

REINSPECTION REPORT

South West Durham Training Limited Reinspection

08 February 2007



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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. South West Durham Training Limited (SWDT) is a group training association and has charitable status. It was established in 1967 to meet the training needs of local engineering and manufacturing companies. Operating from a single site in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, the provider currently employs 47 members of staff, of whom 40 are full time and seven are part time. It has a dedicated training centre. Initially, SWDT delivered training in engineering and manufacturing, but has diversified over the years and now offers administration, warehouse and distribution, customer service, management and lift truck training. SWDT also offers a range of commercial courses to meet the requirements of local companies. The provider has recently built a dedicated area at the Newton Aycliffe site for school pupils taking vocational qualifications. SWDT holds contracts for work-based learning with County Durham and Tees Valley Learning and Skills Councils. They have over 260 learners who are completing apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships, mainly in engineering and business administration. SWDT is managed by a chief executive who reports to an executive council which has seven members.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Reinspection Grade 3

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** SWDT's leadership and management are satisfactory. Its arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity are also satisfactory. The provision in engineering and administration was found to be satisfactory.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is inclusive and is an integral part of the quality improvement process. However, self-assessment does not directly involve any of the provider's external partners, and the executive council is not involved in producing or moderating the report. Inspectors' findings matched many of the findings in the report, but it does not identify low overall success rates as a key weakness.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection, staff and managers at SWDT have worked hard to rectify the key weaknesses identified by inspectors. Success rates are improving and learners, generally, are making better progress in gaining their qualifications. SWDT has recently been restructured. Lines of responsibility and staff roles are now more clearly defined. A new management information system has been established, and much closer attention is being given to recording and monitoring learners' progress.

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Engineering		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	313	3	

Business administration and law			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration		4	
Apprenticeships for young people	35	4	
NVQ training for young people	3	4	
Customer service		4	
Apprenticeships for young people	4	4	

Grades awarded at reinspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Engineering		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	217	3	

Business administration and law			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	45	3	

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

5. The areas reinspected, and those graded, were the same for the reinspection as at the previous inspection in 2005. At the time of reinspection, SWDT had no Train to Gain provision, and numbers in customer service were too small to give a contributory grade. Three reinspection monitoring visits were completed by the lead inspector before the final reinspection visit.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	15
Number of learners interviewed	42
Number of staff interviewed	27
Number of employers interviewed	8
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	15
Number of visits	4

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear leadership and strategic direction
- outstanding resources for engineering
- supportive and open management style

Weaknesses

- low overall success rates

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Engineering

Strengths

- good achievement of additional qualifications
- good and well-planned learning in the training centre
- very good support for learners
- excellent training centre resources

Weaknesses

- declining overall success rates for advanced apprentices
- ineffective target-setting for learners

Business administration and law

Administration

Strengths

- very effective off-the-job training
- very good support for learners
- good work placements

Weaknesses

- low overall success rates

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- clear leadership and strategic direction
- outstanding resources for engineering
- supportive and open management style

Weaknesses

- low overall success rates

6. The executive council, and recently appointed chief executive, provide effective leadership and set a clear strategic direction. SWDT has made a positive and timely response to weaknesses identified by the previous inspection. The provider works hard to meet the needs of the local community, and is responsive to government and funding-body initiatives. It continues to deliver high-quality vocational training to pupils from a number of local schools. SWDT has good links with employers and other external organisations. The provider is very responsive to employers' needs, and works with them in a very flexible way. Business and operational planning has improved since the previous inspection and the current business plan is more detailed and better structured. However, some aspects of business planning are still incomplete. For example, there is no reference to adult training in the plan, although SWDT was involved in the Employer Training Pilot scheme and expects to be awarded a contract for Train to Gain. Senior managers and council members monitor learner performance closely, but the council is not involved in producing or moderating the self-assessment report.

7. The specialist resources for engineering are outstanding. SWDT shows a strong commitment, through its mission statement and business plan, to the provision of equipment and resources which are of the highest quality and reflect the advanced technologies used by many of its partner companies. The range of equipment is more than adequate to meet the needs of engineering learners in their first year of training. In addition, SWDT has a wide range of more advanced and specialist engineering resources. In line with its strategy of developing new areas of provision, the provider has invested heavily in polymer processing equipment, which includes several industrial-scale injection moulding machines. Since the previous inspection, a dedicated and self-contained workshop has been developed for delivering vocational training to pupils from partner schools. The accommodation, range of equipment, materials and small tools amply meets the needs of the learners using this facility.

