



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1998

Trafford Metropolitan  
Borough Council  
(Training Division)

## SUMMARY

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council delivers good leisure, sport, hairdressing and foundation training. Strong working relationships have been developed with several employers, work-placement providers, subcontracted trainers and assessors. This strong and effective support network responds quickly to pastoral, qualification and progression issues. Trainee support and additional learning needs are identified early, and training plans are sensitively adjusted. The development of work-based assessments and evidence collection has been slow, and the low awareness of NVQs among employers has resulted in many missed learning and assessment opportunities. Target-setting is weak, and little developmental use is made of accurate and current data. Training programmes and development arrangements are managed well. Weak analysis of data means that management decisions are not efficiently formulated. Quality assurance arrangements do not ensure consistently high standards within all subcontractors. Equal opportunities data are not analysed to develop an understanding of recruitment trends or to inform target-setting.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Leisure, sport & travel	2
Hair & beauty	2
Foundation for work	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	1
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ supportive training and workplace environment
- ◆ trainees encouraged to reach full potential
- ◆ most trainees achieve their qualification aim
- ◆ comprehensive initial assessment, basic skills support and individual planning
- ◆ high achievement rates
- ◆ strong commitment to training those with disabilities
- ◆ high standard of individual trainee support from training co-ordinators
- ◆ clear, well-documented, regularly updated quality arrangements

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no work-based assessment in some occupational areas
- ◆ missed opportunities to utilise work-based evidence
- ◆ most employers unaware of NVQ process
- ◆ missed opportunities to link on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ no systematic analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ weak equal opportunities promotion and target-setting
- ◆ management decisions not informed by the use of accurate and current data

## INTRODUCTION

1. Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council Training Division (TMBC) has training contracts with Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to deliver vocational training across 12 occupational areas. The training division is involved mainly with the delivery of trainees' induction and some initial assessment. All training and assessment is subcontracted to a range of private training providers or to one of seven colleges in the area. The training team administers induction, initial assessment and programme administration from offices in Sale in Cheshire. This provides a central location to access both the council offices and the main subcontracting colleges and providers.

2. The training division is one arm of the council's training activities, and the council is working towards a merger of all training to one corporate training division which will support all its work. This initiative is part of the council's three-stage review called '*Preparing for the millennium*', started in 1996. A key feature of the council's planning is the Trafford youth strategy, designed to support its continual strategic involvement in youth training and the New Deal arrangements for the young unemployed. This strategy is closely linked to TEC initiatives and contracts. Youth training is a small part of the overall training activity of the council. However, the commitment, in particular, to the multiskills foundation programme for trainees with special and additional support needs is very high. A close working relationship with a local college of further education has helped in the joint development of this area of training, including the council's funding of additional college training facilities.

3. TMBC has one part- and five full-time members of staff. The main form of trainee recruitment and referral to the programmes comes through the careers service partnership. Most trainees are on work-based training for young people programmes; 47 work towards NVQ level 2; eight towards level 3; six multiskills trainees work towards an NVQ level 1; eight trainees are also studying Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC) national qualifications in electronics and technical drawing. Thirty-seven out of 86 trainees are employed. TMBC has developed a network of 80 work-placement providers/employers. All trainees attend one day's off-the-job training in college each week, with the exception of the recreation and leisure trainees, whose training and assessment are subcontracted to a private provider to deliver all the training and assessment on the job. The multiskills programme requires trainees to attend college initially, and work placements are built in the programme individually.

4. There are 86 trainees, funded through Manchester TEC, on a range of training programmes, with 22 on multiskilling foundation work, 21 in hairdressing, 15 in recreation and leisure and 28 trainees on various other vocational programmes. Trainee numbers have fallen this year, owing to the movement of trainees on vocational sampling courses from TMBC to a TEC initiative called Altrincham

Career Line Centre. The division has managed the training of over 370 trainees over the last three years across 13 occupational areas.

