



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JULY 2000

# Roots and Shoots



## SUMMARY

Roots and Shoots provides good foundation training for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual needs are met through well-resourced practical training and appropriate work placements. Equal opportunities are actively promoted in the local community and regularly reinforced through basic skills training. There is no systematic monitoring of equal opportunities in work placements. Trainees are well supported during and after their training. Good use is made of external agencies to broaden trainees' learning and improve training quality. Individual training plans are underdeveloped. Management of training is satisfactory. Experienced staff, trustees and volunteers who are proactive support the manager. The different training programme elements are not well integrated. Workplace agreements lack guidance for employers. Work-placement learning is not integrated with centre-based training. Self-assessment is not embedded in quality assurance procedures and feedback from trainees and employers is not reviewed systematically.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Foundation for work	2

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good practical training to meet trainees' individual needs
- ◆ appropriate and supportive work placements
- ◆ good retention, achievement and progression rates
- ◆ good use of community contacts to strengthen trainees' learning and independence
- ◆ active promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ good integration of equal opportunities into training
- ◆ thorough initial assessment and selection procedures
- ◆ good support for current and former trainees
- ◆ good use of free or subsidised training for staff development
- ◆ good use of external agencies to support quality improvements

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities to integrate basic skills with vocational training
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of equal opportunities in work placements
- ◆ little review of trainees' progress
- ◆ little integration of each element of the training programme
- ◆ self-assessment not integrated with quality assurance arrangements



## INTRODUCTION

1. Roots and Shoots was established in 1982 by the Lady Margaret Hall Settlement and became an independent charity in 1997. It is situated in Lambeth, south London, on a former civil defence site. Its mission is to provide training for young people with moderate learning difficulties, help develop their skills and confidence, and equip them for work. A two-year, full-time training programme in a supportive environment is provided for up to 20 trainees. In addition to literacy and numeracy, the programme includes foundation training in horticulture and woodwork, work experience and social skills development. There are currently 15 trainees on the programme. Five full-time staff are employed, assisted by two volunteers. A wildlife outreach worker funded by another charity supports environmental education. A contract is held with FOCUS Central London TEC for training leading to literacy and numeracy qualifications. Other sources of funding include Lambeth Council's daytime service for young people with learning disabilities, other charities and trusts, and the sale of horticultural produce. Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding has been used to improve some buildings. The site provides training facilities for horticulture and woodwork, and incorporates a wildlife garden used as an environmental resource by local schools.

2. Trainees are drawn mainly from the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark. Their combined population is approximately 500,000. The central London economy is dominated by business services firms. In Lambeth and Southwark there has been growth in employment in banking, finance, insurance, distribution, hotels and restaurants. There has been a decline in employment in construction, public administration, education, health and other general services. Approximately 10 per cent of economically active adults in Lambeth and Southwark are unemployed, compared with 6 per cent for Greater London and 4 per cent nationally. In Lambeth 33.3 per cent of the population and 28.2 per cent of the population in Southwark are from minority ethnic groups. In 1999, 29 per cent of school leavers achieved five general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C or above compared to the national average of 48 per cent. In the same year 74 per cent of school leavers entered full-time education, 5 per cent entered employment and 7 per cent entered training. Seven per cent were unemployed, with the destinations of the remainder unknown. Approximately 27 per cent of school pupils have special educational needs compared to 23 per cent and 21 per cent for Greater London and England respectively. Over 50 per cent of secondary school pupils are eligible for free school meals compared to the national average of 17.5 per cent. Southwark and Lambeth are eighth and 12<sup>th</sup> respectively out of 357 in the 1998 index of local deprivation.



## INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. Roots and Shoots produced its first self-assessment report in accordance with the criteria in *Raising the Standard* a year ago. The current report is the second. A development day in July 1999 was attended by staff, trustees and volunteers, whose suggestions were incorporated in the report. It was written by the manager with support from the basic skills tutor and the TEC contract manager. A draft was circulated to staff for comment before publication. A general introduction gives useful background on the development of Roots and Shoots. Information is provided for the occupational and generic areas. Strengths and weaknesses are identified, but some of a generic nature are shown in the wrong area. For example, some strengths identified under quality assurance actually relate to trainee support or foundation for work. Although inspectors did not agree with all the strengths and weaknesses identified, they agreed with all but one of the grades proposed. In this case a higher grade was awarded. Self-assessment is not integrated with the overall quality assurance procedures. The action plan does not cover all the strengths and weaknesses identified by the self-assessment. It does however clearly state targets, milestones and success indicators.

4. A team of two inspectors spent a total of eight days with Roots and Shoots in July 2000. One occupational area, foundation for work, was inspected. Inspectors visited three work placements and Roots and Shoots' facilities. They interviewed 12 trainees and three workplace supervisors. Inspectors also conducted 12 interviews with Roots and Shoots' staff, including the manager, trainers and volunteers. A wide range of documents was reviewed, including trainees' files, basic and vocational skills portfolios, records of meetings, procedures manuals, policies, correspondence and external verifiers' reports. Four training sessions were observed and graded.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Foundation for work		2	2			
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

### OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

#### Foundation for work

#### Grade 2

5. The foundation for work programme trains young people with a broad range of learning difficulties and disabilities and prepares them for work. Trainees spend an average of two years on the programme. Training includes practical skills in horticulture and woodwork leading to units in a national vocational foundation scheme, basic skills at entry level in wordpower and numberpower, and personal and social skills development. The 15 trainees work in groups of no more than six, on an individually planned rota of training and related activities. These include



selling plants grown at the centre to the public, and plumbing, electrical and other maintenance work on the premises. Seven trainees are on work-experience placements ranging from one to four days per week over block periods. All trainees complete at least one placement. Placements include horticultural contractors in London parks, a charitable wildlife trust, supermarkets and large home/garden retail outlets. Training in independent travel to placements is provided as required. Basic skills training and trainees' allowances are funded by the TEC. In the past two years only one trainee has left the programme early. TEC targets for the achievement of basic skills qualifications have been met. Trainers are qualified and occupationally competent with wide experience of working with young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Volunteers also contribute to the training programme. The self-assessment report separated out the components of the training rather than reporting them together within foundation for work. The report clearly identified several of the strengths. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-managed, purposeful approach to trainees' learning
- ◆ full integration of vocational training with Roots and Shoots' operations as a charity
- ◆ choice of basic skills tasks and activities motivates trainees
- ◆ appropriate and supportive work placements
- ◆ good retention, achievement and progression
- ◆ good use of community contacts and location to strengthen trainees' learning and independence

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no systematic planning and recording of learning in basic skills
- ◆ missed opportunities for integrating basic skills with vocational training
- ◆ missed opportunities for integrating work-placement learning with centre-based training

6. Trainers establish a consistently good teamwork approach to learning. There is clear demonstration and checking of learning, ensuring that all trainees participate and receive close individual support. Trainees understand how they are assessed. They are regularly encouraged to assess their completion of practical tasks in woodwork, and to identify ways of improving their skills. Vocational training is fully integrated with the operations of the charity, providing a real and purposeful context in which to develop skills and practical achievements. This motivates trainees. They grow plants and make furniture which they sell to the public. They work in the wildlife garden which hosts visitors and school parties. They raise funds towards the costs of training, carry out essential maintenance work and promote links with the local community through projects.



7. All trainees attend for two sessions a week of basic skills. At each session they are encouraged to choose from a range of literacy or numeracy tasks according to their interests and levels of ability. This motivates trainees and ensures that they have control over the pace and nature of their own learning. Trainees enjoy this approach and work with concentration. However, trainees are not encouraged to reflect upon or record what they have learnt by carrying out these tasks and activities. Nor are they encouraged to produce evidence for basic skills assessment from their vocational activities. There is no systematic recording of basic skills development in the horticulture or woodworking training. Learning materials for basic skills are satisfactory, but the range has not recently been broadened or updated. Trainees practise letters of complaint to British Rail rather than the appropriate rail company, or work from out-of-date calendars and price lists.

