



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 2000

# Locomotion Ltd

## Dorset

## SUMMARY

Locomotivation Limited is based in Poole, Dorset. It provides good training in sport and recreation. Retention rates are high. Trainees have good prospects of achieving their objectives. Trainees receive good support and frequent visits from staff but these are not well recorded. The management of training is effective. Good use is made of management information. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory and appropriate to the size of the company. Arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity are underdeveloped. Plans for their improvement have been prepared but have not yet been put into action.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Leisure, sport & travel	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	4
Trainee support	3
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good achievement of qualifications
- ◆ careful recruitment process
- ◆ continuous improvement of training
- ◆ frequent assessment
- ◆ few early leavers
- ◆ good communication and co-operation with employers

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor planning of off-the-job training
- ◆ little systematic accreditation of prior achievement
- ◆ few formal agreements with employers
- ◆ no formal feedback by employers
- ◆ trainees' have poor awareness of equal opportunities
- ◆ inaccurate individual training plans

## INTRODUCTION

1. Locomotivation Ltd is a small company based in Poole, Dorset. It provides training in the occupational area of sport and recreation. The company was formed in April 1999. At first, most trainees were placed in the leisure facilities run by a local charitable trust. This trust had previously held a longstanding training contract in its own right, but had eventually decided that the work was best routed through a separate organisation. Locomotivation was formed primarily as this organisation. All the original staff of Locomotivation had previously worked for the trust. Most trainees and placements are in the Bournemouth and Poole area, although an increasing number are located in other parts of Dorset, such as Dorchester and Wareham, as the company gradually extends its range.

2. Locomotivation is run from the home of the managing director. The company has two full-time employees, including the managing director, and two part-time employees. One of the part-time staff was to begin full time work during the week after the inspection.

3. There were 33 trainees at the time of the inspection. All were modern apprentices or national trainees, and all were employed by the organisations they were placed with. They were all working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in sport and recreation at levels 2 and 3. All training is funded through a contract with Dorset Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

4. The leisure industry is enjoying a period of sustained growth, across the United Kingdom, and the number of leisure and fitness clubs is growing fast. Sixty-four per cent of the population takes part regularly in sport, games or physical activities. Consumers spend £10.41 billion on sport and recreation each year. Twenty per cent of this is spent on direct participation in activities. The 50,000 companies involved in this broad area of work, are nearly all small businesses. Many are not-for-profit organisations.

5. The population of Dorset is approximately 389,000. The local economy is becoming increasingly diverse. The more traditional industries such as agriculture, and hotel and catering remain important, but they are increasingly complemented by a strong financial services sector. Leisure and tourism are particularly important along the coastal strip. There are good opportunities for young people to find work in this sector, encompassing the distribution, hotel, catering and leisure industries, which account for 27 per cent of employment in Dorset. Employment in these industries is predicted to increase steadily. The unemployment rate for Dorset is decreasing. It currently stands at 2.7 per cent compared with a national average of 4.3 per cent. This overall figure masks some significant local differences. For example, the East Cliff area of Bournemouth has an unemployment rate of 11 per cent, and the Melcombe Regis area has a rate of 12 per cent. People from minority ethnic groups constitute 0.9 per cent of the working population of Dorset.

6. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers in Dorset achieving five or more



general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 53.3 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In Seventy-five per cent of young people in Dorset remain in full-time education after the age of 16. This figure is higher than the national average.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. Self-assessment has been regularly undertaken since the formation of the company in April 1999. There have been several versions of the self-assessment report and action plan. Guidance on self-assessment was provided through workshops organised by the TECs in the region. Planning tools and proformas were provided as part of this guidance. The managing director led the self-assessment process, with help from other staff. Account was taken of trainees and employers' views. These were sought informally through routine workplace visits.

8. Two inspectors spent a total of seven days at Locomotivation during June 2000. They interviewed 12 trainees, six employers and workplace supervisors, and four Locomotivation staff. The one training session observed was awarded a grade 3. One trainee review was also observed. Inspectors reviewed a range of trainees' portfolios with their training plans and records of assessment. They also examined other records including minutes of meetings, contracts, publicity materials, policies and procedures, and staff files. Computerised databases and management information systems were also evaluated.

### OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

#### Leisure, sport & travel

#### Grade 2

9. There are 33 trainees who are working towards sport and recreation qualifications in operational services and operations and development. Seventeen are working towards NVQs at level 2 and 16 are working towards NVQs at level 3. Sixteen are national trainees and 17 are modern apprentices. Trainees are placed with 14 local employers, such as leisure centres, holiday parks and fitness clubs. Training, assessment and internal verification is carried out by Locomotivation staff. Some employers' staff are also qualified to carry out assessment. Most trainees attend off-the-job training once a fortnight. Trainees are frequently visited by Locomotivation assessors and receive a progress review at 12-weekly intervals. Trainees are able to acquire additional qualifications in areas such as football, swimming coaching and lifeguarding. Most employers provide additional training in the operation of their own facilities.

10. The self-assessment report identified several strengths and weaknesses with which inspectors agreed. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high retention rates
- ◆ good achievement rates

- ◆ well integrated key skills
- ◆ large number of assessors

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor planning of off-the-job training

11. Locomotivation enables a high proportion of its trainees to complete both occupational qualifications and the other parts of their modern apprenticeship and national traineeship frameworks. During the first 15 months of the company's operations 10 trainees completed national traineeships and two completed modern apprenticeships. Some of these trainees were already part of the way through their training when they joined Locomotivation. Nine of the 10 trainees who have completed the national trainee framework have converted to the modern apprenticeship programme. Retention is good. Only two trainees have left early without qualifications. Of these, one left because of ill health, and the other transferred to a training programme in care.

12. There is a high ratio of assessors to trainees. Most placements have a work-based assessor. Locomotivation encourages and assists work-based supervisors to become qualified assessors. It also employs two assessors of its own. They travel between placements visiting trainees in order to carry out assessments and support trainees in building up their portfolios. This combination of assessment and support helps trainees to make quick progress with their NVQs. At the beginning of their programmes they are encouraged to complete a diary of work activities over a two-week period. This helps trainees to identify the units of the NVQ on which they will start to work immediately, those which will require more training, and those which may be absent from their job role. This method enables Locomotivation and the employer to plan ahead for trainees to cover areas of work, which are not normally part of their duties. Some trainees have been moved from one placement to another to allow them to gain wider experience.

13. Key skills are well integrated into the NVQ training and assessment programmes. Trainees are all aware of the need to complete key skills. Evidence to be used for key skills assessment is collected while trainees work towards the NVQ, and so trainees do not view key skills as a barrier to achievement. Key skills training has recently been integrated into off-the-job training sessions. Projects based on trainees' work are used as an additional means of developing and assessing key skills. Locomotivation works with employers to ensure that trainees have the opportunity to gain additional industry-specific qualifications during their training period.

14. Trainees meet frequently with their assessors, and targets are set for work to be completed before the next meeting. This breaks down the tasks into manageable amounts for the trainees. Portfolios are highly structured. They contain a large amount of assessment paperwork which the assessor completes. Trainees use a tick system to see how they are progressing through each unit. Little use is made of planned, formal observations of trainees' work during assessment. More use is

made of trainees' reflective accounts of what they have done which are then authenticated by a supervisor or work colleague.

15. There is no overall plan for off-the-job training. Various systems have been used but, as yet, the company has no clear view of what should be provided or how the training might best be organised. The wider industry knowledge requirement of the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship frameworks has not been planned, or provided for, in the off-job training sessions. There is little co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training.

16. The training centre is adequately resourced. Five personal computers are available to the trainees to assist with key skills development. Two occupationally competent trainers are present at each of the off-the-job training sessions, and a variety of training methods is used. Until recently sessions focused on portfolio building with trainees receiving one-to-one help. The sessions were unstructured and did not deal with either background knowledge for the NVQ, or key skills. More recently, a new series of four half-day workshops has been provided. These are better structured, and deal more specifically with key skills. There are some rudimentary lesson plans but no schemes of work for these sessions. Trainees working for the same employer are divided between the two training groups so that the employer is not left short of staff. This has improved the attendance at the training sessions although it is still poor. Trainees working towards different NVQs and different key skill levels are all in the same training session. They work on the same subject and carry out the same exercises. Some exercises are too easy for the more advanced trainees, who lose interest, or are too difficult for other trainees.