5. Trafford Borough lies to the west of Manchester and is easily reached by a network of motorways. The borough is bordered to the southeast by Manchester airport. The current population is 218,000. The Trafford area is very diverse and includes Trafford park, one of the world's oldest and one of the country's largest purpose-built industrial estates. Other renowned features of the area are the Manchester ship canal and Manchester United Football Club. Unemployment in the Trafford area is relatively low, currently standing at 3.6 per cent, with a TEC area average of 6.5 per cent and a national average of 5.1 per cent. Unemployment in the TEC area has fallen, with national trends, by 25 per cent over the last 12 months. Over 55 per cent of school leavers in the TEC area continue in education after the age of 16, with over 66 per cent from the Trafford area staying in education. A little over 13 per cent of young people in the Trafford area take up modern apprenticeships and other youth training programmes.

6. The general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) attainment levels between 1995 and 1997 in the Manchester TEC area are relatively low, set against national averages. The number of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Manchester was 26.3 per cent, and in Trafford it is 51.6 per cent compared with the national average of 53 per cent, for 1997. Trends show that attainment in the Trafford area is improving faster than are the national or regional averages. The minority ethnic population in the Manchester area represents 9 per cent of the population and long-term unemployment is high within this community. TMBC has recruited 7 per cent of its trainees from minority ethnic groups.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. TMBC's nominee compiled the self-assessment report. Manchester TEC set up three training sessions. Using the self-assessment toolkit, TMBC worked with its subcontracted provider base to identify issues which have an impact on trainees' experience. TMBC's approach to self-assessment was undertaken in a developmental way, and the report includes a critique of the self-assessment process and its own shortcomings. It produced a very realistic report and involved the entire training team. The report is detailed and well cross-referenced, with documentary evidence made available throughout inspection. Self-assessment has had a positive impact, and improvements have been introduced as a result of the process. Strengths and weaknesses were identified in all occupational and generic areas.

8. Five inspectors spent 20 days at TMBC. During inspection, interviews with 48 trainees, nine tutors and 27 managers took place. Twenty-two employers and work-placement providers were visited, and three trainees' reviews were observed. Eight graded training sessions and seven assessments were inspected. Inspectors were able to see trainees' portfolios, records of progress, on- and off-the-job training and assessment, as well as interview trainees at the start, middle and end of their programme. A representative sample of employers and work-placement providers was visited.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Leisure, sport & travel	1	2				3
Hair & beauty	3					3
Foundation for work		1	1			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Leisure, sport & travel

### Grade 2

9. There are 13 unemployed youth trainees working towards NVQ level 2 in sports and recreation and allied occupations and two employed trainees working towards level 3 in sports and recreation development. Although this occupational category refers to travel in its formal title, there is currently no travel training provision at TMBC. Youth trainees gain experience in dry and wet sports work placements at six sports and leisure centres in the Trafford area. They receive training from their work-placement providers and underpinning knowledge training from a subcontracted training and assessment provider. They receive a wide range of additional training opportunities, including pool lifeguard and first aid courses.

10. All NVQ training and assessment is carried out on placement, but there are additional training support facilities at the council's headquarters and at a local college which can be used, if necessary. TMBC's co-ordinators carry out progress reviews. Work-placement supervisors and subcontracted assessors are qualified to support the training and development of all trainees. Qualified assessors have degree-level qualifications in physical education. The self-assessment report provides a clear and well-judged account of this programme. Inspectors confirmed all strengths. Its one weakness was no longer applicable by the time of inspection. Other strengths and weaknesses were identified. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the council in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective co-operation among assessors, trainees and work-based supervisors
- ◆ supportive training environment enables trainees to achieve potential
- ◆ work placements are well equipped, with wide-ranging learning opportunities
- ◆ most trainees achieve their qualification aim
- ◆ extensive additional training opportunities

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ trainees' progress is restricted at one work placement
- ◆ no remedial programme for borderline literacy and numeracy needs
- ◆ variable access to additional training

11. TMBC's training co-ordinators encourage the integration of training and assessment among contracted training and assessment staff and work-based placement trainers and their supervisors. This integration helps trainees to gain wide experience of the leisure and sports sector in leisure centres. These centres have a range of facilities, such as swimming pools, crèches, multigyms and sports courts for various racket and ball games and solaria and cafeterias. This variety offers ideal opportunities for evidence collection, for both sports and recreation and customer service NVQs. One subcontracted provider covers all assessment for all leisure centres in the contract. It employs expert sports assessors who work well with trainees, who respect their experience and expertise. The subcontractor has set up special staff selection procedures and enhancements, and this policy has ensured that trainees receive good-quality training advice. Trainees are encouraged throughout training to attain their best performance at assessment and are actively encouraged by subcontractors and TMBC to celebrate their achievements and develop their competence further by taking additional optional units at level 2, in excess of the normal four optional requirements.

