

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **South West Durham Training Limited**

**25 November 2005**



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
- **learnirect** 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.

## Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

## 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*

# INSPECTION REPORT

## South West Durham Training Limited

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. South West Durham Training Limited (SWDT) is a private training organisation limited by guarantee and with charitable status, established in 1967 in Newton Aycliffe. SWDT operates from a single site in Newton Aycliffe. It currently employs 45 full-time and five part-time staff, and offers training for apprentices and advanced apprentices in engineering, business administration, warehouse and distribution, and customer service. The organisation provides training for school pupils in engineering as part of the increased flexibility programme. As well as offering government-funded training, SWDT offers a range of commercial courses for local industry and commerce. The organisation holds contracts with County Durham, Tees Valley and North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs).

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 4**

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** SWDT's leadership and management are inadequate, as are its arrangements for quality improvement. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies is satisfactory and in business administration the provision is inadequate.

3. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is inclusive and the organisation's most recent self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the inspection team. However, it gave insufficient weighting to some serious weaknesses and the resulting grades were too high. Action plans are insufficiently detailed and poorly monitored.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** The current management team has implemented some effective improvement measures. Overall, the quality of provision has deteriorated significantly since the previous inspection. Achievement was at its lowest point approximately two years ago. Since then a new management team has made improvements, but the pace of improvement remains slow

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR SOUTH WEST DURHAM TRAINING LIMITED:

- improve the learners' achievement and progress rates
- improve the use of data in managing the organisation
- improve the quality of data
- monitor the progress of learners more effectively
- establish formal planning at all levels within the organisation
- improve staff awareness and understanding of equality and diversity
- improve the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training in engineering

## GRADES

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

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

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

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. The inspection was carried out in a single visit to the provider. The provision in warehouse and distribution and customer service was not inspected due to low learner numbers.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	22
Number of learners interviewed	58
Number of staff interviewed	33
Number of employers interviewed	15
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	13
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	1

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

6. **Learners in engineering produce a high standard of practical work.** This work increases in complexity as they progress through the training programme.
7. **In engineering and in business administration, learners' progress towards achievement is unsatisfactory.** Many learners do not achieve within the time limit that SWDT sets for the training programme.
8. **Achievement in business administration is unsatisfactory.** Retention and achievement rates have been consistently poor since the previous inspection. However, there has been a gradual improvement following improvements to key skills training.

### The quality of provision

9. **Recruitment at SWDT is thorough and initial assessment is effective.** These factors help to ensure that the organisation recruits learners to appropriate programmes and identifies their additional learning needs correctly.
10. **Teaching and learning in the centre are good in engineering and in business administration programmes.** Teaching programmes are well planned and lessons in the workshops and classroom are good.
11. **Resources in engineering are excellent.** Learners work in spacious, well-equipped workshops, with comfortable well-furnished classrooms nearby. The accommodation is well maintained and decorated and the learners look after it well.
12. **In business administration, the deployment of assessors to suit learners' needs is particularly well considered.** Assessors' caseloads are allocated on the basis of choosing the assessor most suited to the learner. SWDT uses a range of information to match assessors to learners, including assessors' self-assessments and learners' initial assessments.
13. **Support for learners with learning needs and disabilities is particularly good.** Initial assessment is effective in identifying support needs, and well-trained staff provide sensitive and highly effective support.
14. Assessment in both occupational areas is satisfactory. Assessments are fair, accurate and reliable, and they use an appropriate range of methods. Internal verification provides adequate quality assurance of assessment.
15. **There is insufficient detailed planning and monitoring of assessment and progress in engineering.** SWDT does not encourage the learners to progress at an appropriate rate.
16. Learners' progress reviews are satisfactory. Reviews are well structured and recorded. Discussions of equal opportunities at reviews are superficial and do little to broaden the learners' understanding of the wider issues in equality and diversity.
17. **In engineering, there is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training.** Employers

do not have sufficient information about off-the-job training for them to participate effectively. Similarly, tutors in the training centre do not pay sufficient attention to the on-the-job element.

## Leadership and management

**18. SWDT has a clear strategy to develop and meet local needs and national priorities.**

Staff have good links with industry and the community that help towards achieving strategic objectives.

**19. Management support for staff is good.** They support them on a personal level and in the provision of good staff development opportunities.