8. The management style at SWDT is open and very supportive. Managers continue to provide good support for staff, and the recent restructuring has brought much greater clarity to job roles and associated responsibilities. Although the new structure has only been in place for a few weeks, staff and managers have adapted quickly to their new roles. Internal communications have been improved by more formal and regular team meetings which have comprehensive agenda and clear action minutes. The views of staff and middle managers are valued, and they are fully consulted and involved in the

decision-making process.

9. Arrangements for the recruitment of new staff, staff appraisals and staff development are satisfactory. Many job descriptions have been re-written, as part of the restructuring of SWDT, and the remainder have been reviewed recently. However, SWDT does not have a formal procedure for the appointment of new staff, and managers do not have a list or essential and desirable attributes for each post. SWDT requires that all staff, managers and board members achieve criminal record bureau clearance. The first round of staff appraisals has been completed, and documents for appraisals have been updated recently to include individual targets and performance indicators. A professional development chart has been compiled which records very clearly courses planned, started and completed by each member of staff. Although the chart shows clearly that some staff do not have particular qualifications, this information is not used in discussions during appraisals. Staff have good opportunities for training and personal development, but the effectiveness of training courses is not formally evaluated.

10. The planning and management of training is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection a new manager has been appointed for the training centre. As part of the restructuring, his role has been broadened to that of training services manager, and he now has responsibility for both areas of learning, and manages all training and assessor staff for both on- and off-the-job training. There is now greater consistency, and better sharing of good practice between teams. The availability and use of management information is now satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, SWDT has made a significant investment in a new management information system, and staff are monitoring the progress of individual learners more closely. However, the new system is still being developed, and as identified in the self-assessment report, the use of data in monitoring equality and diversity requires further development.

11. Overall success rates in work-based learning for young people are low. In engineering, success rates for apprentices have been significantly above the national average for the past three years. In administration, overall success rates for apprentices have risen dramatically, but from a very low base, and they are still below the national average. Overall success rates for advanced apprentices in engineering were significantly above the national average in 2003-04. Since then there has been a clear downward trend and in 2005-06 they were below the national average. In administration, the overall success rates for advanced apprentices are rising, but the number of learners successfully completing their frameworks is low. In both areas, however, learners are making better progress than identified at the previous inspection, and are monitored much more closely by staff and managers.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

12. Since the previous inspection, strengths in equality of opportunity have been maintained, and a number of new initiatives have been introduced. However, many of these changes are very recent, and at the time of reinspection it was too soon to judge their effects. SWDT has a comprehensive and detailed equal opportunities policy which is supported by other policies for areas such as appeals, grievances, and harassment and bullying. SWDT's staff are actively involved with their companies in recruiting learners, and continue to promote employment and training opportunities to all groups within the local population. However, recruitment from minority ethnic groups and young women to engineering courses continues to be very low. The gender and ethnic background of

SWDT's staff reflects that of the learners being recruited. There is, for example, only one male training officer in administration, and no female instructors or training officers in engineering. Management data is still not used sufficiently in monitoring the recruitment and performance of different groups of learners by gender and ethnic background, or of learners who have additional learning or social needs.

13. The initial assessment and provision of additional learning support is very good. All learners are screened effectively for additional learning needs, and particular attention is given to learners who may be dyslexic. Qualified staff deliver good support for literacy, numeracy and dyslexia in the training centre. A significant number of learners continue to receive support from the SWDT skills for life team after they have moved to their employer. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Staff produce an additional, individual learning plan for all learners who receive support. A recently introduced initiative dedicates the first half hour of each working day to a learner mentoring session. Learners are allocated to groups which meet with one of the training centre instructors to discuss any problems or concerns and, among other things, monitor attendance and timekeeping. A review of this initiative has identified the need for greater clarity in defining its purpose, and more consistency in the approach taken by mentors.