12. The good quality of work placements ensures a wide range of opportunities to use specialist equipment and gain technical knowledge for standard and non-standard sports: equipment-handling; arranging sporting events; ensuring the safety

of the public; chemical level and temperature monitoring in swimming pools; safety factors in saunas and solaria. Trainees work regularly with sports equipment and facilities, but are also responsible for reception work and sports centres' cleanliness, including washrooms and toilets. There is a high standard of safety and discipline at the centres, and trainees are correctly prevented by legal age requirements from tackling some sports provision systems. Most trainees make rapid progress by exploiting the opportunities to gain evidence for their portfolios. Assessors visit on a weekly basis. The quality of evidence of competence in portfolios is good, as is the way in which assessments are carried out and the opportunities for full- and part-time paid employment which follow the attainment of satisfactory competence levels. The low 43-per-cent retention rate for trainees in 1995 improved considerably during 1996 to 73 per cent. The NVQ achievement rate in 1995 was 67 per cent, with all trainees finishing the programme in 1996 achieving a level 2 qualification. Early analysis of this year's programme shows a slight fall in the retention rate, but a similar pattern to last year's achievement rates.

13. At one placement provider, medium-term problems caused by company rearrangements (unconnected with TMBC) have restricted training and assessment opportunities over a period of months for some trainees, and, although TMBC is aware of this situation, it has not yet been fully resolved. As part of their initial assessment process, trainees complete a skillscheck test, measuring literacy, numeracy and other abilities. Those trainees attaining borderline scores do not receive formal remedial training or support. They are left to develop on their own, and the level of development is not periodically remeasured, nor is there a remedial programme of additional training to help to develop their writing and number skills further. Although the general level of additional training provision is excellent, it is through chance, rather than formal planning or entitlement, that trainees are able to access the full range of courses available.

## **Hair & beauty**

## **Grade 2**

14. There are 21 hairdressing trainees on youth programmes: one is working towards NVQ level 1, 18 towards level 2 and two towards level 3. Ninety per cent of trainees are employed and work in local salons which offer a good range of clients for training. On-the-job training is carried out during salon training sessions, or nights when trainees practise on models. Off-the-job training and assessment are carried out on a day-release basis at college where training, support and individual assessment are offered. All trainers and assessors hold relevant vocational and assessor qualifications, and resources for off-the-job training and assessment are excellent. There are no work-based assessors. The self-assessment report highlighted several strengths and a few weaknesses: some strengths were confirmed and others recognised to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high standard of work from trainees

- ◆ effective working relationships with all parties
- ◆ comprehensive initial assessment, basic skills support and individual planning
- ◆ high achievement rates

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no work-based assessment
- ◆ missed opportunities to utilise work-based evidence

15. Regular and very thorough progress reviews, together with effective trainee-centred working relationships with all parties, provide trainees with a good-quality training and assessment programme. Individual goals and targets are well planned and consistently met. The simulated salon at college is creatively used. Care is taken to match the pace of learning and the demands of assessment to meet individuals' abilities, ensuring that trainees' aims are not unrealistic, while still having demanding targets to work towards. Trainees show a high standard of occupational competence and they have access to a range of learning opportunities with effective support at college, during reviews and in the workplace. Retention rates are still of some concern, but the trend is one of improvement, and this is matched by good achievement rates, with most trainees, who manage to stay on the programme, achieving their NVQ or significant units towards completion. NVQ success rates are high, with over 80 per cent of those completing the programme gaining their NVQ. Recruitment has increased threefold over the last two years, with retention rates steadily improving from 33 per cent, in 1995, to 55 per cent in 1998. Basic skills levels are identified during a comprehensive induction programme, and skills levels are monitored throughout the learning process. Additional support is made available and customised to suit the individual, as and when required. Hairdressing 'starter kits', containing tools which reflect current industry requirements, are provided free to all trainees. These have contributed to the increased interest, retention, motivation and commitment from trainees to the programme.