**20. SWDT manages skills for life and additional support well.** Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Support for learners with additional learning needs is good in both occupational areas. Well-trained staff identify the learners' support needs accurately and provide them with highly effective support.

**21. Management data is unreliable and poorly used.** Managers and staff are unaware of the performance of each intake of learners. During the inspection, SWDT was unable to provide any consistent or reliable data on occupancy, progress or achievement of learners in either of the occupational areas. Managers use data for monitoring the LSC contract, but they do not use data to manage the provision adequately.

**22. Operational planning is insufficient.** The business plan does not contain clear targets or sufficient information to adequately monitor progress towards achieving planned objectives. There are no formal operational plans in the occupational areas. SWDT does not formally monitor any of its plans.

**23. Since the previous inspection, staff training in equal opportunities has been insufficient.** Some staff have received equal opportunities training very recently and SWDT plans to carry out further training.

**24. The quality of SWDT's training provision has deteriorated since the previous inspection.** Achievement in both areas fell from around 85 per cent at the previous inspection to a low of around 12 per cent in 2001-02. Since then, achievement has improved, but current achievement rates are significantly below those at the previous inspection. Both occupational areas have fallen from grade 2 at the previous inspection to grade 3 currently.

**25. SWDT has not successfully dealt with all of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.** Two of the three key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection still remain as key weaknesses.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- clear strategic direction
- good support for staff
- well-managed skills for life and additional support

### **Weaknesses**

- unreliable and poorly used management data
- insufficient business and operational planning
- unsatisfactory quality improvement

## **Engineering and manufacturing technologies**

### ***Engineering***

***Grade 3***

#### *Strengths*

- good and well-planned learning in the training centre
- good support for learners with additional learning needs
- excellent training centre with industry standard resources

#### *Weaknesses*

- unsatisfactory progress of advanced apprentices towards framework achievement
- little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training opportunities

## **Business administration and law**

#### *Strengths*

- good off-the-job training
- well-considered deployment of assessors to meet learners' needs
- good internal verification
- highly effective support for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities

#### *Weaknesses*

- unsatisfactory progress towards framework achievement
- poor achievement rates in the apprenticeship programme
- ineffective monitoring of learners' progress

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SOUTH WEST DURHAM TRAINING LIMITED:**

- the good help that they receive in finding a job - 'the NVQ is a good match for my job role'
- well-organised, hands-on training at the centre
- friendly and helpful instructors with industrial experience
- being treated as adults
- the healthy competition and the apprentice of the year awards
- good support from training officers through regular visits
- the friendly atmosphere in the training centre
- the good balance of tutor support

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK SOUTH WEST DURHAM TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:**

- the selection of food in the canteen and the amount of food left for second-break periods
- the explanations about how the courses will operate, at the time of induction
- the technical drawing and robotics training during the performing engineering operations programme
- the standard of the equipment in the fabrication workshop
- the amount of space available for course folders when working on computers

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 4**

#### Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- good support for staff
- well-managed skills for life and additional support

#### Weaknesses

- unreliable and poorly used management data
- insufficient business and operational planning
- unsatisfactory quality improvement

26. SWDT has a clear strategy to develop in line with local business and community needs and national priorities. It is responsive to local industry and the community and it has a good record in providing training in occupational areas not previously offered. SWDT maintains a strong influence in the region through its highly effective partnerships with local learning providers, employers and community groups. Examples of good partnership working include the local work-based learning network, which is currently chaired by a SWDT manager, and SWDT's membership of the strategic area review. SWDT has performed the secretariat duties for the North East Manufacturers' Forum, which includes businesses, business link and colleges. SWDT has established a route to a foundation engineering degree from the work-based route in collaboration with Bradford University and, using Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) funding, it has developed polymer training in association with a national network of colleges. In response to local employer demand, SWDT has researched into and provided a pattern-making apprenticeship. The organisation has also used CoVE funding to train staff in dyslexia awareness, to the benefit of a number of learners. An innovative exchange programme with a large multinational manufacturing company enables learners to be selected on merit to travel to Germany to design engineering projects and to create the designs in hosting return trips from their German colleagues. As well as developing their occupational skills, the learners develop personally and grow in confidence. SWDT is aware of the national agenda to promote 14-19 learning and is involved in the 'increased flexibility' programme with schools, which helps to promote work-based learning.