8. The nature and timing of work placements are flexible according to individual needs. Placements are planned to develop trainees' self-confidence in the workplace. Employers provide good induction, support and some training. One trainee is working as a full member of a park maintenance team and has been trained by the employer in the use of machinery. Another is gardening in a wildlife centre and will soon be working alongside the playleader in a children's summer school. However, what trainees learn on placement is not linked to their centre-based training. Employers are not formally briefed about the skills and abilities of trainees.

9. Most trainees stay throughout the programme and make good progress. There has been one early leaver over the past two years who was referred to a hostel for specialist support. All six trainees who completed in 1999-2000 achieved units in horticulture or woodworking, and four also achieved both wordpower and numberpower. Some trainees achieve basic skills awards at level 1 or 2. Non-accredited achievement in personal and social development is not systematically recorded but is good. One trainee who could not travel independently to the centre now attends a part-time course at a local college and does voluntary work. A trainee with physical and learning disabilities who attended mainstream school has made friends for the first time at the centre, and is confident within the social group. Some trainees move into jobs directly linked to their success in a placement or to the practical skills developed in training. One trainee with woodworking and electrical skills is working as a lift engineer after an initial job in a joinery workshop. Trainees' transition into work, onto college courses or into voluntary sector placements is carefully managed.

10. A varied programme of visits, trips, speakers and social events is planned to broaden the experience of trainees and develop their independence. Trainees are planning a group trip to Brighton. They travelled from nearby Waterloo Station to Hampton Court Flower Show and saw their own plants and woodworking products on display. Football matches are arranged with other organisations including government departments. The cost of visiting a new cinema was met from funds raised by the Friends of Roots and Shoots.



## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

11. The mission statement commits Roots and Shoots to equal opportunities. Equal opportunities are the responsibility of the manager. A regularly reviewed equal opportunities policy meets the requirements of the TEC and other funding agencies. There are complaints and grievance procedures for staff and trainees. The composition of staff and trustees reflects the balance of gender, ethnicity, age and sexuality found in the local community. The trustees monitor data for staff and trainees monthly. Of the 15 trainees currently on the programme, two are women and two are from minority ethnic groups. All have learning difficulties and disabilities. Local community groups, special schools, and groups catering for people with disabilities use the resources at Roots and Shoots. The self-assessment report identified equal opportunities training for trainees as a strength, and the lack of equal opportunities training for staff and the under-representation of women on programmes as weaknesses. Inspectors identified additional strengths and one additional weakness and awarded a grade one grade higher than the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities policy
- ◆ active promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ clear, rigorously monitored equal opportunities targets
- ◆ good integration of equal opportunities with training
- ◆ extensive local community links encourage access to resources

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ women under-represented on programmes
- ◆ not all staff have received equal opportunities training
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of equal opportunities in work placements

12. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. It commits Roots and Shoots to promoting equality of opportunity for its trainees, employees and work-experience providers, and also in all the services it provides to the local community. It contains clear descriptions of types of discrimination and how they should be avoided. It gives examples of direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability. Religious tolerance is promoted and the specific religious needs of staff and trainees are respected. For example, the work schedule of one member of staff is arranged to enable him to attend a mosque.

13. Roots and Shoots works closely to the commitment in its mission statement, and actively promotes equality of opportunity in all its work. When deciding future developments, Roots and Shoots gives priority to groups who may face



discrimination. It seeks funding only from sources that do not compromise its objectives or contravene its equal opportunities policy.

