

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT  
MAY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION  
AUGUST 2001

# Work Experience Centre Ltd



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

### **Adult Learning Inspectorate**

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's *learndirect* provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

### **Grading**

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

## SUMMARY

The original inspection of Work Experience Centre Limited was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for engineering, management of training and quality assurance. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with engineering, management of training and quality assurance have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website ([www.ali.gov.uk](http://www.ali.gov.uk)).

**Work Experience Centre Limited gives outstanding training in hairdressing. Training programmes are flexible enough to meet the learners' diverse needs, there are effective working relationships with employers and retention and achievement rates are good. Training in health, care and public services is good, with an extensive range of good work placements and the opportunity for work taster sessions which allows learners to decide which aspect of care they are interested in. There is satisfactory training in agriculture, construction, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality and foundation for work. At the time of the original inspection, training in engineering was unsatisfactory. The only training now offered in this area is motor vehicle and this is still unsatisfactory, although several weaknesses have been rectified. Some of the assessment practices are poor and there are too few work placements. The arrangements for equal opportunities are satisfactory, with open access to training for all learners, but the awareness of learners and employers is poor. Support for learners is good, with effective assessment of their basic skills and specialised support available when necessary. Management of training and quality assurance arrangements were unsatisfactory at the time of the original inspection, but they are now satisfactory. There is good internal communication and effective relationships with external organisations. Insufficient use is made of data which relate to achievement rates. Quality assurance procedures have been devised to collect and analyse feedback for continuous improvements. Complaints are not routinely reported or analysed, but they are dealt with as they arise.**

## GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	3
Construction	3
Engineering	4
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	1
Health, care & public services	2
Foundation for work	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Engineering	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

## KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good additional training in work skills and personal effectiveness
- ◆ extensive range of good-quality work placements
- ◆ well-structured basic skills support tailored to individuals' needs
- ◆ appointment of 'minority ethnic co-ordinator'
- ◆ good access to training for those with diverse learning needs
- ◆ good staff appraisal and development process
- ◆ good quality assurance arrangements

## KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate key skills training
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates across most occupational areas
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ lack of rigorous target setting in many reviews
- ◆ poor job-search support for many learners
- ◆ inadequate integration of key skills with vocational training
- ◆ ineffective use of data for quality assurance

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Work Experience Centre Limited (WEC) was established in 1983 to provide a wide range of vocational and skills training for unemployed and employed young people and adults throughout Staffordshire. The company is a wholly owned subsidiary of a registered charity. WEC has three divisions, three satellite work centres and one special unit. The head office and mid Staffordshire division are in Stafford, and the north Staffordshire division is in Hanley, which forms part of the city of Stoke-on-Trent. There are also two satellite work centres at Goldenhill and Bucknall. The east Staffordshire division is in Tamworth, with a satellite work centre at Burton-upon-Trent. The special unit is in the SCOPE centre in Stafford. This unit was set up to give people with disabilities the opportunity to train in information technology. WEC has close links with the Staffordshire education service and financially supports youth workers who give help to young people who do not attend school. It also works closely with schools to offer vocational training as part of the curriculum.

2. At the time of the original inspection, WEC contracted with Staffordshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) for training and assessment towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in 10 occupational areas. Manufacturing had very few learners and was not included in the original inspection. At the time of the reinspection, it contracts with the Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council. It offers modern apprenticeships, national traineeships, other youth training programmes, work-based learning for adults and basic employability training programmes for adults. It also has a contract with the Employment Service for the environment task force option of New Deal. New Deal clients also attend WEC for the training aspect of the employment and voluntary sector options. At the time of the original inspection, WEC had 79 staff who were involved in training and 12 administrative and support staff. There were 530 government-funded learners, of whom 378 were learners and 152 were New Deal clients. At the time of the reinspection, WEC has 93 staff and 27 administrative and support staff. There are 532 government-funded learners, of whom 306 are on work-based learning programmes for young people, 125 are adults funded by the Employment Service and 101 are New Deal clients. Of the 306 on work-based learning programmes for young people, 271 are NVQ learners, 24 are foundation modern apprentices and 11 are advanced modern apprentices.

3. Staffordshire has a mix of urban and rural communities. The principal industries in north Staffordshire are ceramics, bone china, engineering, steel and tyre manufacture. In mid Staffordshire they are engineering, electronics, diesel engines, abrasives and adhesives. In east Staffordshire they are brewing, earthmoving equipment and logistics. The unemployment rate for Staffordshire in April 2000 was 3.2 per cent, compared with 3.8 per cent nationally. By June 2001 this has dropped to 2.7 per cent, compared with 3.0 per cent nationally. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of

secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Staffordshire was 44.9 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, the proportion rose to 48 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

4. In 1998-99, the proportion of 16 year olds participating in full-time education and training in Staffordshire was 82 per cent, compared with the national average of 83 per cent. The proportion participating in government-funded training is 13 per cent, higher than the national average of 9 per cent. The 1991 census shows that less than 2 per cent of the population of Staffordshire are from minority ethnic groups, although in east Staffordshire there are some areas where the proportion rises to 3.3 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. In January 2000, WEC produced a self-assessment report based on *Raising the Standard*. All the training staff were involved in the process. Awareness-raising workshops were held to ensure that staff had a clear understanding of the process and their roles and responsibilities. Feedback from learners, staff and employers was gained through questionnaires and follow-up interviews. The results were analysed and judgements were made based on the information. An action plan was drawn up and staff were involved in its implementation. The second version of the report took account of the improvements made and the report was updated and grades adjusted. Inspectors considered many of the strengths to be no more than normal practice and some strengths and weaknesses were moved into other sections of the report. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses. For the reinspection, WEC submitted an updated self-assessment report dated August 2001, the fourth it has produced. It is based on the *Common Inspection Framework* and was produced by the managers of WEC using the results from a series of internal inspections. One of the grades awarded at the reinspection is the same as that given in the self-assessment report and two are lower.

6. A team of 11 inspectors carried out the original inspection. They spent a total of 41 days at WEC during May 2000. They interviewed 145 learners, 55 staff, 34 employers and three subcontractors, and they visited 44 work placements. They observed 23 training sessions, 16 progress reviews and 15 assessments. Inspectors examined individual learning plans, review records and files. A range of other documents were examined including contracts, external reports, records of meetings, the personnel records of staff and the company's policies and procedures.

7. The reinspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors who spent a total of 10 days with WEC during August 2001. Engineering, management of training and quality assurance were reinspected against the *Common Inspection Framework*. Inspectors interviewed 18 learners. They examined eight portfolios and 10 individual learning plans, observed a monitoring visit and an assessment, and observed and graded five training sessions. They examined documents relating to management and quality assurance and interviewed some of WEC's staff. They visited four work placements and interviewed three employers.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture		2	2			4
Construction		3	3			6
Engineering		1	1	3		5
Business administration		2	3	2		7
Retailing & customer service	1	2	7	3		13
Hospitality		2	2	2		6
Hair & beauty	1	2	2			5
Health, care & public services		1		1		2
Foundation for work	1	1	1			3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>51</b>

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the reinspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering		1	1		1	3
Other training sampled		1	1			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Agriculture

### Grade 3

8. There are 18 trainees and three New Deal clients across the programmes in the table below. There are also eight trainees on the basic employability programme. Trainees work towards NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in commercial horticulture at a semi-commercial production nursery at Bucknall near Stoke on Trent. Transport is provided for trainees. The nursery has one large commercial glasshouse, a smaller propagation house, several polythene tunnels and an outdoor standing area for hardy nursery stock. The nursery supplies mainly wholesale customers but there is some retail activity, mainly in the spring. Occupational skills and theory are mainly taught on the job. There are two workplace supervisors who carry out work-based assessment. New Deal clients work towards units of the amenity horticulture NVQ at level 1. This is carried out at the Burton-on-Trent site.

