



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MARCH 2000

Training & Employment
Services
Stockton Borough Council

SUMMARY

The Training and Employment Services of Stockton Borough Council offers training in several occupational areas for trainees with a diverse range of abilities and motivation. The training in childcare and care of the elderly is good, both in the workplace and at the off-the-job centre. Training in business administration and retailing is satisfactory. Training in both construction and hospitality makes inadequate use of workplace evidence and is unsatisfactory. Foundation for work training is unsatisfactory, with trainees receiving inadequate occupational guidance and assessment of their needs before going into work placements. Equal opportunities are actively promoted in the training centres. Trainees receive high levels of pastoral support but reviews do not focus on trainees' qualification targets. Management of training is satisfactory, but arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of the training are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	4
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	4
Health, care & public services	2
Foundation for work	4

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ open access to training for diverse range of applicants
- ◆ good individual tutorial support
- ◆ effective links with employers

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low retention rates for trainees
- ◆ reviews lack focus on qualification targets
- ◆ ineffective management of key skills training
- ◆ inadequate systems for monitoring training
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of data to make continuous improvement

INTRODUCTION

1. Training and Employment Services (TES) is part of the personnel and communication department of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. The council is one of the unitary authorities formed after the break up of Cleveland County Council in 1995. TES was created in the summer of 1996, following the merger of the council's existing training section with a local charitable organisation which specialised in providing training for young people with a history of under-achieving.

2. In late 1996, TES employed a total of 23 staff who managed the youth training programmes. It now employs 63 staff. Twenty-three staff are directly involved with the recent New Deal programme. The New Deal training was not included in this inspection, as it was covered in a recent inspection of the Teesside Unit of Delivery. The expansion in work-based training over the last two years has resulted from growth in the business administration and care sectors. The increased demand for business administration trainees partly arose from Stockton Borough Council's decision to limit candidates for certain internal posts to TES's trainees.

3. TES has five training sites. One of these sites is dedicated to the New Deal. The other four sites, all located in south Stockton, provide off-the-job training across a range of occupational areas. All of TES's government-funded training is contracted through Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). At the time of the inspection, there were 255 trainees across 10 occupational areas. There are 69 modern apprentices, 87 national trainees, 90 youth trainees and nine adults doing work-based training programmes. Owing to the small numbers of trainees, agriculture, engineering, leisure and media were not inspected as separate occupational areas.

	Young people	Adults	Total
Construction	60	0	60
Business administration	64	0	64
Retailing & customer service	23	0	23
Hospitality	14	1	15
Health, care & public	54	5	59
Foundation for work	9	0	9
Others (not inspected)	22	3	25
Total	246	9	255

4. A large proportion of the young trainees recruited by TES have achieved few formal qualifications in the traditional educational system and many have poor literacy, numeracy and basic skills. Many of the young trainees need help to become motivated and to achieve the skills necessary to make them employable. TES offers support to many trainees who lack confidence or have diverse needs.

5. The area served by Tees Valley TEC covers the unitary authorities of Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Darlington, Redcar and Cleveland. The total population of the Tees Valley is 653,700. Unemployment levels across the Tees Valley vary considerably, but in January 2000, overall unemployment stood at 7.4 per cent, the highest regional percentage in England compared with the national unemployment figure for January of 4.3 per cent. Male unemployment in some areas of Stockton, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool is in excess of 20 per cent. In 1999, unemployment for 16 year old school leavers in Teesside stood at 8 per cent.

6. In Stockton the service industries sector provides 66 per cent of employment, compared with the national figure of 76 per cent. The proportion of employment in Stockton in construction and manufacturing is 34 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Both of these figures are significantly higher than the national averages of 23 and 18 per cent.

7. In 1999, 15 per cent of school leavers in the Tees Valley entered government-funded training programmes and 56 per cent progressed into further education. The percentage entering employment on leaving school was 8 per cent. In 1999, the percentages of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Stockton and Middlesbrough were low at 41.3 per cent and 31 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

8. The 1991 census data identified minority ethnic groups as making up 1.8 per cent of Tees Valley's population. However, the members of these groups are unevenly distributed across the region, with Middlesbrough having the highest proportion at 4.4 per cent and Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland jointly having the lowest at 0.7 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

9. TES's self-assessment report was completed in November 1999. This was the first self-assessment of work-based training undertaken by TES. The process was started in the summer of 1998 with internal monthly workshops. All TES's staff were involved in, and informed about, the process. From the summer of 1999, management staff have led weekly meetings of all the lead training officers across the range of occupational areas. The staff from each occupational area completed the self-assessment report for their specific area. Management staff completed the report sections on generic areas based on feedback from staff.

10. Nine inspectors spent a total of 29 days with TES in March 2000. Inspectors interviewed 86 trainees and made 35 workplace visits. They met with 38 supervisors or employers and with three staff at a local college of further education. Thirty-three interviews were conducted with TES's staff. Seventy-two trainees' files and 43 portfolios were examined. Other documents reviewed included contracts, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance processes, minutes of meetings, promotional arrangements, management and quality assurance evidence. Inspectors observed and graded 12 training sessions. They also observed six assessments and eight reviews of trainees' progress.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction			2			2
Business administration	1	1				2
Retailing & customer service			2			2
Hospitality				1		1
Health, care & public services		2	1			3
Foundation for work		1		1		2
Total	1	4	5	2	0	12

