



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JULY 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT AUGUST 1999

Lancaster Training Services Ltd

SUMMARY

Lancaster Training Services Limited (LTS) provides well-structured and effective training and assessment for its motor-vehicle repair trainees. At the time of the first inspection, on- and off-the-job training was not sufficiently co-ordinated to provide a coherent training programme, but this has been partly addressed by providing employers with additional information about training and assessment. A team approach to training provides strong support for trainees. LTS previously lacked formal systems and procedures to ensure that the quality and management of training were effective and consistent. LTS was reinspected one year after the original report was published. Inspectors identified that effective systems have now been developed and that considerable improvements have been made to the management of training and quality assurance. Equal opportunity issues were previously not promoted or evaluated to ensure that fair and equal practice took place, but this area has been satisfactorily addressed through new publicity materials and targets to recruit from all sections of the local community. The systems and procedures are still quite new and have yet to be fully tested, but the improvements made have provided LTS with a strong platform to further develop its business.

As a result of the reinspection of LTS, the original published report text for those areas which have been reinspected has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original report which have not been subject to full reinspection have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ high achievement rates
- ◆ strong employer networks resulting in all trainees being employed
- ◆ staff provide additional support outside of normal training hours
- ◆ staff well qualified and experienced in their subjects



- ◆ advertising and promotional materials promote equality of opportunity
- ◆ effective management improvements supported by staff
- ◆ evaluation of employers and trainees' questionnaires has improved training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor integration of key skills
- ◆ previous learning or achievement not assessed
- ◆ staff knowledge of equal opportunities requires updating
- ◆ potentially offensive posters displayed in some employers' premises
- ◆ no systematic planning of work-based training and assessment
- ◆ no monitoring of effectiveness of subcontracted training

INTRODUCTION

1. LTS was founded in Lancaster in December 1968 by a consortium of 10 haulage contractors, in conjunction with the Road Transport Industry Training Board. It was then known as Lancaster and District Road Haulage Group Training Association and was one of 72 group training associations set up all over the country. The organisation provided large goods vehicle (LGV) driver training for member companies as a result of the introduction of new LGV driver licensing legislation. In September 1979, the organisation became a limited company and a registered charity.

2. LTS has a management committee comprising an elected chairman and vice chairman, who are both directors of the company, and a representative from 14 member companies.

3. In October 1982, LTS became a managing agent for the youth opportunities programmes, funded through government agencies. Local colleges were used to provide the training and qualifications. In September 1991, LTS decided to provide its own training for young people to work in the automotive industry. LTS currently offers national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for young people in motor-vehicle mechanics and vehicle-body repair, through contracts with Lancaster Area West Training and Enterprise Council (LAWTEC) and Enterprise Cumbria. There are currently 106 trainees, which is 20 more than there were at the time of the first inspection. LTS provides training courses for employers and individuals in a range of transport training, such as fork-truck operator training, LGV driver training and other vocational driver-related courses. These courses are not government funded and were not inspected.

4. Lancaster is the most northerly of the districts in Lancashire in the northwest region. The Lancaster district has a population of approximately 137,000. In the 1991 census, the town of Lancaster had a population of 44,497. The economy of the district is dominated by the service sector, accounting for 78.6 per cent of all employment. Unemployment in the Lancaster and Morecambe travel-to-work areas is high, with a figure of 8.3 per cent recorded in January 1997, compared with the November-1997 national average of 5.1 per cent. A large proportion of those who are unemployed is in the 16-to-24-age range. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the area is low, at 1.3 per cent. The number of year-11 pupils in Lancaster achieving five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades A* to C in 1996 was 48.3 per cent. This is below the 1997 national average of 53 per cent. In 1998, the corresponding percentages are 47 per cent for the local average and 46.3 per cent for the national average. LTS competes for trainees with sixth form colleges, colleges of further education, the university and other training providers in the area.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. LTS produced its first self-assessment report, for the original inspection, in May 1998. The report was concise and many of the strengths and weaknesses identified were confirmed through the inspection process. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the generic areas. An action plan, which followed inspection, was used to address the weaknesses identified by both the self-assessment and inspection. The second self-assessment report and the action plan were more realistic than the first. Most of the strengths and weaknesses in the second report were accurate, as were all but one of the grades given in the report.

6. For the first inspection, a team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at LTS during July 1998. Motor-vehicle repair training was inspected. Inspectors examined company and awarding body documents, assessment records, trainees' work and NVQ portfolios. They interviewed 41 trainees, all LTS staff involved with the programmes, visited 22 employers, the subcontracted college and observed training sessions, assessments and reviews.

7. Reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors over a total of six days in August 1999. They interviewed 12 of the 106 engineering trainees. They examined documents relating to trainees, including portfolios and assessment records, and management and quality assurance documents. They interviewed staff, employers, supervisors and managers. Inspectors also visited the subcontracted off-the-job-training centre.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering (motor-vehicle repair)

Grade 3

8. LTS had a total of 86 youth trainees at the time of inspection. There were 48 modern apprentice trainees on light- and heavy-vehicle repair courses: six were on vehicle-body repair modern apprenticeships; 28 trainees were on light- and heavy-vehicle repair NVQ level 2 and 3 courses; four were completing NVQ level 2 and 3 courses in vehicle-body repair. All trainees are employed and attend off-the-job training one day per week, at LTS for mechanical trainees, or at the subcontracted college for body-repair trainees. LTS's training staff are well qualified, both occupationally and as trainers and assessors. Trainers are occupationally experienced. The training facilities include two large well-equipped workshops for

the practical training element and separate classroom accommodation used for the theory sessions. The self-assessment accurately assessed this provision, and inspectors confirmed their findings.

9. All programmes operate on a day-release basis, with four days on the job and one day off the job. Mechanics attend LTS for their training, while body-repair trainees attend a local college which is subcontracted by LTS to provide vehicle-paint and vehicle-body training and assessment. All trainees and modern apprentices work at local garages, ranging from large franchised dealerships to small one-man operations. Currently, all trainees and modern apprentices are employed by the company with which they work. At the time of inspection, LTS had a total of 86 trainees, who are trained and assessed by five members of LTS's staff.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ NVQ achievement is well above average
- ◆ strong employer networks result in good employment records
- ◆ professional and occupationally experienced staff
- ◆ excellent resources for vehicle-body repair and refinishing courses

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor integration of key skills
- ◆ unco-ordinated on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ modern apprentices unnecessarily required to complete NVQ level 2
- ◆ training plans do not reflect individual trainees' needs or trainees' prior experience and achievements
- ◆ reviews miss opportunities to enhance the learning and assessment process through workplace experience

10. LTS's trainees regularly achieve high numbers of NVQs for every 100 trainees leaving the course. The actual figure for the 1996-97 modern apprenticeship contract was 180 NVQs for every 100 modern apprenticeship leavers, compared with a local average of 112. Employer links are strong, and employers are pleased with the training and trainee support. LTS's staff help trainees, often outside normal working hours. Trainees are confident that they can rely on LTS's staff to resolve work problems in a professional and caring manner.

11. The human and physical resources for body-repair training in the subcontracted college are of a high standard. Key skills are introduced late in the modern apprenticeship programme and are not integrated into the occupational work of the NVQ. Although evidence from trainees' previous work is re-examined for use as key skill evidence, an earlier introduction would be more beneficial to trainees. Training carried out at LTS is not discussed with trainees' employers, and

opportunities to integrate the training between the workplace and LTS are being missed.

12. Modern apprentices currently complete NVQ level 2 before level 3. This is not a requirement of the modern apprenticeship framework, but it results from the contractual arrangements held with LAWTEC. Although, in some cases, trainees may benefit from the additional qualification, it is unnecessary for those trainees who join the programme with previous experience. It results in trainees having to provide NVQ level 2 evidence which is not naturally generated at their level of work.

13. The trainee review sessions carried out in the workplace miss opportunities to integrate and co-ordinate training centre activities with those of workplace training assessment.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

14. LTS has an equal opportunities policy which applies to all applicants, employees and trainees. The policy statement meets TEC requirements and is supported by information about the local population. Applications from minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities are monitored. Employers are given a copy of LTS's equal opportunities policy statement, and they are asked to adhere to and apply its principles, if they do not have a policy of their own. There are currently no women on the programme.

15. The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ poor equal opportunities management
- ◆ equal opportunities policy not promoted to partner organisations
- ◆ staff knowledge of equal opportunities policy and procedures is poor
- ◆ recruitment and promotional materials do not promote equal opportunities

16. Considerable improvements have been made in accordance with the action plan. LTS's second self-assessment report re-graded the provision at grade 3 and inspectors agreed with this grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ quick identification and effective resolution of harassment
- ◆ targets are set together with an action plan to assist achievement
- ◆ advertisements and promotional materials promote equality of opportunity

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ staff knowledge of equal opportunities requires updating
- ◆ potentially offensive posters displayed in some employers' premises

17. LTS's staff work hard to ensure that there is no harassment of trainees or discrimination against applicants. Staff are approachable and in regular contact with trainees, allowing them to identify problems quickly and give the necessary support to resolve the issues. Trainees provided examples of LTS's staff quickly and effectively dealing with harassment in the workplace. The initial assessment process is used to provide an objective assessment of trainees' suitability for training programmes. Simple systems are used to monitor the recruitment process for equal opportunities, and the first inspection found that there was no action taken to redress imbalances in recruitment. Targets have now been set to recruit under-represented groups on programmes. These targets are supported by an action plan detailing the action to be taken to help to achieve them. LTS's promotional materials did not previously promote the policy or focus on the recruitment of under-represented groups. Since the first inspection, new promotional materials have been developed which have positive graphical images showing female engineering trainees and trainees from minority ethnic groups. All recent job advertisements and marketing leaflets contain information about LTS's commitment to equal opportunities. LTS's equal opportunities policy statement has been updated, but it is not signed or displayed on its premises.