27. Support for staff is good. If staff have health problems or family issues, their managers seek to ensure there are appropriate individual strategies agreed so that they can meet the needs of both work and home life. Staff are able to take advantage of a range of learning and development opportunities to benefit themselves and the learners. They are able to gain their assessors' and verifiers' awards within SWDT. Dyslexia awareness and skills for life training has been of particular value to recognise and then support learners with additional needs. Alongside this, SWDT encourages its staff to develop their teaching skills and gain certificates in education. It has provided courses for them in the training centre in the evening. Individuals can request development through the appraisal system, which the organisation is revising. Some appraisals have been missed while the new procedures are

being established, but overall appraisal is satisfactory. SWDT recruits staff with recent industrial experience rather than current assessment qualifications, and then provides assessor training in the centre.

28. Communications across the organisation are broadly satisfactory. Meetings are scheduled at regular intervals at management level and then at team level. They usually happen as planned, unless business needs dictate amendments. Staff also have access to an internal 'staff shared' computer system, where general documents such as meeting notes and the development plan are held, but this is not widely accessed.

29. SWDT's achievement data is unreliable and its use of management information is poor. Managers and staff are unaware of the performance of their learners. Data indicating how many of the learners who start a programme achieve the qualification is not readily available. During inspection, no consistent or reliable data was available for occupancy, progress and achievement in learners' training programmes. Inspectors are unable to provide reliable, accurate achievement tables in either of the occupational areas. Monitoring of achievement across the organisation is not effective. Although there is the facility to provide overall data for a group of learners to monitor progress, this is not well used. There is no management overview of the learners' progress. Managers use the data for LSC contract monitoring but they do not use data to manage their provision adequately. There is no effective target-setting or performance management. Staff have no ownership of the data and do not share in company goals for achievement.

30. There is insufficient business and operational planning. Although there is a business plan, created in 2004, and a three-year development plan for 2005-08, they do not include measurable targets for monitoring learners' performance and links between the two are insufficiently clear. Where there are targets, they relate to business growth, but there are inconsistencies. There are no operational plans linked to the business plan and strategic objectives. Overall, there is no clear statement of how SWDT will achieve its business or strategic objectives in the occupational areas, and there are no individual targets linked to the business plan. There is no adequate staff development plan tied to strategic objectives. Staff are unaware of how each of them contributes to the aims of the organisation as a whole and are not clear of any ownership or responsibility beyond supporting their personal caseloads. There is little formal monitoring of any plans or effective reviews of progress towards targets.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

31. SWDT has a comprehensive and detailed equal opportunities policy backed by a range of supporting policies, including those for appeals, grievance, anti-harassment and bullying. The organisation has maintained its links with a local consortium to develop equal opportunities awareness and continues to promote employment and training opportunities to all groups in the local population.

32. Skills for life provision is well managed. This has developed from the learndirect provision, which it no longer offers, and is providing good initial assessment and particularly good support for people with learning difficulties. Staff training in this area is effective and ongoing. The provision makes a valuable contribution to ensure that people with learning difficulties and support needs are not disadvantaged at initial assessment or in their subsequent training.

33. The promotion of equal opportunities to employers is satisfactory. Learners receive a satisfactory introduction to equality and diversity at induction, and discussions at progress reviews provide satisfactory monitoring of equal opportunities. However, reviews do not develop or test the learners' knowledge of the wider issues of equality and diversity.

34. Since the previous inspection, staff training in equal opportunities has been insufficient. Staff have received awareness training in recent months and SWDT plans further training. There is a rudimentary learning plan, recently prepared, that is not sufficient to meet the needs of the organisation and it is not linked to its strategic objectives.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 4**

35. The quality of the provision has deteriorated significantly since the previous inspection. Although current achievement data is unreliable and inaccurate, the indications are that achievement rates have fallen in engineering and in business administration. For example, achievement of engineering apprenticeships fell from 82 per cent in 1998-99 to a low of 12 per cent in 2001-02. In business administration, achievement fell from 86 per cent to a low of 11 per cent over the same period. Since then, achievement has improved following actions taken by a new management team in 2003. However, despite improvements, achievement rates are significantly below those at the previous inspection and some of them are unsatisfactory.

