



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 1999

REINSPECTION SEPTEMBER 2000

Direct Training Services Ltd

SUMMARY

Direct Training Services Ltd offers good engineering and management and professional programmes, with good-quality working environments, well-planned training programmes, good portfolios and some effective progression routes into employment. The agriculture, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality and care training is satisfactory. In all areas, trainees fully understand their qualifications and are able to gather a wide range of evidence to produce a high standard of portfolios. The foundation for work programme also offers trainees an entry-point into work-based training. The company has effective policies and procedures to manage its training. Staff training and development are well planned. On- and off-the-job training is inadequately co-ordinated, and employers are insufficiently involved in the learning process. Quality assurance measures are satisfactory. At the time of the first inspection, there was a passive approach to equal opportunities, its promotion and management within the organisation. Few trainees had an initial assessment of their basic and key skills and support issues were poorly recorded. Since then, however, changes have been made. Equal opportunities arrangements are now good and trainee support is satisfactory. All trainees now have a good awareness of their rights and responsibilities and most employers have been given sound guidance on equal opportunities. Equal opportunities is now promoted and well managed. Trainees now receive strong support to help them to progress. Any additional learning needs are now identified through an initial assessment of their basic and key skills. The induction process is still inadequate. Direct Training Services has developed good strategies to try to improve retention rates across all occupational areas.

As a result of the reinspection of Direct Training Services Ltd, the original published report text for equal opportunities and trainee support has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings.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
Agriculture	3
Engineering	2
Management & professional	2
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	3
Health, care & public services	3
Foundation for work	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	3



KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective exchange of good practice across all occupational sectors
- ◆ good-quality portfolios
- ◆ additional qualifications to complement NVQs
- ◆ effective system for monitoring trainees' progress
- ◆ frequent visits to the workplace
- ◆ good strategic management of equal opportunities

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ no integration of key skills with vocational training across most areas
- ◆ unsatisfactory retention and achievement rates in most areas
- ◆ inadequate induction to NVQ and key skills

INTRODUCTION

1. Direct Training Services Ltd (DTS) was first established in May 1987. It is a company limited by guarantee and is also a registered charity. Originally based at a single location, in the intervening years DTS has expanded its geographical base and now operates from a network of training centres throughout Cumbria and the Northwest. The company employs 88 staff. A new management structure was introduced in January 1999. This changed the focus of management within the company from one directed at the performance of individual training centres, to one focused on the management of training on an occupational basis across the company as a whole. The chief executive manages DTS, supported by a board of 13 directors, with representation from private sector business and local government, both at borough and county level. None of the directors is employed by the company. Day-to-day management of the organisation is co-ordinated by the programme development group. At the time of the first inspection, the business systems manager chaired the group. It is now chaired by the human resources/programmes manager who acts as the operational interface between senior management and training staff. At the time of the first inspection, the company employed 88 staff, this has since decreased to 79 staff, with four vacancies to be filled.

2. DTS has been offering government-funded training programmes since 1987. The number of trainees has increased by around 21 per cent since the first inspection when there were 416 trainees. This has increased to 627 people in training. They are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 3 in agriculture, construction, engineering, manufacturing, management and professional services, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality, leisure, sport and travel, health, care and public services and foundation for work. Ninety-three trainees are modern apprentices, 185 are national trainees, and 84 are on other work-based training for young people. One hundred and twenty-three trainees are on work-based learning for adults programmes. There are also 45 New Deal clients, 16 of whom are on the full-time education and training option, 29 are on the voluntary sector option and two are on the environment task force option. DTS also provides training for employed New Deal clients, contracting directly with employers on a commercial basis. Two hundred and nine trainees are employed. Seventy-six of the young people are endorsed as having additional learning needs. Twenty-nine of the adults have disabilities. In addition, there are 261 trainees on Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded training programmes, subcontracted from three colleges of further education. DTS also offers training on a commercial basis to individuals and employers throughout the county. Two new programmes have been introduced since the first inspection. Eighteen trainees are on a three-month 'career choices' course and 16 trainees are working on an open-learning computing course.

3. DTS has contracts with three training and enterprise councils (TECs). These are Enterprise Cumbria, Oldham Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise

(CCTE) and Manchester TEC. Since the first inspection, DTS no longer contracts with a local enterprise company (LEC) in Scotland. Cumbria is the co-ordinating TEC for this inspection. As at the first inspection, over 90 per cent of trainees are funded through contracts with Enterprise Cumbria. DTS is a member of the local partnership responsible to the Employment Service for the training elements of New Deal. DTS also provides the Gateway elements of New Deal in Cumbria. It also manages and provides a rehabilitation programme for trainees with disabilities on behalf of the Employment Service.

4. DTS's head office is in Cleator Moor, Cumbria. There are eight other centres in Cumbria, based at Carlisle, Whitehaven, Millom, Barrow-in-Furness, Maryport and three in Workington. There is a further centre in Oldham, Greater Manchester. Most off-the-job training takes place on DTS's premises, although a little is subcontracted to a local college of further education.

5. As at the first inspection, minority ethnic groups in Cumbria make up 0.4 per cent of the population. In Oldham, the figure is higher at 11 per cent, with significant Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian communities. In both Cumbria and Oldham, the industrial manufacturing base is still strong. In the latter, this results in a particularly high concentration of jobs in craft and related areas. In Oldham, young people and minority ethnic communities continue to experience the highest levels of unemployment.

6. DTS's primary area of operations in Cumbria covers the key population centres of what is a mainly rural county. There are significant numbers of people with relatively low incomes in rural areas facing a range of barriers to the labour market, particularly access to transport. Additionally, there are significant areas of disadvantage in the urban centres of Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle, Whitehaven and Workington.

7. The Cumbrian economy relies heavily on manufacturing centred in West Cumbria, Furness and Carlisle. Twenty-four per cent of employment is in this sector, compared with 18 per cent nationally. However, employment in this sector is expected to decline, a trend reflected in the decreasing staff levels of several large manufacturing employers. In rural areas of the county, and especially within the National Parks, tourism forms an important element of the economy and continues to grow as a source of employment. Agriculture still plays a central role in the rural economy, although employment in this sector is in decline. Employment in the financial and business services sectors is low. There is significant potential for employment growth in service industries.

8. In July 2000, the unemployment rate in Cumbria was 3.7 per cent, the same as the national average of 3.7 per cent. Unemployment rates in Cumbria overall have decreased from around 4.8 per cent at the time of the first inspection. In some areas of the county, unemployment is as low as 1.2 per cent, and Kendal, Keswick, Penrith and Windermere possess unemployment rates significantly below the national rate. This is because of the growth of service sector opportunities in these areas. However, Workington, Whitehaven and Barrow-in-Furness have



consistently experienced the highest unemployment in the county, with rates up to 5.8 per cent (July 2000), above the national average. This is owing to the continuing restructuring of the large-scale manufacturing employers in these areas. There are significant seasonal variances in unemployment because of the nature of the agriculture and tourism-related industries.

9. In 1999, 15 per cent of school leavers entered work-based training in Cumbria. However, this figure excludes those on modern apprenticeships, compared with 8 per cent for 1998. In 1999, 56 per cent of school leavers went into further education. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 47.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. These figures disguise substantial differences at local level, and a higher proportion of school-leavers are unemployed in Carlisle, Barrow and Whitehaven.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

10. DTS began preparing for self-assessment in June 1998. Senior staff attended training organised by Enterprise Cumbria. These staff then delivered a number of awareness-raising sessions and workshops to their colleagues at DTS, designed to help them understand and contribute towards the preparation of the different report sections. Team leaders and training staff carried out self-assessment for their own occupational areas, consulting with staff, trainees and employers. The results were co-ordinated and collated by DTS's programme development group chaired by the business systems manager. The self-assessment report was completed in February 1999. After the inspection in June 1999, DTS prepared a detailed action plan, which was implemented and monitored up to July 2000. A second self-assessment report was developed prior to reinspection in September 2000. All staff are fully involved in the action-planning and self-assessment process.