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 4

11. TES offers construction training to young people in general construction operations. The majority of potential trainees are referred by the local careers service. A few apply directly to TES. All trainees on the youth trainee programme are endorsed as having special training needs. Potential trainees are interviewed prior to starting on the programme. The induction programme is spread over two weeks when trainees are introduced to a range of construction activities and assessed for their ability to work safely. Twenty-four youth trainees are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1, and two towards level 2. There are also 10 national trainees working towards NVQs at level 2 in general construction operations. Practical training takes place in external designated work areas at one of TES's training centres. All trainees have work placements organised for them while on the programme during which time they attend the centre on a day-release basis. Fourteen trainees are on placements. Most of the work placements are with small companies, including a number of sole traders. Trainees also benefit from undertaking project work, away from the centre, at the request of organisations or people working for the council. Three suitably qualified and experienced staff from TES carry out the training and assessment. The qualified and experienced programme leader undertakes internal verification. TES's staff meet each trainee at 12-weekly intervals for a formal review of their progress. The first group of national trainees started in 1999. Of the 15, three left with no qualifications. Two trainees finished the level 2 NVQ but left the programme before completing key skills. Ten trainees are still in training. Of the 84 trainees on other youth programmes who started in 1997-98 and 1998-99, 38 completed their individual training plan, twenty transferred to other programmes and twenty-two left with no qualifications.

12. TES also offers modern apprenticeships across a wide range of construction trades. There are 24 modern apprentices who attend day-release at one of three local further education colleges for off-the-job training. Two are working towards NVQs at level 3 in heating and ventilation installation, four in plumbing, three in installing and commissioning electro-technical systems, one in plastering, four in painting and decorating, two in brickwork and seven in wood occupations. College staff perform the assessment and verification processes for all the modern apprenticeship programmes. There is also one modern apprentice who attends a specialist scaffolding training centre. The retention rate of modern apprentices over the last three years has been approximately 80 per cent. College staff carry out termly progress reviews for each modern apprentice. TES's staff undertake formal reviews of apprentices at 12-weekly intervals. TES's self-assessment report failed to identify the good attendance of the trainees. Inspectors considered most of the strengths identified in the report to be no more than normal practice but agreed with others. None of the weaknesses identified by inspectors had been identified in the report. Several of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report are

more applicable to the generic areas. The inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good progression into employment for youth trainees on other programmes
- ◆ good achievement rates at level 3

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient use of workplace evidence
- ◆ some inappropriate work placements
- ◆ some infringements of health and safety practice on site

13. In 1998-99, 36 youth trainees on other work-based programmes started on the general construction operations programme. Nineteen trainees (53 per cent) achieved an NVQ and secured employment. Sixteen trainees were employed by the companies which provided their work placement. Five trainees have progressed onto modern apprenticeship programmes. Work-placement staff speak highly of TES's staff and the quality of the trainees' work. TES's staff and work-placement staff are both involved in the trainees' review process. TES strives to match trainees to appropriate placement providers and has changed trainees' placements to increase their employment opportunities.

14. Trainees enjoy attending the training centre and the colleges. They feel they are making good progress and appreciate the help, support and encouragement they are given. Of the 23 modern apprentices who started in 1996-97 and 1997-98, a total of 22 have achieved a level 3 NVQ. Only 10 have finished their key skills training and completed the apprenticeship framework. The average attendance of all trainees, both on and off the job, is good at around 95 per cent, with a number of trainees having a 100 per cent attendance record.

15. Where training and assessment are undertaken at the centre, trainees' portfolios show little evidence of competent performance while on placements. Trainees do not keep sufficiently detailed records of the work they have undertaken at the placement and there is little use of witness testimony. Opportunities to produce evidence from the workplace and to carry out assessment at work are missed.

16. Modern apprentices are not assessed in the workplace. The trainees' reviews, carried out by college staff, do not involve the employer or TES's staff. Similarly, the trainees' reviews undertaken by TES's staff do not include college staff. The building craft modern apprentices are not encouraged to keep work logs countersigned by their work supervisors or to generate any evidence from their workplace. Evidence of occupational competence for these trainees is generated through simulated activities at the college, even though it may exist as a natural

product of work performance. One employer who has heating and ventilating and plumbing modern apprentices reviews their work weekly, signs their work log and plans the work for the next week to maximise the trainees' experiences and, where possible, to coincide with the off-the-job training. College assessors make inadequate use of such workplace evidence.

17. Some trainees are undertaking work which does not provide opportunities for them to progress towards their qualification. One trainee, who is working towards his NVQ at level 2 in general construction operations, is working with a builder who specialises in joinery. The work and experience that this placement offers is more appropriate to a trainee working towards qualifications in wood occupations. Another trainee, a modern apprentice in his second year of working towards an NVQ at level 2 in plumbing, is working with bricklayers building a two-storey house extension. The trainee, who works for a general builder, can only get appropriate experience when a plumbing subcontractor is employed. The rest of his time is spent undertaking general building work. TES's staff and the builder have recognised that the trainee will have to change employer in order to achieve the modern apprenticeship.

18. At some work placements, provided by small private builders for general construction operations trainees, there have been infringements of health and safety practice which necessitated immediate action by TES's staff to remove trainees from the sites. These incidents involved trainees not wearing their safety helmets and working on scaffolds which were inadequately constructed. The trainees were transferred to TES's centre for further health and safety training. TES has since offered health and safety advice and training to the employers.