17. Training sessions are based in a leisure centre. Trainees based in that centre are often called away from their training to carry out tasks within the leisure centre. This is disruptive to the group and the trainees concerned. Some trainees are unable to attend the off-the-job training sessions because of the distances involved. Little additional provision has been made for those who cannot attend. Locomotivation is currently reviewing the venues used for training so that sessions can be provided in locations accessible to all trainees.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

**Grade 4**

18. Locomotivation has had an equal opportunities policy since the formation of the company 15 months before the inspection. The managing director has been the person responsible for equal opportunities. The trainee liaison officer has recently assumed responsibility for developments in this area. Information about the characteristics of those applying for training places and those currently in training is held on computer databases. There is an NVQ appeal procedure and a grievance

procedure.

19. Inspectors concluded that most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were normal practice rather than strengths. They found an additional strength and further weaknesses, and awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ detailed monitoring of applications, participation rates and achievements

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor trainee awareness of equal opportunities
- ◆ no monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policies and practices
- ◆ no active promotion of equal opportunities

20. The equal opportunities policy covers most of the main areas relevant to Locomotivation's business. The policy clearly applies to both staff and trainees. Locomotivation collects and analyses a wide range of useful information relating to trainees at all stages of their training. Gender, ethnicity, and disability are all considered. The participation and achievement rates of different groups are compared. Staff are aware of the trends revealed as a results of this work. Efforts have been made to secure more placements in rural areas to cater for demand. Trainees are treated fairly.

21. Serious consideration of the practical application of the equal opportunities policy began four months before the inspection. The trainee liaison officer researched the area thoroughly and devised a comprehensive action plan. It covers a wide range of areas, including staff and trainee awareness, training, external communication, and the setting of improvement targets. None of the resulting proposals for action had implemented at the time of the inspection. A new leaflet for trainees has been designed and feedback on it sought from the TEC.

22. Trainees can recall very little about equal opportunities. They have very low levels of awareness and understanding of the subject. Some believe that equality of opportunity was covered briefly during their induction, but others cannot remember any reference at all. Most of those who began their training recently have copies of Locomotivation's equal opportunities policy. Others have nothing. After the induction period there is no provision for reinforcement of the points raised, nor are there any checks to confirm trainees' understanding. Trainees' awareness of grievance procedures and the NVQ appeals procedure is similarly limited. Those who started training most recently know more about the appeals process. There are no checks to ensure that employers have effective equal opportunities arrangements before trainees are placed with them. The company does not collect employers' policies, nor is there any agreement that the employer will abide by Locomotivation's arrangements. The employers' handbook refers to



the expectation that there should be no discrimination, but makes no reference to disability discrimination. These handbooks are only distributed when trainees begin their placements. Many of the agreement sheets have not been signed and returned by employers. There is no reference to equal opportunities in the literature used to recruit trainees or employers. None of the staff have received training on equal opportunities.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

23. Locomotivation recruits trainees following referral by the careers service, through direct contact by the trainee, or through requests from employer. Trainees are first interviewed by Locomotivation and then referred to employers for a second interview. Acceptance onto the programme is dependent on a successful interview with a prospective employer. An occupational aptitude test is conducted at interview and a basic skills test may be carried out later if the assessors believe that it is necessary. Trainees receive an induction from Locomotivation at the off-the-job training sessions. This covers health and safety awareness, NVQ induction, and discussion of the responsibilities of the trainee. The employer carries out an induction in the work place. Assessors, employers and training staff share the responsibility for supporting trainees. Assessors visit trainees every three months to review their progress.

24. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well recorded recruitment process
- ◆ responsiveness recorded to trainees' requests

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor recording on individual training plans
- ◆ lack of systematic accreditation of prior achievement
- ◆ no consistent approach to recording trainee contact

25. The recruitment process is well documented and thorough. During their interview potential trainees undertake a test to assess their suitability for the occupational area, and to ensure that they understand the kind of work that they will be doing. This gives them a realistic idea of what to expect from the placement. This test was originally recorded on paper, but is now stored electronically. This has shortened the length of time taken for trainees to complete the test and provides them with instant results. The record of the more formal part of the interview lacks sufficient detail, but the outcomes of the interview process

are well recorded and analysed. There is a waiting list for placements, and employers have a choice of trainees. Locomotivation matches potential trainees to placements at the shortlist stage. Employers are sent suitable applicants. Shortage of placements means that some potential trainees are lost due to the length of time on the waiting list. Action has been taken to find more placements, particularly outside the Bournemouth and Poole area.

