



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JULY 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT JULY 1999

KITA Limited

SUMMARY

KITA Limited provides training in engineering, and in foundation for work for adults across all vocational areas. As was identified at the first inspection, training in the workplace is good, as is the quality of the work placements. Adults are well supported throughout their training, particularly those who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Quality assurance is satisfactory, but is not systematically implemented. The management of training is good. At the time of the first inspection, KITA Limited did not rigorously promote equal opportunities. At reinspection, it was identified that equal opportunities arrangements are now satisfactory. Successful efforts are now being made to recruit women into engineering, although some areas of the policy are left unrecorded. Although there has been a recent restructuring of management, directors and managers are making rapid progress to address the weaknesses which they have identified.

As a result of the reinspection of KITA Limited, the original published report text for equal opportunities has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report which have not been subject to full reinspection have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Foundation for work	2
Engineering	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	4
Trainee support	3
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements for all trainees
- ◆ carefully chosen work placements, for adult trainees and those with learning difficulties
- ◆ flexible and responsive training provision
- ◆ good action-planning by managers
- ◆ successful recruitment of female trainees to engineering



KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of systematic quality assurance
- ◆ youth training plans do not address trainees' individual needs
- ◆ personnel procedures are not reviewed and amended
- ◆ failure to provide training in key skills

INTRODUCTION

1. KITA Limited was established in 1967, as a shared training resource, by several engineering employers in the Maidstone area. They identified the importance of having such a specialist service, but were unable to justify the use of their own full-time staff to provide training for themselves. Since then, KITA Limited has developed its range of provision and resources consistently and now provides a comprehensive personnel, training and safety service to organisations throughout Kent.

2. The company has been involved in apprenticeship training for member companies since its formation and in government-funded youth training since 1980. Eighty companies are involved in providing placements for trainees whose training is contracted through Kent Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Youth trainees are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3, together with additional qualifications. At the time of reinspection, a total of 92 trainees came within the remit of the inspection. The company had 69 engineering trainees and new provision in business administration for 13 trainees.

3. Two years ago, KITA Limited provided training for adults for work. This area of activity has grown, and provision is made to place adults in training in any vocational area. Some of these adult trainees are working towards achievement of an NVQ at level 2, but most undertake short-duration training to place them in employment. There were 10 adults in training at the time of the reinspection.

4. KITA Limited recruits adult trainees from the Swale area of Kent predominantly and youth trainees from a wide area of the county. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Kent was 49.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. In July 1998, the unemployment rate for Kent was 3.5 per cent. Within the working population, 2.5 per cent of people are from minority ethnic groups. The local economy is characterised by strong manufacturing and transit sectors. Although still strong, the manufacturing sector has been adversely affected by declining export markets, and several local projects for expanding manufacturing have been postponed.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. KITA Limited prepared its first self-assessment report for the first inspection. It was compiled by the chief executive and the divisional manager after consultation with all other staff and employers. KITA Limited did not produce a new self-assessment report for the reinspection, but produced a progress report on its action plan. This report did not propose a new grade for equal opportunities.

6. During the first inspection, a team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at KITA Limited during July 1998. Inspectors examined company and awarding body documents. They met staff from the company, employers, subcontractors and trainees from across all programmes and in all occupational areas offered by the provider. They visited 19 employers and observed, or interviewed, 51 trainees. They examined assessment records, trainees' practical and written work and their portfolios.

7. Reinspection was carried out by two inspectors over a total of four days in July 1999. Inspectors examined policies, procedures, documents, and collected data and their analysis relating to equal opportunity for trainees throughout their involvement with the company. Inspectors interviewed 12 trainees, two employers, workplace supervisors and managers and the provider's staff.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions during the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Foundation for work		1				1
Engineering	2	7	2			11
Total	2	8	2	0	0	12

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Foundation for work

Grade 2

8. In response to needs identified by the company, KITA Limited has developed provision in the training of adults. Over the last 15 months, the company has established links with a range of employers, across all occupational areas. There are nine adults receiving training. Trainees placed with employers in administration, care, computer programming, information technology and warehousing were all inspected. Where appropriate, trainees receive training through subcontracted training providers. Inspectors visited subcontractors providing engineering and security personnel training. Much of the training for adults lasts only for a few weeks, but, in some cases, trainees work towards attainment of an NVQ at level 2. The growth of foundation-level provision has been rapid, and the provider seeks to place trainees appropriately in an

occupational area. Recent placements have included those in agriculture, retail, customer service, hospitality and construction. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but awarded a higher grade for this area of work than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thoughtful placement of trainees in work across all vocational areas
- ◆ skilfully packaged training encourages employers to offer placements
- ◆ flexibility of the training period used to the benefit of trainees
- ◆ subcontracted trainers selected, in part, for the high degree of support which they offer to trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ training plans are not systematically updated
- ◆ no guidance on progression routes after training

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainees are sometimes unable to complete the programme within the contracted period of training. On these occasions, KITA Limited keeps the trainees on until they do complete the programme and absorbs the extra costs.