9. Inspectors did not agree with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They

awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Commercial horticulture	0	1	2	7	0	10
Amenity horticulture	0	0	0	0	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>

1 = modern apprentices, 2 = national trainees, 3 = other youth training, 4 = work-based learning for adults, 5 = New Deal environment task force

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ extra qualifications available to increase trainees' employment opportunities
- ◆ good use of appropriate training methods
- ◆ good on-the-job training resources
- ◆ effective progress reviews

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient recording of commercial horticulture training
- ◆ insufficient commercial working environment for commercial horticulture trainees
- ◆ insufficient welfare facilities for commercial horticulture trainees
- ◆ low achievement rates for adult trainees

10. Trainees work towards additional qualifications to improve their employability. These include forklift truck operations, emergency first aid and retailing NVQ units. This training allows trainees to seek employment in other occupational areas such as warehousing and retailing. The combination of horticulture and retailing training provides a sound basis for employment in garden centres. Trainees enjoy the teamwork during their work experience and many are given the opportunity to be responsible for specific areas. Older trainees are used as mentors for younger ones which benefits both parties. Work-based supervisors ensure that trainees are kept busy and encourage them to take pride in their work. Trainers integrate the theory training with practical skills development. This style of training is greatly appreciated by the trainees, many of whom have little enthusiasm for classroom-based learning. Two youth trainees, both former school refusers, spoke about their learning experiences with enthusiasm. One trainee encouraged a friend to cycle several miles to WEC's training site to find out about joining the horticulture programme.

11. The range of sites available to the amenity horticulture trainees provides them with a wide range of opportunities for productive work experience. The training emphasises productivity and quality and enables trainees to understand and appreciate the rigour of the workplace. Commercial horticulture trainees gain work experience in a production nursery which carries out a wide range of operations

and provides them with a good overall view of ornamental plant production. Trainees' progress is reviewed on a monthly basis. Reviews cover both pastoral and occupational training issues. Trainees are provided with clear measurable targets given support to achieve them. The review is an integral part of the training process and is used to develop both the occupational and personal effectiveness of the trainees.

12. Commercial horticulture training is primarily provided on the job and the content and timing of training sessions is not adequately recorded. Individual training plans do not provide sufficient detail on a trainees' training programmes or how they are going to be taught. The production nursery is operated on a semi-commercial basis, but the number of trainees is too high for a real commercial environment. The site is intensively cropped and operating space is restricted. Trainees work in groups for tasks which would normally be carried out by individuals in a real commercial environment. There is no rest room for breaks and meals. These are taken in the polythene tunnels which are very cold in the winter months. WEC is currently investigating the installation of a portable building on the site to overcome this problem.

13. Achievement rates have declined in the last two years. Many new trainees enter the programme with little understanding of what is involved in horticultural work and it does not meet their expectations. There is a disproportionate number of early leavers. In 1996-97, 71 per cent of adult trainees achieved their target qualification. In 1998-99 this figure dropped to 40 per cent. For youth trainees, the achievement rate has dropped from 71 per cent in 1997-98 to 8.3 per cent in 1998-99. Fifty per cent of the trainees in this group achieved some qualifications. The 1999-2000 group of national trainees shows a much better success rate. In 1999-2000 four trainees started, of whom three have achieved their qualifications and one remains in training.

14. Work experience for New Deal clients consists of renovating and maintaining a number of varied sites, including the grounds of a children's nursery, an RSPCA animal rescue centre and a local housing association. The work-based supervisor provides off-the-job training and assesses the competence of clients on the job. The off-the-job training is carried out one day a week using WEC's training facilities at Burton-on-Trent. A local land-based college provides some additional training when needed. There are no specific achievement data for New Deal clients in this occupational area.

### **Construction**

### **Grade 3**

15. There are 11 trainees in construction, two of whom are adults. The nine youth trainees are on other youth training programmes. There are also 36 New Deal clients, all of whom are on the environment task force option except one client who is on the employment option.

16. There is also one basic employability trainee. WEC provides construction training towards NVQs at level 1 in decorative occupations, painting and decorating NVQs at level 2, wood occupations NVQs at level 1 and the bench joinery option of wood occupations NVQ at level 2. There is one assessor for wood occupations and one assessor for decorative occupations and painting and decorating. There are craft training workshops in Stafford. Trowel occupations level 1 NVQ training and assessment is undertaken at the local further education college. Youth trainees start on level 1 NVQ programmes in decorative occupations and wood occupations. Most wood occupations trainees are found work placements and attend the centre one day a week. There are few placements available for painting and decorating and so trainees gain practical experience through project work. Adults on the basic employability programme work towards a national skills certificate and carry out practical painting and decorating project work. These adults can progress onto the painting and decorating level 2 NVQ. WEC also offers thermal insulation and draft proofing NVQs at level 1. The initial training is done at the purpose-designed facilities at the Goldenhill centre with the remainder of the training and assessment being undertaken while working with WEC's teams carrying out home insulation work. There were currently no trainees on this programme. The majority of the New Deal clients are based on projects in WEC's three divisions. In 1999-2000, 61 per cent of youth trainees gained employment. Over half of the jobs were in construction. Nearly 50 per cent gained some qualifications and three of the 22 trainees who started are still in training. During the same period, out of eight adults who started, two gained employment. Three completed their individual training plans, two are still in training and the remaining one left early with no job or qualifications.

17. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths given in the self-assessment report but considered the other strengths to be no more than normal practice. The report failed to identify the weaknesses in the programme. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-organised workshop training
- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ extensive range of project work

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little co-ordination of on-and off-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ lack of rigorous targets set at reviews
- ◆ inappropriate targets set in individual training plans for some adult trainees

18. There are good working relationships between the trainers and trainees. Trainees understand what they are doing and are well motivated. Instruction in the

workshops is good and well organised. Trainees work purposefully on tasks without unnecessary intervention by the trainers. Tutors are quick to identify, support and encourage trainees who are having difficulties. One of the vocational tutors checks potential work placements. A health and safety inspection is carried out and the type and range of work checked to ensure that trainees will benefit from the placement. There is a range of placements available providing a wide variety of different types of work experience. Tutors recommend appropriate trainees to the placement providers. Trainees gain valuable occupational experience and are well matched to the placements.

19. An extensive range of project work is available, on which trainees gain valuable experience. One project is a converted school building with an attached house. It is located in a conservation area and the use of specialist historic paints is a requirement. The external work includes preparing and painting a range of items including timber and metal windows, cast iron rainwater goods, timber fascia and doors and stonework. There is also internal painting and decorating work. Another project is a long-term one over at least five years. A disused colliery is being converted to a heritage centre. Trainees are involved in the construction of the new conference and exhibition centre, other new building works and the maintenance and adaptation of existing buildings. They work alongside contractors doing foundation, external works and painting and decorating. They gain valuable experience liaising with the contractors and working in a commercial construction environment. Other project work includes painting and decorating in private dwellings. Trainees meet the clients, estimate quantities, plan the work and obtain prices for materials. The trainees work in small groups, often with a more experienced adult trainee acting in a supervisory capacity. The company has received praise from clients about the quality of work and the professional manner in which the trainees have worked.

20. The training carried out in the training workshop does not fully take into account the work being undertaken on projects or during placements. For example, instruction in the workshops on painting doors has been undertaken after some trainees have already spent some time on the projects painting doors. Placement providers do not have a clear understanding of the qualifications and the links between the workshop training and the experience they can provide. Placement providers are given some information about the qualifications but they do not fully understand it. They do not receive a training programme. They are not involved directly in the reviews with the trainees when these are carried out at the placement. There are no assessors or workplace staff who sign trainees' work sheets at the placements. A limited amount of work-based assessment is undertaken and it usually takes place when tutors visit trainees to review their progress at least every eight weeks. Three of the project supervisors have relevant construction qualifications and countersign the trainees' work records. They have not been trained as workplace recorders or assessors and trainees undertake simulated assessment in the workshops when they have already shown that they are competent on the project work.

21. Trainees' reviews do not include specific, short-term targets for achievement. The trainees have a general idea of their progress but do not know what they should achieve by a set date. They are unable to measure their own progress towards their qualifications between reviews. Most of the basic employability trainees who attend and successfully complete the prevocational programme move on to the painting and decorating level 2 NVQ programme. The training plan target for this NVQ for these trainees is unrealistic within the time allowed. The trainees have not taken an occupationally recognised qualification and are starting the programme with the equivalent of an entry-level qualification. Trainees are so determined to succeed that when they come to the end of their time on their programme, many attend on a voluntary basis until they are eligible to properly rejoin the programme and complete their NVQ.

22. Most New Deal clients attend the Stafford centre one week in four for their training. Those attending the college do so for two days a week during termtime only. Some clients make good progress and are encouraged to complete further units from the qualifications. There are no specific achievement data for New Deal clients in this occupational area.

