <b>Engineering</b>                                |                           | <b>2</b>                  |          |
| Apprenticeships for young people                  | 105                       | 2                         |          |

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. All publicly funded work-based learning at SETA was inspected. A grade was awarded for the 101 advanced apprentices in engineering, but not for the four manufacturing apprentices. The number of learners taking manufacturing apprenticeships was too small, and the programme too recently introduced, to award a contributory grade for manufacturing. Inspectors visited the company where the manufacturing apprentices are employed to interview the learners. Where appropriate, the report refers to this aspect of SETA's provision, but unless specified, the text in the report relates to the advanced apprenticeship in engineering.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Number of inspectors                               | 3  |
| Number of inspection days                          | 12 |
| Number of learners interviewed                     | 30 |
| Number of staff interviewed                        | 24 |
| Number of employers interviewed                    | 6  |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 12 |

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good links with employers and the local further education college
- well-managed initial training programme

### **Weaknesses**

- inadequate strategic and operational planning
- insufficient use of data to aid management decisions
- inadequate arrangements for staff development and appraisal
- incomplete quality improvement arrangements

## **Engineering and manufacturing technologies**

### ***Engineering***

#### *Strengths*

- good overall success rates
- very good attainment of skills in the workplace
- good on- and off-the-job training

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning of workplace assessment
- weak internal verification of workplace assessment

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

- 'good foundation training that prepares you for work'
- the wide variety of jobs at work, and learning new skills all the time
- 'everyone is very approachable, you can get help when you need it'
- the friendly atmosphere at the training centre
- 'the training centre is a place you want to come to on a morning'
- 'better teaching than at college'
- 'I enjoyed the first year training at SETA'
- working and learning at the same time
- 'the instructors are easy to get on with, and they treat you like an adult'
- 'the electrical/electronic course at college is good'

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

- too many theory lessons at college and not enough practical work
- 'the first year electrical trainees could spend less time on machine tools'
- 'more cutting tools could be available'
- 'more time on electrical work in the first year'
- 'would have liked some welding in the first year'
- 'a learning plan for work would help, and spending less time on production work'



## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 4**

#### Strengths

- good links with employers and the local further education college
- well-managed initial training programme

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate strategic and operational planning
- insufficient use of data to aid management decisions
- inadequate arrangements for staff development and appraisal
- incomplete quality improvement arrangements

6. SETA has good links with its employers and the local further education college. It works very closely with companies in recruiting learners and completing their initial assessment. Where learners have been affected by company closures, SETA's staff endeavour to find them alternative employment. The organisation has good links with City of Sunderland College. The college delivers the technical certificate for most of SETA's learners. Full-time college students attend the training centre for practical training on the same day that SETA first-year learners are at college. SETA and the college are involved in the joint delivery of LSC-funded adult training, and have entered into a mutual service level agreement. The agreement is very detailed, but has few quantifiable criteria against which performance can be measured. SETA is not significantly involved in delivering vocation training for 14-16 year olds from local schools.

7. The initial training programme, delivered at the training centre, is well managed and structured. The programme meets the needs of employers and prepares learners well for their work-based learning. Schedules for training and assessment are clear and detailed. Instructors are well qualified and experienced. Some staff have specialist qualifications in health and safety and counselling. Instructors are fully involved in reviewing and developing the programme. Team meetings, at which discussions and action points are recorded, are now more regular and formal.

8. Internal communications are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, arrangements for management and team meetings have become more formalised. Meetings now have agendas and minutes are produced. Some meetings were only established early this year. The meeting covering health and safety issues has taken place only once. SETA has a well-established internet site but no intranet. Managers and staff, however, have access to two common drives on the company's network system. Those staff who are most likely to use it for external communications have access to e-mail, but the system does not have capacity for everyone to use it. Staff have access to the internet through two readily available computers. SETA does not have a company newsletter and, other than photographs celebrating learner successes, there is not enough use of publicity and visual displays in the training centre.