26. Most induction takes place at the employers' premises. It is supplemented by some off-the-job training. Health and safety induction is particularly thorough and well recorded. Signed checklists are used to ensure that all the relevant topics are covered. Trainees are given a detailed computer presentation about NVQs at an early stage in their programme. This helps them to understand the structure of the qualifications they are following, and how evidence of competence can be collected.

27. Locomotivation is highly responsive to the requests of trainees. Staff have a good knowledge of the placements and of trainees' individual circumstances. When trainees have requested that they are moved from a work placement, or placements have proved to be unsuitable, they have been moved swiftly to new placements. This has been a significant factor in the high retention rates of trainees on these programmes. Trainees who request information from the company get a prompt reply. This makes them feel well supported and often assists their progress. Company staff are available at any time to respond to requests for help and advice.

28. There are weaknesses in the recording of trainee support. Training plans are not individual. All trainees have two plans on their file, one computer generated and the other completed manually. The plans do not always match, and neither is a comprehensive record. The plans do not set individual targets for trainees, and do not contain details of expected or actual completion dates for each unit of the NVQ. They are not updated regularly, for example, to reflect trainees' movement from site to site. Some also lack detail. For example, all state that off-the-job training will take place, which is not always the case.

29. The company's approach to recording its contacts with trainees is inconsistent. The three-monthly reviews are recorded but the records often lack detail, and parts of the review are sometimes not completed. There is no systematic method of recording the frequent, often informal, contact which assessors have with trainees. This means that information may be lost or trainees may not receive the help and support they need in the event of a change of personnel. The company offers one-to-one support for trainees with specific needs such as dyslexia or poor basic skills. However the assessors are not trained to meet these needs.

30. Initial assessment does not sufficiently contribute to individual training plans. There is no obvious link between the two processes. The results of initial assessment do not influence the type of training provided. Locomotivation has recently introduced an initial assessment to identify trainees who need assistance with basic skills. However, the company has not yet devised a method of ensuring that the support to be given takes account of the needs identified. There is no method for accrediting prior achievement. This has resulted in one trainee having

to redo key skills that had already been completed through a GNVQ course. Other trainees have started working towards key skills levels that they have already achieved. Trainees do not make use of experiences gained through completing coaching qualifications or other awards to contribute to their NVQ portfolios.

## Management of training

## Grade 2

31. Locomotivation employed two full-time and two part-time staff in the week of the inspection. The managing director takes overall responsibility for the operation of the company and leads the development work. The other full-time member of staff, the administration manager, is responsible for all documents and record keeping, and for the quality assurance arrangements. Part-time staff assist with assessment work and with the development of trainee representation and equal opportunities strategies. Staff meet regularly to discuss a wide range of issues relating to both day-to-day operations and to the development of the company. Most of the targets for the business are those set out in the contract with Dorset TEC.

32. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Additional strengths and given weaknesses were also identified. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good communication between staff
- ◆ constructive relationships with employers support trainees' progress
- ◆ comprehensive and accurate management information

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no systematic approach to the planning of staff development
- ◆ no written agreements with many employers

33. Staff are aware of the overall direction of the business and the part that they play. Targets are corporate rather than individual. Performance against training contracts is closely monitored. The main responsibilities of staff are clear, although there is considerable overlap in their day-to-day activities. Staff work closely together every day. Regular team meetings which also include part-time staff supplement this high level of informal communication. Meetings are frequent, productive, and well recorded. They address a wide range of issues including business development, quality, contract performance and trainees' progress.

34. The computerised systems used to collect management information are comprehensive and well designed. The system provided by the TEC is

supplemented by two additional databases. One tracks details of applicants for training, their stage in the application process, and the results of any submissions for interview. The other tracks trainees' progress towards their NVQs and the other compulsory elements of their training. Information is entered regularly and is up-to-date. Used together, the systems produce a wealth of important information which is used effectively to support the management of the training process. The output of these systems is accurate. Information can be produced promptly in various formats.