## **Engineering**

## **Grade 4**

23. The engineering department provides training towards NVQs at level 1 and level 2 in motor vehicle fitting (fast fit) at the Stafford site. Of 27 learners, 10 are in work placements and 17 work full time at the Stafford site. Learners who are in work placements work four days each week in their placement and attend off-the-job training one day each week at the training centre. All training for the level 2 NVQ takes place in the work placements. Learners who have not been allocated a work placement remain in the training centre and receive basic skills training in vehicle maintenance and theory and can take a qualification in tyre fitting. There are two members of staff in engineering. One is a supervisor/assessor and the other is responsible for work placements. Since the original inspection, WEC has ceased to offer mechanical engineering and fabrication and welding training. The motor vehicle NVQ available at the time of the original inspection has been replaced by a new version.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor understanding of NVQ programmes by motor vehicle trainees and employers
- ◆ inadequate planning for motor vehicle off-the-job training
- ◆ some poor assessment practices in motor vehicle training
- ◆ lack of focus on progression and target setting in reviews
- ◆ some poor achievement rates

24. Many of the weaknesses relating to the motor vehicle training have been

resolved. The weaknesses relating to poor understanding of NVQs by learners and employers, inadequate planned off-the-job training and lack of focus on progression and target setting are no longer weaknesses. The weakness relating to some poor assessment practice still exists. The self-assessment report identified strengths which were considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified more weaknesses than given in the self-assessment report and awarded a lower grade.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high priority given to health and safety

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some poor assessment practices
- ◆ insufficient work placements
- ◆ ineffective use of individual learning plans

25. Learners are given a comprehensive induction to their training. Health and safety issues are given a high priority. Employers reinforce health and safety at learners' induction to a work placement and learners carry out a safety assignment when they first start. Learners show good awareness of safety in the workplace, particularly when using tools and equipment. The placement officer thoroughly checks all prospective work placements for compliance with health and safety and other statutory requirements. The visiting assessor routinely monitors health and safety during progress reviews. Employers are enthusiastic about their role in training. On-the-job training is well planned to ensure that learners gain new skills and experience of different work areas. Employers give learners time to attend WEC for two five-day training courses in tyre and exhaust fitting, or to compile portfolios of evidence. WEC's staff give good support to employers.

26. The weakness relating to poor assessment practice remains. Assessments are not planned and recorded. Learners are assessed in the workplace, with their daily work tasks used as the main source of evidence. The assessor uses observation checklists which identify the criteria for each unit of the NVQ. Some learners have not signed the observation document to validate it as an authentic record of the assessment. Learners are given clear and constructive feedback at the end of the assessment. The assessor keeps a copy of the report for their records and another is retained by the learner. Some portfolios are well organised, with evidence referenced to the NVQ unit. They contain records of observation by the assessor and job cards of work carried out in the workplace, but some job cards are not signed and dated by the witness. In some cases learners record their evidence on plain paper, which is not recognised by awarding bodies as a valid document. There is no witness status list with sample signatures.

27. The self-assessment report identified a delay in NVQ assessment, and this has resulted in the appointment of a new supervisor who has responsibility for workplace assessment and the development and teaching of off-the-job training.

The supervisor has occupational expertise but does not have a qualification in instructional techniques. He has only recently achieved an assessors' qualification which enables him to assess learners in the workplace. Workplace assessments are not carried out early enough and learners make slow progress towards achieving their NVQ. Another member of staff, who is a qualified assessor with occupational experience, has not been used for workplace assessments or to countersign those assessment decisions made by the unqualified assessor. Assessors and internal verifiers are still unaware of the awarding body's assessment and verification procedures. This has not been resolved since the original inspection and was also identified in an external verifier's report.

28. There are 10 companies which offer work placements but this is insufficient for the number of learners, as 17 are currently without a work placement. They attend WEC full time and receive basic motor vehicle training and complete their tyre and exhaust qualification. Learners cannot gain the necessary NVQ competences without a work placement and one learner has been waiting for a placement for five months. WEC have set up a call centre to try to find more work-placement providers.

29. The self-assessment report identified ineffective use of individual learning plans as a weakness. Since the original inspection, the progress review procedure has been improved to involve employers in the process. Outcomes are recorded and employers attend the review and countersign the learners' review sheet. The learning plan is not used effectively to record the learners' progress. Little attention is given to setting achievable and realistic targets, and target dates are not always updated. Learners are not always aware of their learning plans. The motor vehicle department does not use the LSC's individual learning plan which has been introduced by WEC. The assessor visits learners in the workplace every four weeks to carry out a review and to carry out an assessment if appropriate. The placement officer telephones the employers each week to monitor attendance, and visits the work placement every month.

30. The achievement rates in engineering are historically poor. In 1998-99, 57.5 per cent of the young people achieved a level 1 NVQ and in 1999-2000, 66 per cent did so. Of the 2000-01 intake, 42.5 per cent gained a level 1 NVQ and 45 per cent left the programme early. These data relate to the previous motor vehicle qualification, as there are no data available for the current qualification as yet. Retention rates have improved for the current intake of learners. Sixteen of the 17 learners recruited in March 2001 are still in training.

### **Business administration**

### **Grade 3**

31. WEC provides training in business administration and information technology within all of its divisions. Trainees work towards NVQs at levels 1, 2, and 3. Information technology training is also provided at the SCOPE Centre, which is specifically set up to meet the needs of people with disabilities. There are 82

trainees and 22 New Deal clients across the following programmes:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Business administration	14	10	38	20	13	1	8	<b>104</b>

1 = modern apprentices, 2 = national trainees, 3 = other youth training, 4 = work-based learning for adults, 5 = New Deal environment task force, 6 = New Deal (employment), 7 = New Deal (voluntary)

32. There are also seven basic employability trainees and two adult 'jobtrain' trainees based in business administration. Most trainees are in work placements across a variety of businesses including tyre distributors, council offices, hospitals, chemical suppliers and computer manufacturers. Some of the trainees attend WEC on a full-time basis. Others who are in placements attend on a day-release basis or have contact through assessors' visits with the opportunity to 'drop in' to WEC as required. There are five business administration tutors and five information technology tutors. Reviews take place every four weeks for trainees with additional support needs and every 13 weeks for other trainees. Assessments are carried out as required by individual trainees. Resource materials include textbooks, exercise handouts, computers, other hardware such as scanners and printers, and software, which includes Microsoft Office and Windows 98. There is also controlled access to the Internet. In 1998-99 achievement rates for level 2 NVQs in business administration and information technology varied across the programmes. Seventy-five per cent of national trainees, 67 per cent of adults and 26 per cent of other youth trainees achieved their target qualifications. Job outcomes for adults have shown a decline, dropping from 35 per cent in 1996-97, to 16 per cent in 1998-99.

33. Inspectors did not agree with any of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They were either considered to be no more than normal practice or were more appropriate to a generic area. Inspectors identified extra strengths and weaknesses and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ wide range of good work placements available
- ◆ good peer group support
- ◆ detailed action planning with clear targets

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ missed opportunities for observing naturally occurring evidence
- ◆ lack of structured on-the-job training in some work placements
- ◆ some poor awareness by employers of NVQ programmes
- ◆ lack of work placements for some information technology trainees

34. Work placements are varied and offer a wide range of opportunities for

trainees to learn and develop their skills. There are some good information technology placements where trainees are able to gain a whole range of skills, including working in a team, dealing with customers over the telephone and face to face, and learning how to build personal computers. Another placement provides one trainee with the opportunity to deal with a range of business clients, and also to operate the help-desk system. The trainee has the autonomy required for the level of qualification being taken, and organises and plans his own workload. Business administration placements enable trainees to gain a whole range of skills. In many cases these are over and above those required for the NVQ. In larger organisations, trainees are given opportunities to move around departments to increase their knowledge and experience.

35. Trainees who have gained experience, and who are comfortable within their environment, are actively encouraged to offer support and guidance to new, less confident, trainees. One former trainee is now employed at the SCOPE Centre as an assistant. Some trainees are given the opportunity to participate in running training courses for other trainees and WEC's staff. This provides them with evidence for the communication aspects of their key skills.

36. Action planning is detailed and clearly identifies which NVQ unit and elements trainees have to complete. Trainees know what they need to achieve, and which parts of their NVQ the required activities will count towards. Actions are clearly linked to timescales which tie in with review dates. This helps trainees to progress and also to focus their efforts on producing appropriate evidence.