36. The overall quality of both occupational areas has deteriorated since the previous inspection. Both engineering and business administration were graded as good at the previous inspection. They are currently judged as satisfactory.

37. SWDT has not dealt with all of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. For example, insufficient business planning and ineffective management information systems still remain, which are two of the three key weaknesses. SWDT still does not monitor achievement rates adequately and there is no formal strategy, clearly expressed and formally shared with staff for improving achievement rates. However, current managers have identified some key issues contributing to poor achievement and they have initiated improvements that are beginning to take effect. Slow progress towards achievement of qualifications remains a serious weakness. There is insufficient formal planning at all levels in the organisation. The business plan has improved but it remains insufficiently detailed and does not have sufficiently clear targets to monitor progress adequately.

38. SWDT has been exceptionally slow in implementing any measures for improving the quality of its provision. It took little effective action until the appointment of a new management team two years ago. Since then, some improvements have taken place. For example, there has been a review of quality assurance systems, judged satisfactory at the previous inspection, and new measures have been introduced very recently. These have not yet had an effect on the quality of the provision.

39. The self-assessment report identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses that the inspectors identified. Some strengths identified were not judged as strengths by the inspectors, and SWDT has overestimated the grades for business administration, leadership and management and quality improvement. Actions in the development plan are not

SOUTH WEST DURHAM TRAINING LIMITED

sufficiently detailed, or monitored and reviewed adequately.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Engineering</b> Apprenticeships for young people	313	<b>3</b> 3

40. SWDT has 244 learners working towards advanced apprenticeships in engineering programmes, 68 on apprenticeship programmes, and one learner is working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) in engineering. Of the total 313 learners, 254 are employed. These learners either work in local companies or carry out their first year of training within SWDT's training centre. The first-year initial training for apprentices is usually carried out at the training centre, but a small number of learners sometimes complete their initial training, key skills and NVQ at level 2 qualifications in the workplace. During their first year of initial training, apprentices complete the NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations. They also receive training and assessment for key skills and the technical certificate. There are 12 instructors working at the training centre and seven training officers provide support and carry out NVQ assessments for apprentices at their workplace. Depending on the employer and workplace assessment opportunities, some will transfer to advanced apprenticeships and will complete an NVQ a level 3 in the workplace. Advanced apprentices also attend off-the-job training at a local college for the technical certificate course on one day each week.

### **Engineering**

**Grade 3**

#### *Strengths*

- good and well-planned learning in the training centre
- good support for learners with additional learning needs
- excellent training centre with industry standard resources

#### *Weaknesses*

- unsatisfactory progress of advanced apprentices towards framework achievement
- little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training opportunities

### **Achievement and standards**

41. SWDT was unable to produce sufficiently accurate or reliable data to include a table of achievements.

42. The rate of learners' progress towards achievement of apprenticeships is unsatisfactory. For example, there are 53 advanced apprentices who started in 2001 who have still not completed the full apprenticeship. Achievement rates otherwise are generally satisfactory. Validated LSC data is available for apprentices and advanced apprentices who were due to complete their qualifications in 2003-04. Achievement rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices were 54 per cent and 41 per cent, compared with national averages of 45 per

cent and 33 per cent, respectively. Achievement was at its lowest in 2001-02, at around 36 per cent and 12 per cent for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. Since then, the number of early leavers has decreased. Although achievement rates for apprenticeships appear poor, this is due to poor management of data. Many of the apprentices obtain jobs and are then transferred to the advanced programme at the request of the employer. These learners are then recorded as early leavers rather than transfers. This distorts the true achievement rate overall. Poor achievement of key skills has made a significant contribution to slow learner progress. Learners joining programmes from 2004 onwards carry out their key skills training during the first-year off-the-job training. Learners now achieve this component early in their programme.

### **The quality of provision**

43. SWDT provides a high standard of initial training in the centre and the apprentices produce a very good standard of work. Training in the centre is well planned and delivered. Learners develop useful skills in basic engineering fabrication and machining. The skills and knowledge that the learners require to complete tasks in the centre are gradually increased as they progress. Training becomes more demanding as the learners prepare to move to their work placements or jobs. The range of engineering training options available at the training centre is excellent and provides learners with a broad base of initial skills that can be of interest 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.