9. Strategic and operational planning are inadequate. The current three-year development plan, produced at the request of the LSC, is insufficiently detailed and does not contain any clear strategic objectives. SETA has no annual business plan, staff development plan, or accommodation strategy. There is no plan to show, for example, how the organisation intends to modify its accommodation to meet the requirements of current disability legislation. There is very close monitoring of finances by the chief executive and board. The chief executive presents regular reports to the board that refer to levels of recruitment, but directors are not routinely informed of trends in learners' performance. The board is not involved in formulating the development plan or the self-assessment report. Directors do not have a good understanding of current educational and training initiatives.

10. Managers make insufficient use of data. Since the previous inspection, SETA has installed a new management information system which, as identified in the self-assessment report, has improved data communications with the LSC. However, the main use of the system is to record data on individual learners, as required by the LSC, and facilitate funding claims. Some managers and staff keep their own learner records, but this information is not routinely checked for accuracy, or shared with colleagues. At the request of individual managers, a few reports have been produced using the new information system. However, the system is not being used to its potential, and data is not routinely and systematically used to monitor trends over time, or aid management decisions.

11. Arrangements for staff development and appraisal are inadequate. Staff have job descriptions, but the duties listed in job descriptions are too general and poorly detailed. There is no procedure for appointing new members of staff. Managers have not identified the essential and desirable attributes for each post. There is no procedure for staff appraisal, the process for which only started the week before inspection. Only one appraisal has been completed to date. There is no reference to corporate targets in appraisal documentation. Managers completing appraisals have not been trained for this role. There are no personal development plans or an overall staff development plan. A significant range of training has been completed since the previous inspection, but records of completed training are only kept in individual learners' personnel files. There is no summary of what training has been completed, and no evaluation of its effectiveness.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

12. SETA has a satisfactory equal opportunities policy that covers its commitment to equality and diversity. The policy was revised in November 2006 and includes reference to all relevant and current legislation. The policy is widely distributed to staff and learners. The provider recently employed a consultant to conduct an equality and diversity health check. This highlighted a number of areas of concern and formed the basis of an equality and diversity action plan. However, the report was dated October 2006 and it is still too early to judge the effect of any actions. SETA uses a comprehensive questionnaire to confirm the appropriateness of new employers' attitudes to equality and diversity, before entering into an agreement with them and the learner.

13. Managers and staff are involved in a number of initiatives to encourage under-represented groups to enter the engineering industry. The number of people from black and minority ethnic groups in the region is low. There are currently no learners or staff from these groups. SETA staff have contacted relevant local community groups and

engaged in discussions with them to assist in recruitment, but so far without success. Staff have been involved in school visits to primary schools either as part of the Connexions business ambassador scheme, or at the direct invitation of schools. They have also participated in careers fairs in secondary schools. They have particularly targeted a local girls' school but have had no recent success in recruiting female learners.

14. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Equality and diversity is covered in the learner induction and through the recently introduced employee rights and responsibilities unit of the apprenticeship framework. It is satisfactorily reinforced at progress reviews during the first year through a series of questions and discussions, although the details of the discussions are not recorded. Equal opportunities issues are also discussed during progress reviews in the workplace. Learners are aware of the reporting procedure in the event of harassment or discrimination. However, managers do not maintain a log recording such incidents or actions taken. Training staff act promptly to challenge inappropriate language or behaviour by learners.

15. No learners are registered as disabled. Learners identified as having dyslexia are given extra support in the form of a reader for online testing, or other tasks where they would otherwise be disadvantaged. Workshops and some training rooms are located on the ground floor and can be accessed directly from a car park used by learners. There is also a toilet for disabled people on the ground floor. Access to the first-floor training rooms is by a steep stairwell and there is no lift. However, there is sufficient capacity to conduct all training on the ground floor if necessary. Access problems are acknowledged in the company's disability statement. SETA does not currently have any specialist equipment, such as hearing induction loops to assist the hearing impaired, or adaptive software to assist with any other disability.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 4**

16. SETA's quality improvement arrangements are incomplete. The latest version of their quality manual and procedures was produced in November 2006 and replaces the previous produced in 2004. The manual states the company's commitment to quality improvement. However, the procedures do not cover all key aspects of the training process and do not have sufficient detail as to how the company is to assure the quality of the provision or promote continuous improvement. There is no quality assurance calendar or similar device to guide provider staff through the quality cycle. Some clerical audits of files are conducted but qualitative reviews of each aspect of the provision are not yet systematically carried out.