14. Learners receive an effective introduction to equality and diversity during their induction, and this is reinforced by a memorable one-day workshop which is delivered by the equality and diversity co-ordinator in the early stages of their training. Equality of opportunity is reinforced during learners' progress reviews in the workplace. In the past this reinforcement has been superficial. Training officers have recently revised their approach to this aspect of reviews, and their use of the equality and diversity booklet which is issued to learners. Progress reviews carried out in the training centre during the first year do not refer to equality and diversity, and staff are currently rectifying this situation. All learners complete the employment rights and responsibilities module as part of their frameworks. The previous inspection report identified insufficient staff training for equal opportunities. Since then, a significant amount of training has taken place, but managers recognise that the recent changes in senior management, and the subsequent restructuring, have not allowed them to deliver the range and volume of training needed to fully resolve this weakness.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

15. Since the previous inspection, staff and managers at SWDT have worked hard to rectify the key weaknesses which related to quality improvement. However, many of these changes have only been introduced recently. A new quality improvement manual has been developed which focuses more closely on the key stages of the training process. This draws on the previous system, where appropriate, but also includes new procedures and working documents. A member of staff has been identified as co-ordinator for quality improvement, and she is supported by a quality improvement team. An audit of the new quality improvement system has been completed and some changes are to be made. However, the system has only been introduced recently and at the time of reinspection it was too soon to be able to judge its effectiveness.

16. Staff and managers make very effective use of learners' feedback. Learners currently complete three questionnaires during the first year of their training, and this will soon be increased to four, with an additional survey at the end of induction. Learners' feedback is

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analysed systematically, and this process has led to a number of clearly identified improvements in training provision. Employers' views are canvassed annually. Employers' participation in this process is low, but responses are carefully analysed and findings distributed across the organisation. However, staff's views are not formally collected in this way. A learners' council has been re-established recently, and this is proving to be an effective mechanism for learners to raise and discuss their concerns with managers.

17. The system for observation of teaching and learning has been revised recently. The documents used by observers refer to national standards for post-16 teaching and learning, and the Common Inspection Framework. Grades are given and teachers receive feedback. However, the new system has not been used long enough to identify any trends in the quality of teaching.

18. The delivery of technical certificates training by Darlington College is covered by a detailed service level agreement, and SWDT's staff monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the college. Darlington College also shares the findings of its own lesson observation scheme, and provides regular reports about attendance and progress.

19. The self-assessment process is inclusive and utilises evidence generated through other quality improvement processes effectively, such as learner surveys and programme reviews. However, the process does not involve any of the provider's external partners, and the executive council is not involved in producing or moderating the report. Inspectors agreed with many of the findings in the report but the report does not identify the key weaknesses of low overall success rates. This weakness was not identified either at area of learning level, or under leadership and management.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Engineering		3
Apprenticeships for young people	217	3

20. SWDT has 189 advanced apprentices in engineering and 28 apprentices. Of the total 217 learners, 188 are employed and 29 are unemployed. The first-year initial training for apprentices is usually carried out at the training centre, but a small number of learners complete their initial training, key skills and national vocational qualification (NVQ) training at level 2 in the workplace. During their first year of training, apprentices complete the NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations. They also receive training and assessment for key skills, and their technical certificate. Twelve instructors are working at the training centre, and five training officers provide support and carry out NVQ assessments for apprentices at their workplaces. Advanced apprentices also attend off-the-job training for their technical certificate at a local college one day each week.

Engineering

Strengths

- good achievement of additional qualifications
- good and well-planned learning in the training centre
- very good support for learners
- excellent training centre resources

Weaknesses

- declining overall success rates for advanced apprentices
- ineffective target-setting for learners

Achievement and standards

21. Overall success rates for apprentices in engineering have risen over the past three years and are significantly above the national average. Overall success rates for advanced apprentices were above the national average in 2003-04, but they have declined over the past three years and are now below the national average. Timely success rates are also below the national average. However, since the previous inspection, achievement of key skills has improved and learners' progress in completing their frameworks is being very closely monitored. All learners now complete key skills training and assessment in the first year of their programmes.

22. Learners' achievements of additional qualifications are good. Many learners progress from their required technical certificate to higher education qualifications, and two learners are currently taking a foundation degree in engineering technology. Most learners achieve certificated health and safety and first-aid qualifications. Employers

support their learners in the achievement of additional qualifications which improve their effectiveness at work. The range of these qualifications is broad and includes electrical wiring regulations, safe lifting and handling, abrasive wheels, slinging requirements, and coded welding certification.

The quality of provision

23. Initial training in the training centre is good and well planned. Learners develop useful skills in basic engineering fabrication, machining and maintenance. The skills and knowledge that the learners require in order to complete tasks in the training centre increase gradually as they progress. Training becomes more demanding as the learners prepare to move to their work placements or jobs. An excellent range of engineering training options is available at the training centre and provides learners with a broad base of initial skills which are appropriate to many different types of engineering employers. The level of competence gained by apprentices at the training centre is much higher than that required for the NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations.