44. Support for learners with additional learning needs is good. The recruitment process is thorough and provides learners and employers with a sound basis on which to make informed selection decisions. All applicants are interviewed and receive initial assessment in literacy and numeracy along with a mechanical aptitude test. These provide a good basis for programme-placement decisions. Employers are fully involved in the recruitment and selection of learners. SWDT provides them with a wide range of information, including the results of initial assessment and aptitude tests, to help produce an interview shortlist of suitable applicants. The organisation also uses initial assessment to identify learning support needs. It carries out further testing on learners selected for training to diagnose the level of key skills and any support needed to complete the key skills. Where needs are identified learners are very well supported. Ten learners with dyslexia are receiving support each week from specialists from the dyslexia institute and from well-trained SWDT staff. The support is helping to build learners' confidence and help them take advantage of progress opportunities.

45. Learners spend their first year in SWDT's excellent training centre. Workshops are spacious, well equipped and exceptionally well maintained and clean. Equipment and materials are in ample supply and of industry standard across all the main engineering disciplines. The classroom facilities are situated close to the workshops and are equally good. They are comfortable, well decorated and well equipped with good-quality furniture.

46. Assessment is broadly satisfactory. The process is fair, accurate and reliable and helps learners develop their knowledge and skills. Several of the larger employers that SWDT uses have staff that have been trained and are 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. Workplace supervisors who are qualified assessors, or SWDT's training officers, assess the learners' skills in the workplace. Assessments are recorded at

unit and element level and are sufficiently detailed. However, there is no assessment plan for the completion of units by a set date, or for the planned completion of the NVQ by the planned end date. This often results in slow progress that is not drawn to the attention of managers until learners go beyond their expected completion date. Internal verification provides adequate quality assurance of assessment and is carried out by suitably experienced and qualified staff.

47. Progress reviews have improved recently and they are now satisfactory. Reviews are well structured and recorded. Equal opportunities is briefly discussed. However, discussions are superficial and do little to broaden the learners' understanding of the wider issues in equality and diversity.

48. There is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Employers receive insufficient information about the structure and content of the off-the-job training. Teaching staff in the training centre do not pay sufficient attention to the on-the-job element of the training.

### **Leadership and management**

49. Use and quality of management information are exceptionally poor. Records kept in the occupational area do not agree with records held centrally. Managers were unable to provide accurate or reliable achievement data. Progress monitoring arrangements are satisfactory and are mainly determined through the progress reviews for individual learners. However, this does not indicate the level of progress apprentices should have achieved at any particular stage of the programme. Managers cannot easily assess whether apprentices are on target to achieve their qualifications within the timescales predicted.

50. Equal opportunities are effectively introduced to learners as part of the initial induction. Learners are well aware of their rights and responsibilities and they know what to do if they think they are mistreated.

**Business administration and law****Grade 4**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Administration</b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	35	4
NVQ training for young people	3	4
<b>Customer service</b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	4	4

51. There are 42 learners on apprenticeship programmes, of whom 21 are apprentices and 14 are advanced apprentices in business administration. Three learners are working towards NVQs at level 2 in business administration. A further four learners are working towards an advanced apprenticeship in customer service. All advanced apprentices are employed and most of them are recruited directly by the employer. The remainder are referred through the local Connexions office. Learners attend off-the-job training relating to the NVQ, key skills and technical certificate at the training centre for one day every three weeks. Training officers visit the workplace every two weeks to carry out NVQ assessments and every eight weeks to carry out learners' progress reviews.

*Strengths*

- good off-the-job training
- well-considered deployment of assessors to meet learners' needs
- good internal verification
- highly effective support for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities

*Weaknesses*

- unsatisfactory progress towards framework achievement
- poor achievement rates in the apprenticeship programme
- ineffective monitoring of learners' progress

**Achievement and standards**

52. The provider was unable to produce sufficiently accurate or reliable data to include a table of achievements.

53. Progress towards apprenticeship achievement is slow. Since the previous inspection, the achievement of apprenticeship frameworks has been poor. In 2001-02, the achievement rate for the apprenticeship programme was 10 per cent. Achievement rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices due to complete in 2003-04 were 16 per cent and 7 per cent, compared with national averages of 29 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively. The business administration team has identified reasons for learners leaving the programme early and has taken appropriate action. All the learners recruited into an advanced apprenticeship for 2004-05 and 2005-06 are currently still in training. Staff have recently identified poor key skills achievement to be an important factor in poor overall achievement. A new model of key skills training was implemented in July 2005 in which key skills and technical certificates are now completed early within the training programme.