17. Observation of teaching and learning has only recently been introduced and is not fully developed. There is no formal observation plan. Teaching sessions are not graded and, although the observer gives the teacher appropriate and constructive feedback, managers are unable to form an objective view of the overall standard of teaching and learning, or set measurable targets for improvement or to monitor trends. Although there are no formal moderation arrangements, staff from the partner college have also observed sessions at SETA and shared their un-graded reports with the company. In addition, the provider receives copies of the observation reports conducted by the training organisations with which members of SETA's staff are working towards teaching qualifications.

18. SETA does not collect or analyse sufficient learner feedback to identify areas for

improvement. It uses an annual satisfaction survey to collect the views of learners at the end of their initial training. However, all the questions in the survey require a literal response, and so it is difficult to analyse responses or identify trends over time. The provider does not use further questionnaires at the end of each discrete phase of training to measure the impact of any changes introduced or identify the need for others. Feedback from learners in the workplace is obtained through the review process, but this is not routinely analysed. A newly devised employer satisfaction questionnaire, which will provide quantitative data, has been used for the first time but not all returns have been received and the provider has not carried out any analysis of the results.

19. Staff involvement in the self-assessment process is satisfactory. All were invited to contribute strengths and weaknesses in their own areas, and then to comment on a draft report written by the chief executive. The latest report, dated November 2006, claims a number of key strengths, which inspectors judged to be normal practice. It also identified many of the weaknesses found at inspection. The associated quality improvement action plan details appropriate actions to overcome the weaknesses, expected outcomes, progress to date, and responsibility. However, it does not give any target dates for completion, or milestones against which to judge progress. Some minor quality improvements have been introduced in the last year, but a number of key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and identified in the latest self-assessment report, are yet to be remedied.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

### Grade 2

| Contributory areas:              | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Engineering</b>               |                    | <b>2</b>           |
| Apprenticeships for young people | 105                | 2                  |

20. SETA currently has 105 learners on engineering training programmes. Of these, 101 learners are taking an advanced apprenticeship in either engineering maintenance or production and manufacturing. The remaining four learners are taking an apprenticeship framework in manufacturing. The first year of the advanced apprenticeship is delivered as an off-the-job training programme at SETA's training centre. Key skills training and assessment is also covered at the training centre, while delivery of the technical certificate is subcontracted to local colleges. All learners are employed from the start of their training programme. All learners receive a monthly monitoring visit from SETA's training officer, plus a formal review approximately every 12 weeks. Assessment and internal verification, for most learners, is carried out by SETA's assessors and verifier. Two employers have their own work-based assessors who complete national vocational qualifications (NVQ) assessments for their advanced apprentices, with SETA carrying out internal verification.

### **Engineering**

#### *Strengths*

- good overall success rates
- very good attainment of skills in the workplace
- good on- and off-the-job training

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning of workplace assessment
- weak internal verification of workplace assessment

### **Achievement and standards**

21. Overall success rates are good. For the last three years, success rates have been at least 20 per cent points above the national average. Timely success rates are lower, but still well above national averages. Most learners complete within their planned end year. However, a few learners do not complete their programme by their expected end date, and five learners are now several months past their completion date. Success rates for the NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations, and the five key skills qualifications taken during the initial off-the-job training are very high. In 2003-04, 88 per cent of the learners gained all these qualifications and this has improved to 100 per cent in 2004-05 and 2005-06.