Business administration

Grade 3

19. There are 64 trainees in business administration working towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3. Twenty-one are modern apprentices, 32 are national trainees and 11 are on other youth training schemes. Twelve trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. All trainees attend the training centre for one day each week; the remainder of their training week is spent at work placements. Seventy-one per cent of trainees have work placements within different sections of Stockton Borough Council while the remaining trainees have work placements in a variety of well-established local companies. Thirty-two modern apprentices have started training since 1997, 13 per cent of whom have completed their training plan. Fifty-six per cent continue to work towards their qualifications. Forty-five national trainees started training in 1999 and 64 per cent of them are still in training. The remainder left early with no qualifications. All trainees begin their programme in the training centre where they receive an induction and basic skills training. Assessment is carried out by a team of five assessors. Two staff are new to the training centre and are working towards assessor qualifications, the rest are fully qualified assessors. The centre has recruited four past trainees as full-time members of staff. The self-assessment report included some strengths which were considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with other

strengths. Recent action has addressed most of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors identified other weaknesses. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ prompt placement of trainees
- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ delayed assessment for some trainees
- ◆ some trainees inadequately prepared for work placements
- ◆ lack of accreditation of NVQ units

20. All trainees are found work placements within two to three weeks. Requests from employers for trainees are quickly dealt with and interview procedures with both trainees and employers help to ensure good matches. Some trainees benefit from a trial period within the workplace before making a final decision. If a placement proves to be unsuitable, prompt action is taken to find an alternative.

21. There is excellent communication and frequent contact between training centre staff, trainees and employers. Workplace training is of a high standard and trainees are given appropriate responsibility and support to enable them to produce a range of evidence of real work skills. Opportunities exist in many placements for trainees to extend their skills and gain other qualifications. The development and assessment of key skills is integrated into the NVQ programme. Trainees receive a key skills induction and employers are made aware of the need for trainees to gather key skills evidence at work. During assessment sessions, both trainees and assessors identify key skills evidence from the workplace.

22. Thorough training sessions for the skills needed at work are held at the training centre. Staff giving these sessions use good support materials. Some trainees are not able to attend the training centre during the day. To prevent them from falling behind, tutors hold evening and one-to-one sessions. Where naturally occurring assessment opportunities do not exist at work they are provided at the centre. Extra support on key skills is offered and set sessions for information technology and numeracy are held.

23. Assessment takes place at the training centre and at work. However, assessment was not sufficiently managed to ensure continuity when one assessor left TES. Approximately 20 per cent of trainees received no assessment or off-the-job training for periods ranging between two and six months. Several trainees did not complete their programmes on schedule and some new trainees had little

understanding of their training programmes.

24. Some trainees are inadequately prepared for their work placements. Initial training in basic skills takes place in the centre prior to trainees starting work placements. However, these skills are not formally assessed and employers are not always aware of the capabilities of new trainees. For example, some trainees are not capable of answering the telephone or greeting members of the public in a professional manner.

25. All trainees who complete a full programme receive a certificate at the end of it. However, there is no accreditation of the separate NVQ units trainees achieve throughout the programme, and some trainees leave without any formal recognition of what they have achieved. TES only recognises achievement in terms of NVQ units for de-motivated trainees who are not pursuing a full qualification.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

26. TES offers training in retail and warehousing at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3. Most trainees have previously achieved few formal qualifications. There are 23 trainees, including 11 national trainees and 12 youth trainees across the retail and warehousing sectors. Eleven trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. Trainees are work based and attend off-the-job training at one of TES's centres for various theory sessions including job search, personal skills and legislation training. TES's staff visit trainees at work regularly for reviews, support and assessment. TES's staff are appropriately qualified and their occupational skills have recently been updated following sessions in industry to reinforce their knowledge of new technology. The lead training officer is also qualified as an internal verifier and to accredit prior learning. Staff have also had workshops for health and safety, safe lifting techniques and equal opportunities training. TES has two sites close to the town centre and is able to offer training and support at both venues. There are computer rooms for key skills training and classrooms for group work. Key skills training is relatively new but weekly training sessions are held which are well attended. During the last year, seven trainees have achieved full NVQs and 21 trainees secured employment, and over the last four years 44 achieved NVQs and 52 trainees have gained jobs. The self-assessment report identified some strengths which are no more than normal practice and failed to identify two weaknesses. The grade awarded was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

One mature trainee who had never been employed and lacked confidence was very worried about going on a work placement. Following extensive additional support on a one-to-one basis, the trainee has achieved units towards the retailing NVQ. The trainee is now a volunteer supervisor in a local charity shop and has staff working for her.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ supportive and involved employers
- ◆ extensive guidance given to trainees
- ◆ additional qualifications achieved by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective assessment planning
- ◆ poor resources in training centre
- ◆ poor retention rates

27. Employers are fully involved in the review process and actively support trainees in the workplace, offering extra training if required. Trainees attend the training centre for workshops and key skills sessions. Some employers have provided placements for several trainees and many have offered employment. TES invites employers to awards ceremonies and to open days to look at trainees' off-the-job work. The open days are well attended and employers value the chance to view the work and gain a better understanding of the NVQ requirements. Employers are then able to offer better informed support. Trainees who have not previously been successful are able to obtain qualifications and gain considerable self-confidence. Trainees are sometimes motivated for the first time and go on to find employment which has previously seemed to be out of reach.

28. Trainees are visited in their placements on a regular basis and some trainees receive visits two and three times a week. Daily visits can be made if required by trainees with severe difficulties. TES's staff also operate a drop-in service to further extend the level of support, such as visiting a retail shop when passing, just to see if the trainee is comfortable with the surroundings. Trainees can contact any of the staff at any time. Staff work well as a team to provide this support. Trainees are enthusiastic about their training programmes, enjoy the visits from their assessor and appreciate the extra help they receive.

29. Additional qualifications are offered, such as the fork-lift truck certificate, first aid and basic food hygiene certificates. Trainees also have the opportunity to progress to higher-level NVQs if they are in the appropriate job role. Some trainees also achieve more than one NVQ at the same level. The fork-lift truck certificate, in particular, is valued among employers in the warehousing industry and it improves trainees' chances of gaining employment. All the additional qualifications offered are certificated at no cost to the trainee.