18. The management's responsibilities for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy had been unclear at the first inspection. This has now been addressed, with the assistant training manager having responsibility for equal opportunity matters. LTS has also joined the 'Equality Exchange', which is a body dedicated to gender equality, and is compiling a file with information for staff about equal opportunities. A regular newsletter is sent by the Equality Exchange to update members on relevant issues. Staff are still unsure of recent legislation about equal opportunities and have not yet had training to update their current knowledge about their responsibilities in this area. The policy and procedures were not promoted to subcontractors and employers at the time of the first inspection. However, all employers have now been issued with this information and a member of LTS's staff has explained its importance to them in relation to the training programmes. Monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace is carried out during review visits to trainees. Employers are involved in the process and keep LTS informed of changes which may have an impact on equality of opportunity. During the reinspection, some employers' sites had pin-ups on display in rest rooms and, on one occasion, a computer screen in an office had scantily dressed female images appearing as a 'screen saver' when the machine was unattended. These images can be offensive to women and people of strong religious faith.

Trainee support

Grade 2

19. Trainees are recruited through a comprehensive system which includes a formal initial assessment. LTS has strong links with the industry, allowing it to place trainees with those employers which will support their training. All trainees receive induction training at the training centre. Trainees are given regular opportunities to review their progress, both at the training centre and in the workplace. These reviews are documented and monitored to ensure that schedules are maintained. Trainees requiring additional learning support are given extra time by staff and, where required, access to basic skills training programmes. The quality of support provided by LTS is also maintained at the college for trainees on the vehicle-body repair programmes. The LTS self-assessment report understated some of the strengths in this area, and the inspection grade is higher than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective selection, initial assessment and employer-placement procedures
- ◆ extensive induction programme
- ◆ workplace visits occur twice as often as the TEC contract requires
- ◆ additional group/individual support to assist development of portfolio evidence

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills

20. The recruitment and selection process is thorough and comprehensive. Trainees' induction is good and prepares them well for the workplace. Trainees who miss the programmed induction receive additional sessions to ensure that all subjects are covered. Workplace review visits are carried out every six weeks – double that required by the TECs. This regular contact helps to resolve trainees' problems before they begin to affect performance. To assist trainees in the development of their portfolio and collection of evidence, staff arrange group sessions for trainees and additional individual review sessions. These sessions are documented and monitored, with targets set to focus trainees on the action required to complete their award. This support extends to allowing trainees to have access to both training centre facilities and staff, out of normal training centre hours.

21. Initial assessment of modern apprentices does not include a review of the trainees' key skills. Training programmes are not designed to reflect individual trainees' needs. For example, a few trainees undertake unnecessary NVQs or work to short timescales. Trainees' prior learning, experience and achievements, are neither accredited nor used to individualise training.

Management of training

Grade 2

22. The management and staffing structure at LTS comprises a training manager, who oversees the company's commercial and government-funded training provision, an assistant training manager, responsible for the operational and contractual arrangements of TEC programmes, two administrators and three operational staff for the TEC-funded programmes. The main contract for training is through LAWTEC, and, at the time of reinspection, 88 of the 106 trainees were funded through it. The remaining 18 trainees were funded through Enterprise Cumbria contracts. Prior to reinspection, LTS's staff operated in an informal manner, they now have formal operating systems and a staff structure with clearly defined areas of responsibility.

23. The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ staff meetings inadequately documented
- ◆ no formal approach to reviewing subcontractors
- ◆ unclear staffing and management responsibilities
- ◆ documented procedures for appraisal and staff development are not followed

24. Considerable improvements have been made in line with the action plan. LTS's second self-assessment report re-graded this aspect at grade 3. Inspectors identified additional strengths and awarded a grade 2.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective action to address identified weaknesses
- ◆ good management-information system
- ◆ award given by LAWTEC for health and safety practices
- ◆ effective communication systems
- ◆ good systems for monitoring subcontractors

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic planning of work-based training and assessment

25. Since the first inspection, LTS's staff have attended a business improvement programme which has resulted in the development of a comprehensive business plan and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis which is reviewed quarterly. The company's goals are clearly defined together with measures of success and how to achieve them.