9. Managers and staff at KITA Limited make good use of their extensive knowledge of, and close working relationships with, a wide range of local employers. When a trainee is referred to KITA Limited, by the Employment Service or another agency, it conducts a thorough interview with both the trainee and the potential employer, in order to match the trainee to a placement which offers the most suitable training and the best prospect of subsequent employment. Potential employers are encouraged to deliver a high-quality training package, often extended beyond the period of the contracted training programme. KITA Limited often commits a high proportion of the anticipated income from the TEC at the start of training, to reflect the employer's realistic training costs.

10. Once placed, all trainees are involved in the development of their training plans. These are, however, not always updated during training to reflect trainees' progress or to identify further training to which the trainees may progress. Trainees are well supported to achieve during their placement, most obtaining subsequent employment. Adults with learning difficulties or disabilities are carefully placed with employers which are experienced in providing the support needed. Their difficulties are dealt with sensitively during training, and they are helped in securing appropriate employment on completion of training. Adult engineering trainees, working towards NVQ level 2, produce work of a high level, in both their practical machining pieces and their supporting theory and portfolio work. The rapport between the trainer and trainees is good, and trainees work with enthusiasm and are fully involved in their tasks. Directed questions and appropriate humour were used to maintain interest in a theory session. The trainees expressed positive views about their training, although many said that they had not been in a classroom situation since leaving school many years ago. Owing to personal circumstances, some trainees have difficulty in reaching the required

standard during the contracted training period. Where appropriate, this period is extended to enable them to achieve their qualification.

Engineering

Grade 3

11. There are 76 engineering trainees, of whom 26 are modern apprentices, working towards achievement of an NVQ at level 3, together with an additional qualification, over a four-year period. The remaining 50 trainees are on traineeships, working towards achievement of an NVQ at level 2 or 3 over various lengths of training programme. All but one of the trainees are employed in the engineering industry. Most attend a college of further education, on a day-release basis, for the practical and theoretical aspects of their training to support their training in the workplace. KITA Limited's training officers regularly visit trainees in the workplace. The focus of these visits is the development of the portfolio of evidence for achievement of the NVQ. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and with the grade awarded for this area of provision.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ flexible arrangements enable trainees to achieve NVQ at their own pace
- ◆ good progression opportunities for trainees
- ◆ demanding qualification targets for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate and poorly maintained training plans
- ◆ key skills not implemented

12. All the work placements visited by inspectors are of a high standard. Most are modern and well equipped, and many involve high-precision engineering work. Trainees receive good training in the workplace from their mentors or training supervisors, who liaise closely with the training officers from KITA Limited. Working independently, most trainees are placed near to their supervisor, who provides help or guidance, as required. The work carried out by trainees is of a high standard, and, in most companies, trainees are regarded as productive members of the workforce by the second year of their training. During their regular visits to review trainees' progress, training officers consult workplace supervisors on ways of ensuring that trainees master the required competencies to obtain their NVQ at a pace which suits them; employers are co-operative in moving trainees around the company to facilitate this. Trainees are allowed to take their NVQ when they are ready to do so, and some aim, with the support of their training officer, to achieve the NVQ well within the initial time.

13. Training officers, in conjunction with employers, encourage trainees to work towards demanding qualifications at college – the minimum level for many trainees is the national certificate. Further progression is encouraged. For example, several trainees have achieved the higher national certificate. Two trainees have undertaken degree courses following completion of their training programme.

14. Although training plans are completed for all trainees during induction, they do not cover aspects of workplace training and are not individual or systematically updated through the trainees' progress review. Few of the modern apprentices are aware of the key skills requirements of their programmes and none has been assessed against key skills criteria. The provider is aware of this significant weakness and has a clear action-plan to address this issue well before the first three modern apprentices complete in 13 months' time.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

15. Since the first inspection, KITA Limited has developed a basic equal opportunities policy which it has distributed to all staff and employers and has displayed in its premises. The policy includes current legislation, including the *Disability Discrimination Act 1985*, and a synopsis of the policy, called a statement, is issued to all trainees. The procedures for the recruitment of staff and trainees are clearly recorded. Thorough analysis of collected data on trainees' ethnicity, gender and disability informs managers' decisions to target groups for recruitment, and the company has been successful in increasing the number of women training in non-traditional occupational areas. Three per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups and 11 per cent of trainees have disabilities or additional learning needs. There is a gender balance within the staff, but no staff are from minority ethnic groups.

