

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT  
MARCH 2001

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION MAY  
2002

# Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Youth Programme



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
- ◆ learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- ◆ education and training in prisons, at the invitation of her majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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 Dudley Metropolitan Council Youth Programme was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for 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 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)).

**Learners in business administration benefit from good work placements and good opportunities to gain employment with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. Off-the-job training is good. Achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices are poor and there is insufficient work-based assessment. Training staff and workplace supervisors have a good knowledge of equal opportunities, but the learners' understanding of equal opportunities is not reinforced. The recruitment and induction of learners are thorough. Learners are well prepared for seeking employment. Individual learning plans are not used effectively and target-setting at learners' progress reviews is not clear. Internal communication is good. However, management of the training programmes is poor and there is no co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in learners' training programmes. The monitoring of quality assurance, within the organisation and subcontractors, is inadequate. Action-planning is not comprehensive and does not help in the continuous improvement of training. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently self-critical or analytical.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- ◆ comprehensive induction
- ◆ well-structured and planned off-the-job training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good communication within the training team
- ◆ systematic use of surveys to gain feedback from learners

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ low achievement rate for foundation modern apprentices
- ◆ little work-based assessment
- ◆ failure to enforce training agreements with some workplace supervisors
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job learning
- ◆ poor management of the training programme
- ◆ unco-ordinated quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ insufficiently thorough self-assessment process

## INTRODUCTION

1. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Dudley MBC) was established in 1974 to incorporate the former county borough of Dudley and the municipal boroughs of Halesowen and Stourbridge. The council has eight main departments and employs approximately 10,000 staff. The training and development section of the chief executive's department operates the work-based learning programme. Personnel services are also in this department. The council has a contract with The Black Country Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for government-funded training. All learners are on work placements in council departments. Foundation modern apprentices are not employed at the start of the programme. They are encouraged to apply for job vacancies during the programme. All the advanced modern apprentices are employed. Three permanent and one temporary members of staff manage the training programme. Off-the-job training and assessment in administration, information technology (IT) and accounting are subcontracted to a local further education college. In September 2001, the administration foundation modern apprentices began to attend workshops and individual tutorials for their national vocational qualification (NVQ). Dudley MBC, which is a registered assessment centre, subcontracts training and assessment in customer service to an external provider. From September 2001, 38 learners were recruited and registered for NVQs in customer service at level 2. It is planned that learners who achieve their NVQ can progress to a foundation modern apprenticeship in business administration or IT. At the time of reinspection, there are 14 foundation modern apprentices working towards administration, IT and accounting qualifications. Thirty-three learners are working towards customer services NVQs. Two learners are on engineering programmes in heating and ventilation, and are not included in this inspection.

2. The population of Dudley borough was estimated to be 318,000 in 2001. There are approximately 8,500 businesses in the area. Twenty-nine per cent of businesses are in wholesaling and retailing, 19 per cent in manufacturing, 15 per cent in banking, finance and insurance, 9 per cent in public administration and health, 8 per cent in each of hotel and catering and other services, 7 per cent in construction and 1 per cent in industry. Eighty-nine per cent of businesses employ fewer than 25 staff. Only two businesses employ more than 200 staff. Manufacturing is still important. There are automotive components businesses in the borough. The local crystal-glass industry produces more than 50 per cent of the United Kingdom's output. Approximately 4.5 per cent of the population is from minority ethnic groups. The proportion ranges from more than 70 per cent in some wards in Dudley and Stourbridge, to less than 5 per cent in most parts of the borough. At the time of the original inspection, the unemployment rate in Dudley was 4.9 per cent. This compared with 3.9 per cent in the West Midlands and 3.4 per cent nationally. By the time of the reinspection, the unemployment rate in Dudley had decreased to 4.2 per cent, compared with 4.6 per cent in the West Midlands and 2.9 per cent nationally. In 2000, 48.4 per cent of school leavers achieved five or more general

certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above. This compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportion increased to 50 per cent in Dudley, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. Dudley MBC carried out its third self-assessment of its youth training programme in May 2000, in preparation for the inspection. Previous self-assessment reports had been completed using a template. The most recent self-assessment report was produced by the manager in consultation with the trainers. The report was updated and its grades were raised in November 2000 on the advice of staff from Dudley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The report was not thorough and did not identify key strengths and weaknesses clearly. Many strengths were identified in each section. A significant number of these did not relate to the training described or were no more than normal practice. The action plan did not clearly specify timescales for action, or indicators of success in remedying identified weaknesses. There were no timescales to monitor progress in building on the strengths. The grades for training were not accurate. Inspectors awarded three grades which were one grade lower, and two grades which were two grades lower than those in the self-assessment report. Dudley MBC produced its latest self-assessment report for reinspection in December 2001, as well as an updated post-inspection action plan. It was written mainly by the training programme manager in consultation with members of the training team. Dudley MBC used feedback from surveys of learners' views and three-monthly programme review meetings. Learners and workplace supervisors were consulted but they were not asked to review a draft of the report. Subcontractors were not consulted.