16. There are no work-based assessors employed at the salons where trainees are placed, and this has prevented work-based assessment. There are no arrangements with the college to bridge the gap between on- and off-the-job training and assessment. Employers are not clear about the rôle which they can play in collecting and witnessing evidence of trainees' learning and competence as they occur in the workplace; many opportunities for trainees to gather supplementary evidence towards qualification are missed.

#### **Foundation for work**

#### **Grade 2**

17. There are 22 trainees, seven of whom spend at least part of their time on work placement. Two are employed. TMBC's prevocational provision is a multiskills programme offered to young people predominately from statemented schools and referred by the careers service. The careers service has a dedicated link careers

officer, through whom all referrals are sent. Trainees usually have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their off-the-job training is subcontracted to a local college of further education where trainees pursue wordpower, numberpower and skillpower qualifications at entry level. Many trainees progress onto NVQ level 1 and 2 programmes in the occupational area of their work placement. Trainees are on placement from between one and five days a week. The assessment and delivery of NVQs are subcontracted to other providers. College tutors are qualified assessors, and one of the subcontracted assessors is working towards an assessor award. College and other subcontracted staff are occupationally qualified, as well as being qualified to deliver basic skills. Work-placement staff are not qualified assessors. There are seven employers currently being used to provide work placements; they have been identified and set up by TMBC, which gives strong support to the participating employers during trainees' placement periods. It also acts as the main link between workplace provider and off-the-job training centre. Trainees' achievements are commendable, and trainees staying on in the programmes, over the last three years, have all achieved the qualifications agreed in their individual training plan. The self-assessment report gave a full and accurate analysis of the multiskills programme and identified strengths, some of which were confirmed by inspectors, and others which were no more than normal practice. The weakness identified is no longer applicable. However, other weaknesses were identified and inspectors agreed with the grade in the company's self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-chosen and supportive work placements
- ◆ training effectively planned to meet individual trainees' needs
- ◆ continuous work-based assessment for NVQ qualification
- ◆ good progression onto NVQ programmes
- ◆ strong and effective working relationship among all parties

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some off-the-job training at inappropriate level for trainees
- ◆ poor awareness of the NVQ process by most employers
- ◆ missed opportunities to link on- and off-the-job training

18. As soon as trainees are prepared, they are placed with employers who are known to be experienced and sympathetic to the needs of trainees with learning difficulties. TMBC is able to provide the extra early support required to help build trainees' confidence. College attendance ranges between one and five days a week, according to each individual's needs. After employers have met trainees, most trainees have a trial period, to make sure that the placement is right for both trainee and employer. TMBC maintains a strong communications link with the employer and trainee during work placements. This also includes the monitoring of an employer's questionnaire which records the tasks covered by each trainee during

placement.

19. The pace, content and level of training are defined carefully according to the needs of each trainee. This sensitive approach enables trainees to learn at a pace suited to their own strengths. Programmes are also designed to build slowly on areas of weakness identified during initial assessment. Learning and personal development is continuous and well organised. Realistic, but challenging, actions are agreed on, with trainees, at reviews and closely monitored throughout their programme. Good timekeeping and attendance are continually emphasised. Copies of the records kept by the work-placement provider and the college are sent back promptly to TMBC's training co-ordinators, and problems are quickly acted on. NVQ assessments are mainly based on work, using naturally occurring evidence. Assessments are regular, frequent and well recorded, including records of the method of assessment used and each trainee's stage on the assessment schedule. Over 60 per cent of trainees progress from their foundation qualification, linked to literacy and numeracy, onto level 1, with a smaller proportion of trainees progressing onto level 2. College-based assessment for entry level qualifications is rigorous and fair. College staff and TMBC's training co-ordinators have developed very effective open working relationships with trainees; this has helped to build self-confidence and confidence in the staff and the qualification requirements.