The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ lack of a written policy and procedures to complement the equal opportunities statement
- ◆ no written procedures for recruitment of staff or trainees
- ◆ failure to analyse data on trainees' gender, ethnicity and disabilities
- ◆ publicity material does not target under-represented groups

After the first inspection, the company produced an action plan to address the weaknesses identified and to build on its strengths. Eleven months later, at reinspection, the weaknesses are being tackled by the company, although some action requires more time before its full effect becomes apparent. Staff have undergone training to raise their awareness of equal opportunities issues, and data are now analysed to shape the company's advertising and recruitment activities.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ participation in local initiatives to promote training to under-represented groups
- ◆ success in recruiting women into engineering training
- ◆ careful matching of trainees with disabilities or learning difficulties to work placements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no documented complaints procedure for youth trainees
- ◆ low awareness of equal opportunities among some trainees
- ◆ unsystematic checking of employers' equal opportunities policies

16. KITA Limited plays an active part in many local events to promote its training opportunities to under-represented groups, for example to attract women to non-traditional employment areas, such as engineering, fork-truck driving and security work. Recent activities have included participation in a country-wide event for women returning to work and a promotional presence at public events, including the Kent County Show. The company produces a range of promotional posters and leaflets which help to reinforce the message of equality of opportunity. The company has continued to build on its success in recruiting women into its engineering programmes. Women now make up 6 per cent of KITA's engineering trainees, and are working in large and small local engineering companies. Last year, the company's apprentice-of-the-year award, which is open to all the company's trainees, was won by a woman. The managers and staff at KITA Limited make good use of their occupational experience in placing trainees with disabilities or special learning needs with employers which have appropriate support available, and with which the trainees are most likely to succeed. Special equipment, such as a specially designed ergonomic chair for a trainee with a back problem, or adapted working methods for trainees with additional learning needs, are used to help trainees to fulfil their potential.

17. All the young people on work-based training programmes are employees of the companies at which they work and, as such, they are protected by the complaints and grievance procedures of those companies. KITA Limited has not written an over-arching complaints procedure to cover these trainees. Complaints from trainees are usually effectively dealt with by training officers, but the speed with which they are addressed, and the level of authority at which they are dealt with, is at the discretion of each training officer. Adult trainees are provided with a flow-chart indicating clearly what the process is for any complaints they may raise with KITA Limited.

18. All trainees are issued with a synopsis of the company's equal opportunities policy, known as the statement, and their attention is drawn to equal opportunities during their induction. However, this is not reinforced during their training and some trainees have a low awareness of the company's stance on equal opportunities and related issues. KITA Limited checks that the employers with

which it works have an appropriate equal opportunities policy when they first approach them, but it does not review the policies or routinely check the currency with regard to new legislation. As part of a staff development initiative, all KITA Limited's staff and managers have undertaken training aimed at raising their awareness of equal opportunities and related issues.

Trainee support

Grade 3

GOOD PRACTICE

An adult security personnel trainee, who had difficulty in reading, was found a job where there was a minimum requirement for reading. In order to complete his training assessment, he was allowed to sit the test paper alone, with the training officer reading the questions to him. He then sat in the test session with the other trainees, where he was able to put anything he liked on the paper, so that there was no loss of face.

19. KITA Limited allocates one training officer to each trainee for the duration of training. The training officers for engineering trainees are well qualified and experienced, in both training and engineering. Support for adult trainees is good. Visits to trainees in the workplace are carried out at least every six weeks, but are arranged flexibly, and their frequency is increased when additional support is required. Trainees with learning difficulties are well supported during training. However, the initial assessment of trainees is not conducted systematically to ensure that all additional support needs are identified at that stage. The provider's self-assessment report did not reflect all the weaknesses which inspectors identified, but the grade proposed was the same as that awarded by inspectors.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good induction assignments
- ◆ flexibility in arranging review visits
- ◆ innovative adaptation of training and assessment for trainees with learning difficulties
- ◆ sensitivity in dealing with additional support needs of trainees with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- ◆ support and encouragement given to female trainees in engineering