14. Clear equal opportunities targets are set and rigorously monitored. There is a requirement that the composition of staff and trustees should reflect the local population. For example, 75 per cent of trustees are required to live or work locally. Trustees' meetings are held where access is good and childcare facilities are available. The trustees formally review the equal opportunities policy and the achievement of targets annually. This includes a detailed review of the ethnic background of all people using Roots and Shoots' services. Marketing materials are monitored, and include images that reflect the target client group. Monitoring has shown that women are under-represented on programmes. Action is being taken to provide training that is more likely to meet the needs of young female trainees from the target group.

15. Equal opportunities issues and training are integrated well. Trainees' induction materials contain clear statements about equal opportunities. Understanding of these is checked by verbal questioning. Equal opportunities topics are integrated with basic skills training. The newspaper articles and worksheets used to develop literacy skills also cover equal opportunities topics. For example, an article about a neighbourhood boundary dispute is used to discuss tolerance in society. Pictures showing people of different race and social background are used to discuss stereotyping in job applications. In horticulture, a trainer who hears trainees making inappropriate remarks draws them into a group to discuss the implications of the remarks in the context of employment. Although staff have a good awareness of equal opportunities issues, not all have received equal opportunities training. There is some inconsistency between staff in the approach to the monitoring and promoting of equal opportunities.

16. Roots and Shoots' extensive local community links encourage access to its resources by a wide range of groups. Roots and Shoots is a member of the Black Environmental Network (BEN), and local schools and groups for disabled people use its environmental resources. Many special schools and groups representing minority ethnic groups also visit the site. For example, visits by a local Asian women's group have been arranged. Work experience is regularly provided for children from a local school for the blind. Most of the Roots and Shoots site is easily accessible by wheelchair users except for one first-floor woodwork workshop, but equivalent resources are available on the ground floor.

17. Roots and Shoots does not systematically monitor equal opportunities in the workplace. Work-experience providers are given a copy of the equal opportunities policy, but the agreement they sign with Roots and Shoots does not commit them to implementing equal opportunities. Equal opportunities issues are discussed with employers during trainees' review visits, but the discussions are not recorded. Where equal opportunities issues arise, prompt action is taken. One trainee placed at a builders' merchant who suffered racial abuse was immediately withdrawn and placed with a different company.



## Trainee support

## Grade 2

18. Trainees are referred to Roots and Shoots through the careers service or directly from special schools, other training providers and social services. Potential trainees are invited to visit the centre with parents or others as appropriate. All have a confidential interview, and complete a detailed application form. The initial visit is followed up by a day of assessments to establish the individual's training and support needs, and to give further experience of the centre before the enrolment is confirmed. Trainees have an individual induction in their first week, which includes health and safety, equality of opportunity, and the behaviour expected during training. This is followed up with questioning against a checklist to ensure that all topics have been fully understood. The training contract is agreed following a review at the end of the first month. Trainers in each skill area report on each trainee's progress every eight weeks. Staff have recently been allocated a tutorial responsibility for up to four trainees, and carry out tutorial reviews every three months. The work-experience co-ordinator supports each trainee's introduction to the work placement, and monitors progress through telephone contact and visits. She provides travel training and support. Towards the end of the programme she also assists trainees in finding employment or in planning other progression. The manager is closely involved with all aspects of trainee support, particularly liaison with parents and external agencies. Strengths identified in the self-assessment report were accurate, but it did not fully cover all the stages needed for the effective support of trainees. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and awarded the same grade as the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ thorough initial assessment and selection procedures
- ◆ highly supportive environment
- ◆ well-established use of external support agencies and organisations
- ◆ good celebration of trainees' successes
- ◆ good support for former trainees

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ under-developed individual training plans
- ◆ little formal reviewing of overall progress with trainees

19. Initial assessment is thorough, and covers practical skills and motivation as well as a self-assessment against a broad range of personal, social and basic skills. Assessment is carried out before induction to ensure that trainees have a good understanding of the training offered within the centre, and so that support needs can be met. Parents and social workers are involved. The application form gathers details of trainees' medical and educational background and existing skills levels. All trainees are interviewed. These procedures provide a well-informed basis for starting the individual's training. Comprehensive one-to-one induction is carried

