

INSPECTION REPORT

NLT Training Services Limited

29 May 2001



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

NLT Training Services Limited is a private training organisation and a registered charity. It operates from two sites, in Chesterfield and Scunthorpe. It provides training for young people, unemployed adults and commercial clients in the occupational areas of engineering, business administration, and retailing and customer service.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based training in engineering, business administration and retailing and customer service is unsatisfactory, as are the leadership and management of NLT Training Services Limited.

Work-based learning for young people

At the time of the inspection NLT Training Services Limited was providing training for 134 advanced modern apprentices and 34 foundation modern apprentices. It was also providing other programmes of work-based training for 118 young people. A low proportion of trainees remain in training and achieve their qualifications. Many trainees are making slow progress. However, recently recruited trainees in engineering are making good progress. There is good support for trainees from the company's staff. The paperwork for assessments in engineering and the resources at the company's premises in Chesterfield for training in operating lift trucks are good. There is weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of NLT Training Services Limited are unsatisfactory. There is good strategic planning, but data to help managers in this process, other than financial data, are not easily available. There is effective communication within the company. The company does not adequately monitor equal opportunities in the workplace. Trainees have a low awareness of equal opportunities. Self-assessment is thorough and involves all staff. The company has recently carried out quality assurance audits, which have identified areas for improvement. NLT Training Services Limited uses feedback from trainees effectively, to improve its services. However, the company does not adequately monitor its subcontractors.

GRADES

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Business administration, management & professional	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Retailing, customer service & transportation	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- good resources for lift truck training and for assessments for engineering NVQs
- good support for trainees
- clear strategic planning aided by good communications
- good process of self-assessment

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor co-ordination in business administration of training in the workplace and training away from work
- low rates of retention and achievement
- inadequate data to guide decisions by management
- weak promotion of equal opportunities
- ineffective arrangements to assure quality of training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- effective practice in all assessments
- more accurate initial assessments to identify most appropriate training
- more frequent and informative communications with employers
- better awareness among trainees of procedures for complaints and appeals

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. NLT Training Services Limited (NLT) was formed from the merger of Notts and Derbyshire Training Association and North Lincolnshire Training Trust in November 1996. The company operates from two sites, in Chesterfield and Scunthorpe. The premises in Chesterfield include an engineering workshop, offices and facilities for conferences. The premises in Scunthorpe include training and conference rooms. NLT has 40 staff at its site in Chesterfield and 12 at its site in Scunthorpe. It currently provides training in engineering, business administration and retailing and customer service, for 176 young people and 20 unemployed adults, as well as commercial clients. NLT provides some of the training at its training centres. It subcontracts the rest of the training to local colleges of further education. Most of the young people in training are employed by engineering companies.

2. NLT's work-based training for young people is funded through the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) for Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Humberside, and Lincolnshire and Rutland. The economic climate varies across the areas served by the four LLSCs. During the 1990s, Derbyshire suffered large-scale pit closures and many large employers closed down. However, employment is now growing, especially part-time employment and the employment of women. In Nottinghamshire, there were also large-scale pit closures during the 1990s, but the local economy has partially recovered through the setting up of new small companies. Lincolnshire's economy has diversified widely since the 1980s and employment in the service sector is increasing. Humberside has seen a large growth in employment in food preparation, petrochemicals, distribution and tourism. In April 2001, the rate of unemployment in the four LLSCs was 3.8 per cent in Derbyshire, 4.4 per cent in Nottinghamshire, 2.7 per cent in Lincolnshire and 5.7 per cent in Humberside, compared with the national average of 3.3 per cent. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups and the rate of achievement of school leavers also vary across the areas served by the four LLSCs. The 1991 census found that the proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups was 3 per cent in Derbyshire, 4 per cent in Nottinghamshire, 4.4 per cent in Yorkshire and the Humber and 1 per cent in Lincolnshire, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 49 per cent in Derbyshire, 43.4 per cent in Nottinghamshire, 50.3 per cent in Lincolnshire and 58.9 per cent in Rutland, compared with a national average of 49.2 per cent.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days at NLT in May 2001. They visited 53 employers and interviewed 78 trainees and 31 staff of NLT and employers. They observed lessons and assessments and examined a range of paperwork, including trainees' portfolios of evidence, trainees' records, the company's plans, policies and procedures, promotional literature and awarding bodies' reports. Inspectors studied NLT's self-assessment report, which it had produced in November 2000.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	207	4

