

# Inspection of Lomax Training Services Limited

Inspection dates:

15 to 17 June 2022

**Overall effectiveness****Good**

The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Apprenticeships

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

**Information about this provider**

Lomax Training Services Limited (LTS) is an independent learning provider that offers specialist training for the gas energy industry. It is based in North Tyneside and also has training centres in Sunderland and Selby. LTS provides standards-based apprenticeships that help to address the national shortage of skilled operatives in the energy sector. At the time of the inspection, there were 36 apprentices, of whom 13 were on the level 2 gas network operative standard and 23 on the level 3 gas engineering standard. A small number of apprentices are under 19 years of age.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Apprentices attend training sessions well and understand the importance of maintaining high attendance. They recognise that they miss valuable training if they do not attend the training centre. Trainers ensure that apprentices who are unable to attend through, for example, illness or injury are set work to do at home to enable them to continue to develop their knowledge. However, staff do not have high enough expectations of apprentices' punctuality.

Apprentices have very positive relationships with their trainers, and they speak enthusiastically about the training that they receive. They feel appreciated and respected, and consider that LTS is a good place to learn. Apprentices respect the expertise of their trainers and their substantial and up-to-date industry knowledge.

Apprentices feel safe and have a secure understanding of safeguarding topics. Trainers ensure that apprentices on the gas engineering operative standard know how to resist any pressure to work on tasks that they are not trained or qualified to complete. Apprentices know to who they should report any concerns about risks to their personal safety. They receive clear guidance about online security and how to protect their online identity, including for professional reasons to avoid damage to employers' reputations.

Trainers on the gas network operative standard teach apprentices very well how to keep themselves safe at work. Apprentices learn about important site practices such as making sure that they have their permits in place from the local council when they set up at the start of the working day. Before starting work, they check that signage is clearly displayed for the public and that breathing apparatus is being used when working in excavated areas with gas leaks.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and managers have a clear curriculum intent to prepare apprentices for careers in the domestic gas and utility industries sector. They provide specialist training for apprentices to become skilled practitioners in their field and rightly recognise there is a need to train new staff within the sector to replace an ageing workforce. They have a well-planned curriculum that meets the needs of local employers. Leaders and managers have designed training for apprentices that enables them to enter the industry as gas engineering operatives with the skills needed to work in local domestic and business settings. They have planned the programme for network gas operatives around the essential skills required by the gas utility industry.

Leaders and managers have created and invested in high-quality workshops that allow apprentices to work on equipment that matches industry standards. Facilities include a wide range of boilers from different manufacturers, gas cookers and fireplaces which provide apprentices with the opportunity to develop and practise their skills on the different types of equipment that they will find at work.

The well-established links that leaders and managers have with organisations locally and nationally help them to design course content that meets the needs of the employers with whom they work. For example, leaders and managers develop training on the most up-to-date boilers and associated systems and, as a result, apprentices develop highly relevant skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Leaders and managers communicate clearly and effectively with employers so that they are aware of the training requirements of the apprenticeship. Staff provide regular updates related to changes in legislation which apprentices and their employers need to know. Staff also provide employers with helpful information about the progress that apprentices are making. However, trainers do not routinely involve employers in meetings to review the progress of apprentices in order to identify what apprentices need to do to improve.

Leaders and managers recruit staff who are highly skilled practitioners from the gas industry. Staff have significant industry experience gained predominantly through working for major gas suppliers and distributors. They teach and assess apprentices effectively, covering relevant topics such as modern boiler installation, ventilation systems and older systems that require repair or maintenance. Employers rightly value the expertise of the staff and the quality of the training that they provide. They often return to LTS for repeat business and for other training outside of the apprenticeship programmes, such as solar thermal training and smart meters installation, that add to apprentices' skills set.

Trainers benefit from useful training about the craft of teaching. They use this training effectively in the sessions that they teach. Managers ensure that all trainers keep their regulatory registrations current so that they are suitably qualified to teach the apprentices.

Apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours well. They produce work of a good standard that demonstrates the technical knowledge that they have gained and how to apply it in different contexts. Apprentices are coached well in the workplace and develop their confidence through practical activities. From very early in their programme, they use and apply at work the skills that they learn from their off-the-job training. Apprentices develop their competence as gas engineers and quickly learn how to install, repair and maintain boilers at work and perform tests of gas systems, fix pipes and radiators. Gas network apprentices quickly gain the skills to drill pipes and prepare road surfaces for excavations.

Trainers help apprentices to develop their English and mathematics skills well. Apprentices who need to acquire functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics achieve well. Those who do not need to achieve these qualifications develop their subject terminology well. Apprentices develop mathematical skills and knowledge within their job roles, such as working on reinstatement and learning how to calculate cubic metres of tarmac, concrete and backfill.

Trainers do not use progress reviews consistently well to record or plan specific training for apprentices. A few trainers set vague and often repeated targets such as completing additional units by the next review. They do not consistently provide apprentices with helpful guidance on how to reach their full potential.

Trainers teach apprentices about the importance of treating people fairly and with respect. Apprentices understand that they may work in teams with people from a wide range of backgrounds and the importance of recognising and having positive attitudes in relation to diversity. They are aware of the importance of behaving respectfully towards members of the public and taking account of their needs when they carry out work, such as ensuring wheelchair users continue to have access to properties.

Apprentices receive good support to prepare them for the next steps in their careers. They receive useful guidance on what they may need to do to secure work or training on completion of their apprenticeship, including preparing curriculum vitae and knowing about future training opportunities. Many apprentices aspire to become managers or self-employed in the future.

Apprentices have a well-developed understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. They relate this well to the areas in which they live and work.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers responsible for safeguarding have appropriate experience and qualifications. They work well with partner organisations such as local authorities and further education colleges to share best practice and training. This gives staff access to additional training and updating events to keep their knowledge current.

Leaders and managers have in place comprehensive policies and procedures to ensure the safety of apprentices. Staff log all referrals and concerns appropriately, and they signpost apprentices to outside agencies where necessary. Leaders and managers have clear processes in place to ensure that recruited staff are safe to work with vulnerable children and adults. They carry out appropriate identification checks and references.

Leaders and managers undertake rigorous checks to ensure that apprentices are safe. They check that employers have the appropriate insurance and safety procedures in place prior to enrolling apprentices. Leaders and managers assure themselves that apprentices will be working with employers who have high regard for apprentices' personal and professional safety.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure that trainers provide specific guidance for apprentices about how they can reach their full potential.

- Ensure that employers are fully involved in the process of reviewing the progress that apprentices make in developing their skills, knowledge and behaviours.
- Ensure that high expectations for punctuality are set and that apprentices meet these expectations.

## **Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	57907
<b>Address</b>	Old Gas Depot Howdon Lane Wallsend NE28 0BD
<b>Contact number</b>	0191 262 3040
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lomaxtraining.co.uk">www.lomaxtraining.co.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Jim Lomax
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent training provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

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