4. The original inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors who spent a total of 12 days with Dudley MBC during February and March 2001. One occupational area, business administration, was inspected. Inspectors visited the council's premises, where learners are based, and the subcontracted college. Thirty-one learners and nine workplace supervisors were interviewed. Inspectors also carried out 11 interviews with Dudley MBC's staff and six interviews with the subcontractor's staff. A wide range of documents was reviewed, including learners' files, records of meetings, procedural manuals, policies and correspondence. Three learning sessions were observed and graded. Two assessments and three progress reviews were observed.

5. The reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors who spent a total of six days with Dudley MBC in May 2002. They interviewed 14 learners working towards business administration, IT, and customer service qualifications. Inspectors also had 11 discussions with the training team. They visited eight work placements in the council and spoke to all the appropriate work-placement supervisors. They also spoke to three subcontractors. Inspectors examined learners' files and portfolios of evidence, records of assessment, internal and external verification, minutes of meetings, contracts, the quality assurance and procedures manual, staff development plans and other management records and data. Inspectors also observed and graded a learning session, which was

satisfactory, and a progress review.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration		2	1			3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration

### Grade 3

6. There are six advanced modern apprentices. Four are working towards accounting NVQs at levels 3 and 4 and two towards administration NVQs at level 3. There are 42 foundation modern apprentices. Thirty-six are working towards level 2 NVQs in administration. Eleven of these are following training in customer service leading to an additional qualification at NVQ level 2. Six are training in information technology, working towards an NVQ at level 2. Eighteen of the foundation modern apprentices are employed. Off-the-job training for business administration, information technology and accounting is undertaken at the premises of a local subcontracted college. Most trainees attend for one day each week for lessons in theory, support in portfolio-building, word processing and the development of key skills. Three qualified trainers from Dudley MBC carry out some assessment of administration at NVQ level 2 in the workplace. The subcontractor's staff carry out some assessment of trainees in administration, information technology and accounting in the workplace. Training in customer service, provided through monthly workshops and learning sessions, is subcontracted to the council's NVQ assessment centre. Work-based assessment takes place every two months. Trainees are either on work placements or are employed within a range of departments of the council. Trainees in business administration change their work placement every six months. Information technology trainees are on 12-month work placements. The work placements are well established and are used by the youth training team on a yearly basis. The self-assessment report explains the way in which training is managed. Numerous strengths are identified, including many which are more appropriate to the generic areas. Most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with two strengths and one of the weaknesses and found additional strengths and weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Trainees in administration are provided with an adhesive label at the start of their programme giving the names of their assessors and the internal and external verifiers. They attach this to the cover of their portfolios for reference.*

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good assessment for the customer service NVQ
- ◆ well-structured and planned off-the-job learning

- ◆ wide range of additional training undertaken
- ◆ good, varied work placements leading to employment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little integration of key skills into training
- ◆ low achievement rates in business administration and information technology
- ◆ little work-based assessment
- ◆ little adaptation of the learning programme to meet trainees' individual needs

7. Some trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 in customer service in the second year of their foundation modern apprenticeship in administration. The subcontractor assesses trainees in the workplace every two months. Trainees attend a training centre for workshops and learning sessions each month. Trainees complete a detailed assessment plan each month when they are at the training centre. They use this to support recording of work-based evidence. Trainees receive sessions in theory, which comprise a variety of activities, ranging from written exercises to role-play. They are encouraged to include relevant evidence from these sessions in their portfolios. All portfolios contain a wide variety of evidence for assessment, including many observations and evidence of oral and written answers to questions.

