



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 1999

Drivers on Demand

SUMMARY

Drivers on Demand offer training in a variety of road transport qualifications. Trainees benefit from a high level of support and good training resources. Training in transportation is good and a high number of trainees progress into employment. Promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory with a high percentage of trainees from minority ethnic groups entering training. Systems to support equal opportunities are not fully developed. Training in retailing and customer service (fork-lift truck) is satisfactory with expert training provided in the training centre. The management of the organisation and its training is good and staff and trainees benefit from an open and accessible management style. Quality assurance is satisfactory with new systems and procedures being currently developed and implemented

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Transportation	2
Retailing (fork-lift truck)	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ innovative funding programme for transportation trainees
- ◆ high number of trainees from minority ethnic groups on programmes
- ◆ rigorous initial assessment
- ◆ effective promotion of training opportunities
- ◆ open and effective internal communication
- ◆ rapid action in making improvements

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance systems
- ◆ no routine monitoring of equal opportunities
- ◆ underdeveloped trainees' review systems

INTRODUCTION

1. Drivers on Demand (DoD) Ltd, is a privately owned specialist employment agency offering training for drivers of cars, large goods vehicles (LGV) and passenger carrying vehicles (PCV) to a wide variety of employers. The organisation's head office is in Hounslow, West London. Established in 1989, in Wembley North London, the move was made to Hounslow as the business expanded. A shortage of drivers with LGV licences in the London area, resulted in the company entering the transport training sector in 1991. The company has continued to grow and currently employs 13 full-time staff. It offers work-based training to adults through a contract with North London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). There is no provision in the contract for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and the success of the training is measured on the basis of job outcomes. Training is offered in transportation for both LGV and PCV driver training. In the retailing and customer service sector, fork-lift truck operator training is also offered. Trainees are working towards the relevant occupational driving qualifications with the opportunity to gain additional related qualifications. Subcontracting arrangements exist with a transport training centre in Wembley for all TEC-funded training. Trainees are mainly from within the greater London area. There are 57 trainees in government-funded training.

2. Unemployment in the area is currently 11 per cent compared with the national average in October 1999 of 3.9 per cent. The main sectors for employment in the area are business services, retailing and manufacturing. The majority of employers are small- to medium-size. Sectors currently experiencing growth are business services, health and social work and the retailing area. The largest concentration of population locally is in the Barnet area. Minority ethnic groups constitute 20 per cent of the local population.

3. In 1997-98, the number of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSE) at grade C or above was 41.5 per cent compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. In North London, 74 per cent of 16 year olds continue in full-time education and 8 per cent enter employment with training.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Drivers on Demand started the self-assessment process in June 1998. The senior managers attended workshops run by consultants to outline the self-assessment process. Staff meetings were held to explain the importance and process of self-assessment. Managers and staff identified areas of potential strengths and weaknesses with external consultants providing advice and support in putting together the report and action plan. Using a variety of evidence sources the organisation was able to establish its main findings and identify strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but considered that some strengths were no more than normal practice. They judged the grades given in the report were accurate in all cases except one.

5. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at Drivers on Demand during October 1999. Inspectors examined trainee's files, achievements and retention rates. They also examined company documentation, systems and accrediting body information. Inspectors carried out 18 interviews with trainees, four interviews with work experience providers and 13 interviews with Drivers on Demand staff. Subcontractor staff were also interviewed and three off-the-job training sessions observed.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Transportation		1				1
Retailing (fork-lift truck)		1	1			2
Total	0	2	1	0	0	3

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Transportation

Grade 2

6. Drivers on Demand Ltd is a specialist employment agency supplying training for a number of grades of licenses. The company operates commercially as an employment agency alongside the driver training. Work-based training accounts for approximately one third of the business. The following are courses currently on offer: LGV group C licence; PCV manual-coach licence; and PCV automatic-bus licence. Currently, there are 50 trainees on transport training programmes, of whom 30 are on work-experience with client companies, five are on pre-vocational training, five are in preparation for their theory training and 10 are undertaking their practical driver training with a subcontractor. The LGV C and PCV (manual) programmes are a mixture of work experience and theoretical and practical driver training for a period of up to 26 weeks. LGV and PCV (manual) trainees spend the

first part of their training undertaking a variety of driving experiences with the in-house recruitment agency. This provides experience in knowledge of routes in London and surrounding areas and builds up drivers' confidence and knowledge of time management.