20. All trainees take literacy and numeracy screening tests; the results are used to reinforce any requests for additional support. All trainees work towards entry level numberpower and wordpower qualifications, as part of the skillpower qualification, even if screening shows trainees to be above entry level.

21. Some parts of the skillpower qualification are delivered in a style unsuitable for most trainees and at a level above that required for the qualification. Trainees are unable to cope with the work, and TMBC is aware of this and taking action to address it. Computing equipment shortages restrict individual access to machines when full groups are in class. Most employers have little knowledge or understanding of the NVQ process and choose not to be directly involved in the development of trainees' portfolios. Employers respond to any training needs, if assessors or training co-ordinators highlight them, but they do not plan ahead or co-ordinate coverage, because of their unfamiliarity with the programme. College staff and employers have no direct contact with one another. While trainees sometimes link what they are doing on placement with the skillpower qualification, opportunities are missed to gather evidence for their portfolios outside the college. Some links and cross-referencing are made between the skillpower qualification and the workplace, but the programme lacks an integrated on- and off-the-job approach. Assignments are not used to add depth or meaning to the underpinning knowledge and bridge the gap between theory and practice.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 3

22. TMBC's equal opportunities policy is that of the borough council. The policy was last reviewed in January 1997 and before that in 1994. The youth training section employs two full-time male employees, three full-time female employees and one part-time female employee. All members of staff have attended an equal opportunities development course, and data about equal opportunities during trainees' recruitment are collected and monitored. TMBC do not try to influence or monitor the equal opportunities policies of its subcontractors or network of employers. Over the past 18 months, 230 trainees have or are currently accessing youth programmes: 56 per cent male, 44 per cent female, 43 per cent employed and 6.5 per cent registered as disabled. Seven per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups. The unemployment rate for Trafford is relatively low, currently standing at 3.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.1 per cent. A greater number of men, than women, choose the work-based route through government-supported training. The self-assessment report identified one strength, which was confirmed during inspection. Inspectors identified several key weaknesses, and the grade awarded is lower than that proposed by the company.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good awareness by trainees of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ trainees and staff protected against discrimination and unfair practice
- ◆ strong commitment to training people with disabilities

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ action-planning not supported by systematic analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ weak equal opportunities promotion and target-setting
- ◆ selection procedures do not guarantee equality of opportunity

23. A comprehensive induction process ensures that trainees have a firm knowledge of TMBC's equal opportunities policy, and trainees at all stages of their training can recall the key features of the policy. There is a strong culture of equality in both the council and the training division; all training staff attend two days' equal opportunities awareness. All occupational programmes have an open-access policy. However, some programmes have specific entry requirements. TMBC is very good at organising training programmes which enable foundation training and NVQ progression for trainees with learning difficulties and those with disabilities. All staff and trainees are protected against unfair practices with clear policies and procedures to support this.

24. Detailed data about gender, race, disability and ethnicity are collated according to occupation, from trainees' application forms. Although discussed at monthly team

meetings, this information is not used to inform action plans or develop an informed equal opportunities promotional plan. Analyses of data are retrospective and mainly driven by contractual obligation. TMBC does not have a clear view about the management of equal opportunities arrangements or how target-setting and analysis can drive the review of policies, formalise the action-planning process or develop an energetic approach to an already sound culture of equality. Equal opportunities documents are requested by TMBC from all placement providers. However, the content and impact of these policies are not monitored. The careers service refers most trainees, but a few come direct from employers: TMBC has no influence and does not monitor the policies of these parties, and a passive acceptance exists that selection automatically guarantees equality of opportunity.