8. The trainer/assessors for administration, information technology and accounting all provide well-structured sessions in theory for the trainees. Detailed session plans are used. A good variety of learning resources and good planning documents are used. Every trainer/assessor records the progress of the trainees towards the qualification being followed. The resources available to trainees are of a good standard and trainees are encouraged to use other facilities which the subcontracted college has available. Most sessions are held in computer rooms, which gives trainees the opportunity to use the equipment to present their work to a high standard.

9. Foundation modern apprentices take word-processing examinations or NVQs at level 2 in customer service as an additional qualification. All accounting trainees take two accounting qualifications and Dudley MBC funds accounting trainees to continue their training to achieve the level 4 NVQ. All trainees undertake a learning programme as part of their first year with the council. This includes basic computing training at the council's information-technology training centre. The training provided is the same as that for other external and internal clients. Trainees also receive training in interview skills, which includes practice interviews by council managers. When trainees become employed, the wide variety of training offered by the council is available to them. This includes in-house training such as NVQ training and the opportunity to study for external professional qualifications. Trainees also receive additional training in health and safety and appraisal when they transfer to employment by the council.

10. Trainees are placed in all departments within the council, ranging from

schools, the housing and property departments, information-technology services and financial services. Each workplace supervisor carries out a skills audit of the work placement to ensure it is at the right level for trainees and contains appropriate tasks. Trainees are involved in a wide range of activities. These include computer maintenance, data entry, contacting supply teachers over the telephone and receiving visitors. One trainee has been appointed to provide maternity cover and is responsible for departmental finance with supervisory responsibility for other members of staff. Currently 18 out of the 42 foundation modern apprentices are employed, with four becoming employed during March 2001 while still in the early months of their training.

11. One subcontractor provides all the theory sessions in key skills. During the first four months of the foundation modern apprenticeship, trainees prepare for external tests. After sitting the external tests, the trainees work on their key skills portfolios. These are mainly compiled from project work and evidence from simulated exercises. No assessment of key skills takes place in the workplace and trainees are not encouraged to use work-based activities as evidence of key skills for their portfolios.

12. Trainees in administration and accounting are assessed only infrequently in the workplace. Accounting trainees use very little work-based evidence in their portfolios and have not been observed in the workplace. The subcontractor's assessors have been allocated time to assess trainees in information technology in the workplace every two months, but this has not yet started. Dudley MBC's youth trainers observe and assess trainees in administration, but this is infrequent. Some observations check trainees' knowledge but do not assess their competence. The evidence from these observations is not recorded in the NVQ portfolio and the assessors are not registered with the awarding body.

13. The rates of achievement of targets on individual learning plans over the past three years by foundation modern apprentices in both information technology and administration, at 29 per cent and 26 per cent respectively, are low. To date, no trainees in accounting have completed their programmes. The rate of achievement of NVQs for foundation modern apprentices is 64 per cent in administration and 71 per cent in information technology. The training staff and workplace supervisors place greater emphasis on achieving NVQs than on achieving the apprenticeship framework.

14. All trainees in administration and information technology are given a workbook which explains in simple terms the performance criteria and knowledge requirements for the NVQ units. Within this booklet, there is a list of evidence with references to NVQ standards. Both assessors and trainees use this as a check list of evidence for the NVQ. Very little additional work-based evidence is used. Every trainee takes the same optional units and additional qualifications for administration and information technology, and every trainee in administration is required to take one higher-level key skill. Most trainees start with the council in September and are expected to achieve their main NVQ by the June of the

following year. Staff and trainees perceive the length of the learning programme in terms of the academic year. Some trainees who start later in the academic year perceive that they have to complete their training in key skills and NVQ competencies at the same time as the other trainees. Arrangements have been made for trainees to attend the subcontracted college for additional support in key skills and NVQ training during the college's summer holiday period. Several trainees took up this offer during 2000.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

15. Dudley MBC's youth training programme uses the same equal opportunities policy and complaints and grievance procedures as the rest of the council. The equal opportunities policy is under revision and is currently awaiting the council's approval. This policy covers age, social background, disability, gender, race and sexuality. All staff and trainees are made aware of the policy and procedures at induction. Subcontractors sign an agreement to comply with current equal opportunities legislation. Data on applicants' ethnicity, gender, and disabilities are collected and analysed. The training and development section of the council is represented on several local initiatives to promote equality of opportunity, including a TEC suppliers' subgroup. Inspectors considered that most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed that opportunities to reinforce equality of opportunity are missed and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good awareness of equal opportunities by trainers and workplace supervisors
- ◆ systematic monitoring of the recruitment of trainees