11. A team of 15 inspectors spent a total of 57 days with DTS in June 1999. Eight occupational areas were inspected. These were agriculture, engineering, management and professional, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality, health, care and public services and foundation for work. Construction, manufacturing and leisure, sport and travel were not inspected, as the number of trainees in these sectors was small. Inspectors visited 86 employers and interviewed 81 workplace supervisors. They interviewed 119 trainees and visited nine out of 10 training centres. The centre in Oldham was not included in the scope of the inspection. Twenty-seven staff were interviewed. Inspectors examined a range of documentary evidence, including 122 NVQ portfolios and 105 trainees' files, together with assessment and review documents, and internal and external verifiers' reports. Policies and procedures, marketing information and a wide range of performance and occupancy data were also examined. There were some opportunities to observe training, assessment or reviews. Twenty-eight sessions were observed and these are detailed below.

12. A team of two inspectors carried out reinspection over a total of six days in September 2000. Inspectors interviewed 35 trainees. They examined 12 NVQ portfolios and 36 trainees' files. Eleven staff interviews were recorded and nine workplace supervisors were interviewed. One member of the board of directors was interviewed. Assessment and internal verification records, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures were examined. Inspectors observed one induction and one job-search session, which were judged to be satisfactory and good respectively. One review and one assessment were observed and both were judged to be satisfactory. No training sessions were observed at reinspection.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture			1			1
Engineering		1		1		2
Business administration		2	4	2		8
Retailing & customer service		1	4			5
Hospitality		3	1			4
Health, care & public services		4	1	1		6
Foundation for work		1	1			2
Total	0	12	12	4	0	28

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture (horticulture)

Grade 3

13. There are 19 trainees undertaking work-based training programmes in horticulture. Four are on work-based training for young people, following NVQ level 1 in commercial horticulture. All have special training needs. Nine trainees are on work-based learning for adults, following NVQ level 2 in commercial horticulture. There are also six New Deal clients, following the environmental task force option, undertaking an NVQ level 2 in amenity horticulture (hard landscaping). Training is largely project based. Training, other than the project work, is provided at two of the organisation's training centres: Workington and Barrow-in-Furness. There are no work placements and all trainees are unemployed. Trainees are recruited by referral from careers centres or the Employment Service. Recruitment is ongoing throughout the year. All trainees are interviewed prior to joining their training programme, and undergo an induction onto the programme. Induction normally lasts one day. All staff are experienced, occupationally qualified and hold appropriate assessor and internal verifier awards. Training and assessment takes place using practical training facilities, resources and horticultural equipment at both centres. These resources include outside planting areas, glasshouses, poly-tunnels, classrooms, trainees' base rooms, stores and offices. Both training centres operate commercial activities selling produce. The Workington site also provides community support to schools, homes for the elderly and the disabled gardeners' association.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-constructed portfolios
- ◆ comprehensive induction
- ◆ good, communicative, supportive environment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of training and assessment plans
- ◆ ineffective review and action-planning
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

14. DTS provides individual and flexible horticultural programmes at NVQ level 1 and level 2 in amenity horticulture (hard landscape) and commercial horticulture. Training and assessment are provided either on remote project sites throughout the West Cumbria area or in the organisation's horticultural centres at Workington or Barrow-in-Furness.

GOOD PRACTICE

There are good project-based learning programmes. Two youth trainees were set practical projects to assist them with their NVQ evidence collection and portfolio development. The trainees were given small individual glasshouses to plan, and grow from seed, a crop of tomatoes through to harvest. The trainees have day-to-day control of the growing process supported by centre staff. The project covers a wide range of performance criteria and theoretical knowledge across a range of units and elements. Both trainees are highly motivated. Both trainees are undertaking NVQ level 1 commercial horticulture and have special learning needs.

15. Both horticultural training centres are well resourced, with good facilities and equipment to support the trainees throughout their NVQ programme. Additional resources are being identified and budgeted for in order to support a projected increase in the number of commercial horticulture trainees. There are no work-placements or employers used in this sector and there are no plans to recruit any. Training sessions are very flexible and support the trainees effectively. Some training is provided on a one-to-one basis. There are three experienced and occupationally qualified staff, who work effectively as a team. All staff in this area have recently undertaken staff development to improve their vocational expertise. All three staff are currently working towards accreditation of prior learning assessor qualifications.

16. Trainees' portfolios are well constructed, individual and use good examples of a diverse range of evidence. The use of photographic evidence is widespread and encouraged. All trainees recall their induction and all are very aware of health and safety. Most can recall equal opportunities information, complaints procedures and have a good understanding of the NVQ process. All trainees undertake an additional two-day certificated health and safety training course.

17. Trainees in this programme area are either young people with special learning needs or long-term unemployed adults. There is a good communicative, supportive environment and an excellent team approach within the training centres between trainers and trainees. The centre at Workington operates a garden produce sales unit as part of its provision. Pupils from local schools, the elderly, people with disabilities and other members of the local community come to the centres. This enhances public contact for this particular group of trainees and supports personal skills development, confidence building and communication skills.

18. The organisation recruits trainees from the careers service and Employment Service, normally by referral. DTS operates an open-door policy and trainees are

recruited throughout the year. Initial assessment is limited to basic skills tests for youth trainees. DTS is not contractually obliged to initially assess adult trainees, so they are given a choice about assessment. This is not systematic, and not all adult trainees undertake this. Wordpower and numberpower training is provided in the centre on a weekly basis. Poor recording of trainees' additional learning needs leads to some trainees' needs being missed. Some trainees, who are identified as having special learning requirements, receive no additional support. In some cases, trainees with severe literacy problems have been identified, but these are not being addressed. Where additional support is provided, it is of a good standard and highly regarded by the trainees.

19. The company has recently restructured and introduced some new documents and systems. These are not fully established. In horticulture, the trainees do not have individual training plans. They are unaware of their current progress, unit targets and assessment plans. Trainees all attend the centre for five days each week. They do not receive a training timetable or training programme, either daily or weekly. The staff operate very informal systems. Trainees are unaware of when or how they will be next assessed.

20. The three staff in this area are all newly qualified internal verifiers and currently undertake all sampling of portfolios until they are more experienced. External verifiers' reports are now positive and supportive after some problems in the recent past with systems and processes.

21. Most trainees' reviews are frequent but pastoral in nature and content. There is no effective review of trainees' NVQ progress, and short-term training and assessment action plans are not produced. The use of accreditation of prior learning is not established in this programme area. Staff are currently working towards these awards. There is, however, a written process for accrediting prior learning and achievement.

22. All trainees are highly motivated and there are good working relationships between trainees and trainers. The centre at Workington is operated on a very informal basis. This is reflected in the casual approach to trainees' progress, programme awareness, recorded assessment and trainees' achievement. Questionnaires are sent out to trainees at the beginning, middle and end of their programmes. The results are not used to evaluate training. Retention and achievement rates in the adult and modern apprenticeship programmes are poor. On the adult programme, 1998-99 figures show 80 per cent of trainees were early leavers, the remaining 20 per cent achieved NVQs. On the modern apprenticeship programme, figures for 1998-99 show that all three floristry trainees failed to complete the programme, with no qualifications achieved. However, the youth training programme figures for achievement and retention are comparable to those of the local TEC. In youth training at DTS, 62 per cent successfully complete their qualifications and 38 per cent leave early. The average figures for the TEC are 50 per cent completing and 50 per cent leaving early.

Engineering (motor vehicle)

Grade 2

23. There are 74 trainees working towards national vocational qualifications in motor vehicle-related occupations at levels 1 to 3. Ten trainees are following NVQ level 1 vehicle maintenance service replacement. Thirty-six trainees are following NVQ level 2 motor vehicle unit replacement and 28 are following NVQ level 3 in motor vehicle mechanical and electronic systems maintenance and repair. Twenty-seven trainees are modern apprentices, two are national trainees and 42 are following other work-based training programmes for young people. There are no trainees on work-based training for adults in this sector. All the modern apprentices, one of the national trainees and two of the other young people are employed. There are also three clients on the New Deal full-time education and training programme. Of the 74 trainees in this occupational sector, 32 have been identified as requiring additional learning support. Work-placement providers and employers range from small, privately owned garages to large, multi-franchised car dealerships. Most off-the-job training is delivered at DTS's training centre in Workington. Four trainees attend a local college for off-the-job training in NVQ level 2 in body repair and vehicle refinishing. Trainees attend off-the-job training on a weekly or fortnightly basis. The remainder of the time is spent with their employer or placement company. Trainees are visited regularly in the workplace. The self-assessment report claimed few strengths or weaknesses. Inspectors identified others and awarded a grade higher than that given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective employer and trainer relationships
- ◆ good standard of portfolios
- ◆ good, well-supported progression for trainees
- ◆ effective individual training planning and review system

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ integration of key skills is slow
- ◆ ineffective internal verification system

GOOD PRACTICE

Five trainees with special learning needs who have achieved their intended qualification and then progressed to the modern apprenticeship programme demonstrate good and well supported progression.