22. Learners attain a high level of skills in the workplace. They complete a variety of

demanding tasks early in their training with minimum supervision. For example, maintenance apprentices not only carry out routine jobs, such as bearing replacements, but also more complex fault finding diagnostic work on pumps, presses, and mixing machines. This work involves reference to detailed technical literature, and the use of specialist tools and equipment. In addition to the good standard of vocational skills, learners develop a high level of self-confidence, and clearly understand their employers' business. In particular, they are knowledgeable about their role and can clearly explain the progression opportunities available to them.

| 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      | 36              | 86                | 57                | 83                      | 46                      |
|                          |          | timely       | 36              | 53                | 34                | 50                      | 27                      |
|                          | 2004-05  | overall      | 29              | 66                | 57                | 66                      | 45                      |
|                          |          | timely       | 32              | 38                | 33                | 38                      | 25                      |
|                          | 2005-06  | overall      | 0               | 0                 | 0                 | 0                       | 0                       |
|                          |          | timely       | 0               | 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

23. The initial off-the-job training at SETA's training centre is good. SETA's training staff are very experienced in their engineering discipline and are skilled trainers. Training is well organised with wall charts clearly showing learners' progress against a planned scheme of work. Key skills are taught effectively through the completion of a relevant engineering project. SETA's training centre is well resourced with sufficient staff and a good range of industrial standard machine tools and equipment. Learners have good access to information technology facilities and suitable engineering software. Employers set high standards and recruit well-qualified learners. SETA places a high emphasis on health and safety and learners complete an industrially recognised safety course as part of their initial training.

24. On-the-job training provided by employers is good. Most learners work in well-equipped workplaces with a good range of activities to develop their competences. Learners usually spend the first year or more by working for a short period of time in the various departments. This process enables learners and employers to confirm their suitability for a particular job role in the company, before starting their more specialised training programme. Well-organised training programmes are then used to progressively develop learners' skills. All training is supervised by experienced craftspeople or technicians, who effectively guide and develop learning, and skills development.

25. Progress reviews have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. In addition to the formal progress reviews, the training adviser makes frequent additional visits to companies, when learner progress is less formally monitored. Reviews generate action points, which are followed up at the next review or visit but in some cases targets and deadlines are not sufficiently clear. In many cases, the review of

learners' progress is not against an NVQ assessment plan. Up-to-date information on learners' progress with their technical certificate is not routinely available. Learners sign the review document, agreeing it to be true record of the meeting, but they do not receive a copy. Employers are not always directly involved in the review meeting, but they are interviewed by the training adviser, and make a written comment on the review document. The formal progress reviews are scheduled to take place every 12 weeks, but have not always occurred as planned because of the heavy caseload of the single training adviser.

26. Assessment of the NVQ at level 3 in the workplace is not well planned for many learners. Assessment is mostly carried out in the third and fourth years, but not to any predefined plan which has been agreed with the employer and learner. However, this is not the case with all level 3 learners. Rolls Royce, which accounts for 18 per cent of advanced apprentices, has a clear assessment plan. The learners have a good understanding of the plan, as they played a major role in its production. Poor assessment planning was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection, but was not identified as a weakness in the current self-assessment report. Assessment of the NVQ at level 2 during the initial off-the-job training is satisfactory. There are clear plans for assessment and appropriate records are maintained.

### **Leadership and management**

27. The initial off-the-job training programme is well managed, but support and assessment for work-based learners is not well resourced. All learners are well supported by their employers. Most work in prestigious companies with sophisticated equipment and very good working conditions. SETA staff in the training centre are suitably experienced and most have appropriate training and assessor qualifications. They have developed a very successful initial off-the-job training programme that effectively prepares learners for their work-based learning. However, in contrast to the well resourced programme in the training centre, the responsibility for all workplace reviews and assessments is taken by one training adviser.

28. Internal verification in the workplace is weak. There is no internal verification plan in place and some learners' portfolios are nearly completed before any internal verification takes place. SETA has had difficulty retaining some members of staff and three qualified internal verifiers have left the organisation in the past year. At the time of inspection, additional verifiers were being trained, but there are currently insufficient qualified internal verifiers for workplace assessment. There are no formal programme management meetings to review learners' progress and set targets for completion of the frameworks. Five learners are now several months past their expected end date with no formal action recorded to address the issue. The self-assessment report is a fair reflection of the provision and includes most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.