35. Employers are well informed and take an active interest in the progress of their trainees. They understand their role in training. Many are regularly involved both in the planning of training and assessment, and in carrying out assessments. Several supervisors and managers have themselves successfully completed similar training programmes. Contact between employers and Locomotivation staff is frequent and constructive.

36. Locomotivation staff know most of their placements well, but there are few formal checks before trainees begin commencing their training. Health and safety checks are carried out by an organisation authorised by the TEC, but no other checks are recorded, and no agreements are exchanged or signed. An employers' handbook outlines their role in training and sets out many of their responsibilities. Employers are asked to sign and return a sheet at the end of this handbook. It is not clear whether they sign to accept the points listed on this sheet, which apply mainly to health and safety, or to the entire content of the handbook. Fewer than 40 per cent of employers have signed and returned these sheets. In most cases there is no formal agreement between Locomotivation and the employer outlining their respective responsibilities towards the trainee.

37. Most staff have been involved in training activities directly related to the delivery and management of the training programmes. The activities include assessor and internal verifier training, health and safety training, database training, and workshops on self-assessment. Most of this training has resulted from immediate necessity, rather than a systematic process of comparing current capabilities with future business needs. There is no overarching plan for staff development. However, the company acknowledges that staff need to become sufficiently multi-skilled to be able to cover each other's work when the need arises.

### **Grade 3**

#### **Quality assurance**

38. Locomotivation has a quality assurance policy which outlines the principles to be applied. It links the standards of training and staff competence on the one hand, and trainees' acquisition of occupational knowledge and competence on the other. There are some outline procedures which detail how these principles are put into effect. There is a separate internal verification policy. Trainee feedback is

collected using a system provided by Dorset TEC. Locomotivation is subject to TEC audits and to external verification visits from the awarding body.

39. Inspectors identified different strengths and weaknesses from those in the self-assessment report, but awarded the same grade.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ continuous development and improvement in many areas
- ◆ rigorous self-assessment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no formal employer feedback system
- ◆ few documented procedures

40. The quality policy covers a broad range of relevant matters including feedback from trainees and employers, the development and monitoring of quality procedures, self-assessment and action planning, and the use of benchmarking. Action has been taken in most of these areas. Work in the area of recruitment and initial assessment is well advanced, and the procedures are an accurate reflection of trainees' experience.

41. Locomotivation has gathered information and ideas from many sources in order to contribute to improvements in their own work. Among these sources areas links with the national training organisation, membership of industry groups and the association of internal verifiers and assessors, links with other training providers, and reference to published materials. The information gained has been evaluated and used to make changes to various aspects of the training process. These changes are beginning to benefit trainees, for example by new initial assessment arrangements and the recording of on-the-job training. Self-assessment has been approached in a self-critical way, which has highlighted a number of areas where improvements are required, particularly if the business is to expand. Several versions of the self-assessment report have been produced, each building on the last. Action planning is systematic and progress is regularly monitored.

42. There are procedures for collecting feedback from trainees at the start of training, during training, and on leaving. The system used for this is the TEC 'Quality Monitor'. Locomotivation collects feedback through a written questionnaire and then enters the results onto a computer system. The data are subsequently analysed by the TEC and the results returned to Locomotivation. So far there has been one significant trainee survey which elicited a positive response to all areas of the training. The questionnaire used is long and detailed. Few trainees make any additional comments.

43. The approach to internal verification is well planned. At least 30 per cent of the units in a candidate's portfolio are internally verified. This rises to 100 per cent

when the assessor involved is inexperienced. Candidate tracking sheets are completed to show how trainees are progressing against each unit of the qualification they are working towards. These records are handwritten and also recorded on a computer database. Neither version shows the dates on which individual units of the qualification are achieved. Consequently, rates of progress are not immediately obvious.

44. Some important processes are not clearly recorded. Most staff work in a similar way, but there are some significant differences. Some individual training plans contain inaccuracies, for example in the recording of prior achievements and off-job training arrangements. Trainee reviews are inconsistent in their content and the level of detail they contain. Work has begun on the observation of training sessions, but there are no clear criteria for this observation and the feedback so far is of little use.

45. Feedback from employers is not collected in a systematic way. Some feedback is collected through reviews and visits to employers, but this is not recorded or analysed. Locomotivation plans to use the 'Quality Monitor' system of questionnaires to make this process more systematic.