4. There are 207 trainees in the occupational area of engineering. Of these, 109 are advanced modern apprentices, 14 are foundation modern apprentices and 84 are on other programmes of work-based training. NLT offers a range of engineering courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) up to level 3. These include courses in electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering, construction, fabrication and welding, manufacturing, maintenance, and engineering design. Initially, all foundation and advanced modern apprentices work towards a level 2 NVQ in foundation engineering. Foundation modern apprentices also work towards an additional NVQ in manufacturing and processing skills. Most of the trainees are employed by local engineering companies. Trainees who are employed attend training towards the level 2 NVQ in foundation engineering on a day- or block-release basis, depending on the requirements of their chosen programmes and of their employers. Unemployed trainees attend full time. For trainees in Chesterfield and the surrounding area, this training takes place at NLT's workshop in Chesterfield. For trainees in Lincolnshire and Humberside, it takes place at subcontracted local further education colleges. Trainees working towards NVQs at level 3 attend a further education college to undertake a craft or technician course. They spend the rest of their time at work, where they receive training towards their NVQ. NLT's staff perform most of the assessments, although employers' staff also carry out some assessments.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					34		17		19	100
Still in training					3	9	5	29	6	32
FMA framework completed					0	0	1	6	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					23	68	7	41	7	37

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			46		52		26		32	100
Still in training			23	50	36	69	22	85	28	88
AMA framework completed			4	9	1	2	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			30	65	29	56	17	65	8	25
NVQ level 3 completed			8	17	6	12	1	4	2	6

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			98		100		99		76	100
Still in training			4	4	13	13	28	28	39	51
Individual learning plan completed			27	28	22	22	36	36	18	24
Left without completing individual learning plan			67	68	65	65	35	35	19	25
NVQ level 2 completed			26	27	22	22	34	34	17	22
NVQ level 3 completed			1	1	3	3	1	1	2	3
NVQ level 4 completed			0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- wide range of training available
- frequent work-based assessment
- good paperwork to facilitate assessment

WEAKNESSES

- low rates of achievement and retention
- delayed progress by many trainees
- late introduction of key skills training
- inadequate planning of some training in the workplace
- insufficiently thorough reviews of trainees' progress

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective practice in all assessments
- extension of internal verification to include observation of assessors
- closer monitoring of trainees' progress in the workplace

5. NLT offers training towards qualifications in most aspects of engineering. It also enhances trainees' occupational skills by providing further courses leading to additional qualifications. These include courses in portable appliance testing, electrical regulations and abrasive wheels. It also provides a nationally recognised two day health and safety course to allow trainees to work on large sites, such as oil refineries. Some trainees' employers have encouraged them to progress to higher-level academic courses. Other trainees have followed manufacturers' courses in topics such as pneumatic and hydraulic systems, injection moulding and maintaining specific equipment. Trainees in electrical engineering in particular, benefit from relevant courses which are not normally funded as part of the modern apprenticeship framework.

6. NLT's occupationally competent training staff visit trainees frequently in the workplace. They carry out reviews of the trainees' progress every three months. Once each month, on average, they assess the skills which trainees are developing in the workplace. There are many opportunities to assess trainees' occupational skills. The assessors use a wide range of methods, including observation, written and oral questions and witness testimony. Most assessments are thorough. However, some statements about trainees' performance are too descriptive and lack judgements. Some witness statements are not signed by a competent member of staff in the trainee's workplace. Overall, internal verification is effective, especially at the company's site in Chesterfield. However, there is no observation of assessors in the workplace.

7. NLT has developed good paperwork for assessing trainees' work towards their NVQs. There is a package for each unit of the NVQ, which sets out a clearly structured procedure for assessment. A plan specifies the method of assessment for each element of the unit and includes a checklist of all the points to be observed. There is a comprehensive list of oral and written questions which trainees must be able to answer correctly. There are clear examples of where a witness testimony is appropriate for each unit. There are helpful references to further projects which could provide additional relevant evidence. The self-assessment report identified the good quality of the paperwork for assessments as a strength.