## Trainee support

## Grade 1

### GOOD PRACTICE

*One trainee was identified as having learning difficulties and a low level of confidence and ability. He was supported and coached and succeeded in gaining a level 2 NVQ. The trainee has now progressed to a paid job in the council's maintenance depot, using natural talent at woodworking and other technical skills, and is working with enthusiasm towards an NVQ level 3. The trainee's success is due to be celebrated on the Internet.*

25. Most of TMBC's trainees are referred from the careers service, which carries out an initial assessment and endorsement, where appropriate. Trainees are interviewed by TMBC's training co-ordinators, and any previous qualifications and experience are taken account of when selecting a qualification aim or other training route. All trainees undertake a basic numeracy and literacy skills evaluation, using the associated examining board skillcheck test. Further tests by contracted training providers are used to inform decisions about support, before and during training. For trainees with learning difficulties, the Basic Skills Agency tests are administered and marked by qualified specialists. An extensive induction process is given, which includes half a day's induction by TMBC, with a further induction by the subcontracted training providers and the work-placement or workplace supervisors. Understanding and retention of this knowledge are checked. NVQ progress is carefully recorded. Assessors working for contracted training providers give a high level of effective support and advice. Support arrangements encourage trainees to feel confident about learning new skills. The self-assessment report gives a full and accurate account of this aspect and identifies strengths which were confirmed by inspectors. Further strengths were also identified. The weaknesses identified in the report are no longer applicable, but inspectors did identify another weakness. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive induction
- ◆ high standard of individual trainee support from training co-ordinators
- ◆ very frequent contact between assessors and trainees
- ◆ comprehensive initial assessment and basic skills testing arrangements
- ◆ high level of support for trainees with learning difficulties and disabilities

### GOOD PRACTICE

*Following initial assessment, basic skills requirements are identified, and additional support is effectively integrated with theory sessions. The course is costed in such a way that a basic skills tutor can be introduced to the programme as an additional resource for everyone, avoiding stigma being attached to trainees accessing the support.*

### GOOD PRACTICE

*A trainee with an extreme lack of confidence, has, through the patience and dedication of staff on the multiskills scheme and college staff, become a recommended candidate for the 'medal for excellence in training achievement' award. There is also a formal written recommendation by the scheme's external verifier. Through a gradual process of support and counselling, the trainee's disruptive behaviour has ceased. The trainee has completed wordpower, numberpower and basic food hygiene certificates and has been offered full, paid employment at her placement.*

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some initial assessments do not inform training plans

26. TMBC offers an exceptional level of personal support given freely and with great care to all trainees. Where problems have been identified, trainees are helped and counselled using supportive and imaginative solutions. Training co-ordinator staff also give up their own time to assist trainees and also help with transport to home and work for trainees on the multiskills programme who have difficulty finding their way. There is a formal system for requesting personal counselling from expert counsellors; TMBC arranges these referrals and also has meetings and a conference in which trainees are able to express their views.

27. Most assessors visit trainees weekly or, for some trainees, several times a week. Trainees receive feedback after each assessment. Action plans are updated, and targets set for the next assessment. Trainees are given copies of action plans. Work placements are selected with care, to ensure that staff make trainees feel welcome and integrate them within the working environment. The initial assessment includes accreditation of prior learning; where appropriate, trainees are credited with previously gained skills and learning. Most trainees' individual training and development plans are informed by the results of evaluation tests. Most trainees encountering problems completing the skillcheck to a satisfactory standard are retested, using Basic Skills Agency tests which are marked and evaluated by specialist staff at a local college. Trainees undergoing this process may be formally endorsed, allowing access to additional training and literacy and numeracy support.

28. Subcontracted training providers use their own skills assessment documents to evaluate training needs, and these are used to inform assessors and trainers where gaps in knowledge or in trainees' confidence occur. Induction processes are clear and comprehensive, formal reviews are frequent and regular, adjusted to the needs of trainees' work schedules. Trainees retain in-depth knowledge of equal opportunities issues, fire safety, accident procedures, complaint and grievance procedures and other induction issues. Although contracted training providers systematically collect information about weaknesses in trainees' knowledge and skills, one training programme fails to use this analysis to produce an effective training plan. While induction information is well retained, certain parts are repeated many times.