24. DTS has developed effective working relationships with many local garages. Its knowledge of these companies, and the personal working relationships between staff at all levels, have given trainees good opportunities to learn and apply new skills in an environment which meets their needs and those of the employer. Highly skilled workplace supervisors assist trainees to identify suitable evidence for their qualification. There are a wide variety of relevant qualifications held by the workplace supervisors, including various technical occupational skills. DTS's well-qualified staff assist trainees with the compilation of portfolios. The result is good-quality portfolios, which the trainees understand and own.

25. Individual training is effective, well planned, agreed on with the trainee and discussed with the work placement supervisor. Assessments are pre-planned and are usually carried out at the placement company. If the placement company does not have the resources to allow a particular assessment to be carried out, it is carried out in the training centre under simulated conditions. As an example of this, trainees working in small garages, which do not have a range of reception facilities for the customer service unit, are assessed in a realistic reception area in the training centre. Assessment is thorough with full explanations given covering the appeals procedure and the routine of assessment. Notes are taken throughout assessment to allow a comprehensive feedback from the assessor who informs all parties involved in the training process. The review system is thorough and involves the trainer, trainee and placement company staff. All three parties agree on the future plans and these are recorded to allow the individual training plan to be updated.

26. There is no written plan for internal verification, despite requests in two successive external verifier reports that one be drawn up. The current policy of four samples per year is not fully implemented. Samples are not selected by the internal verifier: they are put forward by the assessor.

27. Off-the-job training in the workshop makes good use of the resources available and promotes trainees' interaction. However, observation of a training session in the classroom proved unsatisfactory. The traditional classroom layout creates difficulties for some trainees in observing the visual aids. Training and subsequent question and answer sessions did not confirm their understanding. Extra training sessions are available one evening each week for trainees who wish to attend in their own time or where workplace commitments dictate that they cannot attend during normal working hours.

28. Key skills are taught within the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship programmes. However, they are not assessed as part of the occupational programme and are planned and assessed separately. In one assessment, for example, inspectors observed an ideal opportunity to integrate key skills, which was not identified by the assessor. On the modern apprenticeship programme, 100 per cent of male leavers move into jobs. This is higher than the TEC average of 66 per cent. Of the modern apprentices, 50 per cent successfully complete the programme and 50 per cent leave early, compared to the TEC's average of 53 per cent and 47 per cent respectively. The percentages for the youth trainees are 64 per cent completing and 36 per cent leaving early compared to the TEC's average of 63 per cent and 37 per cent.

Management & professional

Grade 2

29. There are 19 trainees in this sector. Sixteen are on work-based learning programmes for adults following NVQs at level 3 in training and development. Some of these trainees are working towards supplementary qualifications in NVQ level 3 information technology or administration. There are also two New Deal

clients on the voluntary option. One is working towards NVQ level 3 in supervisory management, and the other is working towards three units in the NVQ level 3 in training and development. There is also one modern apprentice working towards NVQ level 3 in procurement. Off-the-job training takes place one day each week at DTS's training centres. Of the 19 trainees, 16 are placed with DTS in the role of assistant trainers. The three remaining trainees are on placement with local organisations. All trainers, assessors and internal verifiers are occupationally qualified. The self-assessment report contained some strengths with which inspectors agreed. Others reflect a standard which is no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with the identified weakness. The grade awarded is the same as that given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear action plans
- ◆ good access to occupational resources
- ◆ wide range of evidence in portfolios
- ◆ good use of workplace learning opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ work demands on trainees inhibits progress
- ◆ declining rates of achievement

30. Trainees clearly understand their qualification and its requirements. All have clear action plans and are able to monitor their own progress against targets. There are frequent visits to the three trainees in external work placements and these are used as opportunities to carry out regular reviews and assessments. Trainees placed within DTS have frequent contact with their trainer and assessor, but in some cases, this does not guarantee regular reviews and assessments. As a result, some trainees feel that their progress is actually inhibited by being placed in-house. Trainees are busy helping the training of other trainees, which leaves little time for their own reviews and assessments to take place.

31. The occupational learning materials are up to date and relevant. As trainees use the open-learning library, this is recorded to allow trainers to monitor the research skills of the trainee. Training sessions are planned, carried out and evaluated. Reflective learning reports, the self-evaluation records of the training sessions which the trainees have themselves delivered, are produced as evidence. Training and development trainees use workplace opportunities for learning in their own and other occupational areas to broaden their perspective and experience of training and assessment in the workplace.

32. The diversity within the training programmes results in a wide range of evidence in trainees' portfolios. Trainees have good portfolio-management skills and are able to clearly demonstrate their understanding of the qualification process. However, the rate of progression of trainees towards the achievement of

their award is affected by their role as 'trainee trainers' within DTS. They are sometimes acting as trainers for other youth and adult trainees on programmes for which they do not have the occupational expertise to deliver. Trainees have little time to reflect on and complete their own portfolios. This has been exacerbated recently for some trainees as their trainer has been absent through long-term sickness. During 1997-98, 87 per cent of adult trainees achieved their qualification; this figure has dropped to 52 per cent in 1998-99. The number of early leavers for the same programme has risen from 15 per cent in 1997-98 to 48 per cent in 1998-99. However, 55 per cent of adult trainees move directly into employment. As there is only one modern apprentice on programme who has successfully completed and is in work, the TEC averages have been exceeded by this 100 per cent record. The averages for the TEC are 35 per cent for successful completion, 65 per cent for modern apprentices leaving the programme early, and 74 per cent progressing into employment.

Business administration

Grade 3

33. There are 151 trainees in this sector. Forty-two are employed. Trainees are working towards NVQ levels 2 and 3 in business administration and levels 1 to 3 in the use of information technology. Twenty-six are modern apprentices, 10 are national trainees, 75 are on work-based learning for adults and 23 are on other work-based training for young people. There are also 17 clients on New Deal options. Trainees are offered additional qualifications, including health & safety. Trainees work or are placed in a variety of employers, ranging from multi-national private sector companies and public sector organisations to smaller, privately owned employers. These organisations are located throughout Cumbria. Training advisors visit trainees on a regular basis for reviews and assessment. Trainees receive guidance, coaching and skills training at work. Some trainees attend off-the-job training on a day-release basis. Trainees without placements are based full time at one of DTS's training centres. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that claimed by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high quality of portfolios
- ◆ well-documented, effective, action-planning
- ◆ trainees fully understand their training, assessment and progress
- ◆ well-resourced information technology facilities at some centres

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some evidence not authenticated
- ◆ key skills not integrated into vocational programme
- ◆ most training is not individually planned
- ◆ some trainees achieve NVQs in fully simulated work environments
- ◆ high percentage of modern apprentices and youth trainees leave early

34. Most trainees' portfolios are well structured, clearly referenced and contain a variety of naturally occurring high-quality evidence. Good use is made of witness testimonies, trainees' prior achievements and case studies. However, some of this evidence is not authenticated by the trainee or the workplace supervisor. Trainees are not advised to sign their own evidence to prove ownership or to get signatures of workplace supervisors to validate workplace evidence. The lack of validation reduces the value of some excellent evidence as it is word-processed evidence so is not instantly recognisable as being original to the trainee.

35. Trainees, whether based in the centre, attending the centre on day release, or based full time with employers, benefit from regular meetings with their training advisor. At each meeting, short-term targets are set for completion by the following scheduled meeting. This ensures that the trainee is well aware of and has control over their progress in the training programme. These targets take the form of explicit, well-documented action plans. Trainees have a good understanding of what is required to achieve their NVQ. They are aware of the assessment process and easily recall how many units they have achieved, and how many remain.