POOR PRACTICE

One level 3 trainee was on the programme for almost five months before being assessed. The assessor was on extended sick leave. Recently, a new assessor has been recruited to strengthen the team. The trainee has had his programme extended several times, but no formal assessment has yet taken place.

30. Assessments are planned but trainees do not receive a copy of the plan and, although they sign the form, they are not involved in the planning itself. The plan is inadequate and fulfils no purpose except as a log of dates. There is no target-setting or information given to trainees on what is required or what action they need to take to complete the plan. There are no assessment plans for key skills and trainees are unsure of what evidence they need to collect. Some assessments are not planned and trainees are not given advance notice. Opportunities to plan assessments across several units of the NVQ are missed.

31. There are some documentary resources in the training centre but they are poor-quality copies and some are out of date. There are no open-learning packs to support trainees who cannot attend the centre or who may need support between

assessors' visits. Staff are unaware of the resources which are commercially available and have been unable to acquire relevant training packs. There are no resources for additional key skills training and trainees generally work with handouts rather than support packs. There are no resources for level 3 trainees. Trainees were unaware of the necessary legal frameworks such as the sale of goods act and trade descriptions legislation.

32. In 1999, 18 young people applied directly to the national traineeship programme. Thirty-nine per cent of these trainees have left early without any qualifications, while the remaining 61 per cent continue to work towards the award. A total of 141 youth trainees started training over the last four years. Sixty-nine per cent of these trainees left early with no qualifications. Trainees do have 'taster' training sessions but many are still unsure of which programme they want to undertake. The open-access recruitment strategy provides training opportunities for trainees with considerable additional training and support needs, but at the expense of poor retention.

Hospitality

Grade 4

33. There are 15 trainees in hospitality. Two are modern apprentices, seven are national trainees and five are on other youth training programmes. There is one adult trainee. Six trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. TES offers food preparation and cooking qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. During their programme, all trainees are expected to achieve an additional basic food hygiene qualification. This is taught at the training centre on a monthly basis. All trainees receive a standard one-day induction at the main centre and then a further induction to the training kitchen. None of the trainees, except the modern apprentices, are employed. The training centre runs a café which is open to the public for lunches and snacks throughout the day. The kitchen also provides an outside catering service and offers a realistic working environment. Initially all trainees, except the modern apprentices, work at the training centre for five days a week. Placements available include hotels, public houses, day-care centres and restaurants. Once in the placement, trainees attend the training centre one day each week for training and assessment. All assessment and verification is undertaken at the training centre. All TES's catering staff are vocationally qualified and hold the relevant assessor and verifier awards. A catering manager and two instructor/assessors run the training kitchen.

34. In 1999, 18 modern apprentices and national trainees started on the programme. Since then, 50 per cent of these trainees have left the programme with no qualifications. The other 50 per cent are still in training. A total of 17 trainees began other youth training or adult programmes during 1999. Of these, 35 per cent have left early with no qualifications. In the previous three years, 50 per cent of adults and 38 per cent of youth trainees have completed their training plans. The self-assessment report identified seven strengths and three weaknesses. Inspectors considered that the identified strengths were no more than normal practice. The

strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection were not identified in the self-assessment report. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ highly motivated and enthusiastic trainees
- ◆ good induction to the occupational area

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient planning of training
- ◆ no use of workplace evidence
- ◆ trainees not sufficiently challenged
- ◆ some poor assessment practices

35. The training centre staff have developed a wide range of placements with employers for the trainees. Work placements offer a good range of menu items and equipment which helps to develop trainees' skills. The trainees in these placements develop good practical skills. Trainees work with supervisors who are experienced industry professionals and who take an active interest in the development of their trainees. Some of these employers are running in-company NVQ programmes and their supervisors are qualified to carry out the work-based assessments. Trainees are very motivated in these positions and attendance at placements is good.

36. Trainees are well motivated and enthusiastic and look forward to progressing into a job within the hospitality industry at the end of their training. Many trainees receive additional support which, in some cases, has enabled them to stay on the programme. There is a high level of trust between the training centre's staff and trainees.

37. Following the one-day induction offered at the training centre, trainees also receive a half-day induction which concentrates on the kitchen environment. The vocational induction includes equipment awareness, layout and food flow systems. There is good use of written tests to check understanding of the information covered in this session.

38. Training sessions are not adequately planned and co-ordinated to meet trainees' individual needs. There are no plans detailing how training will develop either at the training centre or during the placement. There are no planned training sessions carried out at the centre. There is no co-ordination of training between the training centre and the work placements. Workplace supervisors do not know what is being covered during the off-the-job training days. Trainees do not know what will be covered at the training centre until they turn up on the day. Theory sessions

are now arranged on a random basis after a scheduling system was stopped. Trainees are not consulted on the planning process for their own training and assessment. There is little use of handouts or textbooks to supplement the training sessions.

39. All assessments are undertaken in the training centre. No use is made of workplace evidence. Some supervisors in the placements have the appropriate assessor qualifications but they are not involved in assessing TES's trainees. Trainees are not given credit for the skills and competencies they have gained at work by use of the testimony of expert witnesses.

40. There is a delay in the assessment process within the training centre and trainees have to wait to be assessed. Some trainees in the training centre who are not on placement wish to move into the more challenging environment of the workplace. There are delays in arranging some of these placements.