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ missed opportunities to reinforce equal opportunities
- ◆ underdeveloped use of data on equal opportunities

16. Dudley MBC is currently reviewing its equal opportunities policies. While this review is nearing completion, staff involved in youth training have adapted the policies and procedures to enable them to be more easily understood by trainees. This has led to trainees being more aware of their rights and responsibilities within the learning programme. The council's equal opportunities officer checks the adapted versions of the policies. This happens annually, and the most recent revision took place in January 2001. A revised disciplinary procedure, which covers all trainees and employees, has recently been introduced, following a comprehensive review. Most training staff and workplace supervisors have attended a range of internal courses covering equal opportunities issues. Trainees

also have access to these courses where a need is identified either through their workplace supervisor or the training team. Courses attended include racism awareness, disability awareness, disability matters in employment and equal opportunities. Managers are required to attend courses on recruitment and selection. Trainees benefit from managers' experience by taking part in practice interviews as part of their preparation for work.

17. There is systematic monitoring of trainees' applications in terms of ethnicity. This has taken place over the past three years. Data are produced and analysed. Trends are established and reasons are identified for trainees from particular ethnic groups not taking up places offered. For example, reasons for a high drop-out rate of applicants from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds have been identified. The data show that the proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups is higher than that in the local population, which is 5.1 per cent. In 1998-99 and 1999-2000, 9 per cent of foundation modern apprentices were from minority ethnic backgrounds. This has risen to 16 per cent in 2000-01. In 1998-99, 13 per cent of advanced modern apprentices were from minority ethnic groups, but no trainees were recruited from minority ethnic groups in 2000-01.

18. Opportunities to reinforce equal opportunities during the learning programmes are missed. The review of trainees' progress does not specifically cover issues such as harassment, bullying and other equal opportunities matters. These issues are not highlighted in the paperwork for the progress review. All trainees receive a learning journal at induction in which to record their experiences of work placements and college. There is no mention of equal opportunities in this booklet. Workplace supervisors have a booklet which provides guidance on their role and responsibilities. There is no reference to the equal opportunities policy in this. However, a brief section outlines the disciplinary and grievance procedures.

19. Little systematic use is made of the equal opportunities data available from the management-information system. Analysis of data on recruitment has been carried out consistently over the years. However, specific action has not been taken to address the issues identified, including gender imbalances. For example, during the previous three years, 80 per cent of those recruited to programmes in information technology have been men, but only 20 per cent of those recruited to programmes in administration. A reversal of the gender imbalance has been noted from applications received so far in 2000-01. Reasons for this have not yet been determined. There is little mention of equal opportunities in meetings of workplace supervisors, training staff and trainees. There are inconsistencies in subcontractual agreements. The contract requires compliance with equal opportunities legislation. However, the monthly check list completed by training staff states that it is Dudley MBC's policy which should be complied with.

### **Trainee support**

**Grade 3**

20. The youth training programme is promoted through the local careers service,

in schools and through the TEC. Many trainees find out about the programme through family contacts or through the recommendation of previous trainees. Applicants' suitability for the programme is established at an initial interview. Previous work experience and achievements are also discussed at the assessment day. A five-day residential course, which includes training for the development of team skills and confidence building, takes place at one of the council's centres in a nearby town. Regular progress reviews are conducted by the training staff, college trainers, and assessors from the internal NVQ assessment centre. All trainees receive a learning journal to complete during their work placement. All have access to advice and guidance from Dudley MBC's staff and basic skills support from the subcontracted college. Inspectors agreed that induction was a strength and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good individual support
- ◆ well-structured recruitment process
- ◆ comprehensive induction
- ◆ good preparation for employment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no updating of individual learning plans
- ◆ lack of clear target-setting at reviews of trainees' progress

21. Trainees' individual needs for support are identified effectively and sensitively. Trainees have access to all the support services available at Dudley MBC. Specialist equipment is provided for trainees where necessary. For example, one trainee with a disability was provided with a voice activated laptop computer, special chairs, and an electronic stapler and hole punch. This equipment moved with the trainee into her employment with the council. A magnifier for a visual display unit was provided for a trainee with a visual impairment. Another trainee was identified as needing additional support with literacy, but he declined the support offered. His needs were monitored through progress reviews. Eventually, the trainee requested support when he realised he was having difficulty making progress. The training team quickly arranged support with the subcontracted college. Two members of staff hold a counselling qualification. Trainees are referred to specialist agencies when appropriate. Trainees are encouraged to discuss any problems they have in one-to-one sessions. Confidentiality on matters concerning individual trainees is maintained at all times, but staff support each other by raising with their colleagues issues relating to the general nature of the problems they are dealing with.