36. At the Carlisle and Whitehaven training centres, which specialise in information technology delivery, trainees have access to a variety of computer hardware and software, which meet industry standards. Most centres offer an extensive range of high-quality printers and scanners and a satisfactory level of resources. Internet access is available at all sites where information technology NVQs are delivered.

37. Thirty-six modern apprentices and national trainees require key skills as part of their programme. However, key skills are not assessed at entry to the programme or at any other time afterwards. There is little integration into the NVQ programme and trainees have little awareness of the key skills requirements. Only one modern apprentice had begun any work on key skills and this was not integrated into the vocational training programme.

38. Trainees working towards the same NVQ programme have identical personal development plans. The plans did not show any variances corresponding to the individual background, ability and job role of the trainee. The objectives on these plans consist solely of lists of NVQ unit titles. Any individual requirements or special training needs are not considered during the planning process. This is due in part to the lack of systematic initial assessment at the time of entry to the programme.

39. Many trainees on work-based learning programmes and the New Deal full-time education and training option do not gain workplace experience. These trainees train 'in-house' for the duration of their programme. The current information technology qualification framework recognises that some assessment can take place in a non-working environment, subject to conditions. The activities undertaken by trainees do not provide a complete working situation and do not reflect normal working practices. The work the trainees are asked to do is realistic in many cases. However, approximately 12 per cent of NVQs, those for

information technology trainees and some adult trainees, are achieved without the trainees having the opportunity to demonstrate occupational competence in a real work environment. This situation also applies to some trainees following NVQs in administration. However an attempt is made to provide each with real work experience in the administrative offices of DTS for short periods of time.

40. There is a high percentage of early leavers on the modern apprenticeship and youth programmes, 77 and 66 per cent respectively. The figure for youth trainees is well above the regional TEC average and that for modern apprentices equates for this vocational area at 46 and 79 per cent respectively. However, a substantial amount of these leavers, (amounting to 40 per cent of youth trainees and 45 per cent of modern apprenticeships), leave voluntarily to take up employment opportunities. The achievement rate for modern apprentices at 23 per cent is close to the TEC average of 21 per cent. The TEC average for youth trainees achieving work after leaving a programme in this sector is 27 per cent. In context, therefore, the provider's figures appear more optimistic.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

41. There are 45 trainees working towards NVQs in retailing, distributive operations and customer service. Eight are modern apprentices and seven are on other work-based training for young people. All the modern apprentices and seven of the other young people are employed. There are also two young people on national traineeships and 17 on work-based learning programmes for adults. One young person has been identified as requiring additional learning support. One adult is disabled. There are also 11 young people on New Deal options. Three are on the full-time training and education option, and eight on the voluntary option. DTS offers NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in both retailing and customer service. Employers supporting the programmes include a variety of retail outlets, including charity shops, high street stores and building societies. Modern apprentices are recruited by direct referral from employers. Most of the other trainees are referred to DTS from the careers service. Unemployed trainees attend an induction at the start of their programme. At the start of their placement all trainees are visited in the workplace by their assessor, who conducts a further one-to-one induction. At this visit, trainees are issued with the NVQ standards. Their assessor explains these to them. Trainees are visited regularly in the workplace. Workplace supervisors administer and provide on-the-job training for trainees. The self-assessment report claimed only two strengths and one weakness. Inspectors found others.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good understanding by trainees of the programme and their progress
- ◆ excellent standard of trainees' work
- ◆ comprehensive assessment recording
- ◆ good use made of trainees' prior achievements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor retention
- ◆ little implementation of key skills
- ◆ lack of occupational training for some trainees
- ◆ lack of uniformity in off-the-job training

42. Trainees have a good understanding of the structure and content of the NVQ they are working towards. They are able to describe clearly how and when they are assessed. Most trainees understand their own progress. Trainees are fully involved in planning what evidence they will gather and what assessment activities they will undertake. The standard of trainees' work in the portfolios is excellent. Portfolios are well structured and trainees work with their assessor to match the evidence to the qualification. Where trainees have undertaken qualifications or training in the past, the assessor explores this in detail and uses this evidence to contribute towards the current qualification. For example, a trainee who had undertaken a separate health and safety qualification at work, used this evidence for the relevant parts of the NVQ.

43. However, there is an over-reliance on written work for NVQ level 2 trainees. Written reports cover such issues as the trades description act, data protection act, handling customer complaints and health and safety procedures. This written work is very similar in each portfolio and is not signed by the workplace supervisor, where appropriate, to confirm its authenticity. The volume of written work required is excessive for this level of qualification, and trainees find this work laborious. Some trainees have completed many reports to demonstrate their occupational knowledge over a period of several months, but they have not been formally assessed. This has contributed to some trainees making slow progress.

44. Trainees are visited regularly by DTS's staff. The frequency of visits is dictated by the needs of each trainee, and some are visited weekly to help them to make progress with their NVQ. Assessment records are clear and comprehensive. Trainees and assessors complete an action plan at every visit and both parties retain copies. These action plans are excellent and clearly outline what activities the trainee should undertake to complete the qualification. The action points agreed are truly individual as they refer to specific workplace documents, procedures and activities that are unique for each trainee. All trainees find these action plans to be extremely helpful. However, trainees do not always sign records of assessor observations. Where witness testimonies are produced, the witness does not always date these and it is therefore difficult to determine their authenticity. Internal verification is a continual process, and areas requiring action are identified and rectified as the trainee progresses through the qualification. The internal verifier's comments are clearly recorded and action points are specified. These findings are then communicated to the relevant assessor for information or action, as appropriate.

45. Trainees undertake a wide variety of training activities in the workplace to develop their occupational skills. Most on-the-job training is in areas such as setting up displays, handling cash, processing returned goods and dealing with customers. This training is not well co-ordinated with the pre-assessment plans negotiated with the trainees. Training plans lack detail. Trainees' long-term training and development needs are missed. There is no employer involvement in planning both on- and off-the-job training. There is insufficient involvement in the programme from employers and workplace providers, and while managers and workplace supervisors are generally supportive of trainees, this commitment has not been harnessed by DTS. Managers are not always involved in formally reviewing trainees' progress with the advisor, and there are few comments from employers on the review forms. DTS's staff liaise with the relevant manager at each visit to the trainee where this is practical, thereby keeping relevant personnel updated on an informal basis.

46. Modern apprentices and national trainees in this sector are making little progress towards the key skills units. The NVQ units are taught in isolation from the key skills. One of three modern apprentices has had an initial assessment for key skills, but this is incomplete. There has been no initial assessment for the other trainees, nor has there been any training to date to enable the trainees to achieve these units. Although there has been some key skills activity in the weeks prior to inspection, the implementation of this aspect of the programme is weak.

47. Off-the-job training for the NVQ is delivered differently at separate training centres. At the Barrow-in-Furness centre, training workshops are held on a weekly basis. These workshops develop trainees' skills and knowledge, for example, in communication skills in support of the NVQ and trainees' personal development. At other locations, trainees are brought into the centre for additional support sessions when the assessor deems this necessary. This is unsystematic, however. At these sessions, trainees are given support to build their portfolio of evidence and to complete their written work. One-to-one support is given to trainees during workplace visits as and when required. Trainees receive few training sessions to develop their occupational knowledge. Some learning materials are good, but handouts are poorly photocopied and difficult to read. One centre uses a rudimentary initial assessment form, which is occupationally specific to assess trainees' suitability for the programme. This process is not used at any of the other centres.

48. Retention on all programmes is poor. There is a very small number of trainees on the youth training programme. However, the number of early leavers from this programme has increased over the last three years to 75 per cent, comparing unfavourably with the local TEC average for 1998-99 of 47 per cent. There is also a high number of leavers on the work-based learning programme for adults with 69 per cent leaving the programme early. Sixty per cent of modern apprentices also leave early. There is good achievement, at 80 per cent, on the modern apprenticeship programme where trainees achieve more than one qualification. Early leavers receive unit certificates where appropriate.