41. There is some poor practice in the assessment process. Assessments are not planned in advance or agreed with trainees. There is no use of assessment plans. Feedback from the assessment is not given in a structured way. The assessor does not complete the documents for trainees' unit records. A different instructor/assessor completes trainees' unit records. The original assessor then signs off the record. The internal verifier has been completing the trainees' unit records with details of the assessments carried out, because one of the assessors was on sick leave. The verifier then internally verifies the assessment records he has just completed. This contravenes awarding body regulations.

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

42. TES offers NVQs in early years care and education and care at levels 2 and 3. Key skills training and qualifications are offered at level 2. There are 54 trainees, of whom 20 are modern apprentices, 20 are national trainees and 14 are on other training programmes. Thirteen trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. Three adult trainees work in care and two adult trainees in are in childcare. Trainees work in supervised placements with social services and privately owned locations. These placements include primary schools and nurseries, crèches, residential homes, nursing homes, and learning resource centres providing day care for adults with learning difficulties. Off-the-job training sessions take place at a TES centre. Level 2 trainees have the opportunity to attend weekly sessions during the day. Level 3 childcare trainees may attend evening training sessions. Theory training takes place at work for level 3 care trainees. There are half-day off-the-job sessions for key skills training in information technology and numeracy. There are five training officers who support trainees and workplace assessors. They carry out assessments at work as required. All training staff are qualified to teach and assess. Two are qualified to internally verify trainees' assessed work and to accredit any prior achievements. Two other staff are working towards an internal verifier award. There are 13 work-based assessors in care and childcare placements. Staff

attend courses to update their professional skills and knowledge. The self-assessment report identified many strengths which were no more than normal practice for NVQ training. Inspectors agreed with three of the strengths and two of the weaknesses and identified an additional strength and weakness. The grade awarded by inspectors is higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective links between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ good training
- ◆ frequent workplace assessment
- ◆ good use of NVQ unit accreditation

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress for some trainees
- ◆ low retention rates

43. There are good links between all parties involved in training. Employers are well informed about the content of the training and receive copies of the weekly training programmes. This provides guidance to staff in the workplace as to the activities which trainees need to practice at work. Regular meetings are held for workplace supervisors and employers to discuss a range of training issues. These meetings provide work-based staff with an opportunity to make contributions to the programme. Employers and work-based staff understand the NVQ process and recognise that trainees need to cover a full range of activities to achieve the NVQ. Childcare trainees move between rooms if they are working in a nursery and trainees based in schools spend time in nurseries to gain experience with all ages. Care trainees are key workers for some clients and take supervised responsibility for providing all of their care needs. Some care trainees have arranged outings and given presentations promoting health to their clients. Recently these have been recognised as an opportunity to assess both occupational and key skills.

44. Well-planned off-the-job training takes place at TES's training centre. Information relating to occupational and key skills is displayed on the walls. There is also a display promoting equality of opportunity in terms easily understood by trainees. There is a bank of lesson plans for most units so that continuity of training can be maintained if a trainer is absent. Training session plans are detailed and clearly identify general and specific objectives, teaching methods and resources to provide evidence for all NVQ units. Trainees participate in the training sessions and find the sessions interesting, varied and useful. Tutorial support is available after each session and trainers respond to requests for additional tutorials at other times, often at work during assessment and support visits.

45. Training in the workplace is well planned. Care trainees working at level 3 receive both practical training and theory sessions at work. Trainees have an

induction to the workplace including information relating to policies, procedures and guidance in specific areas. No trainees are allowed to lift clients until they have completed an appropriate course. Trainees work alongside experienced staff in the initial stages of training.

46. TES's training officers make frequent visits to the workplace, sometimes several times each week. This support builds trainees' confidence in relation to observed assessment. In the initial stages, assessment planning and observation focuses on one element. Direct observation is recorded in detail and evidence is cross-referenced to the unit, element and performance criteria. Recent records have included assessment of key skills during daily work activities. Written and verbal feedback is given to trainees. Trainees monitor their own progress and achievement of NVQ units and this progress is also displayed on a wall chart in the training centre. Portfolios are well organised, clearly separated into units and contain evidence individual to each trainee. As trainees achieve NVQ units, these are accredited appropriately to motivate trainees and improve their self-confidence.

47. Progress has been slow for some trainees. One trainee on a level 3 programme since 1998 has only achieved three units. Four trainees on a level 2 programme since 1997 have not yet completed their award. The progress of some trainees was delayed owing to the unavailability of an assessor.

48. There has been low retention of both adult and youth trainees. Over the four year period since 1996, a total of 178 trainees have started work-based training programmes. Approximately 50 per cent of these trainees left the programme early with no qualifications. During 1999, 57 national trainees and modern apprentices started, 70 per cent of whom remain in training, working towards their qualifications.

Foundation for work

Grade 4

49. There are nine trainees on foundation for work programmes. They are recruited through the local careers unit. They are all young people whose disabilities or disadvantages prevent them from entering effective vocational training and who require a period of preparatory training. Trainees can choose up to three vocational areas in which they can have 'tasters' or they can choose from TES's own businesses in design and print, catering, horticulture and construction. All trainees are currently on work placements or in one of the occupational areas. All of the work placements are within small retail outlets or charity shops. Two trainees are on the design and print section and one trainee is doing general construction operations. If a basic skills assessment indicates that trainees are below level 1, they are offered wordpower and numberpower qualifications at entry level. One trainee is doing just wordpower and two trainees are doing both wordpower and numberpower. No other vocational qualifications are offered. In January 2000, off-the-job training was introduced. This is a 12-week rolling

programme covering job-seeking skills, self-awareness, health and safety and related work and personal issues. The training takes place one afternoon each week. There is a dedicated training officer for this group and a basic skills trainer who teaches wordpower and numberpower for the whole organisation. Most of the strengths and one of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were agreed by inspectors. An extra strength and additional weaknesses were identified. The grade awarded was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ 'taster' placements well matched to trainees' needs
- ◆ effective development of trainees' basic skills
- ◆ frequent and effective monitoring visits