37. Work-based activities are not observed or directly assessed and opportunities are missed for including naturally occurring evidence in trainees' portfolios. Trainees spend time collecting hard copies of evidence or writing personal statements, which they show to their assessor. This is time consuming and trainees' progress is slowed. In some workplaces, on-the-job training is inadequately organised and structured. Trainees learn single aspects of the work and do not have the opportunity to see a job through to its completion.

38. Some employers have an insufficient understanding of NVQs in general, and of the specific programmes that their trainees are undertaking. Those employers who have a greater awareness and knowledge of the NVQ process and programme are able to identify ways in which the on-the-job training can be used to help trainees to gain and demonstrate competence in the different units and elements being undertaken. Not all information technology trainees have the opportunity to do work experience. The new information technology NVQs require that assessment takes place in the workplace. Some of the trainees who have been registered for several months have not yet been assessed in the workplace.

39. Most New Deal clients work towards information technology qualifications. Most assessment takes place in the training centre. There are no specific achievement data for New Deal clients in this occupational area.

## Retailing & customer service

## Grade 3

40. There are 92 trainees and 70 New Deal clients in retailing, across the programmes in the table below. There are also eight basic employability trainees and one adult 'jobtrain' trainee based in retailing and customer service. Trainees work in environments which include shops in the private and voluntary sector, horticultural nurseries, distributive and transport logistics, cash and carry, travel and healthcare. WEC also offers forklift truck training, testing and NVQs, to trainees in distribution and construction. Large goods-vehicle training and testing is subcontracted. Youth and adult trainees are matched to work-placement providers which offer work experience or potential employment. Non-employed trainees have an induction at WEC and employed trainees at their workplace. Training and assessment for distributive and service industries is carried out at WEC's sites, subcontractors' sites and in the workplace. During 1999-2000, 58 per cent of youth trainees gained an NVQ at level 2, 59 per cent gained employment and 35 per cent are still in training. No modern apprenticeships or national traineeships have yet been achieved. Sixteen per cent of adults gained an NVQ at level 1 and 16 per cent gained an NVQ at level 2. Less than 1 per cent gained employment and 34 per cent are still on the programme.

41. Inspectors agreed with one strength in the self-assessment report and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Retailing & customer service	10	5	36	41	26	8	36	162

1 = modern apprentices, 2 = national trainees, 3 = other youth training, 4 = work-based learning for adults, 5 = New Deal environment task force, 6 = New Deal (employment), 7 = New Deal (voluntary)

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent, flexible reviews and assessment
- ◆ wide variety of work placements available
- ◆ effective links between workplace supervisors, assessors and trainees

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor assessment practice
- ◆ missed opportunities to use naturally occurring evidence
- ◆ no key skills assessment

42. Assessors visit their allocated trainees on a weekly basis or monthly in some cases, according to the needs of each trainee. They give individual tuition based on handouts that are used for guided reading. Work assignments are adapted for each working environment. Reviews are carried out every four to eight weeks. Line managers, assessors and trainees all contribute to the review process. The focus of

the review is to increase trainees' job skills to their full potential. Trainees are helped to find work placements. They work with assessors to compare their skills with job requirements and are given assistance in compiling curricula vitae, completing application forms and interview techniques. There are work placements within WEC which include a garden centre and stores. Disadvantaged trainees can develop their vocational skills in these placements where they are well supported. Assessors ensure that on-the-job learning takes place in a safe environment. Two placement providers offer the opportunity for trainees to gain experience in forklift truck work and large goods vehicle driving which is essential to gaining employment in this field. Many charity organisations regularly offer placements, in which trainees can improve interpersonal skills with other volunteers. They also learn practical skills such as stock control, pricing, labelling and customer care at a pace suited to their capabilities.

43. WEC's assessors agree specific training responsibilities with placement providers to ensure that trainees have the opportunity to gain their target qualifications. There are good links between workplace supervisors and assessors. This ensures that any problems can be dealt with quickly and extra support identified and provided. Some placement providers offer flexible hours or attendance patterns for trainees with childcare responsibilities. The customer service subcontractor offers creche and holiday childcare schemes. Additional information technology training is also offered.

44. Opportunities to accredit trainees' prior learning are frequently missed, for example, certificates in first aid and health and safety are often not used as evidence. Few specific training or assessment plans are used and trainees are often unclear as to whether they are being assessed or whether it is an individual training session. A checklist of tasks is issued or dictated to trainees prior to assessment or is used as an observation report. Instruction and leading questions are used during observation which does not meet the requirements for using observation as a method of assessment. Trainees are required to complete questionnaires when they have already demonstrated knowledge and understanding, or answered oral questions which assessors have failed to record. There are few recorded observations of assessors in order to monitor assessment practice. Assessors' meetings do not include discussions on good or poor practice and there is no common policy or procedure for assessment.

45. A large amount of simulation is used to provide evidence for trainees, and opportunities to use work-based evidence are missed. Trainees repeat everyday work tasks in simulated sessions so that assessors can observe them. There is little use of witness testimonies from the work placement. Assessors are not confident about key skills and no assessment has yet taken place. Trainees achieve the individual NVQs required but are unable to achieve the full modern apprenticeship or national traineeship frameworks at present. Some members of staff have been trained in key skills, but this has not yet been done across all occupational areas.

46. New Deal clients are either on the employment or voluntary sector options and

are working towards two units of an NVQ. WEC acts as a subcontractor to the training providers of these options. WEC's staff carry out training and assessment. There are no specific achievement data for New Deal clients in this occupational area.

## **Hospitality**

## **Grade 3**

47. The number of trainees in hospitality has been decreasing for the past four years. There are now 11 trainees on the programme and one adult 'jobtrain' trainee is based in hospitality. Three trainees are working towards NVQs at level 1 in food preparation and cooking. Eight trainees are working towards the same NVQ at level 2. Trainees attend WEC for five days a week until they are ready to go out on work experience. They spend the majority of this time working in the on-site kitchen. This provides a take-away service for breakfast, lunch and tea and lunch in the self-service dining room. This is open to all workers on the industrial estate where WEC is situated. In the afternoon the trainees have portfolio-building sessions and theory classes. Trainees on work experience normally attend WEC one day a week. The two staff from WEC visit the workplace every eight to 12 weeks as well as carrying out training and assessment at WEC. The training supervisor visits trainees more frequently if they are not attending WEC as part of their programme. The New Deal trainees work in the site kitchen on one or two days a week and work towards individual NVQ units which they choose from the range of the food preparation qualifications.

48. WEC's self-assessment report did not include all of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-planned training and assessment
- ◆ good use of personal evaluation by trainees in progress reviews
- ◆ good development of trainees' confidence and sense of responsibility
- ◆ trainees fully involved in all aspects of their training programmes

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of disciplined approach in training kitchen
- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ no specific targets set for some trainees
- ◆ no detailed plans for off-the-job training

49. Prospective employers are not only visited by WEC's staff to check their health and safety practices and their compliance with the contractual requirements, but also hold detailed discussions with the catering training supervisor on their

ability to provide appropriate training and experience for the trainee. If employers are deemed suitable, they are involved in the development of a training and assessment plan for the trainee. Employers work with WEC's staff to plan and provide appropriate on-the-job training. WEC takes into account the business constraints of the employer when devising an off-the-job training programme. Trainees who receive additional learning support have reviews every four weeks. Trainees, their training supervisors and the support tutor are involved in the reviews. Other trainees review their progress with their training supervisor every eight weeks. If the trainee is on work experience, their workplace supervisor is also involved in the review. Trainees are asked to complete a personal evaluation form to self-assess their progress and this is compared with the workplace supervisor's or training supervisor's evaluation. Any differences are discussed before the review documents are completed and signed by all those involved.

50. WEC's staff allow trainees taking NVQs at level 1 to have an unusually high level of responsibility for their work. They work as team leaders in the kitchen and work with very little supervision. This is above the level required for NVQs at level 1. Trainees initially identified as having severe low self-esteem or low confidence take a pride in their work and openly discuss their progress with visitors. Trainees choose the course appropriate to their needs and select the optional units they wish to take. They have ownership not only of their assessment logs and portfolios but also of their files, including individual training plans and reviews.

51. The site kitchen has an appropriate amount and range of equipment for the meals being served. However, the number of trainees who can safely use the kitchen at one time is limited by the size, layout, and equipment available. Some of the equipment is old and the fittings make the area difficult to keep clean and safe. These constraints make it essential to rigorously enforce appropriate working practices. This is not always done. Some hygiene regulations are not rigidly enforced. Correct protective clothing is not always worn and some storage requirements are not met. Some storage and working areas in the section are untidy and set a poor example for trainees. Modern sanitation practices have not been fully implemented. Insufficient attention is paid to detail in the kitchen and associated areas.