7. Trainees following PCV automatic-bus spend up to four weeks on the driver training course. These trainees do not take part in the work experience scheme but instead start their PCV training, and theoretical and practical driver training leading into the Driving Standards Agency test. Most of these trainees complete this training and return to work in local bus companies. In 1998-99, 72 per cent of the company's trainees have gained employment. Retention rates are 60 per cent for the same period and 85 per cent of trainees gain their respective licences. As trainees obtain a licence they either get a job immediately or they are registered with the agency, which is part of Drivers on Demand. Inspectors identified additional strengths to those recognised in the self-assessment report and fewer weaknesses. They agreed with the grade awarded in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ innovative funding programme
- ◆ good-quality training resources
- ◆ extensive additional training
- ◆ high number of trainees into jobs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to use reviews as training documents and plans

8. Most trainees have unemployed status when they arrive for training and after undergoing a thorough selection process they are allocated a training programme. The selection process consists of initial assessment by a member of staff. The trainees are then interviewed by a member of the management team and finally by a director of the company before they can join the training programme. There is an additional assessment six weeks into the programme before final acceptance. In the case of the PCV programme a local bus company also assesses the potential trainee. Company induction is comprehensive, with a considerable emphasis put on health and safety. All trainees undertake a health and safety induction before starting training in the company's vehicles. Trainees have a good awareness of health and safety matters.

9. LGV and PCV coach trainees start the programme by participating in work experience which enables them to build up an 'accumulation fund'. The accumulation fund allows trainees to build up credits to sponsor the driver training. Using the car drivers' licences held by trainees, the company finds suitable work placements for trainees to undertake work experience. This usually takes the form of light deliveries in vans. A proportion of the fee earned is then accumulated in a

fund for trainees to sponsor their driver training. The trainees often accumulate sufficient funds to achieve a number of different transport qualifications, for example, LGV, PCV, Accord des Routiers (ADR), fork-lift truck and certificate of professional competence (CPC). Any funds accumulated from work experience in excess of the funds required for training are put into a reserve fund for trainees who require additional help such as an extra test or refresher course.

10. Driver training is carried out in busy London traffic conditions. The training school has at its disposal a number of C class rigid vehicles and PCV buses and coaches. The local bus company provides the buses. Tutors have a wide range of experience and qualifications in the transport industry. Good working relationships exist between trainers and trainees. The subcontractor for transport training, who is an associated company, carries out most of the driver training and is located at Wembley stadium. The company's lease agreement allows it to use the coach parks for the stadium as vehicle training areas when there are no match fixtures. The open areas allow the trainees to drive and manoeuvre the LGVs and PCVs safely and without close proximity to any other road users. After their initial training on the coach parks, trainees are very competent at manoeuvring large vehicles, having had unrestricted space for their driving practice, a facility which would be difficult to find elsewhere in the London area.

11. Trainees are encouraged to build up sufficient credits to continue their training on other courses and then to acquire the licences they require to secure them a future in the transport business. In some cases, this can represent a considerable portfolio of qualifications. Drivers on Demand obtains agency work for the trainees using their newly acquired skills, until they have sufficient work experience to get a full-time position of their choice. In the event of a test failure, the reasons are analysed and further training is arranged to address the problems identified before a further test is arranged and taken. This process is continued until the training credits are exhausted. If necessary, further credits are built up to repeat the process until success is achieved

12. Reviews of trainees' progress are not used as working documents to aid training. The opportunity to use the review process and the documents as a diary of training events and to set targets and milestones for trainees is missed. The existing reviews are pastoral and do not attempt to develop the trainee's abilities or to encourage additional effort. More effective use of reviews is made difficult by the very busy driving schedules and the fact that the work experience controllers and driving instructors operate from different locations. There is a missed opportunity to use the review documents to synchronise the training activity and to use a mixture of targets drawn up by both instructors and controllers to include time management, customer contact skills, definitive driving exercises, and tests on road transport theory, customer relationships and location knowledge.