This, together with better initial assessment, is proving to be effective in improving key skills achievement. Learners who started in 2005 are achieving both key skills units in three to five months, compared with some previous learners who took 16 to 18 months to complete them. Many of the learners from previous years did not complete their key skills units. SWDT's staff provide additional key skills support in the workplace and at the centre for those learners who were recruited in previous years. Revised individual learning plans indicate that most of these learners are now scheduled to achieve their key skills over the next two months. Although achievement remains unsatisfactory, the number of early leavers has gradually decreased and 70 per cent of learners recruited during 2004-05 remain in training.

### **The quality of provision**

54. Following recent improvements, the off-the-job training is good. Learners and employers value this. This is reflected in the organisation's observation of teaching and learning records. Attendance at the training centre is very good. The broad range of sessions, covering NVQ units, the key skills and the technical certificate, is well structured and is supported by comprehensive session plans that specify detailed outcomes. The facilities are of a good standard, offering good learning resources that are well used to maintain a high level of learner interest. Learners are engaged in classroom and workshop activities that they find enjoyable and relevant to the workplace. There is good interaction between tutors and learners, with good reinforcement of learning throughout.

55. Deployment of assessors to meet learners' needs is particularly well considered. Part of the business administration internal verification system features the self-assessment of assessors, which highlights their strengths, weaknesses and personality traits. This information is combined with findings from learners' initial assessment, including preferred learning styles, and then used to determine the allocation of the assessor team's caseloads. This is a recent initiative introduced as part of the measures to improve the achievement and retention rates.

56. Internal verification has recently been improved and is now good. Internal verifier records confirm that a wide range of assessment methods is being applied effectively. Sampling arrangements contain separate 'at a glance' records covering NVQs and key skills. They provide an easy-to-read and informative summary of relevant activity that has been planned and completed. This system avoids overuse of tick boxes and places great importance on narrative commentaries that provide feedback that helps assessors to develop. Assessors carry out three individual reviews each year with managers. These contain an effective action-planning mechanism. The results of these reviews, which are linked to ongoing observations of assessment and teaching and learning, are effectively used in the organisation's annual appraisal programme.

57. Assessment is fair, accurate and reliable. Opportunities to observe work-based activity directly are planned in advance with both the employer and learner, and a broad range of assessment methods is used. Feedback is satisfactory and helps the learners to improve.

58. Support for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities is highly effective. In addition to the good level of support that is available from the organisation's discrete skills for life unit, learners within business administration have access to a wide range of additional support that is particularly well focused on additional social needs, such as drug misuse. This specialist support draws on both internal and external expertise. Some of

SWDT's staff are trained counsellors and the business administration team have built up close working relationships with appropriate outside agencies, such as The Samaritans. Support records show particularly good examples of different types of learner support that have recently been provided for learners with anorexia, dyslexia and for those with solvent misuse difficulties. All learners involved have remained on their training programme. SWDT provides good support for learners who lose their jobs.

59. Learners' progress reviews have improved recently and are now broadly satisfactory. Reviews are well structured and used to update individual learning plans. Review discussions focus on progress and encourage learners to stay in training and achieve their qualifications. Equal opportunities is briefly discussed. The discussions are superficial and do little to broaden the learners' understanding of the wider issues in equality and diversity. However, the monitoring of equal opportunities is satisfactory and has, for example, detected and dealt with instances of bullying in the workplace.

### **Leadership and management**

60. SWDT has a good working relationship with its network of employers. The organisation is responsive to companies' needs. Communication is good and features a high level of consultation that benefits the learners.

61. The monitoring of learners' progress is ineffective. Monitoring of learners' performance against the LSC contract is carried out regularly, but these arrangements are too imprecise to make informed judgements regarding learners' progress on an individual or group basis. The current monitoring system does not determine how well learners are performing against specific elements of the qualification. Data is inaccurate, collected and presented in a haphazard manner, and it is not used to manage the quality of the provision. Any analysis and evaluation of data that is carried out is done to monitor performance against the LSC contract.