52. Over the last two years, 53 per cent of trainees achieved NVQs at level 1 before leaving the programme, but only 17 per cent achieved NVQs at level 2, which is the level usually required by prospective employers. The low achievement rates are partly a reflection of the high drop-out rate. Some trainees are disaffected and find it difficult to attend on a regular basis. Seventy per cent of those starting left the programme before their expected end date, many of them within the first few weeks. There is a lack of urgency about progressing towards qualifications, which also affects the achievement rates. Trainees' progress reviews state future actions for trainees but these are not time-related and are often unspecific. Some work-based trainees review their progress with their workplace supervisor and the placement officer. In these cases it is left to the training

supervisor to set targets later, but this is rarely done.

53. There is little structure to the catering training given at WEC. Theory training takes place from week to week when there is time available but there is no programme timetable, nor are there co-ordinated session plans. Trainees do not know what they will be doing in the kitchen or the classroom in the next few weeks, or even in the next week. Trainees work repetitively on one unit over several weeks until they are competent in that unit. For some units, the work lacks imagination and the trainees are not sufficiently stimulated to move rapidly through the work required.

### **Hair & beauty (hairdressing)**

### **Grade 1**

54. There are 15 trainees on the hairdressing programme. Two are national trainees and the other 13 are on other youth training. Nine trainees are employed and attend off-the-job training once a week, the rest of their time being spent in their salons. Other trainees attend the training centre either on a full-time basis, or with some work experience, as appropriate to their individual needs and aspirations. Trainees start their programmes at NVQ level 1, which is carried out entirely at WEC, and then progress to level 2 and are assisted in finding employment or a placement with a salon. Some trainees convert to the national traineeship programme. The programme is managed and taught by a team of two trainer/assessors. They carry out progress reviews with trainees in the training centre or in their salons if they are on placement or employed.

55. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good use of prior learning and achievement to produce training plans
- ◆ flexible programme to meet individual needs of trainees
- ◆ comprehensive, frequent and well-recorded reviews
- ◆ good retention and achievement rates

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some outdated equipment
- ◆ insufficient range of clients available for trainees to practise on

56. WEC liaises with local schools and provides two-week prevocational work tasters. Everyone has an informal interview to explore their interest in hairdressing. Many trainees have worked part time in hairdressing and this and other prior learning and achievements are used to inform their individual training

plans. Care is taken to ensure that realistic and achievable targets are agreed and set which meet individual trainees' abilities and aspirations. All trainees start working towards NVQs at level 1, taught entirely at WEC. Trainees are matched to salons according to their needs and those of the employer. The programme is taught by two trainer/assessors who are supported by a qualified basic skills tutor. The programme is designed to be flexible to meet the diverse needs of the trainees. Some trainees, who feel that they lack the confidence and ability to work in a commercial salon, are only found work experience when they feel ready. There are various modes of attendance and additional coaching in the workplace. Trainees increase their time with employers as appropriate. By the time they achieve the level 1 NVQ, usually at about eight months, most have a full-time work placement and some are employed in salons. National traineeships are offered to trainees. The evidence gained in the level 1 NVQ is used and built upon for the level 2. Trainees are encouraged to take ownership of their programmes and select their own options for the level 2 NVQ.

57. Trainees who have been identified as having additional learning needs, such as literacy or numeracy, are offered specialist support and additional individual tuition and coaching with their practical and/or written work. This is linked in with their hairdressing and helps them to progress towards their NVQ. The programme has a strong emphasis on personal development, such as confidence building, personal effectiveness, teamwork and pastoral care. Additional support is exceptionally well recorded during regular and comprehensive review sessions. All trainees have a 12-weekly individual progress review with their personal hairdressing tutor and many also have a separate weekly review with their tutor or the basic skills tutor. The review process covers NVQ achievement targets, general learning and personal development, and any personal issues that trainees wish to discuss. This ensures that extra help can be given immediately and, in the case of personal problems, appropriate support and guidance or referral advice given. Individual training plans are referred to and constantly updated, so that realistic and achievable targets are maintained.

58. WEC maintains close links with employers to ensure that they know the NVQ requirements and are able to offer suitable opportunities to trainees. Trainees are assessed in their salons and their progress is discussed with their employers or supervisors. This helps to maintain good working relationships with the salon supervisors, and there are good links between on- and off-the-job training. WEC's staff frequently visit employers to liaise with supervisors about the off-the-job training programme and their trainees' progress, and they try to ensure that the on-the-job training is planned to support this.

59. Assessments are carried out early in the trainees' programmes and trainees make steady progress. On average, trainees take just over 24 months to achieve both levels 1 and 2 of the NVQ. The standard of work, both written and practical, is good. Practical assessments are planned in advance. A wall chart prominently displays individual trainees' progress towards their qualifications. Both assessors and trainees use this, and trainees are encouraged to make steady progress

throughout the programme. Retention and achievement rates are good. Of all youth trainees starting their programmes during 1998-99, only 12.5 per cent left without achieving their qualifications while 75 per cent went on to complete their individual training plans. In 1999-2000, 25 per cent left without achieving their qualifications and 64 per cent achieved an NVQ at level 1. All of the trainees completing level 1 NVQs have progressed to level 2. Most of the trainees secure full-time employment either during or upon completion of their programmes.

60. The product range in the training salon is narrow and some equipment is not up to date with current industry standards. There are no proper reception facilities or after-care retail area. There is a shortage of some modern commercial equipment found in most commercial salons such as steamers and accelerators. A regular clientele throughout the week meets the practical work needs of the level 1 trainees. However, the range of clients is not sufficiently broad to ensure that all techniques can be practised, especially at level 2.

## **Health, care & public services**

## **Grade 2**

61. WEC offers training and assessment leading to NVQs in care and early years care and education at levels 2 and 3. There are 65 national trainees, one other youth trainee and three New Deal clients on the voluntary sector option. Trainees work for three or four days each week in supervised placements, including residential homes for elderly people, community centres, nurseries, primary schools and schools for people with learning difficulties. There are also 10 dental nurses, three of whom are employed, and all work in dental practices. Off-the-job training takes place on one or two days each week and includes guidance on portfolio building. There are two supervisor/assessors, qualified to assess trainees and to verify assessment decisions. One member of staff is qualified to assess and accredit trainees' prior learning and achievements. There is one training and development advisor for dental nursing. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to the local National Health Service Trust for dental nursing. All staff have occupational experience and are qualified to teach.

62. The self-assessment report included four strengths, two of which inspectors judged to be no more than normal practice and two of which they agreed with. One of the weaknesses in the self assessment report was confirmed by inspectors. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### ***STRENGTHS***

- ◆ extensive range of good work placements available
- ◆ workplace 'taster' sessions available
- ◆ frequent, effective reviews of trainees' progress
- ◆ good achievement rate and job outcomes

- ◆ high progression rates to employment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no structured plan for off-the-job training
- ◆ duplication of evidence by trainees
- ◆ delayed training and assessment of key skills

63. There are good working relationships between all those involved in training. WEC has a database of workplaces which accept trainees who need extra support both on a personal level and with literacy and numeracy skills. Most of the workplaces have a qualified assessor. Where there is no work-based assessor, WEC's staff visit at least every two weeks to assess trainees during real work activities. Most employers and assessors identify a specific time each week for the assessor and trainee to plan and carry out assessments in the workplace. Some employers have a plan for the practical training to be carried out during the trainees' first three months in the workplace. All trainees have the opportunity to spend up to three months in the workplace before they start their NVQ training. This gives trainees and employers time to decide whether the workplace and client group is suitable. Trainees are able to experience work in up to three different care settings during this period. All trainees are given this time to become accustomed to the demands of work and what is expected of them before they start assessment for their NVQ. Trainees work closely with their work-based supervisors and most employers have a list of simple tasks relating to the NVQ which trainees practise during this time. When trainees are competent in these tasks their achievement is used as evidence towards their NVQ. Experience in different settings help trainees to identify where they wish to work.