22. Two members of staff interview all applicants. A scoring chart is used to determine the suitability of the prospective trainee for the programme. This is followed by a day of assessment, when a range of numeracy and literacy tests is

conducted to check the aptitude of applicants for training. Successful applicants receive the results of these tests within two weeks and are then invited to take part in the five-day residential course held at one of the council's centres, in a nearby town. Trainees speak highly of this course, which develops their confidence, together with team-building, decision-making and assertiveness skills, through a varied programme. At the end of the course, trainees agree an action plan, the outcomes of which are discussed at the first review of their progress. The residential course is reviewed each year as a direct result of feedback from trainees.

23. A comprehensive induction takes place over four days and includes information from the council's programme of corporate induction. Speakers include the equal opportunities officer and a trade union representative. Trainees are given a learning journal in which to record their experiences in their work placements, and a copy of the TEC's trainees' charter. Trainees undertake a 'getting to know you' project during their first week on work placement. This encourages trainees to become familiar quickly with staff and the working environment. There is also advice on whom to contact if trainees have any concerns about their training. The induction is memorable for trainees and provides them with a strong foundation for training. Trainees receive further induction when they change work placements or begin employment with the council.

24. Job-search training sessions are well structured and comprehensively planned. There are good resources for trainees, including access to the Internet and interactive computer packages. Trainees acquire good job-search and interview skills. Practice interviews are held with managers from different council departments in a range of settings. This has a two-fold advantage: trainees gain valuable experience, and managers practise their newly acquired interviewing skills. Role-play is encouraged among trainees and they are given help to complete job application forms. Exercises in compiling curricula vitae are provided and trainees can use computers in the training and development section. All trainees are given copies of the council's weekly jobs bulletin and are encouraged to apply for jobs. All trainees are given opportunities to update their record of achievement.

25. Individual learning plans are not used as working documents. The plans, which meet the TEC's contractual requirements, are drawn up at the beginning of the learning programme. These record details about the trainee and the learning programme to be followed. Details of qualifications do not specify the level of key skills which trainees are working towards. Details of additional qualifications taken as part of the apprenticeship framework are not included. The plans are not updated when trainees achieve a unit towards their qualification and in some cases details of registration with the awarding bodies are incomplete. Amendments to the plan are made on a separate document as stipulated by the TEC. Only dates of progress reviews may be added to the original document. Plans are not routinely monitored at progress reviews and many trainees are unaware of their purpose.

26. The college's trainers set short-term targets each week for work towards the NVQ carried out in the college. These are followed up weekly and concerns about progress fed back to training staff at the council. Trainees have a termly progress review with the college's trainer but the information recorded is brief. It consists mainly of a record of the units being worked on, or those which have been achieved. Progress reviews carried out by the youth training staff at the council, conducted every six to eight weeks, are mainly concerned with pastoral matters. Units currently being worked on are discussed and recorded. Training staff do not set the trainees sufficient clear targets for the achievement of elements or units leading towards their qualifications for the next period of their training. Progress in key skills is rarely discussed.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 4**

27. Dudley MBC's youth training team is based in the central training and development section, which is part of the chief executive's department. The department provides youth training, NVQ training for council employees, and other training and development for employees and councillors. The manager of the youth training programme reports to the training and development manager. She has a team of two training assistants and a foundation modern apprentice on a work placement. The training assistants carry out progress reviews in the workplace and carry out some assessments of business administration learners in the workplace. The youth training team holds monthly team meetings. All staff in the central training and development section meet every two months. The section uses Dudley MBC's procedures for recruitment, staffing and appraisal. Staff have annual appraisals and six-monthly reviews. All staff have a detailed job description. Training and development are planned for the coming year against the requirements of the job and personal and professional development. Information on the training programme is held on computer. The youth training team has a business plan, which is reviewed annually and which links into the council's staff plan. The council is accredited as an Investor in People. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ little analysis of management information
- ◆ weak management of subcontractors
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ failure to enforce training agreements with some workplace supervisors