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*Every year up to 10 pupils from a local special school attend Roots and Shoots on a work placement. They experience all aspects of the training programme and the centre. Each is mentored by an experienced trainee. This gives trainees the opportunity to develop mentoring skills. Each participant evaluates the experience of mentoring. This promotes local links and is an effective way of recruiting trainees directly or through word of mouth.*

out in the first week of training and is supported by written induction materials. Understanding is checked by verbal questions. The standards of behaviour expected of trainees are given in clear simple statements.

20. Trainees receive close support from a small team of staff and volunteers, and through the involvement of local professional and community organisations. Counselling services give effective support to young people with high levels of support needs in aspects of relationships, self-esteem, and sexual health. This counselling is being extended through a successful bid for funding in partnership with a local counselling service. The expertise and resources of other agencies is harnessed to extend the range of support available. Nurses on two-week placements give presentations on health topics or carry out tutorials and mock job interviews. Another local hospital provides an annual talk on dental health. Local mothers work with trainees on parenting skills. Volunteers assist directly with reading sessions, and contribute widely to the organisation. The trainees are particularly well supported through the Friends of Roots and Shoots, who provide additional equipment and fund the cost of social events or visits. They have provided clothes for job interviews, or the taxi fares for a trainee who is unable to travel independently to the centre. Roots and Shoots works closely with social services, attending case conferences about vulnerable trainees. They have involved the local member of parliament in resolving the benefits problems experienced by a young trainee after the sudden death of his mother, and worked with solicitors on a case of mistaken identity in the arrest of a Vietnamese student. High levels of individual support are given to some former trainees who call in at the centre for social contact or for further practical support with jobs or relationships.

21. Trainees are encouraged to take pride in their achievements both as individuals and as members of the team. They show visitors a well-constructed garden seat made as the focal point for a garden of remembrance they are building in memory of a former volunteer. Photographs around the centre show a high level of success and community involvement. These include photographs of their furniture and plants on display at the Hampton Court Flower Show, or of the local mayor planting a tree. There is a strong focus on what trainees have been able to achieve on the programme, and on the extent to which they have developed in self-confidence and independence. There are leaving ceremonies for all trainees and regular features in local newsletters and publications.

22. The comprehensive information obtained through the initial assessment is not used in the development of individual training plans. The plans do not provide a template against which trainees' progress can be monitored. Trainees have no written information about the planned stages in their two-year programme.

23. Trainees have close working relationships with their trainers, who frequently and informally review their progress. Trainees have a good understanding of what they have learnt and what progress they have made. Every eight weeks, all trainers share written progress reports with trainees who, however, are not actively involved in these reviews. Reviews of trainees' progress on work placements are not linked to their agreed learning goals. New tutorial arrangements have recently



been introduced for the overall review of trainees' performance, and for action planning and the re-negotiation of learning goals. These have already resulted in some adjustments to individual training programmes.

### **Management of training**

**Grade 3**

24. The Roots and Shoots manager reports to the nine trustees of the charity. Two horticultural trainers, a woodwork and building skills trainer and a basic and social skills tutor report to her. All have been employed by Roots and Shoots for over 10 years. Work experience is co-ordinated by the basic and social skills tutor. A wildlife outreach worker funded by another charity is employed by Roots and Shoots. Accounting and general administration are undertaken by two volunteers who also report to the manager. Volunteers from the local community provide additional support for trainees and staff. Roots and Shoots staff carry out all the training. No subcontractors are used. TEC targets for recruitment and results have been achieved for the last three years. Roots and Shoots was recognised as an Investor in People in April 2000. Inspectors agreed that the manager requires additional support. Strengths claimed in the self-assessment report do not all relate to the management of training. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ enthusiastic and appropriately experienced trustees
- ◆ strong commitment by all stakeholders to organisational objectives
- ◆ comprehensive staffing procedures ensure equality of opportunity
- ◆ good use of free or subsidised training for staff development