Retailing (fork-lift truck)

Grade 3

13. There are seven trainees on the work-based training for adults programme. Three are taking part in the practical and theory training, and the remaining four are involved in general induction and support training. All trainees work towards the achievement of the counter balance fork-truck operator's certificate. Training takes place at a subcontractor's premises and includes classroom and practical work. Achievement and retention rates are high at 80 per cent and trainees achieve a fork-truck certificate by the end of the operator-training programme. There is provision to extend the programme for remedial training, if required. Fifty per cent of trainees progress to employment on completion of the course. The self-assessment report did not identify fork-truck training as a separate occupation. Inspectors identified a number of strengths and weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good use of innovative aids
- ◆ highly-experienced instructors

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective use of individual training plan
- ◆ no formal feedback from trainees on the effectiveness of practical training

14. Practical training takes place in a building which has two operating areas. The first is suitable for basic manoeuvring and the movement of pallets and containers in and out of storage racking. The second is set for the practical test and allows trainees to practice without the need for re-structuring the training area. Classroom training is split into two sections. The first covers the health and safety aspects of fork-truck operation. The second section covers the theoretical knowledge that is required. The structure of this classroom training enables trainees to progress to practical training early and forms a natural break at the mid-point of the course. The practical training area has prominent posters relevant to the safe operation of fork-trucks.

15. The highly-experienced instructors have developed a number of innovative aids that are welcomed by the trainees. For example, trainees have difficulty in assessing the vertical position of the fork-truck mast, and the use of a highly visible levelling device allows trainees to judge the relevant position with ease. Pivot points and load centres are explained using small models and a variety of well-produced drawings. Trainees have a very high regard for their instructors. All the instructors, in addition to holding the appropriate qualifications, have experience of instruction within the transport industry. Their attendance at seminars enables them to keep up to date on developments within the industry and its training

16. In the first training session observed, trainees were shown by demonstration the correct positioning and techniques and forward and reverse procedures for handling a stack of containers. All three trainees achieved this with further instruction and advice given as appropriate. The second training session covered the movement into a racking system on completion of a right turn. This movement was quickly explained prior to a practical demonstration. The speed of the instruction caused one trainee to find difficulty with this manoeuvre, but further explanation and demonstration rectified this. During the practical training, trainees are encouraged to point out any operating errors that occur while their colleagues are operating the truck. This promotes teamwork and is a valuable learning experience. All the trainees commented favourably on this method of training. Practical training takes place on a planned five-day programme, with remedial training added if required, and this is varied to accommodate the differing needs of trainees. The whole programme, as specified on trainees individual training plan, can take up to a maximum of six weeks. This plan is not effectively managed and results in some trainees waiting for up to two weeks between the initial induction and the practical training session. At the end of the programme, formal feedback is not requested from trainees on the effectiveness of the practical training. All interviewed trainees spoke highly of the programme's effectiveness, but this is not recorded.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

17. Drivers on Demand has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy, which is widely distributed to staff and trainees. Trainees and staff are made aware of the organisation's commitment to equal opportunities as part of their induction process and there is a high level of awareness of equality of opportunity throughout the organisation. There is a complaints procedure for trainees and a grievance procedure for staff. The minority ethnic population of the catchment area in which the company recruits is 20 per cent and currently minority ethnic groups constitute 55 per cent of trainees on programmes. There is currently one trainee with a disability on programme. The organisation attends local job fairs and events and is currently attempting to counter gender stereotyping in the large goods vehicle drivers sector by initiating a positive marketing initiative to recruit female drivers. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses to those in the self-assessment report and agreed with the grade given.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive complaints procedure
- ◆ high number of trainees from minority ethnic groups on programme
- ◆ good equal opportunities practice in recruitment of trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to display equal opportunities message on all documents
- ◆ no routine monitoring of equal opportunities
- ◆ no regular update of equal opportunities policy

GOOD PRACTICE

One of Drivers on Demand's directors and the contract manager featured in an article in a national road haulage publication to promote the recruitment of minority ethnic groups into the LGV driving sector.