28. Dudley MBC has taken steps to remedy the weaknesses identified at the original inspection. The training team has worked with subcontractors and workplace supervisors. Subcontractor and work-placement agreements now include details of the training programme. However, there is still insufficient monitoring to ensure that these are applied. Dudley MBC no longer works with the

main subcontractor responsible for business administration, but no replacement has yet been appointed. Dudley MBC has set up a group meeting to which all workplace supervisors are invited. It plans to hold these meetings every six to eight months. Not all supervisors attended the three group meetings which were held in July and October 2001. A wide range of relevant training was offered at the time of the original inspection. This was cited as a strength in the original report, but it is no longer a strength. Staff continue to benefit from a range of training, including counselling skills, a business studies degree and teaching certificates, but staff have not had any structured training in the new qualification standards for IT, administration and customer service. No professional development is planned for the staff on the training team. The analysis of management information and the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training are still areas of weakness. Many strengths identified in the self-assessment report were more appropriate to other areas. Inspectors found that most of the strengths were no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified that good communication and staff training are still strengths and identified some additional weaknesses. They awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good communication among the youth training team

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor management of the training programme
- ◆ ineffective use of work placements
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient analysis of management information

29. The youth training team meets formally every month. Training issues are also discussed as they arise between meetings. Team meetings have an agenda and staff discuss Dudley MBC's performance against the contract, learners' progress and other relevant issues. The youth training team also meets the rest of the central training and development section every three months to report on contractual activity. There are regular meetings with subcontractors. The training team and workplace supervisors work well together. Through the supervisor groups, workplace supervisors ensure that everyone in the workplace knows their responsibilities and what learning opportunities are available. Workplace supervisors' experience is valued and their suggestions are incorporated into the overall training provision for young people.

30. All trainers hold assessors' awards and counselling qualifications. Both permanent, full-time trainers have completed or are working towards training and supervisory qualifications. The youth training programme manager has recently achieved a professional management qualification. All team members have taken in-house computer and equal opportunities training.

31. The training programmes are poorly managed. Although the central training

team manages the programme, most training and assessment are subcontracted. Business administration and IT learners continue to work with the local college. Customer service learners' training is further subcontracted to another organisation. Neither of the subcontractors carries out sufficient workplace assessment. Most assessment for NVQ learners is carried out at the training centre. Learners collect evidence in response to task sheets they are given at their monthly training sessions. Most learners have been on their training programmes for at least eight months, but have not yet been assessed in the workplace. This weakness was identified at the original inspection. Workplace observations are unplanned and not systematic. There is no evidence that assessors give feedback to workplace supervisors after observations.

32. There is no co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. Information about learners is not shared effectively and no-one has a clear idea of learners' progress. Workplace supervisors are not told what topics learners cover during off-the-job training sessions. Therefore, supervisors cannot arrange for learners to practise their new skills or discuss any new information raised by off-the-job training. Workplace supervisors cannot link learners' on- and off-the-job training. They are not clear what their role is in helping learners to collect work-related evidence. Although Dudley MBC has tried to remedy this by introducing supervisor groups, not all supervisors have attended the groups and it is too early to tell whether the system has made a difference. Subcontractors are not given copies of progress reviews carried out by the training team. Issues discussed at progress reviews cannot be taken into account when assessing learners' progress.

33. Data on achievement against contractual targets are collected monthly for the local LSC claims as well as for internal use. At the time of reinspection, data are still not being used fully. Management information is not used to identify trends, and data are not analysed. For example, equal opportunities monitoring data are routinely collected and summarised as a report. There is no evidence that this information is used to develop the training programme. It has, however, been used to consider targets for future recruitment. Some targets have been set to improve achievement and retention rates but they are not sufficiently challenging. Achievement and retention rates are still poor.

34. Some workplace supervisors are not clear about their role in supporting and training learners. Dudley MBC has updated the training agreement, and all the departments offering work placements have signed it. The agreement is not sufficiently detailed. There is no specific reference to workplace supervisors' responsibilities for on-the-job training. Workplace supervisors do not know the requirements of the qualifications that learners are working towards, or the content of learners' training sessions. Workplace supervisors do not have a copy of learners' individual learning plans. The training team has produced an updated agreement and a workplace supervisors' handbook. However there has been little improvement since the original inspection. Some learners make slow progress in achieving their NVQ targets.