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low retention rates
- ◆ no systematic assessment of trainees' needs
- ◆ few opportunities to gain qualifications
- ◆ inadequate occupational guidance given

50. Trainees are asked to choose three occupational areas they would like to try and their requests are responded to promptly. Other considerations are taken into account when choosing a placement such as the support they will require and the location in relation to where they live. Trainees talk with enthusiasm about their placements and demonstrate progress in terms of confidence gained and new skills learned. The workplace supervisors are supportive and have frequent contact and communication with the training officer. If trainees are unhappy with their placement they receive a quick response and a change of placement is offered. Trainees with TES's own businesses are offered the same opportunities for assessment as those completing NVQ level 1 (or equivalent).

51. When trainees begin their numberpower or wordpower qualification, a further assessment of their particular needs may be made. Evidence from their placements is used and portfolios are individual. Trainees are given ample information and guidance to ensure that they understand the assessment process and they take responsibility for building their own portfolios. Communication between the basic skills trainer and the occupational trainers is effective. Trainees progress well and are able to transfer to the workplace.

52. Trainees are visited at least weekly by the training officer to check that they are settled and experiencing no problems. The training officer also seeks feedback from their supervisor. Any problems or concerns are picked up very quickly and dealt with. Supervisors are able to contact the training officer and receive a prompt response should there be any need between visits. Trainees keep learning logs

which are signed each week by their supervisor as another way of monitoring their placement. All visits are recorded and the main points noted in a history log. Formal reviews are held monthly and the supervisor is invited to make comments at the end of the review. The main issues and required actions are fed back to the supervisor.

53. Over the past four years, retention rates have been low. This year the proportion of early leavers without qualifications has been 55 per cent. This is an improvement over the previous three years. The proportion gaining jobs has gradually decreased over the past three years from 24 per cent to around 12 per cent.

54. When trainees start their programme they attend a general one-day induction and then go on to their first 'taster' placement, usually within a week. They are on placement for four and a half working days each week. The other half day is reserved for off-the-job training. Some trainees have another half day each week for off-the-job training in basic skills. There is no assessment and recording of trainees' specific needs with regard to any personal development or development of employment-specific skills before starting a placement. No targets or agreed methods of addressing their needs are set before they go on the placement. The general approach is to allow up to three tasters and then encourage progress to a vocational qualification. Reviews cover different aspects of their placement and any basic skills training but any information collected is only used to feed into a very general overall aim such as 'carrying on with placement' or 'going on to vocational training' after 13 weeks is completed. There are, however, a few good examples of trainees progressing from foundation training through to modern apprenticeships and full employment.

55. Trainees can achieve entry-level numberpower or wordpower qualifications. For those in the design and print business there is an opportunity to achieve one module of a level 1 equivalent qualification. Although off-the-job training includes health and safety and issues such as cleanliness, job search and skills required for employment, there are no recognised qualifications or certificates given to motivate trainees.

56. Trainees make their own choice of taster placements with little initial guidance and information regarding job opportunities and the possible choices open to them. There is no assessment of their current vocational skills and areas of interest which could be used to help to inform and advise trainees on suitable occupational or training opportunities. However, the 12-week off-the-job training programme includes sessions to encourage self-assessment and consider the skills required for different occupations.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

57. The equal opportunities policy and procedures of Stockton Borough Council are applied to the work of the TES. The policy and procedures were last revised in July 1998. TES has a written procedure for the implementation of the equal opportunities and harassment policy. This procedure is subject to annual internal audit. New staff receive copies of the policies during their induction. The trainees' induction programme includes a session on equal opportunities. A small group of staff meets on a quarterly basis to discuss equal opportunities issues. Most of the staff meetings have a standing agenda item on equal opportunities. No individual member of staff has overall responsibility for implementing the equal opportunities policy in TES's work. The self-assessment report identified seven strengths and four weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with most of the identified strengths and weaknesses but expressed them in a different format. The grade awarded was the same as that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ open access to training for a diverse range of applicants
- ◆ good promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities in training centres
- ◆ good awareness of equality of opportunity by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities at work
- ◆ little promotion to under-represented groups
- ◆ little analysis of equal opportunities data

58. TES offers work-based training for a diverse range of applicants, including those of low academic attainment and those from areas of social deprivation. During the last 12 months, nine of TES's staff have attended an external training session to raise their awareness of equal opportunities issues. However, not all occupational areas have been covered by the staff training plan for awareness raising. In most of the training rooms and reception areas of the TES centres, notice boards display guidance and information relating to equality of opportunity. During the management team's internal audits of training and review sessions compliance with equal opportunities is monitored. Further monitoring occurred during 1999, when a senior member of staff undertook in excess of 50 individual confidential interviews with a selection of trainees across the training centres. Two members of staff have recently completed assessor training as part of the TEC's equal opportunities quality framework. The two staff have internally assessed TES against the framework and an action plan is being implemented.

59. During the TES's one-day general induction programme, trainees receive a well-structured information booklet relating to equal opportunities. Group discussions are encouraged on illustrative examples of discrimination and sexual harassment. The booklet contains clear advice on how to complain and provides a wide range of contact details for seeking advice and support. Trainees are aware of how to complain and get advice. TES encourages trainees to feel able to complain.

60. Initial vetting and further reviews with employers and supervisors are insufficient to monitor compliance with equal opportunities at work. TES gives new employers a handbook containing its policy statements but no systematic checks are made. TES's monitoring is dependent on verbal feedback from trainees during staff visits.