18. Drivers on Demand encourages equality of opportunity both in internal and external staff recruitment and in the recruitment of trainees. There is a wide mix of staff within the organisation, which provides positive role models for trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. When trainees apply for a place on the training programme they complete an application which gathers information for equal opportunities monitoring. This information is collated and supplied to the TEC for analysis. As part of the induction process, trainees are introduced to equal opportunities and the company's equal opportunities policy. There is no monitoring of staff recruitment for equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy is supported by an implementation procedure, which identifies the responsibilities of staff, employers and trainees. Trainees, who were interviewed, remembered and were aware of equal opportunities issues. The equal opportunities policy is not updated on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects current practice and legislation. Equal opportunities do not form part of the business plan or the quality assurance system.

19. The equal opportunities message appears on some marketing materials but it is not displayed in newspaper advertisements and on general stationery. In addition to the positive marketing attempt to recruit women to become drivers of large goods vehicles, the company positively encourages minority ethnic trainees to enter the large goods vehicle driving sector which, nationally, has a low proportion of minority ethnic drivers. There are examples of trainees being given additional support to assist them in completing their training programmes. Problems sometimes occur with the understanding of the theory tests in both driver and fork-lift truck training because trainees have difficulties with the language or problems with numeracy, literacy and dyslexia. The company provides additional support to trainees with language and learning difficulties and has provided interpreters and readers to accompany trainees to driving tests and read the relevant theory examinations. The head office premises are not accessible to trainees with restricted mobility and facilities are not available at the subcontractor's premises either.

20. There is a comprehensive complaints procedure for trainees and there was evidence that trainees' complaints had been recorded and action taken and that procedures for monitoring the progress of complaints and identifying trends were in place. The trainees are made aware of the grievance and complaints procedure through its inclusion in the training agreement, which all trainees have to sign. There is one senior manager who has been formally trained in equal opportunities awareness.

21. Equal opportunities are not discussed at the trainees' reviews and, as a result, opportunities to reinforce equal opportunities at this stage for trainees and

employers are missed. Employers are required to have their own equal opportunities policy or adopt the company's policy. This process is carried out through correspondence and employers do not have the equal opportunities issues explained to them in detail.

Trainee support

Grade 2

22. Recruitment of trainees is usually by referral from the Employment Service. Some are also recruited as a result of recommendations from previous trainees. Acceptance onto the programme is based on two documented procedures. Initial assessment tests and an initial interview are a contractual requirement for all entrants to the programme. All trainees undergo induction which covers rights and responsibilities, health and safety and equal opportunities. In addition, all trainees receive an induction to their occupational area. Trainee support is provided by a number of staff in the organisation. In addition, trainees are encouraged to telephone senior staff members for additional support. Inspectors agreed with one strength identified in the self-assessment report, identified further strengths and a weakness, and awarded the same grade as that given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees' successes celebrated
- ◆ rigorous initial assessment
- ◆ high level of trainee support
- ◆ good perception by trainees of health and safety requirements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to make trainees aware of their progress

23. Initial contact for the programme is usually through the Employment Service. A team of three full-time recruiters visit 50 job centres on a planned, regular, basis and have access to a further 70 job centres using Employment service networks. Where a recruiter is not available at the time of initial enquiry, an appointment is made for the next available date. Recruiters are able to give details of the programme and the courses on offer using a range of marketing material, and discuss the eligibility of the potential trainee. Initial contact is quickly followed up with a written invitation to attend for initial assessment.

24. Initial assessment is a three or four stage process depending on the course requested. For fork-truck operator trainees, the first stage is an interview with a company director to ensure that the aspirations of the trainee and the training on offer are a suitable match. This interview is carried out in a relaxed and informal atmosphere with the main points re-emphasised and the opportunity for questions to be asked. The second stage is an assessment of the trainee's basic skills. This

assessment is carried out in a quiet area and, after an introduction, the trainee is left for an appropriate length of time to complete the assessment. The third stage is a short assessment on a fork-truck to identify the suitability of the trainee for this type of training. This assessment is carried out by an experienced fork-truck instructor and involves the trainee being able to respond to verbal and demonstrated instructions on the use of the fork-truck mast and manage a short test drive through a chicane. Feedback is given at each stage and a further opportunity is offered for questions to be asked.