8. Rates of achievement are low in all areas of engineering. Since 1997, only one foundation modern apprentice and five advanced modern apprentices have achieved all the targets on their individual training plans. These represent fewer than 6 per cent of all apprentices who have left or completed their programmes. Of the trainees on programmes of other work-based training, 28 per cent have achieved the targets on their individual training plans. Since 1997, a satisfactory proportion of advanced modern

apprentices have remained in training. However, the proportion of foundation modern apprentices who have left their programme early is poor, averaging 79 per cent over three years, and was poor in 1997-98 and 1998-99 for trainees on other programmes of work-based training, at 68 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively. There are some signs of improvement in 1999-2000 and 2000-01 with 35 per cent and 25 per cent of trainees having left their programme early. The self-assessment report did not evaluate statistical data relating to trainees' rates of retention and achievement.

9. Various problems have delayed trainees' progress towards NVQs at level 3. Some trainees have had gaps of up to six months between assessments. NLT issues trainees with books which set out the competences they need to achieve and contain space for trainees to record their achievements. Some trainees experienced a delay in receiving these books. NLT changed some trainees' assessors but this failed to remedy the lack of assessment. Some trainees made no progress for up to a year. Many current trainees have had to extend their programmes. One trainee, who is within three months of finishing his programme, has only completed a quarter of the work towards his level 3 NVQ and has not yet started working towards his key skills award. NLT identified these problems in its self-assessment report. The company has made improvements and recently recruited trainees are making good progress.

10. Previously, training in key skills did not start until a late stage in trainees' programmes. Some trainees did not start training in key skills until they had achieved their level 3 NVQs. Many trainees have a low awareness of key skills. NLT has not integrated training in key skills with these trainees' occupational training. Many trainees have not received adequate support with their work towards the key skills award or with gathering evidence of their competence. The delay in starting training in key skills has contributed to the failure of many trainees to achieve the targets on their individual training plans within the planned time. However, trainees who have started their programmes more recently are developing their key skills from the beginning of their training.

11. Some training in the workplace is poorly planned. Some employers thoroughly plan trainees' training and progress, but others do not plan the training which they provide. Some trainees are not fully aware of their progress towards their NVQs at level 3. NLT has developed a new sheet on which to monitor trainees' progress. However, some trainees are still unaware of the extent of their progress because their sheets are not up to date. There is insufficient co-ordination of trainees' experiences in the workplace with their learning at college.

12. Reviews of trainees' progress are insufficiently thorough. Many scheduled progress reviews have not taken place. Many do not adequately focus on targets for the trainee to achieve before the next progress review. Some trainees are not aware of the distinction between progress reviews and assessments. Many employers are not involved in reviews of trainees' progress and are not familiar with the requirements of the NVQ. This has prevented them from identifying opportunities for assessment. Many individual training plans are not up to date. Many lack dates for trainees to achieve their

targets and do not accurately reflect trainees' progress.

Good Practice

One trainee had used a digital camera effectively to capture evidence from the workplace. He used the camera to record the various stages in overhauling a clutch assembly. He imported the photographs into a word-processed document to record the task for his notebook. Using the software, he was able to annotate the photographs to explain important points.

Poor Practice

Foundation modern apprentices start by undertaking the level 2 NVQ in foundation engineering. When they achieve this NVQ, their assessor cross-references the evidence which they have gathered to the standards of a machining and processing vocational qualification. The trainees have little or no involvement in the cross-referencing. Trainees who have achieved both qualifications can describe how their NVQ was assessed and the work they have completed to demonstrate their competence. However, they have little understanding of how they achieved their vocational qualification and do not value their achievement of this qualification.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	62	4

13. There are 22 advanced modern apprentices working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in administration and 13 foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2 in administration. Two of the advanced modern apprentices are also working towards qualifications awarded by the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT). All the foundation and advanced modern apprentices are in work placements and some are employed. Additionally, there are 27 trainees on other programmes of work-based training for young people, who are working towards NVQs at level 2 in administration, and in some cases, key skills awards. These trainees can transfer to an advanced modern apprenticeship during or at the end of their programmes. A small number of trainees are working towards the AAT's qualification and an NVQ in information technology at level 2. Trainees can start their training at any time during the year. However, most join their training programmes at the end of the school year. Some trainees in administration attend training at NLT's training centres in Chesterfield and Scunthorpe on one day a week. Trainees in accounting attend training at subcontracted local colleges of further education. Training in key skills is given by NLT and the subcontracted colleges.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					5		9		18	100
Still in training					0	0	1	11	12	67
NVQ level 2 completed					2	40	3	33	1	6