61. The proportion of TES's trainees from minority ethnic groups is 1.6 per cent of the total number of trainees, compared with 1.9 per cent of minority ethnic residents in the Stockton area. The localities covered by TES's training centres have a high concentration of minority ethnic residents. TES's promotion of opportunities for work-based training to the minority ethnic communities has not been successful. Its prospectus has some text in two Asian languages. However, these sections are immersed in the overall English text and the outside covers do not identify their presence. None of the promotional materials display appropriate images to attract more applications from minority ethnic groups. TES's staff have recently made links with key members of the local Asian community and a staff training session on cultural awareness is planned.

62. TES does not adequately analyse equal opportunities data. There has been little analysis of data on complaints, retention, achievement and destinations in relation to the diverse background of the trainees. Analysis of recruitment and selection statistics is at an early stage of development with the local careers service. TES has set recruitment targets for under-represented groups.

Trainee support

Grade 3

63. Trainees are recruited through the Employment Service, careers service and from employers. TES advertises its training programmes in the local press. Potential trainees complete an application form which identifies their occupational interests. Staff from the occupational area interview them to assess their understanding of the occupational area. When trainees are unsure, they have the opportunity, as part of their preparatory training, to experience 'taster sessions' in the workplace before starting an NVQ. Most trainees complete literacy and numeracy tests to identify any additional support needs, and trainees with learning difficulties or disabilities are given the support they need. Some trainees are already employed and their job role determines the level of NVQ towards which they will work. Inexperienced trainees start at level 1 or level 2 as appropriate for their ability. The self-assessment report identified eight strengths and three weaknesses. Several of the strengths and weaknesses were considered not directly

relevant to trainee support. Inspectors agreed with some strengths and identified others, as well as three weaknesses not identified by self-assessment. The grade awarded by the inspectors was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective induction
- ◆ good individual tutorial support
- ◆ access to specialists for advice and guidance
- ◆ well-structured programme on leaving
- ◆ celebration of trainees' successes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ reviews lack focus on NVQ targets
- ◆ individual training plans not used as working documents
- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills

64. Induction to TES is thorough. The first day of induction for all occupational areas is used for trainees to complete paperwork and receive information about equal opportunities. During the second day, induction is related to the trainees' occupational area and aspects of health and safety are introduced. Two weeks later, trainees complete a questionnaire about the induction to assess their understanding and recall. Most trainees have a good recall of their induction and understand their rights and responsibilities.

65. TES provides support for a high proportion of level 1 trainees who need individual guidance and support to complete their NVQ. Initial assessment is used to determine the support needed by these trainees. Numeracy and literacy support is provided by specialist staff, one half day each week for each skill. Trainees receive confidential one-to-one tutorials, giving them opportunity to identify any aspect of their training which is causing concern. TES's staff make good use of this opportunity to discuss progress, time keeping and attendance. Some trainees are given help to complete their portfolio evidence during these tutorial sessions. The sessions are available after normal working hours. A trainee representative has recently been appointed to provide additional pastoral support and guidance. The current post-holder is a past trainee who is now employed as a personal assistant to a manager at TES. Trainees recognise this representative as having a good understanding of their circumstances.

66. TES arranges for a local careers advisor to attend its central site one afternoon each week to provide further guidance which includes preparation for job interviews. TES has established effective links with other specialist support agencies. Trainees are supplied with contact details for finance and benefits

advisors, drug abuse counsellors and HIV/AIDS counsellors.

67. Trainees nearing completion of their programme but not yet employed have the opportunity to practise their interview skills and writing for job applications during special sessions arranged by TES. TES's staff from specific occupational areas provide information on local job vacancies and trainees are given access to the council's vacancies bulletin.

68. Trainees from some occupational areas monitor their progress through NVQ units on display charts in their training room. These displays help to motivate trainees to complete their units. Photographs and history of trainees who have found employment or received awards for achievement from awarding bodies are displayed in the reception area of the main training centre. All trainees' achievements are celebrated during an annual awards ceremony, with local dignitaries presenting the awards. Trainees' relatives, friends and employers are invited. The event is well publicised in the local media.

69. TES's staff undertake formal reviews of trainees' progress on a three-monthly basis. The reviews provide opportunities for trainees to discuss problems and talk through experiences with staff. The reviews focus on pastoral support rather than trainees' progress towards achieving their target qualifications. Trainees' progress is often not adequately recorded. Trainees are not given precise and measurable targets or deadlines for completion. Some trainees make slow progress towards their qualifications and the review process is not adequately used to motivate them to progress. Some trainees view the review process as simply a means of monitoring their attendance and timekeeping.

70. The training plans do not consistently identify individual target dates for NVQ unit achievement. Individual training plans are not always updated with trainees' achievements after review. Training is not thoroughly planned on an individual basis. In some occupational areas, individual training plans are all very similar.

71. There is no initial assessment of trainees' key skills on entry. Trainees' additional support needs are often not identified until they have been on programme for several weeks. Some trainees had already completed key skills qualifications before joining TES but have not been accredited with their achievement. Some trainees repeat activities unnecessarily.

Management of training

Grade 3

72. The general manager of TES reports directly to the director of personnel and communications of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. TES's senior management team comprises the general manager, the assistant manager, the programme co-ordinator and the New Deal co-ordinator. This team meets informally on a monthly basis. The senior staff and the programme area leaders meet formally every month.