25. For trainees who wish to undertake one of the driver training courses, the driving assessment takes place in a dual control vehicle. The trainee is expected to show a good driving ability and be aware of other road users. The chief driving instructor carries out an initial interview before the driving assessment. For bus driving trainees, a guarantee of a job with a local bus company on successful completion of the training programme, is built in to the initial assessment. The results of these assessments are carried forward to influence the individual training plan. Where initial assessment has identified a basic skills need, extra support is given with a bias towards the trainee's vocational area. Examples of this include additional literacy support with the compilation of an accident report for fork-truck operator trainees. Driving trainees complete vehicle checks and these are recorded on a form.

26. Induction is carried out for all trainees and takes place initially in a general group. This stage of the induction covers the contractual requirements of the course including, health and safety, equal opportunities and support arrangements. A further induction is given to trainees and this is relevant to the occupational route being followed. On completion of induction, a checklist is completed as confirmation of what has been covered. All trainees are given a list of telephone numbers of people whom they can contact in the event of problems occurring. In addition, a member of staff is available 24 hours a day on a local rate number. All driver-training trainees are given a named work-based supervisor as their first point of contact. Fork-truck trainees are expected to contact their nominated instructor in the first instance. All trainees have a good awareness of health and safety requirements. For example, one trainee during interview was able to quote the relevant act. Another trainee ensured that unexpected visitors to the training area were made fully aware of the potential hazards. On completion of the training programme, arrangements with external agencies are in place to provide job search facilities and training for those trainees who have not been successful with their personal job search activities. Trainees' successes are celebrated. On completion of the driver training courses, a small informal ceremony takes place where the trainee is photographed receiving the pass certificate from their instructor. Fork-truck trainees and driving trainees' names are published in the monthly newsletter. The successes of past trainees are also detailed to show the possibilities for progression to other trainees.

27. Not all trainees are aware of their progress through the programme. Fork-truck operation trainees are aware of their start date and are later made aware of their completion date. Trainees show little awareness of the programme. LGV trainees

are made aware of the position relative to their accumulation fund by regular statements and are fully aware of the work placement they have carried out. However, they are not aware when the next stage of their training programme will start.

Management of training

Grade 2

28. Drivers in Demand has a total of 13 staff, five of whom are dedicated to the adult training contract. All employees, however, have some involvement with the work-based training of trainees. The office facility operates both a driver hire agency and the training contract with the TEC. Two directors oversee the operation and the TEC contract manager reports directly to them. The contract manager has line management responsibility for the contract administrator and three recruiters who operate within the local Employment service job centres on a rotational basis. The Drivers on Demand administration team supports the TEC contract team and the company's driver controllers are involved in obtaining and allocating work experience for trainees. The management structure is clear and understood by all staff. Drivers on Demand achieved Investors in People status in 1997 and is due for re-accreditation in the year 2000. Staff are set annual objectives which are measurable. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses to those in the self-assessment report and awarded a higher grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective management of subcontractor arrangements
- ◆ open and effective internal communications
- ◆ comprehensive management information systems
- ◆ good staff development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ business plan objectives not measurable

29. Drivers on Demand has very effective management arrangements with the subcontractor who supplies all the training for their TEC programmes. A detailed contract is in place, which identifies the levels of service expected. Meetings take place on a quarterly basis between Drivers on Demand's managers, the contracts manager and managers from the subcontractor. These meetings have formal agendas and are minuted. Issues discussed include reviews of all training programmes, areas for improvement, success rates of trainees and issues raised by trainees with reference to experiences on training programmes. The contract is reviewed and renegotiated on an annual basis.

30. Senior managers operate an open and collaborative style of management and are visible and accessible to both staff and trainees. Great emphasis is placed on

teamwork at all levels. Effective lines of communication exist through a series of internal meetings which involve all staff members. Quarterly business review meetings take place which involve all staff and are held off site to allow everyone to concentrate on the process. All aspects of the business, including current trends and business development issues, are discussed. Monthly meetings take place between managers and driver controllers to review training programmes and the work experience progress of trainees. Senior managers meet on a six-weekly basis to review performance against budgets and TEC contracts. All meetings are minuted, and, through these, staff are able to contribute to the business-planning process. Electronic communication is available between the subcontractor and the company to ensure immediate transfer of information about trainees. Business-planning is in line with requirements for Investors in People and the business plan is current and has set objectives. There are no measurable targets defined to ensure that objectives are reached.