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ over-reliance on the manager in all aspects of provision
- ◆ little integration of each element of the training programme
- ◆ lack of guidance for employers in work-placement agreements

25. Since Roots and Shoots was formed as an independent charity in 1997, a board of trustees has guided all activities. They come from a range of backgrounds and reflect the population mix of the local area. Trustees with a range of professional skills have been appointed to provide expertise to support the manager, and include an architect, a senior government official, a local primary school teacher and a former trainee. The architect has drawn up plans for new building developments. Another trustee who is a freelance writer undertakes publicity and fundraising. One trustee undertakes all the financial management on a voluntary basis. Trustees' meetings, which the manager attends, are held monthly. There is no other staff representation at these meetings. They follow a standard agenda and review action items from the previous meeting. Progress towards targets, and



updates on fundraising, form the main business.

26. There is a very strong commitment to the objectives of Roots and Shoots by all those involved. Trustees, staff and trainees fully understand the mission and their role in supporting it. Regular volunteer staff provide good support to trainees in a variety of ways. Some support trainees directly with horticultural and basic skills. Over 200 local people belong to the Friends of Roots and Shoots, which undertakes fundraising and other support activities. Roots and Shoots has active links with the local borough and with many community and voluntary groups which support its work. Local residents support trainees through the purchase of plants and wood products. Local employers understand and support the charity and provide high-quality work experience for trainees as well as management support through links with the business community.

27. There are comprehensive staffing procedures that ensure equality of opportunity for staff. Although staff turnover is very low, detailed procedures cover the recruitment, selection, induction and development of staff. Applications for all posts are to be placed in the local and national press, job centres and in minority ethnic publications. Personal details are to be removed from application forms before shortlisting. Interview panels are to contain at least one person from a minority ethnic background and one from another under-represented group. Conditions of employment set out all terms and conditions in a clear, concise way. They include a summary of the equal opportunities responsibilities of employer and employee. The staff appraisal system has recently been revised. Two trustees appraise the manager. The manager and a trustee appraise other staff. Appraisals cover the previous year's activities and identify training needs.

28. Staff have access to a wide range of relevant training opportunities despite severe budget restrictions. Roots and Shoots takes advantage of many free or subsidised training activities to meet most of its training needs. Training provided by the TEC, community organisations and the local borough is used. For example, the basic skills tutor has recently undertaken key skills training arranged by the TEC. A trustee has taken an Open University course in fundraising management, subsidised by a local charitable trust.

29. There is an over-reliance on the manager. She is directly involved in the organisation and management of all internal and external activities. She manages all contracts with funding providers and is primarily responsible for fundraising. She is the only qualified internal verifier and undertakes all internal verification. In addition, she is responsible for all trainees' welfare and discipline, and for liaison with external welfare agencies. She is responsible for all policies and procedures, including quality, equal opportunities and staffing. Funding is being sought to appoint an additional member of staff to undertake trainees' welfare.

30. There is little integration of each element of the training programme. Induction, initial assessment, basic skills, horticulture, woodwork and work experience are individually well managed, but are not sufficiently linked. There is little planning for a coherent programme for trainees. A staff meeting is held every



two weeks, where trainees' progress and other aspects of the programme are discussed. There is no standard agenda, and only brief notes are made which do not specify follow-up actions. This leads to missed opportunities to use information about each aspect of the programme more widely, and to share good practice in training and assessment.