24. Support for learners is very good. The recruitment process is thorough and provides learners and employers with a sound basis on which to make informed decisions. All applicants are interviewed and receive an initial assessment in literacy and numeracy, together with a mechanical aptitude test. Employers are fully involved in the recruitment and selection of learners. SWDT provides them with a wide range of information which includes the results of initial assessment and aptitude tests, to help produce an interview shortlist of suitable applicants.

25. The provider also uses initial assessment to identify any additional learning support needs. It carries out further testing on learners selected for training to diagnose their level of key skills, and any support needed to complete key skills training. Where such needs are identified, learners are very well supported. A number of learners with dyslexia receive effective support each week from specialist members of staff. The support builds learners' confidence and helps them take advantage of opportunities to progress. This support continues for learners in their workplaces, after leaving the training centre. Learners receive good levels of support from their employers. Many apprentices work for employer-sponsored higher-level qualifications. Most employers allow learners generous amounts of time to carry out their NVQ work and provide company facilities.

26. Most learners spend their first year in the provider's excellent training centre. Workshops are spacious, well equipped and exceptionally well maintained and clean. There is an ample supply of equipment and materials of industry standard for all the main engineering disciplines. The range of equipment, from conventional machinery to computer numerically controlled lathes is excellent. The welding and fabrication area is well equipped with MIG, TIG and arc welding sets. Learners in this area also have access to a plasma profile burner. Learners who are in training before beginning work in the polymer industries can train on injection moulding machines. The classroom facilities are close to the workshops and are all equally good. They are comfortable, well decorated and well equipped, with good-quality furniture. There is also a dedicated suite of computers with computer-aided design software.

27. Learners receive a satisfactory induction to the training centre. Coverage of health and safety is good, and they receive an introduction to equality and diversity. This is reinforced within the first month of training by a further one-day equality and diversity

training event. Assessment and verification are satisfactory. The process is fair, accurate and reliable, and helps learners to develop their knowledge and skills. Several of the larger employers have staff who are trained and qualified as work-based NVQ assessors. This provides apprentices with on-site assessors who are able to carry out NVQ at level 3 assessments while at work.

28. Target-setting for learners is ineffective. Progress reviews are carried out every 12 weeks and are broadly satisfactory. As some learners near the end of their apprenticeships, the frequency of visits may be increased. However, targets set by training officers are too broad and not sufficiently focused. Targets are not specific or time-bound and do not encourage learners to progress in a timely manner. SWDT's assessors and company work-based assessors do not set specific targets during assessment planning. When learners fall behind with their learning plans, progress reviews may become more frequent, but these are not formally planned and recorded, and targets still remain very broad.

Leadership and management

29. Within the engineering team, communications are satisfactory and staff are well motivated. The self-assessment process includes all members of staff, and the report generally matched the findings of inspectors. However, it did not identify the key weaknesses of declining success rates and ineffective target-setting. Staff have good access to training and development activities, in order to help maintain their occupational knowledge and develop their training expertise. All staff complete training courses annually in equality and diversity. The use and quality of management data has improved since the previous inspection. However, the current management information system is still relatively new and not all data can be extracted easily.

30. Internal verification is well planned and thorough. Assessors, other than those who are well established, are visited three times each year in the workplace. All aspects of the assessment process are recorded well. This includes observation of direct assessments, examination of portfolios and documentary evidence, and interviews with learners.

Business administration and law**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration		3
Apprenticeships for young people	45	3

31. SWDT has 42 learners on work-based learning programmes in administration, of whom 15 are apprentices and 27 are advanced apprentices. A further three learners are advanced apprentices in customer service. Most learners are employed, and most of them are recruited directly by employers. Some of the learners have been referred to SWDT by the local Connexions office, and others have responded to advertising by SWDT. Learners attend off-the-job training for the NVQ, key skills qualifications, and the technical certificate. Off-the-job training takes place in the training centre for one day, every three weeks. Training officers visit the workplace every two weeks to carry out assessments, and every eight weeks to carry out learners' progress reviews.

Administration*Strengths*

- very effective off-the-job training
- very good support for learners
- good work placements

Weaknesses

- low overall success rates

Achievement and standards

32. The standard of learners' portfolios is good. They collect a wide range of workplace evidence, which includes witness testimonies, memos, drawings and professional discussion, to prove their competence. Learners have a clear understanding of their progress, and what is required to complete the target qualification. They complete a health and safety certificate as an additional qualification, which is delivered by SWDT's staff. A number of learners also currently receive in-house training programmes in first aid, manual handling and product awareness.