64. WEC's supervisors/assessors support assessors and trainees in the workplace. They review trainees' progress through the NVQ and their performance in the workplace at least every month. Employers complete a form relating to trainees' competence, achievement of skills, time-keeping and ability to work as part of a team. The trainees complete the same form to assess their own achievement and performance. Trainees are given the opportunity to meet with WEC's supervisor privately before all parties meet together. Activities for the trainee to undertake in the workplace are agreed and recorded. These specific activities are detailed and so trainees understand exactly what is expected of them. A workbook of questions and activities in the workplace is used to assess trainees' background knowledge. Trainees practise their skills under supervision in the workplace before arranging with their assessor to be observed at work and complete their assessment. Trainees are involved in planning their assessments and fully understand the NVQ process.

65. Once trainees have settled into their workplaces, most go on to complete their NVQ. Those who leave the programme early do so for reasons beyond the control of WEC, such as moving away from the area, and most return to complete their training. Some trainees have completed other courses related to childcare. Their previous learning and any written work is reviewed and, where possible, is accredited as prior learning. This helps trainees to progress more quickly towards

their NVQ. During 1998-99, 58 per cent of youth trainees and 75 per cent of adult trainees achieved their level 2 NVQ. All care trainees became employed. In 1998-99, 80 per cent of the dental nurses completed their training. All dental trainees who stay on the training programme achieve the National Certificate for Dental Nurses and become employed either during their training or very shortly afterwards.

66. WEC offers a rolling programme of training for childcare meaning that trainees can start at any time. There is no plan for theory training and it is therefore difficult to monitor the training which trainees have received or the training sessions they need to attend. Employers have no record of the date of the training sessions which trainees may need to attend and they are unable to link on-the-job training with the theory training sessions. Some work-based assessors have compiled their own question sheets for trainees to complete as part of their preparation for observation in the workplace. WEC also gives trainees workbooks to complete the theory work for their NVQ. This means that trainees complete similar tasks and questions twice, and their progress through the NVQ is slowed. Teaching and assessment of key skills has not yet been fully implemented. There are 17 national trainees working towards NVQs at level 2. Many of these trainees will have the opportunity to progress to level 3 on the modern apprenticeship programme. There are no documents for trainees to record their achievement of the key skills which they demonstrate during their daily activities in the workplace and these key skills cannot then be assessed.

67. The New Deal clients in childcare are on the voluntary sector option and are attending on a day-release basis from another training provider. They work towards two units of the NVQ at level 2 and are assessed in their work placements by WEC's assessors. The one New Deal client on programme has sufficient evidence in her portfolio to complete her two units and has started to collect evidence for other units. There are no specific achievement data for New Deal clients in this occupational area.

### **Foundation for work**

### **Grade 3**

68. There are 60 trainees and eight New Deal clients across the areas in the table below. The youth training programme (known as 'life skills') is new and is still being developed. It is offered in Tamworth as a structured programme. In the other divisions, trainees are based in an occupational area and have an individual programme with extra support sessions. An in-depth initial assessment is carried out using a variety of assessment techniques. The structured programme in Tamworth is operated in conjunction with various local partners. Most adult trainees on basic employability training are based in occupational areas and receive additional support where this has been identified. Apart from in construction, they work towards NVQs at level 1 and some progress to level 2. There is an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme offered in East Staffordshire. WEC offers off-the-job training to adult trainees on a

'jobtrain' programme. The contract is with the employer and training is usually provided on the employers' premises through individual sessions and mentoring. New Deal clients who have been identified as requiring additional support in basic skills spend one day each week with a basic skills tutor. In 1998-99, 70 per cent of adult trainees and 62 per cent of youth trainees completed their individual training plans. In 1999-2000, 40 per cent of adult trainees completed their individual training plans and 41 per cent are still in training. Sixty-three per cent of youth trainees completed their individual training plans, 6 per cent are still in training and the rest left the programme early.

69. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and one of the weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Other strengths were judged to be either no more than normal practice or were more appropriate to other areas. Three of the weaknesses were more appropriate to the generic areas. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Foundation for work	8	48	4	5	3	68

1 = youth (life skills), 2 = adult (basic employability), 3 = adult (job train), 4 = New Deal (environment task force), 5 = New Deal (voluntary)

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ strong focus on achieving occupational competence
- ◆ well-structured and individualised basic skills support

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient time to assess support and training needs of adult trainees
- ◆ inappropriate initial assessment and certification for ESOL trainees

70. Adult trainees are placed in the occupational area of their choice and are integrated into the practical work and training. They work towards NVQs at level 1 and some of them progress to level 2. Trainees in construction work as a team with one supervisor. They are highly motivated and are working towards a prevocational award in construction which also includes personal effectiveness. They have the opportunity to progress to level 2 but it is not possible to complete this in the timescale of their programme. Many of them continue on a voluntary basis so that they can achieve their NVQ.

71. All youth trainees have an initial assessment to identify their basic skills and other support needs. They have a structured programme of basic skills support which leads to them gaining wordpower and numberpower certificates. They either attend the open-learning unit at Stafford or work with a basic skills tutor in the other two divisions. Trainees either work in very small groups or on an individual basis. They have access to a wide range of resources and there are computerised support packages available in the open-learning unit. Trainees bring their

portfolios with them if they need help to record evidence. Basic skills tutors have begun to develop links with occupational supervisors and are beginning to integrate basic skills support with the occupational work. Some adult trainees have identified basic skills needs, but do not choose to receive extra support. Tutors work with them to encourage them to view the support as a positive progression towards work, but only a few take up the option. Those who do find it useful.

72. Adult trainees start in their occupational areas and have the same induction and initial assessment as other trainees. There is no opportunity to carry out an in-depth initial assessment of their support and training needs or to spend time working with them before they move into their chosen occupational area. There is a high drop-out rate for adult trainees. In 1997-98, 44 per cent left early, in 1998-99, 35 per cent left early and in 1999-2000, 21 per cent left early with 41 per cent still in training. This rate is lower for adult construction trainees, who are highly motivated. They are the only group of adults who are working on a personal development programme as well as their occupational area.

73. ESOL trainees have a standardised initial assessment and then work towards a wordpower qualification as part of their individual training plan. This is part of the TEC contract. However, both the initial assessment and wordpower are designed for native English speakers and are not appropriate for ESOL trainees. The two ESOL tutors recognise this and also use specially designed initial assessment tests. ESOL trainees are given appropriate work for their individual needs and do plenty of oral work to improve their spoken English. The tutors give them a great deal of support to enable them to develop their wordpower portfolios but are aware that there are more appropriate qualifications specifically designed for this client group.

74. New Deal clients work on an individual basis with their basic skills tutor. They work towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications. Attendance is not good. There are no specific achievement data for New Deal clients in this occupational area.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

75. WEC has an equal opportunities policy which meets the requirements of legislation, the TEC and the Employment Service. Job advertisements contain a positive statement encouraging applications from people with disabilities. The equal opportunities policy is contained within the quality assurance manual which is issued to all staff. Overall responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the chief executive and the three divisional managers. Equal opportunities is covered in all induction programmes. A high proportion of WEC's trainees and New Deal clients have specific learning needs and disabilities. Inspectors agreed with four of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but did not agree with the

other strengths listed. They identified an additional strength. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses and also identified additional weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective links with local community groups and agencies to recruit under-represented groups
- ◆ appointment of a 'minority ethnic co-ordinator'
- ◆ good access for trainees with diverse needs
- ◆ prompt action taken to resolve complaints

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ equal opportunities policy not fully comprehensive
- ◆ poor awareness by trainees and employers of equal opportunities
- ◆ no updating of staff on equal opportunity issues
- ◆ no systematic analysis of equal opportunities data

76. Quarterly reports on equal opportunities are prepared for discussion at board meetings. The board is working towards an 'equal opportunities quality framework'. This framework provides a comprehensive approach to developing an equal opportunities culture within an organisation. The framework is based around the business excellence model but with specific reference to the implementation of sound equal opportunities practice. Four members of staff from WEC have been given training and are now beginning the process of implementing the framework. This involves self-assessment, action planning, and continuous review.

77. WEC has established effective links with local community groups and agencies. Within Staffordshire, 1.1 per cent of the population have disabilities and in Stafford, the figure is 2.8 per cent. To meet the needs of this client group, WEC has increased the availability of specialised training by entering into a partnership arrangement with the SCOPE Centre in Stafford. WEC also has partnership arrangements with the local probation service, the Education Welfare Service and local schools. The partnership arrangements with schools ensure that school pupils who are excluded from year 10 onwards are referred to WEC. Within the county, 0.5 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups and within East Staffordshire, the figure is 3.3 per cent. WEC has taken positive action to make additional English language training available within East Staffordshire. It also co-ordinates a project to encourage people from minority ethnic groups to take up work-based training. A full-time minority ethnic co-ordinator has been appointed. The co-ordinator works with young people from minority ethnic groups in schools and in the community, to encourage them to view training as a good way of increasing their employability. He arranges open days and visits to the training centres.