Hospitality

Grade 3

49. There are 28 trainees on a variety of hospitality-related training programmes at NVQ levels 1 to 3. Two are following NVQs in reception, 11 in food and drink service, 14 in food preparation and cooking, one in portering and two in front office supervision. Four trainees are following NVQs at level 1, 14 at level 2 and 10 at level 3. There are 10 modern apprentices, six national trainees and eight on other work-based training for young people. All the modern apprentices and national trainees are employed, as are three of the other young people. Three of the trainees have been identified as needing additional learning support. There are also four clients on New Deal options. One is on the full-time education and training option and three are on the voluntary sector option. Trainees are employed or placed in a variety of organisations, including hotels, residential homes, cafes, social centres, restaurants and public houses. Training is co-ordinated from the Cumbria centre, with satellite provision at Carlisle, Barrow-in-Furness and Oldham. Practical training and provision of occupational knowledge takes place at work. Trainees are given handouts to support their theory work. Occupational knowledge is provided by one of the three training advisors employed by DTS. This is generally taught on a one-to-one basis. Training advisors carry out all assessments in the workplace. Trainees are visited frequently, often every two weeks, for assessments and review of training. All trainees have the opportunity to gain a food hygiene and health and safety qualification. The provider claimed few strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexible approach to assessment
- ◆ well-organised portfolios
- ◆ enhancement of programmes with additional certified courses
- ◆ effective, well-documented assessment and internal verification procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some unplanned and ineffective on-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities to share good practice
- ◆ key skills not developed

GOOD PRACTICE

There is a good range of evidence in portfolios. Photographs are used to demonstrate trainees' work completed in hotels or restaurants. Photographs of tables set for weddings and conferences can be seen in portfolios, as well as pictures of specialist dishes prepared by trainees.

50. Trainees appreciate the fortnightly workplace visits they receive from one of the specialist hospitality-training advisors. These advisors are occupationally experienced and have a wide knowledge and understanding of the catering and hospitality industry. Relationships between employers and training advisors are good. Employers are impressed with the training advisors' early morning and late evening visits to trainees to ensure and promote assessment opportunities. This is in response to the shift working required by trainees in this industry. Assessment is well documented with clear pre-assessment tasks and feedback records. Trainees

understand the assessment process and the accompanying documentation. Trainees are also assisted in the management of their portfolios during these visits. Portfolios are well-organised and demonstrate excellent use of photographic evidence.

51. All trainees are encouraged to obtain additional qualifications and most gain essential food hygiene and health and safety qualifications. Some also gain the first aid and the welcome host award.

52. There are few links between on- and off-the-job training. DTS's training advisors have worked together in the last few months to develop learning resources and training programmes. However, there has been no consultation with workplace supervisors in the development of these resources. Trainees identify few links between the two strands of training. On-the-job training is not well planned. Two young people training in front office supervision NVQs have received little training in their workplaces. There is considerable emphasis and use of observation in the workplace for training purposes. However, there are few planned training sessions to help skills development.

53. There are very effective and well-documented internal verification procedures and systems. Sampling is well documented and planned, as are the detailed internal verification checklists.

54. Key skills are not yet fully developed or integrated into the occupational programmes. Trainees demonstrate little awareness of key skills or their significance in their programmes. Initial assessment of key skills has been recently introduced in this sector and two trainees have been assessed. Several trainees who are ready to complete their modern apprenticeships are unable to do so or they have not yet received training and assessment for key skills.

55. In the work-based training for young people programme, the rate for those leaving the programme early in 1997-98 was 78 per cent. This is comparable with the local TEC average. In 1998-99, it improved to 68 per cent. The achievement rate of NVQs for this group has increased from only 30 per cent to 47 per cent in 1998-99. This is lower than the local TEC figure of 59 per cent. For modern apprentices, the achievement rates are poor to date at 31 per cent, but better than the TEC average of 5 per cent. Retention across all programmes is poor, but better than average for other local providers in this sector. The unsociable working hours are cited as a common reason for leaving this sector, and DTS's staff are trying hard to combat this through out-of-hours support. Overall, the number of early leavers without a qualification or job has increased from 71 per cent in 1997-98 to 79 per cent in 1998-99. However, the number of NVQs achieved per 100 leavers at 31 per cent remains higher than the TEC average of 17 per cent.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

56. DTS offers NVQ levels 2 and 3 in direct care and early years care and education at its Barrow-in-Furness and Millom centres, and NVQ level 2 and 3 in direct care at its Carlisle centre. There are 69 trainees. Thirty are modern apprentices, three are national trainees and 26 are on other work-based training programmes for young people. There are also 10 young people on New Deal, six of whom are on the full-time education and training options. Four trainees are on the voluntary sector option. Twenty-seven of the modern apprentices, two of the national trainees and 10 of the other young people are employed. Four young people have been identified as requiring additional learning support. Trainees are able to complete additional qualifications to complement their NVQ. These include basic food hygiene, health and safety and first aid. Trainees are employed or placed in residential care and nursing homes for the elderly, or private day nurseries and local authority primary schools and nurseries. Trainees have a general induction, followed by a specific occupational induction. Off-the-job training is provided on a fortnightly basis for level 2 trainees. Level 3 trainees receive one-to-one training in the workplace. DTS has four staff responsible for training and assessment in this sector. All are occupationally qualified and have assessor and internal verifier qualifications. All assessment takes place at work. There are also 22 work-based assessors in care establishments and six in childcare placements. Where there is no work-based assessor, assessment is carried out by DTS's assessors. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ varied, individual and well-constructed portfolios
- ◆ good support from employers
- ◆ programme of additional qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unsystematic planning and integration of key skills in child care
- ◆ some slow progress by trainees
- ◆ inconsistent internal verification practices in childcare

57. There is no initial assessment to determine a trainee's suitability to work in this occupational area. Basic skills assessment for non-employed trainees takes place at induction. This is also offered to employed trainees, but owing to poor recording of support required by trainees, this is rarely followed up. Key skills levels are not assessed on entry.

58. Off-the-job training for level 2 trainees is well planned. Trainees and employers have a copy of the planned sessions. Lesson plans, with supporting materials, have been written for care, and are being developed by the childcare staff. These materials are used across the company to ensure consistency of input for the trainees and to maintain continuity of provision in the event of staff

absence. Off-the-job training for level 3 care and childcare trainees is offered at the Millom and Barrow centres. Where trainees are unable to attend the centres, off-the-job training is provided individually in the workplace. This is recorded on the trainees' personal development plan. A programme of relevant additional qualifications is offered to trainees, including first aid at work, basic food hygiene and manual handling.

59. Trainees are well supported in their work placements. Employers are aware of the requirements of the qualifications. In two local authority schools, a mentor for the trainees has been appointed in addition to the classroom supervisor. A work-based assessor holds occupational training sessions in the evenings to support level 3 trainees. Staff make frequent and regular visits to trainees and review progress over and above contractual arrangements. Assessment action-planning is clear, detailed and well recorded. Where there is a work-based assessor, assessments are planned by agreement with the trainee and monitored by DTS's staff. Tracking documents record trainees' progress and are monitored and discussed at monthly occupational sector meetings of trainers and assessors. Trainees' portfolios are individual in content and well constructed to a standard format laid down by DTS. Portfolios include a wide range of evidence gathered in the workplace.

60. Key skills are integrated into the occupational award wherever possible. Application of number and information technology is taught in off-the-job training sessions. Material used in these sessions is occupationally relevant. However, there are variations in the planning, provision and assessment of key skills across the occupational area and between centres. For care and a small minority of childcare trainees, key skills planning and assessment are identified and recorded alongside that for occupational units from the beginning of the award. However, good practice is not always shared between centres and programmes, and for most childcare trainees this is not the case, as planning and assessment for key skills comes towards the end of the level 3 award. This causes concern to trainees and is delaying completion of their modern apprenticeship. Most level 3 childcare trainees are unsure about the structure and content of key skills standards and how evidence can be gathered and recorded.

61. There are differing practices in internal verification procedures across the occupational area. In care, internal verification sampling is ongoing, thorough and well documented. For some childcare trainees, internal verification takes place when portfolios are completed. This has resulted in some poor assessment practices not being identified and addressed early enough for corrective action to be taken during the programme. Assessors are unsupported in these cases, and additional work has been required of them. This has also had a negative impact on trainees' progress. There are plans to ensure that internal verification takes place throughout the trainees' programme, but they are not fully operational. The self-assessment report claimed that internal verifiers in care observe assessors carrying out assessment in the workplace four times each year. Some assessors have not been verified at all, and some only twice in the past year. Regular meetings are held for work-based assessors, but they are not well attended. Assessors have large caseloads and there has been a high turnover of staff in this area.