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ initial assessment does not influence the training plans for trainees on some NVQ programmes
- ◆ initial assessment does not ensure identification of all additional support needs
- ◆ key skills are not assessed on entry

20. The initial assessment of youth trainees concentrates on the skills required in the workplace, but does not identify basic or key skills, nor does it shape the individual training plan. Opportunities to identify support needs occur informally during the trainees' progress reviews, but, although identified needs are generally met, they are not systematically identified. For youth training programmes, the provider has developed a range of induction assignments, which explains the scope of training and assessment to the trainees. For adult trainees, initial assessment is

GOOD PRACTICE

A trainee with a debilitating bone disorder has been enabled to go on a work placement, and carry out all the employer's requirements, because his provider has supplied him with a specially designed chair. In another instance, a trainee on placement, who was having difficulty in maintaining the pace of work, receives visits from his trainer twice a week, instead of once, and has been able to increase his rate of progress considerably, as a result.

used effectively to determine individual training plans, and these take account of any support needs.

21. Trainees with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given considerable support throughout their training. Their particular support needs are met with sensitivity. Employers and the provider's staff work closely, to provide the trainees with the optimum chance of success to achieve the target qualification and to secure employment.

Management of training

Grade 2

22. KITA Limited has a clear management structure which is understood by staff, trainees and employers. Each member of staff has accountability for several areas which are established on appointment and reviewed annually. About two years ago, in response to an analysis of its position, the company decided to diversify its training provision. It also identified several areas of its activities which needed updating and improving. To this end, a new divisional manager has been appointed to develop and manage adult training and to manage the youth training programmes. A new board of directors has been constituted, and, in the last twelve months, the company management has been restructured. In a short space of time, considerable improvements in the management of training have taken place, and action-planning for continued improvement is in place. The action-plan addresses many of the weaknesses identified by inspectors, but at the time of inspection, implementation of the plan was at an early stage. Inspectors agreed with the main strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and with the grade proposed for this area of provision.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ keen participation in local and national employer and training networks
- ◆ rapid response to new training initiatives and opportunities
- ◆ good action-planning to address management issues
- ◆ clear organisational structure with well-defined staff accountability
- ◆ good management information system provides accurate and timely data

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor promotion of the company's mission statement which is not widely known internally
- ◆ insufficient rigour in personnel procedures
- ◆ lack of coherent recording of staff appraisal

23. In general, training is well managed by KITA Limited. On- and off-the-job training are well co-ordinated through training officers, and informal communications operate effectively among the company's staff, employers, subcontractors and colleges. Management information systems provide accurate and timely data to inform decision-making. Managers respond rapidly to changes in demand for training and are quick to meet employers and trainees' needs. The company is a key player in many of the training and employment groups in Kent.

24. KITA Limited is rapidly extending its range of training provision and reacting positively to new government initiatives. The new board of directors has set the management team challenging targets, such as entering new vocational areas and increasing the numbers of trainees, which relate to the business and marketing plans. Management is aware of the weaknesses in personnel procedures, which are no more than statements in the employers' handbook. Staff appraisal focuses on the achievements of individual staff, in the areas for which they are accountable. There is no systematic recording of staff appraisal or of the development needs of trainers, which are identified during appraisal. These weaknesses are addressed in the company's action-planning. KITA Limited has a statement of corporate values which reflects the company's philosophy of commitment to good-quality training. This is not recognised by staff as a mission statement, although it is written in the employee handbook and referred to in the business plan. Trainees, placement providers and employers are not given a copy of this statement, nor is it displayed in the company's offices.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

25. KITA Limited meets several external quality standards, including ISO 9002, the Investors in People Standard and those of the TEC and awarding bodies. Where achievement targets have been agreed on with the TEC, they have been consistently met or exceeded. Individual quality assurance mechanisms ensure high-quality work placements and a good reputation among local employers. However, these mechanisms are fragmented and do not systematically assure quality. Inspectors agreed with the grade which the company awarded itself for quality assurance, but identified some weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous and effective monitoring of work placements
- ◆ open and thorough self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of an established and systematic quality assurance system
- ◆ failure to analyse performance data systematically



26. KITA Limited has yet to complete the introduction of a comprehensive quality assurance system, which is specified in the company's action-plan. The views of trainees, employers and subcontractors are gathered informally and, where appropriate, have been acted on to improve the quality of training. Data on trainees' progress, achievements and destinations, together with data relating to achievement of company's targets and TEC profiles, are analysed to provide information for improving the quality of training. However, this analysis is not carried out and recorded systematically.