31. There is an annual staff appraisal system which is a two-way process allowing staff to discuss objectives and targets for the forthcoming year. All staff have current job descriptions which are reviewed and updated, if required, at the appraisal stage. Individuals' development needs are discussed at the staff appraisal and their development programme for the year is agreed on. The staff development programme is prescriptive, identifying training in line with business needs. There is flexibility in the programme for further individual development, which is fully supported if business benefits are identified. All training on external programmes is evaluated formally and discussed with the line manager. All staff are well qualified occupationally and some have recently undertaken NVQ qualifications. This includes the director and contracts manager.

32. The management information system is comprehensive and holds records of trainees' progress and work experience and the level of surplus in their training accumulation fund. Trainees are supplied with regular updates on their accumulation fund. The database used also collates information for the TEC contract and enables performance against the contract to be monitored. A separate database collects referral information from the staff operating in the job centres and monitors the movement of potential trainees in terms of interview attendance and programme referral. This system is used to contact trainees when they do not attend for interview or assessment.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

33. Drivers on Demand aims to provide the highest quality of drivers to the transport and logistics industry. There is a commitment to quality assurance and continuous development is recognised in the achievement of their status as an Adult Training Supplier with North London TEC. The trainees have high expectations of the training and also want to use their accumulated training fund, having worked hard to accrue it. The company uses questionnaires to obtain feedback from trainees at the end of a training programme. It also has an operational questionnaire

aimed at trainees while they are on their work experience. Questionnaires on induction are also completed. The self-assessment report is informative and inspectors used the report as the basis from which to seek further evidence that quality assurance procedures were being followed. In addition, as a result of self-assessment, action plans have been formed to address weaknesses and, in some cases, had been implemented before the inspection. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified, and considered some of them to be no more than normal practice. They identified other weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than the one given in the self-assessment report

STRENGTHS

- ◆ commitment of managers to quality assurance
- ◆ use of good self-assessment process to plan continuous improvement
- ◆ rapid action in making improvements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance operations
- ◆ no formal evaluation of questionnaire data

34. The company has a formal quality assurance system in place, which goes some way to meet the requirements of the ISO 9002 accreditation. The company's latest review shows that it has achieved most of the requirements of the ISO standards. This system and the Investors in People award are being used to drive quality assurance in the whole business. As the training is an important part of the business, assuring its quality is seen as an important part of the development of the whole quality assurance systems. The staff are fully aware of this and are involved in the development, and monitoring of the quality assurance procedures. They are enthusiastic about quality assurance and want to take part in the improvement of quality assurance systems to achieve the company's aims. Progress has already been made by the development of a number of computer-based packages for the control and operation of the business.

35. The process of self-assessment has led to major improvements, including the modification and further development of departmental work instructions, some of which have been formatted into standard control procedures in readiness for the ISO 9002 audit. A system for controlling the trainees' individual learning accumulation fund has also been developed to monitor and control the amount of training credits that are available to each trainee and to provide a weekly report on this to each trainee. Action plans are produced regularly and action taken to address weaknesses very quickly. It was realised that the self-assessment report process was identifying several minor weaknesses which could be addressed immediately or within a short space of time. The experience of producing the self-assessment report showed that with prompt action, further ideas and improvements were self-developing. This has led to consistent and constant improvement within

the organisation. All of the staff have been fully involved in the self-assessment process and have contributed to the content of the report. North London TEC has organised awareness events on self-assessment and consultants have given assistance when it was required. The final self-assessment report is descriptive but strengths and weaknesses are identified and an action plan formed to address most of the weaknesses, some of which have already been addressed.

36. The quality assurance system is very much aimed at the recruitment agency functions and not always at the quality of the training. The underdeveloped areas are formal management of reviews, planning, document control and customer monitoring. Questionnaires to trainees from the company seek feedback regularly on the quality of the training and the views of trainees on exit. The results of the questionnaires are not used to promote continuous improvement. There is no formal evaluation and tabulation of the findings and staff are not made aware of the contents. The opportunity to make use of the analyses of the information gained in questionnaires and its evaluation across the whole business is missed. The management are fully aware of this and developments are taking place to make better use of the information gathered.