26. Previously, LTS held staff meetings but failed to record the discussions. They now have a communications policy and strategy, which includes quarterly meetings for all staff. Monthly in-house team meetings are held, with weekly Monday morning briefs for motor-vehicle training staff. These are fully recorded with the necessary action to be taken against those staff responsible. A newsletter

is distributed to all staff informing them of what happened at company committee meetings. With the new management procedures, staff feel that they are actively involved in the company's development and welcome the opportunity to influence progress and have their opinions considered.

27. At the time of the first inspection, staff were unsure about their own responsibilities and how they fitted into the company structure. All staff are now issued with a personal development file which contains their updated job description and company staffing structure. It also includes company policy updates and the business plan.

28. Previously, staff appraisal and personal development systems were not implemented or recorded according to company procedures. A staff performance appraisal system has now been developed with staff reviews taking place every six months. Examples of the review documents are comprehensive and clearly state new targets and any staff development required to improve performance. Newly appointed staff participate in a comprehensive induction programme which ensures a smooth transition into using company procedures.

29. At the time of the first inspection, LTS did not formally review the subcontractor's agreement or assess the effectiveness of training and, although LTS's staff regularly visited the subcontractor's sites, it did not record discussions or agreed actions. The training co-ordinator now visits the subcontractor monthly to monitor and record trainees' progress. Review documents are clearly recorded and any necessary actions agreed on by the subcontractor's representative.

30. Previously, workplace providers had little knowledge of NVQ requirements or their own role and responsibility within the training programme. LTS has now issued all employers with a comprehensive employers' manual which provides information on how the programme works and details of their own responsibilities. A copy of LTS's equal opportunities policy is also included with information on how it is implemented. Each employer is individually briefed on its contents by the training co-ordinator. Also, the manual has a plan showing the proposed off-the-job training that the trainees will be undertaking. The company does not have a work-based training plan which builds in opportunities to link on- and off-the-job-training activities. LTS has identified a lack of assessment of trainees in the workplace and has included in its business plan action to develop an assessment schedule. In the meantime, the assessors' work schedule has been altered to allow time for more frequent visits to the workplace in order to take advantage of naturally occurring assessment opportunities.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

31. LTS complies with the quality assurance requirements of the TEC and has received satisfactory TEC audit reports. Since the previous inspection, managers have undergone extensive training and carried out a review of the current quality assurance systems. A comprehensive manual with new procedures has been

developed. Many of the new systems and procedures introduced are not yet tried and tested and require time for all staff to become familiar with them.

32. The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ quality manual requires updating and its procedures to be implemented
- ◆ training effectiveness is not monitored with actions to address weaknesses
- ◆ quality assurance is not managed

33. Considerable improvements have been made by following the action plan drawn up after the first inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by LTS.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ awarding body's commendation on quality of NVQ provision
- ◆ evaluation of employers and trainees' questionnaires has improved effectiveness of training
- ◆ clear and measurable targets set

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no monitoring of effectiveness of subcontractors' training

34. At the time of the first inspection, the quality assurance manual was not systematically updated, its procedures were not followed and lines of responsibility were unclear. LTS has a new quality assurance manual which has clearly written procedures based around the key training process, with planned, regular reviews for it to be systematically updated. All staff have access to the manual which is available in the staff office. Existing staff have received training on its contents and procedures, and for newly appointed staff, it is included in their induction programme. Following the analysis of data, clear and measurable targets are set. However, the procedures are new and have not had sufficient time to be established in order to produce evidence which shows continuous and improved performance.

35. On the first inspection, information from trainees and employers was not effectively analysed to provide the company with evaluative information to plan improvements. LTS has a revised system for collecting feedback on the quality of training. This information is obtained annually through questionnaires sent to employers, to trainees after induction and then throughout the programme. It includes early leavers. Results are collected and data are analysed and used to inform management decisions. Examples of action taken as a result of the feedback are the purchase of a vehicle for those trainees completing the heavy-vehicle qualification and employers receiving training on their roles as witnesses for gathering NVQ evidence in the workplace.

36. During the first inspection there was no formal monitoring system for evaluating the effectiveness of LTS's training or that of the subcontractor. LTS

now has a monthly review of the subcontractor which concentrates on trainees' progress, but it does not consider the effectiveness of their training and assessment. The subcontractor undertakes its own evaluation of training, but the information is not shared with LTS. The subcontract agreement does not include monitoring of awarding body's external verifier reports or subcontractor's internal sampling of quality.

37. Awarding body reports commend staff on their professional approach and quality of provision in relation to the training and assessment of NVQs and indicate a high level of satisfaction with the quality of internal verification procedures. Records of internal verification show that monitoring is continuous throughout the programme and clear detailed records are maintained by qualified staff.

38. LTS's self-assessment report is an open and self-critical document. Judgements are accurate and supported by evidence. An action plan was produced and is supported and approved by the TEC. Inspectors agreed with two of the grades in the self-assessment report and awarded one higher grade.