Programme area staff organise their own meetings as required. All staff attend an annual briefing on the strategic plan and the six-month progress review. The current staff team comprises 40 people directly involved in mainstream work-based training and 23 people involved in New Deal programmes. The total number of staff in TES has nearly doubled during the last year. All staff are employees of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and are subject to the council's recruitment, appraisal and staff development systems. All new staff attend the council's main induction as well as TES's induction programme. The training centre was last accredited with the Investors in People Standard in 1997. The self-assessment report failed to identify effective links with employers as a strength. The report did not include any of the weaknesses identified by inspectors. A number of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report related to quality assurance. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ open management style with good internal communications
- ◆ effective staff training linked to strategic plan
- ◆ effective links with employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate management information system
- ◆ ineffective management of key skills training

73. Frequent meetings are held between the training centre manager and the director of personnel and communications. There is significant support from the council for the work undertaken by TES. The open style of management ensures that all staff are aware of any new developments and the senior management team is aware of any issues. The training centre manager meets monthly with the senior staff and programme area managers to review targets against TEC contracts, and other developments. The programme area managers meet with their staff teams to share this information. All staff have clear job descriptions and reporting lines.

74. There is a structured and thorough appraisal process. Staff attend the council's appraiser or appraisee training as appropriate. Appraisals take place annually and any training needs are clearly identified, linked to the strategic plan. Identified needs are converted into a staff training plan which identifies actions and review dates. All courses attended by staff are evaluated. Staff development is encouraged and staff can, at any time, apply for further training. Some staff have received support to undertake higher education programmes as part of their personal development. Within the last year, a new grading and career structure was introduced which recognises not only length of service and responsibility but also qualifications, particularly in teaching and health and safety. Staff success in gaining qualifications is celebrated at an annual certificate ceremony attended by

POOR PRACTICE

In many of TES's documents, there are spelling and grammatical mistakes.

the mayor and the chief executive of the council.

75. Staff at all levels and across all areas have developed close links with employers. All employers receive a comprehensive guide to the requirements of work-based training when they accept a trainee from TES. There is an abundance of work placements available to trainees in all programme areas. Employers frequently contact TES to find out if they have suitable trainees either for placements or for employment.

POOR PRACTICE

In many of TES's documents, there are spelling and grammar mistakes. Frequently bad grammar is used in text and to phrase questions.

76. Current and accurate information on trainees' progression and achievement is not readily available to TES's management. Some data are held on computer, but a great deal of information is still paper-based in a variety of sources. Management information is not used as a tool to systematically guide decision-making. TES sets itself few targets other than those directly related to NVQ achievement against TEC contracts. Staff do not have personal performance targets to work towards.

77. TES's management of key skills training across the range of occupational sectors has been delayed. Recently a senior member of staff has been recruited to co-ordinate key skills training and assessment. Some staff are undertaking the key skills practitioner's award. In two occupational areas, key skills are now being integrated within the vocational training and assessment. In other areas, key skills training comprises separate sessions taught by a specialist in another training centre. Opportunities are missed for trainees, not only to recognise the importance and value of key skills, but also to provide naturally occurring key skills evidence from their vocational work-based training.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

78. No individual member of TES's staff has overall responsibility for quality assurance. It complies with the contractual requirements of Tees Valley TEC and is subject to periodic external audits by the TEC. TES's quality assurance manual makes reference to a set of 19 controlled procedures. The self-assessment process identified seven strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses and identified others. They did not agree with three of the strengths and expressed all of the others within two strengths. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ some effective action planning
- ◆ systematic audits of compliance with procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate systems for monitoring training
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of data to further continuous improvement
- ◆ underdeveloped use of feedback from trainees and employers

- ◆ insufficient monitoring of subcontractors

79. Some effective action planning is initiated through quality review meetings at management and programme team level. Each programme team has taken effective actions as a result of requests made by external verifiers. TES responds to actions requested during external audits from Tees Valley TEC. The manual of 19 controlled procedures covers a wide range of the activity undertaken by TES staff. Staff are made aware of these procedures through team meetings. Copies of the procedures are held on all TES sites and amendments are distributed. Internal audits of the implementation of each procedure are undertaken on a yearly basis. Each audit results in a report identifying any non-compliance with the stated procedure. The audits check staff understanding of a specific procedure but do not measure the quality of the process or the product. Action plans focus on non-compliance with points of procedure.

POOR PRACTICE

A questionnaire given to trainees on their induction programme did not make any reference to equal opportunities.

80. Since the summer of 1999, two members of the senior management team have monitored some staff carrying out training and performing reviews. There is little strategic planning to this monitoring process and no reference is made to the process in TES's quality assurance procedures. The observations have resulted in written feedback to the monitored staff. The reports are structured in terms of checking compliance. Reports lack judgements on the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes. TES's quality assurance procedures do not identify the key features of a review, a training session, an assessment session or the internal verification process. Identification of good and poor practice is not systematic. Opportunities for sharing good practice across occupational areas are missed.

81. TES's management does not analyse data on retention, progression and achievement by occupational sector. Data are not used to set performance indicators or to make continuous improvements.

82. During the last six months, TES's managers have devised questionnaires to obtain formal feedback from trainees and employers. The structure of both sets of questionnaires makes it difficult to analyse the results. Results have not been distributed to all staff. Some specific issues have been identified and individual action taken. However, there is a lack of formal action-planning based on systematic analysis of the data obtained from questionnaires.

83. TES subcontracts the training for modern apprentices in construction to one of three local colleges of further education. The agreement with the colleges does not identify how the quality of the training will be monitored. The current arrangements depend on informal links between one of TES's staff members and the subcontractor's staff. TES does not access any of the subcontractor's formal quality assurance measures. It does not require to see the external verification reports on the subcontracted training. The TES staff member who undertakes the formal three-monthly reviews of the modern apprentices is not technically experienced in construction. No member of TES's staff checks the content of



modern apprentice's portfolios.