78. WEC offers good access to training for trainees with diverse learning and

support needs. The company operates an open-access policy for both youth and adults, offering all trainees a place, regardless of their background. Appropriate additional support sessions are available where identified. Access to sites is good, with the exception of Tamworth. This division is moving to a new site which does have ramps and appropriate facilities. Trainees are made aware of the grievance procedures and have a good understanding of the process involved in dealing with any grievance. Prompt action has been taken when complaints have been made. Details of complaints are kept on file along with details of the actions taken. These are regularly reviewed.

79. WEC's equal opportunities policy is not fully comprehensive. It does not make any reference to harassment and bullying and the policy has not been extended to cover subjects such as ageism and HIV. The policy is reviewed annually as part of the company's quality assurance arrangements but copies of the policy currently held by staff were last revised in September 1998. WEC's equal opportunities policy is not on public display in any of its three divisions. Trainees in some occupational areas have a low awareness of equal opportunities. Equal opportunities issues are referred to during the induction process and briefly referred to in the induction booklet. Trainees are not given a full copy of WEC's equal opportunities policy. There is no reinforcement of the information given on equality of opportunity and it is not mentioned at reviews.

80. Equal opportunities practices are not routinely monitored in the workplace and employers are not fully aware of the importance of equal opportunities. Employers' training agreements include a reference to the requirement that they must observe WEC's equal opportunities policy, but they are not given a copy of the policy. Employers are not issued with a handbook containing guidelines on how WEC will monitor the implementation of equality of opportunity within the workplace. All new staff have an induction which includes equal opportunities. However, staff are not continuously updated on equal opportunities issues including any changes in legislation, nor are they given any guidance or support on how to monitor equality of opportunity in the workplace. The self-assessment report identified this as a weakness and the action plan records that a series of equal opportunities awareness sessions will be in place by December 1999. These have yet to take place.

81. A range of equal opportunities data is available to WEC, most of which is supplied by the TEC. This covers the gender of trainees, recruitment of minority ethnic groups, and of people with disabilities. Statistics are supplied for both youth and adult training. The data are not systematically analysed by WEC to inform management and are not used to set recruitment targets or to take positive action.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 2**

82. Prospective trainees are referred to WEC from local careers offices, the Employment Service and other agencies. WEC maintains close links with these

referral agencies. New Deal clients are referred from the Employment Service onto the environment task force option. Referral agencies use WEC for trainees who need high levels of support. Forty per cent of TEC-funded trainees referred to the Stafford division in 1999-2000 had learning difficulties or additional support needs. The selection process includes initial interviews and tests, followed by interviews with supervisors from the vocational areas. All trainees have a general induction programme at WEC and an induction into the vocational area they have chosen. In smaller centres, the vocational supervisor may carry out both. Reviews of trainees' progress take place at least every eight weeks in most cases, but where trainees have additional support needs this is increased to every four weeks. Training supervisors in the vocational areas provide both training and pastoral support. Trainees are referred to specialists where more specific support is needed. The self-assessment report identified many strengths and few weaknesses. Inspectors did not agree with all of these and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good, impartial advice given to trainees on entry
- ◆ good assessment of basic skills needs
- ◆ well-developed specialist additional support for basic skills
- ◆ good support for people with disabilities
- ◆ good use of specialist agencies for support

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no initial assessment in some occupational areas
- ◆ no systematic initial assessment of trainees' key skills
- ◆ poor job-search support for many trainees

83. WEC attempts to find the most appropriate course for all those who apply to its programmes. This policy is known in the local community and, as a result, WEC receives applications from a range of prospective trainees who may have training or support needs which cannot be met within WEC's programmes. Considerable time and effort is therefore spent finding suitable programmes for trainees and providing an unofficial advisory service for prospective trainees even though they may not enrol with WEC. A high proportion of trainees are undecided as to which career they wish to pursue. Supervisors are realistic in describing the programmes and the jobs they may lead to. In some cases, short taster programmes are used to help trainees to decide on the most appropriate full programme. Despite the initial advice given, some trainees decide within the first few weeks of starting that they wish to change the direction of their programme. Trainees are given the opportunity to move from one programme to another following advisory interviews with the appropriate supervisors.

84. Most trainees take a Basic Skills Agency initial assessment test during their induction and this is marked by basic skills specialists. On some sites this process

is less developed and more reliance is placed on the interview, with induction staff making a personal assessment of each trainee at this stage. Trainees who are identified as needing further support are normally offered in-depth diagnostic tests administered by qualified tutors. This service is offered in an encouraging and supportive interview and most trainees take the test. The diagnostic tests are used to draw up an appropriate programme of additional support, which is agreed with the trainee. The support may involve activities in the workplace or the vocational training workshop as well as in WEC's basic skills unit or open-learning centre. Learning support programmes are well planned and make good use of well-designed, appropriate materials. Learning support is very well recorded.

85. WEC works with the SCOPE centre in Stafford to provide a high level of support for trainees with a range of disabilities, some of whom do not qualify for normal funding. WEC is taking part in a project to develop voice input on the computers of those with sight impairment or disabilities, which makes keyboard use difficult. WEC has also made arrangements for signers to accompany trainees with hearing impairments. All staff support trainees well regardless of whether they have direct contact with them as part of their normal job role. Trainees' reviews are used to address personal as well as training issues. When problems are identified, time is dedicated to help the trainee to resolve them. Most personal support is recorded, but there is no appropriate procedure for keeping confidential information and so there is a lack of records in some cases. WEC realises its limitations and involves other specialist agencies in supporting trainees with specific problems beyond the expertise of its own staff. It works closely with these agencies. A mini-bus is provided by WEC for some trainees who have to work in a rural area.

86. There is no systematic initial assessment of trainees' occupational skills. Some occupational training supervisors conduct detailed initial assessments, but in other areas the trainees' application form and initial interview are the only source of information. In many cases, the information about occupational skills collected is not used to develop individual training plans and there is little accreditation of trainees' prior learning. WEC has sent staff on courses in key skills training and assessment during the last year. Comprehensive materials for the initial assessment of key skills have now been introduced for use on all national traineeship and modern apprenticeship inductions. However, this material has not yet been used for all trainees taking key skills and, in many cases, initial assessments are not used to produce individual training plans.

87. Formal job-search training is not part of the programme for TEC-funded trainees although trainees looking for employment are given active support by training supervisors and work-placement officers. WEC offers job-search training and support for New Deal clients but the standard of the programme is inconsistent across sites and is classroom based. New Deal clients do not always attend. WEC is aware of these problems and has started to take action to raise the standard of all job-search programmes to the standards achieved in some parts of the organisation.

88. There are very low achievement and retention rates for New Deal environment task force clients. In 1998-99, there was a 5 per cent retention rate and in 1999-2000, a 14.7 per cent retention rate. This compares with an average from all published and unpublished Training Standards Council reports of 44 per cent for the environment task force option. The individual training plan completion rate is 4.4 per cent for 1998-99 and 14.9 per cent for 1999-2000.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

89. WEC has a good management structure. There are seven divisions within the company, for which the managing director has overall managerial responsibility. The training operation is managed by the managing director and the director of training. Five of the divisions are concerned with training and two with commercial operations. Each of the training divisions is located in a main town within the county. There is also a specialised training unit in Stafford which offers learners with disabilities the opportunity to train in administration and information technology. Divisional managers are responsible for the day-to-day management of their division and associated satellite centres, including management of the devolved budget. The company produces a three-year business plan which sets out divisional targets for the training programmes and the plan is reviewed twice a year. The budget is devolved to the five divisions in accordance with forecasted numbers of learners. The managing director reviews the year's operations and gives projections for the forthcoming year. There are policies for staff recruitment, marketing, health and safety and staff appraisals. The company was accredited with the Investors in People standard in December 1994. It was reaccredited in 1997 and again in 2000.