62. The progress of some trainees is slow. There is a heavy reliance on the completion of written evidence for portfolios before assessment can be completed. In childcare, there has been a high turnover of staff, which has affected trainees' progress. As staff turnover has stabilised in recent months, trainees are beginning to make progress. The retention rate and achievement rate for modern apprentices have remained stable during the last two years. In 1997-98, retention was 58 per cent and in 1998-99, 57 per cent. The achievement rate for both years is above 40 per cent. This is comparable with achievement rates of 44 per cent within the region. On other training programmes for young people, the retention and achievement rates have fluctuated during the last three years. In 1998-99, retention was 42 per cent and achievement was 35 per cent. Both figures are below the regional averages. Many trainees progress from NVQ level 2 to level 3, and into relevant employment.

Foundation for work

Grade 3

63. The foundation for work provision offers prevocational training for both adults and young people. There are seven youth trainees on the preparatory programme. Five are on work placements and two are placed in the motor-vehicle engineering section of DTS. There are also four New Deal trainees on the full-time education and training programme. Some trainees are working on the profile of achievement qualification. This award accredits basic skills and helps trainees take responsibility for their own learning. There are also 31 adult and youth trainees within the other occupational areas who are working towards entry-level wordpower and numberpower qualifications. Trainees are also offered additional qualifications, including certificates in food hygiene, and health and safety. All trainees are assessed for literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the programme. Youth trainees start their programme when a suitable placement has been identified in the occupational area of their choice. This includes placements within DTS's motor-vehicle engineering and information technology sections. There is no off-the-job training for youth trainees. Reviews take place every four to six weeks while they are on placement. The unemployed adults are on work placements and attend off-the-job training half-a-day each week, when they work on their profile of achievement qualification. The options they cover include working with others, problem solving and job search. Most staff are appropriately qualified. The self-assessment report identified no strengths and one weakness. Inspectors identified others.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ individual, high-quality portfolios
- ◆ effective and well-planned basic skills training
- ◆ supportive, high-quality work placements
- ◆ relevant, additional qualifications offered

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some programmes not tailored to individual needs
- ◆ poor reviews
- ◆ poor retention rates
- ◆ missed opportunities to develop personal skills of trainees

64. The portfolios developed by trainees in wordpower, numberpower and the profile of achievement contain a wide range of evidence from trainees' specific occupational area. The type of evidence varies in each portfolio and includes diaries, observation at the work placement, photographs, witness testimonies, feedback from customers, personal statements and work products. The evidence fully meets the requirements of the qualification. Trainees have ownership of their portfolios and take pride in their development. Trainees' work is continuously assessed.

65. Training in basic skills is carried out on an individual basis. It is provided alongside the mainstream training, sometimes in the workplace. There are full lesson plans for wordpower and numberpower units. There is a large variety of learning resources, many of which are exercises set in occupational contexts. These support the learning when there are insufficient naturally occurring opportunities. There is an effective tracking system to keep trainees' progress up-to-date. Qualifications are achieved at a rate which is suited to the individual. All trainees on programme achieve within set targets in an appropriate length of time. Staff are well qualified and very experienced in providing basic skills. Additional qualifications are offered in food hygiene and health and safety. Qualifications are taken when it is clear that the achievement will enhance the trainee's personal development and employability.

66. There is a good base of suitable work placements. The placements are chosen carefully to meet the needs of the trainees. Sometimes, the trainees are given the opportunity to try out different occupational areas. The work-placement supervisors are understanding and supportive of the trainees' needs. Trainees are often included in training and associated activities alongside other employees. Work-placement supervisors take part in reviews and help trainees produce evidence for portfolios. Employers are aware of the demands of the NVQ programme and their advice is sought on the suitability of trainees for mainstream training and future employability. For youth trainees, the TEC's average for those achieving work after completing the programme is 21 per cent, but for DTS this is 6 per cent.

67. The individual training plan and personal development plan are used to record and highlight progress towards qualifications. The more specific needs of trainees and action to be taken are not recorded. Placements are used to meet trainees' needs, but there are instances when individual weaknesses are not addressed in the training plan. These weaknesses include poor timekeeping and attendance, lack of confidence and low self-esteem. There is no record of trainees' capabilities

concerning working with others and communication skills. The work and training aspirations of trainees are not explored in any depth. Trainees' long-term objectives usually remain the same as expressed when they started their programme. Despite evidence to indicate the unsuitability of career choice, opportunities are not taken by DTS's staff to explore alternatives. There is no individual or routine exercise to increase trainees' self-awareness of their skills in relation to future training and work. Trainees tend to remain in the same work placement. For some trainees, this is appropriate to build self-confidence. For others, this limits their experience of other types of training or work.

68. Reviews do not set specific actions and targets. The review process does not inform the trainee of their progress in a formalised manner. Trainees are given encouragement and positive feedback, but it is mainly superficial and general. Workplace supervisors are invited to join reviews only to inform them of any outcomes from the process. Employers do not contribute to setting future actions.

69. In the year ending March 1999, 44 per cent of trainees left before their intended leave date. Forty one per cent of these early leavers were terminated by DTS, usually as a result of non-attendance. Trainees destinations are not systematically followed up after leaving and it is unclear whether some trainees may have left to enter employment.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

70. DTS has an equal opportunities policy, which is reviewed on an annual basis. The most recent policy is dated June 2000. Responsibility for reviewing the policy lies with the programme development group and a group of equal opportunities representatives from each occupational area of the company. The human resources/programme manager chairs the group. A member of the board of DTS has also been designated with specific responsibilities for equal opportunities throughout the organisation. The policy meets the requirement of DTS's contracts with the TECs and the Employment Service. A copy of the policy is given to trainees during induction, and to employers who provide work placements. Data are collected for the purposes of these contracts and include trainees' achievements, gender, age, disability and ethnicity.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ passive approach to equal opportunities
- ◆ poor employers and trainees' awareness, and understanding of, equal opportunities
- ◆ little use made of equal opportunities data

71. The self-assessment report included six strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses, although these were reworded and combined. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by DTS.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective strategic management of equal opportunities
- ◆ good awareness by trainees of grievance and appeals procedures
- ◆ specialist training in equal opportunities for most staff and some employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace

72. Since the first inspection, the senior management has successfully made significant changes in the management of equal opportunities. A detailed action plan was developed to rectify the weaknesses identified. Members of staff from each occupational area were requested to volunteer for the role of equal opportunities representatives. This key responsibility is not yet detailed on job descriptions. The human resources/programme manager has chaired one meeting of the equal opportunities group. A member of the board of DTS volunteered to become the most senior equal opportunities representative, to monitor and evaluate the activities of the group. The human resources manager brings information on the latest legislation regarding employment and equal opportunities to the meetings of the equal opportunities group. This information is then effectively shared at the occupational team meetings where equal opportunities is a standard agenda item. The chief executive of DTS has recognised the barriers to understanding equal opportunities in the region, focusing on the need to address gender imbalances in occupational areas and the problems of rural isolation. He has approached local authorities, trainees' referral agencies and TECs and is developing a regional equal opportunities strategy.

73. Equal opportunities data are now adequately used. As part of the strategic management of equal opportunities, clear performance targets have been set for each occupational team in relation to gender, disability and under-represented groups. Occupational teams discuss these performance indicators every two months. Staff are encouraged to continually develop promotional literature specific to the needs of their occupational area. For example, the care sector has developed recruitment literature to attract male trainees to this traditionally female-dominated occupational area. The literature depicts a young male carer looking after an elderly person. Staff are keen to develop further materials which demonstrate the range of childcare and disability care opportunities for young men. The promotional materials and targeting of under-represented groups have begun to

have an impact on the gender balances in some occupational areas. For example, there are slight increases in the number of males taking up administration and care training, and women starting horticulture and manufacturing.