## Quality assurance

Grade 4

35. The training and development manager has overall responsibility for ensuring the quality of training. There are procedures for quality assurance, which cover many aspects of training. The training and development manager updates the procedures twice a year. Learners provide feedback about their training by filling in questionnaires after induction, after their residential training period and at the end of any additional training courses that they attend. Once a year, learners also complete a questionnaire about the overall quality of their training programme. Dudley MBC also asks for feedback from workplace supervisors and learners at quarterly meetings and at learners' progress reviews.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ unsystematic quality assurance of training provided by subcontractors
- ◆ underdeveloped monitoring of quality assurance
- ◆ lack of rigour in self-assessment

36. Dudley MBC has attempted to remedy the weaknesses identified in the original inspection report. It has not renewed its contract with the business administration and IT subcontractor. It is appointing a new training provider. Some improvements have been made to the monitoring of the training programme, but they are not comprehensive. Dudley MBC has acknowledged that there has not been enough time for some of the actions taken to make a significant difference. The self-assessment report is still insufficiently critical or thorough. The self-assessment report, which includes an action plan, is the fourth produced by Dudley MBC. The action plan is reviewed and updated monthly. The self-assessment report did not identify any new strengths or weaknesses, it updated strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors at the original inspection. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report. At the original inspection, regularly updated quality assurance procedures was considered to be a strength. It is no longer a strength because, although the procedures are reviewed every six months, there is insufficient consultation with all those involved in the training process.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ systematic use of surveys to gain feedback from learners

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ unco-ordinated quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of training

37. Learners complete several evaluation questionnaires about the induction process, residential programmes, the training programme and exit arrangements. Learners also complete questionnaires after in-house short courses. Evaluation

questionnaires have been used for several years. They are analysed and the results are used effectively to plan future training programmes. As a result of learners' feedback, the induction programme has been shortened and the content modified. Learner representatives, training staff and workplace supervisors attend three-monthly programme review meetings. Feedback from these meetings is also used to review and revise training programmes.

38. Quality assurance arrangements are incomplete and unco-ordinated. There is no quality assurance policy or strategy to introduce the quality assurance arrangements. The procedure for monitoring and evaluating the training programmes is not comprehensive. When the procedure was updated, there was insufficient consultation to ensure that it reflects all aspects of training provision. There is insufficient action to check that quality assurance arrangements apply to all those concerned and all those who provide training programmes. There is insufficient monitoring of subcontractors' internal verification procedures to ensure that they comply with Dudley MBC's requirements and that they are effective and applied regularly. The unsystematic quality assurance of training provided by subcontractors was a weakness in the original report. Some action has been taken recently to remedy this weakness, but it is too early to see any improvements.

39. Although a number of activities which contribute to quality assurance arrangements take place, such as the observation of training sessions, internal verification, and three-monthly performance review team meetings, the outcomes are not combined effectively to give a clear picture of the overall quality of training programmes. Learners' problems are not identified or solved quickly. The self-assessment and action-planning procedures are not included in the quality assurance arrangements. They are not referred to in the procedure for monitoring and evaluating training programmes. Although the action plan is reviewed and updated monthly, training programmes are not improving. Some required actions in the action plan have not been identified and others are not specific enough. There is still insufficient work-based assessment on most training programmes. Individual learning plans are not updated to take account of learners' progress and achievements. Reviews of learners' progress do not set clear targets. These weaknesses were identified, with other key weaknesses, in the original inspection report, and continue to be weaknesses after reinspection.

40. There is insufficient monitoring of training programmes to ensure continual improvement. Although the training team has worked hard to evaluate aspects of the training programmes and to make some changes, there is inadequate, systematic monitoring of all aspects of the programme, including on-the-job training and the effectiveness of supervisors. Dudley MBC produces a monthly, updated action plan which reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the training programmes. Some weaknesses are identified inaccurately as strengths. The action plan does not emphasise the monitoring of training programmes sufficiently. Sixty-seven per cent of learners are taking the customer service NVQ at level 2, which they are due to complete by June 2002. Many learners have already

completed their portfolio work, which has been signed off by the assessor, but there has been very little internal verification. A subcontractor has recently been asked to carry out internal verification of a few portfolios. Training department staff observe some training and tutorial sessions. Written reports are produced after the observations, which summarise and grade the training sessions. The reports are insufficiently evaluative and the outcomes are not followed up effectively or used to continuously improve off-the-job training.

41. The fourth self-assessment report was produced for the reinspection. The report is lengthy, and the strengths and weaknesses are too descriptive and insufficiently analytical. The report concentrates too much on the strengths and weaknesses in the bullet points in the original inspection report and not enough on the supporting text.