31. Roots and Shoots' work-placement agreement lacks guidance for employers. There is no separate written guidance for them. The placement provider is required to agree to a range of conditions that support and protect the trainee, but these do not include equal opportunities. There are no written details of the responsibilities of Roots and Shoots to the employer, or of contact procedures in case of problems arising with a trainee.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 3**

32. Roots and Shoots has a quality assurance policy and annual quality cycle which have been recently developed from a previous quality statement. A detailed procedures manual covers all activities. The development and implementation of quality assurance procedures is the responsibility of the manager. Some internal audits of trainees' documentation are undertaken. TEC requirements for quality assurance are met. External audit reports by the TEC, Investors in People and awarding bodies are used to guide quality monitoring and improvement. Questionnaires are used to gather feedback from trainees and work-placement providers. Roots and Shoots produced its second self-assessment report for the inspection. The report recognised that the procedures manual required updating. This had been done by the inspection. Inspectors did not agree that the other strengths and weaknesses found in this area by the self-assessment report related to quality assurance. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified and inspectors awarded the same grade as the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ clear written procedures for all activities
- ◆ good use of external agencies to support quality improvements
- ◆ good use of trainees' achievements and destinations as a basis for future developments

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ self-assessment not integrated with quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of action plan
- ◆ no systematic use of feedback from trainees and employers

33. A clearly written, up-to-date procedures manual covers all the activities undertaken by Roots and Shoots. The manual gives details of all procedures for trainees' recruitment, induction, training and work experience. Staff make good use of the manual, which is easily accessible. Clear flowcharts guide staff through



each procedure. The manual also contains the business plan, and procedures for quality assurance, staffing, health and safety and financial management. Although the self-assessment report stated that the manual needed updating, this had been done by the time of inspection. It is routinely updated to reflect changes in procedures.

34. Good use is made of external agencies to supplement and inform quality assurance procedures. The TEC contract manager observes training in basic skills. The local borough undertakes an annual audit of equal opportunities. It is used to review performance and amend the equal opportunities policy. Areas for further development arising from the recent Investors in People assessment, and from a review of training undertaken by a consultant, have been incorporated into current action plans. The assessment of trainees is observed by the manager approximately every three months as part of the internal verification process. The external verifier for the vocational foundation scheme provides advice and support for assessors. Internal verification for horticulture and basic skills meets awarding body requirements. There is no occupationally competent internal verifier for woodwork.

35. The achievements and destinations of all trainees are closely monitored. This information is routinely used to influence training developments. For example, it has been found that traditional job opportunities in horticulture have declined, as has the number of women trainees. Increasing numbers of trainees are gaining employment with branches of garden centre chains. This information has been discussed by staff and trustees, and has led to developments in retail skills training. These are planned to improve trainees' employment opportunities and attract more women trainees.

36. Internal quality assurance arrangements are under-developed. The quality assurance policy and associated statements have recently been updated. They draw together a range of quality assurance procedures, but do not include self-assessment. The results of the quality assurance cycle do not routinely contribute to the self-assessment process, or vice versa. The current self-assessment report is the second produced by Roots and Shoots. A development day was held in July 1999, attended by staff, trustees and volunteers. Their suggestions were incorporated in the report. The manager wrote the report, with support from the basic skills tutor. Inspectors considered some of the strengths and weaknesses it found to be normal practice. Some of the generic strengths and weaknesses did not meet the criteria in *Raising the Standard*. For example, some strengths identified under quality assurance related to trainee support or foundation for work. The action plan does not cover all the strengths and weaknesses identified. It does, however, clearly state targets, milestones and success indicators. Items from action plans are discussed at trustees' and staff meetings, but the manager does not regularly report on progress towards the overall plan.

37. Trainees and employers complete questionnaires following work experience, but no systematic use is made of this feedback. The information is held by the work-experience co-ordinator and discussed with the manager periodically. There



is no formal analysis of trends. Emerging issues are discussed at team meetings and at the annual development day.

38. Every two months trainees meet the basic skills tutor and the manager. Brief notes are kept, and key points arising are discussed at team meetings. There is no systematic follow up of action items, although some suggestions are acted upon. For example, a tuck shop was started, and a cleaning rota for the toilets was introduced.