74. At the first inspection, around 30 per cent of training staff had attended specialist half-day training courses in equal opportunities. After thoroughly evaluating this training, DTS subcontracted with a different organisation to provide a series of one-day equal opportunities courses. Feedback from this is excellent. Over 70 per cent of all of DTS's staff have attended the courses, including administrators and board members. Training is planned for new staff and those remaining staff who have not attended the course. All staff find the activity-based course relevant and interesting. Senior managers decided to offer the courses free of charge to employers and work placement providers. To date, around 10 employers have attended the courses and feedback continues to be excellent. Further effective ways of raising employers' awareness of equal opportunities include additional guidance notes on equal opportunities which are inserted into the employers' handbook. A detailed equal opportunities questionnaire has been distributed and results show that most employers welcome DTS' guidance. An employers' 10-point plan to address equality issues has also been distributed to around 30 organisations.

75. There is some inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Some employers are still unsure about the relevance of equal opportunities in the workplace. In the minority of cases where employers approach DTS to train their employees, DTS has not systematically carried out its equal opportunities induction activities for government-funded trainees. In these few instances, DTS does not influence the trainees' knowledge of equal opportunities, nor does it check the recruitment, selection and induction arrangements of these employed trainees. There are unsatisfactory practices at several employers, who do not allow employees, who are also trainees, time off for necessary study.

76. Most trainees have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues. The subject is introduced at induction using videos and discussion. All trainees also receive a copy of the trainees' handbook which contains clear equal opportunities statements. All trainees clearly remember the issues raised at the induction. For most trainees, equal opportunities is reinforced thereafter at their regular progress reviews. Trainers routinely ask whether trainees have been subject to bullying or harassment in the workplace. This is recorded at each review. Equal opportunities learning sessions are systematically offered to trainees in some occupational areas to reinforce the knowledge gained at induction. The assessment appeals procedure is clearly understood by trainees. This is part of the stringent pre-assessment planning procedures. All trainees have a good understanding of the grievance policy and procedure and the relevant documents are kept in their portfolios.

Trainee support

Grade 3

71. Trainees are referred to DTS through a wide range of external agencies. For

those trainees referred by the careers service and the Employment Service, being selected for a training programme is dependent on an interview with a member of DTS's staff. This interview is recorded. Many trainees have an initial assessment at this stage. Following the first interview, trainees are invited to attend a one-day general induction to DTS. Some trainees have an initial assessment at the end of the one-day general induction. Subsequently, trainees meet their nominated training advisor and receive a specific induction to their chosen occupational area and qualification. Some trainees are already employed when they start training at DTS. A training advisor visits trainees in the workplace to carry out a brief induction to DTS and the qualification. Thereafter, trainees attend off-the-job training sessions at one of DTS's training centres on a full-time or part-time day-release basis. The progress of trainees is reviewed every four to six weeks.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no initial assessment of basic and key skills in some areas
- ◆ ineffective induction in most occupational areas
- ◆ support not recorded
- ◆ identified additional learning needs not always supported

72. DTS gave four strengths and weaknesses for reinspection. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given by DTS.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good support for trainees' additional learning needs
- ◆ effective short-term target setting
- ◆ effective action taken to retain trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient involvement by employers in reviews
- ◆ inappropriate initial assessment strategy for some trainees
- ◆ inadequate induction to NVQ and key skills

77. Since the inspection, DTS has developed a comprehensive initial assessment strategy. This includes an assessment of trainees' basic skills, key skills and occupational skills on entry to programme. However, the process is not used effectively to address additional support needs. For example, all entrants to modern apprenticeships are tested for key skills. The results of the key skills assessments are identified in trainees' files and used to identify areas for additional support in key skills training sessions. However, several trainees score very poorly and the grading indicates that specific additional support is necessary. These trainees are not required to attend separate literacy or numeracy sessions, and they continue to attend key skills teaching sessions with other, more capable trainees. Some trainees on other work-based training programmes are routinely required to

take basic skills tests. These trainees receive appropriate individual learning support where necessary. However, other trainees referred from the careers service are not given basic skills assessment tests by careers officers and the process is unclear. All adult trainees undertake an occupational skills test and are given the opportunity of taking the basic skills test. Several adult trainees decline to take the test. This prevents learning difficulties from being identified at an early stage. DTS does not have clear criteria to identify which trainees will benefit from all three assessment tests or where trainees' previous learning or qualifications can be taken into account.

78. Trainees with identified learning difficulties receive appropriate support from a team of three of DTS's staff with specialist skills and qualifications. Where literacy or numeracy learning needs are identified at entry, the occupational trainer refers trainees to the recently established specialist support team. Arrangements are made for each trainee to attend additional learning sessions. Attendance at these sessions is carefully monitored and there is a system for reporting issues to the occupational trainer. Questions are raised when a trainee misses two additional support sessions. DTS's trainers effectively motivate trainees to progress towards their individual qualification aims. Significant numbers of trainees have progressed from foundation to NVQ levels 2 and 3.

79. The general induction session to DTS is satisfactory and remembered by most trainees. However, the second stage of the induction, focusing on the NVQ and key skills, is not memorable for some trainees. Some trainees do not have a good understanding of their programmes. Some are unsure of the key skills requirements and are uncertain how to cross-reference evidence from their NVQ. Many trainees rely on their training advisors to index and identify their workplace evidence.

80. Effective short-term targets are set for trainees by their training advisors. All trainees have frequent contact with their training advisors, whether they are in DTS's centre full time or placed with employers. Visits to the workplace are scheduled on a fortnightly basis. On some training programmes, particularly in the hospitality and care sectors, out-of-hours visits are made to observe and assess trainees in the workplace. On each visit, both trainees and training advisors focus on an action plan which outlines clear tasks to be completed before the next meeting. These tasks are clearly linked to the NVQ units and elements.

81. Unemployed trainees and New Deal clients attend well-structured job-search sessions. They are given sound guidance on identifying vacancies, writing letters of application, producing curriculum vitae and carrying out role-play exercises on interview techniques. Job-search, learning and reference materials are good.

82. Reviews are carried out more frequently than is contractually required for almost all trainees. Some workplace supervisors do not routinely attend the review meetings between trainees and their training adviser and are not adequately informed of the progress and achievements of their trainees. Progress toward the NVQ and key skills is indicated on the review form by 'coded shading' on a chart. Some trainees and workplace supervisors do not understand the process. Most

trainees and workplace supervisors receive a copy of the review form, but this is often dependent on the goodwill of the training advisor and is not systematically given as part of the procedure.

83. Since the first inspection, senior managers have successfully raised staff's awareness of the importance of trainees' retention rates. Scheduled meetings are held to analyse retention rates across all occupational areas and programmes. A strategy has been developed to provide early notification of trainees who are considering leaving their training early. This clearly identifies both trainers and senior managers' roles and responsibilities. An effective intervention strategy is used which directs the training advisor to seek advice from the senior verifier in the relevant occupational area. The senior verifier then carries out an individual interview with the trainee, usually in the workplace. This early intervention has been successful on many occasions and recently trainees have changed shift patterns, employment and even training advisors. Those trainees who leave their training before completing their qualification are asked to provide their reason for leaving through telephone contact and a postal questionnaire. Retention rates have so far improved, by 5 per cent across many programmes.

Management of training

Grade 3

84. DTS has recently undergone significant restructuring. The current management structure was introduced in January 1999. The business-systems manager, who is responsible for training, development and quality assurance, reports to the chief executive. Senior internal verifiers are responsible for co-ordinating training and assessment in each occupational area across 10 sites. They report to the business-systems manager. DTS expects all assessors to hold assessor awards. They are expected to complete NVQ level 3 within their first year of employment. All internal verifiers hold the appropriate award and senior verifiers hold NVQ level 4. The human resource development officer is responsible for all staff training and development. A computerised management system is used by DTS to provide data to manage their TEC contracts and to track trainees through their training. There is also a manual tracking system used by training staff. Staff meet in peer group forums and are encouraged to contribute to management review and to a process of continuous improvement of both programmes and systems. The board identified a new strategy and a planned process of change for the future direction of the organisation. The introduction of this strategic goal has resulted in various recent operational changes, notably to the structure of the organisation and some of the systems by which it is managed. At the time of the inspection, the new structure and arrangements were still new. Two in-house staff development events have been held in the past three months to introduce and involve staff in the change process. New staff appointments have been made at various levels throughout the organisation, mainly from internal candidates and from trainees. A revised business systems manual is in operation along with policies and procedures. DTS achieved the Investors in People Standard in 1995, and were successfully re-accredited in 1998. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of management-information system
- ◆ comprehensive change management process in operation
- ◆ good administration across multi-site locations
- ◆ key strategic partnerships with local, regional and national impact

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of employers' involvement in most training programmes
- ◆ on- and off-the-job training not well integrated in most sectors
- ◆ introduction of key skills is slow
- ◆ little planned training

85. The board and management of DTS have decided on a strategy and begun a process of change which has impacted on the structure of the organisation and its staff roles and responsibilities. The change is being effectively managed and most people are involved and understand what is happening. The careful and systematic approach to change is manifest in the management team's agendas and minutes of meetings over the past six months. There is also the careful introduction through team briefings, individual sessions and whole staff team meetings of information about the change and how it will affect the staff. This comprehensive approach to the change in the organisation has provided a sound basis upon which the training organisation can continue to perform what remains its primary function of providing training services.