At the time of the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no strategic management of training programmes
- ◆ employers not made aware of their roles and responsibilities
- ◆ inadequate key skills training
- ◆ no accurate data available to guide managerial decision making

90. Work has been carried out in each area and two of the original weaknesses have been rectified. There is insufficient use of data and the integration of key skills training is not adequate. In its self-assessment report, WEC accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses which were identified during inspection. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good internal communication
- ◆ effective working relationships with external organisations
- ◆ good staff appraisal and development process

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate integration of key skills training with vocational training
- ◆ limited use of achievement data

91. There is effective communication between head office and the divisions. Managers meet every three months to review strategies, to consider problems across the company and to co-ordinate standards and policies across all of the occupational areas. The meetings are attended by directors and divisional managers and by any member of staff who has knowledge of, or a special interest in, an item to be discussed. The board of directors meets every three months and receives reports on performance and any strategic developments which managers wish to implement. Information from managers' meetings is passed to divisional staff meetings and departmental meetings. Staff are encouraged to ask questions, give opinions and participate fully in the discussions. Their responses are noted and passed back to senior managers. This two-way communication ensures that staff throughout the company are kept informed. Other meetings, such as the staff development meetings and the divisional managers' meetings, offer additional routes of communication. Managers and staff use e-mail for most of their written communication. The company's intranet facility gives on-line availability to policies and procedures, and it is effective in giving relevant information to people at all levels in the organisation. Staff keep up to date with changes to documents through the intranet, and they use it to update learners' records. A staff bulletin is posted on the intranet and paper copies are sent to all divisions to keep staff informed on matters of general interest within the company. A journal is produced twice each year and approximately 5,000 copies of each edition are distributed within the county, particularly to employers who offer work placements and modern apprenticeships. It is an effective means of raising public awareness about the company and its training and commercial activities.

92. Effective changes have been made in the strategic management of training programmes which involve staff at all levels. Groups of staff from different divisions within the company meet to discuss improvement themes for all the occupational areas. Staff have already improved the induction and Life Skills programmes, and are working on jobsearch, data collection and key skills. Staff can meet to discuss specific aspects of training within the same, or similar, occupational areas in order to bring about continuous improvements. Good practice is now being shared, and procedures have been developed which apply throughout the company. An effective system has recently been introduced for monitoring the extent to which off-the-job training is related to, and supports, learners' on-the-job experience.

93. WEC has developed co-operative working relationships with many external organisations, including local community groups, which support learners' needs. These organisations offer appropriate work-placements for learners and give additional support and counselling in their specialised areas. There is a good referral process with other training providers which has been developed to ensure that learners receive the most appropriate training.

94. WEC has an effective staff appraisal process. Staff are reviewed every three or six months, depending on their individual needs. The appraisal is linked to objectives in the company's business plan, and individual objectives are agreed and reviewed. The objectives frequently highlight training needs which form the basis of the company's staff development plan, and an extensive core training programme has been developed to meet regular and ongoing staff development needs. An appraisal was observed by inspectors and the standard was good. When staff attend in-house or external training, they evaluate the training and assess its contribution to their knowledge, skills and job role. The staff development officer follows up the training with the relevant members of staff and systematically monitors the feedback.

95. The self-assessment report identifies the need for employers and work-placement providers across occupational areas to be more aware of their roles and responsibilities. WEC has designed and produced a booklet, which describes the role of employers and what they can expect from WEC staff. It has been given to all employers and work-placement providers. A new process has been developed which involves the employers when learning objectives are set and when learners' progress is reviewed. This will allow, assessors to gain employers' opinions and observations on learners' needs and their progress towards the qualification. Some employers give statements which testify to learners' competences, although few are involved in the direct assessment of occupational competence.

96. There continues to be a delay for many of the modern apprentices in starting their key skills training and assessment. WEC has introduced an extensive programme of staff development for 20 staff to gain the key skills practitioners' qualification. Although the training is almost complete, learners are still undergoing separate key skills training and assessment in many of the occupational areas. Some learners are now starting to work on their NVQs and key skills simultaneously but key skills are not an integral part of all vocational training.

97. WEC has worked hard to improve its data collection systems since the original inspection. Managers and staff identified some key data needs. They designed a new computer-based data gathering and processing system. The system is already beginning to give relevant data which managers need to make effective judgements. However, there are some gaps in the data and the way it is used as a basis for management decisions. There is little analysis of achievement data, especially between occupational or geographical areas, and of the financial impact of achievement or lack of it. For example, there is no analysis of the effectiveness of business administration programmes at the company's different sites.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 3**

98. WEC has a system of procedures, flow charts and forms for quality assurance. The procedures cover a wide range of training and management activities and are

available to all staff. Management of the quality assurance policy and procedures is the responsibility of the managing director and the quality assurance co-ordinator. The quality assurance system is reviewed and amended periodically and any changes are notified to staff through the intranet and the document control process. There is a quality assurance policy which outlines the company's commitment and objectives for quality assurance and customer satisfaction. Nominated and trained staff carry out internal verification of NVQ assessments. The revision of the self-assessment report and action plan involved all senior management staff and training staff. The action plans have been reviewed and updated on a number of occasions. The self-assessment report was an informative and well-structured document which identified the strengths and weaknesses in most occupational areas.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ quality assurance arrangements do not always ensure consistency
- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification
- ◆ no structured evaluation process
- ◆ no use of achievement and destination data to make improvements

99. New quality assurance arrangements have been developed which now effectively monitor and review all training and management processes. Standardisation of processes and procedures are ensuring a consistent approach over all occupational areas and regional training centres. Internal verification is now planned and carried out at regular intervals during the training process. A comprehensive audit programme includes observation of training. The audits are carried out by staff who are from a different work area than that being audited. Reports from these audits are used to plan improvements. There has been some improvement in the management information system, but the data are mostly used to monitor performance against financial targets rather than measuring quality of service. Inspectors agreed with the one additional weakness which was identified in the revised self-assessment report and awarded a lower grade than that given in the report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ comprehensive improvement programme

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inconsistent use of the complaints procedure
- ◆ ineffective use of data to plan improvements

100. The new quality assurance arrangements fully measure and review all training and management processes. Training sessions and staff are regularly monitored and constructive feedback is given on materials, resources and teaching techniques. Training staff accept constructive feedback and initiate actions for

improvement. The internal verification process follows the good practice guidelines of the awarding body. Schedules are held by each internal verifier to ensure effective sampling of work. Observations of assessments are also routinely carried out. There is a comprehensive staff development programme which covers a wide range of training activities. The development of staff's competences has had a direct effect upon the quality of training. The self-assessment report highlighted staff development as a key action point.

101. There is a well-managed audit programme, which is referred to as internal inspection. A number of trained staff carry out the audits. The staff do not audit areas for which they have direct responsibility and they usually work on different sites. This independent review ensures that only objective evidence of good or poor practice is collected and used to initiate change. Results are fed into the self-assessment process. Feedback is being collected from learners and employers using questionnaires. There has been a good rate of response from employers so far. Quality assurance procedures have been developed to collect and analyse feedback in the future.

102. A comprehensive improvement programme is in the process of being carried out. The current quality assurance procedures are being reviewed and updated by the director of training and the managing director. The standardisation of documents, procedures and forms is a major improvement. A considerable amount of data have been collected but have yet to be fully analysed. The self-assessment action plan has been frequently reviewed and updated. Objectives and targets are measured against the business plan. Improvements have been made in the recording of learners' progress. Reporting methods between divisional work centres and head office have also improved, ensuring the accuracy of the information held by the company's head office. Communication has been improved by the introduction of more formal management and staff meetings where the sharing of good practice and updates to quality assurance arrangements are discussed. The introduction of groups to review areas such as key skills, equal opportunities and induction has enhanced the continuous improvement process.

103. There is no effective system for reporting complaints. Complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively by divisional managers, but are only reported to the managing director for action when divisional managers feel it is necessary. The quality assurance co-ordinator is not routinely informed of complaints or the action taken and there is no opportunity for company-wide analysis of complaints received and no overview of whether one operational site has more complaints than another. The self-assessment report considered actions to deal with complaints as normal practice but did not identify the missed opportunities for reporting and reviewing complaints, as part of a continuous improvement process.

104. Data from the management information system are not used as a basis for making improvements. There has been considerable development and improvement to the data collection process. Data are analysed, but mainly to measure performance against financial and contractual targets. Data on

achievements and early leavers are not analysed to identify trends and plan actions.

105. The self-assessment report gives useful information about the services offered by WEC. It gives clear descriptions of the performance in each occupational area and examples of good practice. The areas are assessed objectively and the action plan identifies corrective actions in order of priority. However, there are insufficient data on achievement and retention rates and no targets for improvement in this area have been set.