33. Overall success rates are low, but they are improving. In the three years 2003-04 to 2005-06, the percentage of learners on advanced apprenticeship programmes who completed the full framework rose from 17 per cent to 45 per cent. For learners on apprenticeship programmes, the percentage completing the full framework in the period 2003-04 to 2005-06, rose from 7 per cent, to 53 per cent. Overall success rates have risen dramatically over this three-year period, but for apprentices and advanced apprentices they are still below national averages. Since the previous inspection, a number of strategies have been introduced to resolve poor success rates. Learners' progress is now closely monitored and recorded against agreed completion targets. There is a strong focus on the early completion of key skills units. Formal sessions to prepare learners for the technical certificate are prepared and delivered carefully as part of

planned off-the-job training. Success stories in respect of learners are documented and used effectively to motivate other learners. Most learners currently on training programmes are making good progress.

The quality of provision

34. Off-the-job training is very effective. Learners attend the training centre for one day every three weeks. Levels of attendance are high, and learners enjoy the adult environment in the training centre. Facilities are very good, and staff are knowledgeable and well qualified. Training sessions are structured carefully and activities are designed to maintain interest and promote learning. Lessons focus on specific NVQ units, key skills and the technical certificate. Links between training and the workplace are identified, and learners are encouraged to relate newly acquired background knowledge to their own workplace experiences. Group work is used effectively and interaction between tutors and learners is good.

35. Support for learners is very good. Training officers visit learners in the workplace every two weeks and are available between visits to offer advice and guidance. Learners make use of e-mail and telephone to contact training officers between visits. During workplace visits, support focuses on progress towards the target qualification. Clear action plans are agreed with learners, and these are monitored on subsequent visits. This process identifies areas of need in relation to the qualification, which are then dealt with during off-the-job training sessions. A wide range of additional support is available to learners, including social needs such as drug awareness. Some of SWDT's staff are trained counsellors and close links have been established with external agencies such as the Samaritans. A good level of support is available from the provider's discrete skills for life unit. A range of different types of learner support has recently been provided for learners with anorexia, dyslexia, and solvent abuse problems. Since the previous inspection, the expertise available within the skills for life unit has been strengthened by the appointment of a skills for life co-ordinator.

36. Work placements are good. Many learners placed with an employer by SWDT have progressed to full-time permanent posts. The positions they hold are wide and varied and include significant responsibilities for data, patient care and customer relations. Learners have the opportunity to develop employability skills such as being a member of a team, contributing towards company targets, managing time, and employing appropriate communication skills. Employers appreciate the contributions made by learners and there are examples of learners being encouraged and supported to progress to further training and qualifications. Examples include progression from an NVQ at level 2 to level 3, and from level 3 to higher education programmes. SWDT's staff work closely with employers to promote learners' progress. Many workplace supervisors have a good understanding of competency-based qualifications such as NVQs, and help identify opportunities in the workplace to collect evidence and to assess competence.

37. Assessment is satisfactory. Training staff use an appropriate range of methods to assess learners' competence. Good use is made of observation in the workplace. Both verbal and written feedback is provided following an observation and outcomes are referenced appropriately to NVQ and key skills units. Professional discussion is being used more as a means of assessing learners' understanding. Internal verification meets awarding body guidelines. The sampling strategy is clear and understood by assessors, and implemented by internal verifiers. Regular standardisation meetings provide

opportunities to promote and share good practice. Narrative commentaries are used effectively to support assessors.

38. Learners' progress reviews are satisfactory. They are carried out by staff who are also responsible for training and assessment. This helps ensure that progress targets identified in other areas of training are fully reviewed and recorded. Learners' understanding of their progress is good. An increased focus on equal opportunities and the progress review process is used to agree and monitor set activities regarding equality and diversity. Employers' involvement in the review process is restricting to brief and often bland written comments.

Leadership and management

39. The area of learning has strong links with a wide range of employers in the area. These links are managed effectively to provide work placements for learners and feedback from employers regarding the appropriateness of the programmes offered. Recent changes to the management structure of SWDT have strengthened and clarified staff roles and employer liaison. Communications in the learning area are satisfactory. Staff meet monthly in formal meetings. Many of them are working towards further qualifications which are supported by SWDT. A new team structure has been in place since January 2007. Roles and responsibilities within the team are clearly defined, but at the time of reinspection it was too soon to judge the effects of some of these changes.