## Management of training

## Grade 2

29. TMBC has a clear management structure with defined areas of responsibility. Staff have detailed job descriptions and fully understand their responsibilities and the organisation's mission. TEC contract targets are consistently met and are discussed with the training team regularly. There is an annual appraisal system which links staff development opportunities to personal, departmental and organisational objectives. The youth training manager is responsible for overseeing the whole training process. The training division manages a broad portfolio of programmes, but has a more concentrated input to sport and recreation,

hairdressing, and specialist foundation multiskills programmes. The youth training manager reports to the assistant director of training and has direct responsibility for managing a team of four training co-ordinators and one administrative assistant. Each co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that each work placement affects trainees' potential and that training is delivered to awarding bodies' standards. The self-assessment report referred to several organisational links and meeting arrangements, but contained no judgement on the strengths or weaknesses of the management arrangements. Inspectors agreed with the grade awarded by the company in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-documented management procedures reflect good practice
- ◆ effective staff development programme
- ◆ strong commitment from staff to organisational goals

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ low understanding of organisational policies and procedures in work placements
- ◆ management decisions not informed by the use of accurate or current data

30. Policy and strategy changes are discussed and minuted in monthly meetings. Team meetings are used to discuss programme targets for contractual purposes. Individual employers, colleges and training programmes are considered, if issues arise. Communication with outside bodies is through direct contact with the training co-ordinators and the trainees, colleges, employers and work-placement providers. Links with the TEC and awarding body as well as contractual/financial links with colleges are made by the youth training manager and the assistant director of training for TMBC. Work-placement providers receive a handbook detailing policies and procedures, but there is no monitoring by TMBC to ensure that policies and procedures are understood, supported or accepted. TMBC's health and safety policy is reviewed in line with changes in legislation. All trainees are set projects about health and safety in the workplace, when they attend induction. Staff and trainees' sickness and attendance levels are recorded, and sensitive action is swiftly taken to address any emerging trends or problems. There is a return-to-work procedure for employees who have been absent from work, to inform them of changes and developments which have occurred during their absence. This limits the sense of alienation which can occur when returning to work in a busy and ever-changing environment.

31. There is an annual employee development programme, which clearly links individual development needs to the organisation's objectives, a good example being the equal opportunities awareness training undertaken by all staff. Additional training needs of employees are addressed in monthly team meetings. Annual target-setting and systematic analyses of data are underdeveloped. Monitoring does take

place across a range of activities, but there are gaps which are not being filled. As a result, management decisions and action by staff are not as efficiently formulated as they might be.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

32. The quality assurance arrangements for TMBC's training department set out in a quality manual which covers all aspects of the organisation's work. It contains clear procedures, outlines staff's responsibilities and promotes good practice. The manual is updated to consider changes in the organisation as a whole and to improve the control of systems and procedures. Training and assessment activities for all programmes are subcontracted to seven colleges and four independent training providers. TMBC checks that quality assurance arrangements for health and safety, and verification of assessment meet awarding bodies' requirements. The assistant director (training) has responsibility for quality assurance in youth programmes. There is a system for reviewing employers and trainees' feedback, but these data are not used effectively to improve the quality of the programmes. Formal staff meetings, to discuss training-related and general quality issues, are held monthly, while programme review meetings take place with subcontractors annually. Self-assessment audits are carried out annually by the youth training manager who has responsibility for implementing agreed corrective action. The self-assessment report identified and described several contractual requirements and strengths which were no more than normal practice; it failed to present supporting evidence which could establish clear strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ self-assessment audits carried out annually
- ◆ clear, well-documented, regularly updated quality arrangements
- ◆ quality assurance arrangements support improvements in trainees' performance

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ training not of a consistently high standard across all areas
- ◆ quality assurance arrangements not fully understood by work-placement providers
- ◆ data do not inform the setting of standards or targets

33. Quality assurance procedures are understood, supported and implemented by training staff, but little effort or control is taken to ensure that quality standards are set and maintained in the network of work placements. The employee development programme fully addresses staff, departmental and organisational training needs. Quality assurance arrangements are audited regularly, and the results of audit and monthly team meetings address most quality-related issues in a positive and



developmental way. Annual programme review meetings are held. Quality assurance arrangements are well documented, and strong working relationships with all parties ensure that issues are identified and addressed promptly.

34. Trainees' achievements and destinations are not fully evaluated, and little use is made of data to form action plans or strategies to improve provision. Quality assurance arrangements are well understood internally, but there are gaps between the level of understanding of training staff and that among the different work-placement providers. This breakdown in understanding prevents TMBC from setting or maintaining a consistently high standard of work experience.