GOOD PRACTICE

The staff development programme has enabled a number of staff to progress in the organisation. A significant number – 55 per cent of the current team – have progressed from training into full-time employees. An example of this is a member of staff who retrained with DTS after suffering an industrial injury and experiencing long-term unemployment. He had no formal qualifications beyond his construction trade experience and skills. He became the adult trainee of the year in Cumbria, achieving a level 3 qualification. He was then employed by DTS as a horticulture trainer. He has achieved the level 3 qualification and has contributed to the programme development in his occupational area.

86. There is a good management-information system. The system is well documented and has been introduced carefully to the people in the organisation who will use it. It enables senior managers to discuss, agree on and review targets for performance with senior verifiers who, in turn, are able to do this with their staff. Management reports are produced in a way that is appropriate to the new structure and the needs of the management team. The tracking system, which is part of the management-information system, enables staff to identify and report on trainees' progress, regularly and effectively. It also provides a management-control system for senior managers. Management meetings are well structured, documented and reflect a good use of management information in decision-making. In the transition period, as the organisation structure settles down and new managers develop their roles, they are being well supported by the programme development team who have been familiar with requirements of the company in the past and the management information associated with it.

87. Training and development for staff are well developed in DTS in accordance with the organisation's Investors in People accreditation. There is a comprehensive policy encouraging all staff to participate in training and development which provides a good framework for staff progression. All staff involved in training are expected to achieve the full NVQ level training and development trainer and assessor award. Some training staff are currently training towards accreditation of

prior learning assessor awards in order to assess new entrants to training programmes. Good use is made of external courses. For example, a group of staff recently attended a course on portfolio-building. This has had direct benefit in the production of high-quality portfolios across all occupational sectors. Over 20 per cent of the training staff are newly appointed in the last six months. This has inevitably put some strain on the support systems for staff development in some programmes. In business administration, this has been compounded by the recurrent failure to appoint a senior verifier on a permanent basis.

88. Training administration is good, and co-ordinated across all sites by the finance officer. Each centre has an administrator to support the training services provided. This new role has been supported with good induction to the new systems and procedures. Staff are working confidently and competently in their new roles. The overall co-ordination and communication between centres is good and results in an effective multi-site operation.

89. The organisation's policies, strategies and targets have not been communicated to subcontractors, including work-placement providers and employers. Furthermore, the organisation has not involved employers sufficiently in its training programmes. Recently, an attempt was made to raise employers' awareness of training and their role in it, but the impact of this has varied. Many employers are not currently aware of the organisation's policies in respect of equal opportunities, quality assurance, assessment and training for qualifications. Consequently, employers' roles in training are often underdeveloped.

90. There is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The sequence of training is not specified. On-the-job learning is not planned to enable trainees to benefit from the experience and make progress towards their qualification. Work-based learning objectives are sometimes not identified. Opportunities for assessment in the workplace are not planned in some training programmes. Employers are generally not involved in the planning of reviews and assessments. Pre-assessment plans, for example, do not have a space for employer's signatures.

91. In most occupational sectors, there is insufficient direct training provided to support learning. The training programmes are over dependent on unplanned work experience as the main source of learning. Across most occupational sectors, there is no structured plan to identify the objectives, content, methods or sequence of training.

92. The introduction of key skills across all relevant programmes has been slow and, in some cases, very late. The decision-making process to derive a policy for the introduction of key skills has been slow. The management team has shown no urgency to move forward with the implementation until fairly recently. This has impacted adversely on some trainees' rate of progress towards their modern apprenticeship. There are missed achievement opportunities in a number of occupational areas where the design of the training has not adequately accommodated key skills as an integral part of the programme.

93. DTS has good contacts with external partners and plays an important role in the local training infrastructure. The board of DTS includes significant stakeholders from public and private organisations in the area. Each training centre plays an important part in developing the education and training opportunities with local partners such as schools, careers services, the Employment Service and others. The chief executive also takes part in regional and national affairs related to the development of training and lifelong learning.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

94. DTS has achieved a number of nationally recognised standards in quality control. One standard is ISO 9002 registration, which was awarded in 1991 and has since been maintained in full. Other quality standards include the basic skills agency quality mark and multi-sector quality assurance status. The provider meets the requirements of the TEC and of relevant awarding bodies. In 1993, a programme development group was set up. This group consists of senior verifiers from all the occupational areas and is chaired by the business-systems manager. Its remit is to address quality assurance issues on a company-wide basis, and it was instrumental in the development of the current business system. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent staff awareness and ownership of the quality assurance system
- ◆ effective exchange of good practice across occupational areas
- ◆ good system for quality control

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some procedures and documents not fully established or understood by staff
- ◆ ineffective use of employers and trainees' feedback to improve quality
- ◆ inaccurate self-assessment
- ◆ poor action-planning and target-setting to address identified weaknesses

95. The members of the programme development group bring quality assurance issues arising from their occupational areas to regular meetings. These meetings are used to disseminate good practice across the sectors and occupational areas. One example of this is found in the care sector. The training advisors in social care and childcare are working together to develop a standard approach to the provision of training. The programme development group is recognised by staff as a forum for discussion, development and implementation of improved processes across the organisation. Changes in processes and procedures arising from these discussions are piloted in specific areas before full implementation. In this way, staff remain aware of and feel that they contribute to, the quality assurance system.

96. DTS maintains an effective system of quality control, which ensures that the organisation complies with the requirements of the relevant funding and awarding bodies. This system is based on a standard set of documented procedures against which both internal auditors and external assessors audit the activities of the organisation on a regular basis. There is recognition of the need for a movement from a culture of compliance to one which ensures continuous quality improvement. However, the current system does not fully support this. Recently introduced software for gathering clients' feedback presents data in a format which is incompatible with the requirements of the provider's quality assurance system. It is too difficult to analyse data effectively and they have not been used to contribute towards overall continuous improvements. Visits to a sample of employers by the DTS chief executive brought in qualitative information on an informal basis. This was used to develop the recently circulated employer's handbook.

97. There is a copy of the quality assurance manual, containing current procedures and controlled documents, at each of the 10 centres. In some areas, however, procedures and documents are not adopted or used consistently. In the business administration sector, the personal development plans and trainees' progress record forms, both re-issued in April 1999, were introduced in early June and completed retrospectively. In the care sector, some training advisors are using the forms to record off-the-job training, and others are not. Although some training advisors are using the amended pre-assessment plan form for recording trainees' action plans, one centre is continuing to use the previous form. Internal verification activities also vary across occupational sectors. Within the care sector, there are variances in the internal verification procedures between centres and between social care and childcare.

98. The self-assessment report contains very useful information on the background of the company, the local area and labour market information. Each member of the programme development group was asked to assess their area against the inspection framework, and to identify key strengths and weaknesses. Senior managers judged the grades and the business-systems manager wrote the report. Although attempts to identify strengths and weaknesses have been made honestly, with appropriate reference to evidence, some of the strengths claimed represent no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report also identified key issues separately, neither as a strength nor as a weakness. Many are, indeed, weaknesses. The grading judgements in the self-assessment report reflect, in the main, those made following the inspection. However, the inspection grades are based on strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection, which are significantly different to those identified in the self-assessment report.

99. The action-planning process is not rigorous. Although action points are listed in the self-assessment report, many of these do not have target dates attached to them. There is no comprehensive action plan containing quantifiable targets, achievement dates, performance milestones and allocated responsibilities.