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			20		17		25		11	100
Still in training			4	20	0	0	9	36	9	82
AMA framework completed			1	5	1	6	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			13	65	7	41	2	8	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			2	10	1	6	1	4	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			28		16		20		16	100
Still in training			7	25	4	25	5	25	11	69
Individual learning plan completed			4	14	4	25	1	5	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			16	57	8	50	10	50	3	19
NVQ level 2 completed			10	36	5	31	2	10	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 4 completed			0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good support from training staff
- thorough internal verification
- effective integration of key skills training with some occupational training

WEAKNESSES

- low rates of retention and achievement
- insufficient involvement of employers in training towards NVQs
- poor co-ordination of training at work and in the training centre
- poor development of knowledge of theory

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more accurate initial assessments to identify most appropriate training
- more informative induction

14. NLT provides good support for the trainees. Many trainees have monthly or six-weekly reviews of their progress, even though the contract for the training requires progress reviews only once every eight to 12 weeks. Training staff visit some trainees even more frequently, especially those who do not attend training at the NLT's training centre. NLT's staff regularly assess trainees' occupational competence. Trainees can telephone NLT's staff to discuss training or personal matters and the staff resolve their problems quickly. Adequate help with basic skills and careers guidance are available to trainees. Trainees value the support and encouragement which they receive. When they begin a new unit of their NVQ, trainees receive a comprehensive plan which identifies the actions they need to take and the evidence they need to gather for the

unit. These plans, together with continuing support from NLT's staff, help trainees to monitor their progress closely. NLT regularly informs workplace supervisors about trainees' progress.

15. There is a thorough internal verification system, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. One member of staff has responsibility for managing internal verification and for internally verifying all the portfolios in the occupational area of business administration. The internal verifier carefully checks a selection of units from each trainee's portfolio, partway through the trainee's programme and when the trainee completes the portfolio. The internal verifier observes assessments and produces detailed, constructive reports on assessors' performance. NLT uses trainees' opinions on the fairness of assessments constructively. There are regular reviews of assessors' occupational competence and their suitability for assessing trainees in business administration. There are regular assessors' meetings, at which assessment and internal verification are discussed and reviewed.

16. In the past seven months, NLT has extensively developed its training in key skills. Training in key skills is now closely integrated with occupational training in some programmes, especially those in Scunthorpe. Trainees on these programmes develop their key skills and gather evidence of their competence while working towards their NVQs. However, trainees on other programmes do not start to work towards the key skills award until they have completed work for their NVQs. There are good resources to help trainees develop their key skills.

17. A low proportion of trainees remain in training and achieve their qualifications. The self-assessment report identified the low rate of achievement as a weakness. Many trainees either leave their programmes early without qualifications or do not achieve the targets on their individual training plans. In 1999-2000, over half the trainees in business administration left early, many for personal reasons. In the same year, no foundation or advanced modern apprentice achieved the targets on their individual training plan. Only one young person on a programme of other work-based training achieved all the targets on their individual training plan. The dates for some trainees to complete their programmes have been extended three times. The current initial assessment and induction do not ensure that trainees join the most appropriate programmes. They also fail to give trainees an understanding of the content of their programmes and the timescale for completing them.

18. Employers are insufficiently involved in trainees' work towards their NVQs. NLT gives employers a guide to work-based training, which explains their role in training towards NVQs, but does not monitor the effectiveness of this guide. Some employers are unaware of the requirements of trainees' programmes. Some do not know which programmes their trainees are following. Others do not fully understand the content of their trainees' programmes, including key skills, training in theory and the additional training available. This has seriously restricted trainees' progress and delayed their achievement of the targets on their individual training plans.

19. Learning resources at the training centre and at the subcontracted colleges are satisfactory. However, there is insufficient co-ordination of training at work and training in the training centre. There is no long-term planning to effectively link the two types of training. Training in the workplace is determined by commercial demands rather than the requirements of the NVQ. Many workplaces have the potential to give trainees a wide range of experience. However, trainees do not benefit from this opportunity because of inadequate planning. Many trainees have narrow roles in the workplace which give them few opportunities to learn.

20. NLT does not adequately develop trainees' knowledge of theory. There is inadequate emphasis on achieving the thorough background knowledge required by trainees' NVQs and the key skills award. In some cases, trainees lack the level of understanding which their NVQs require. Trainees complete oral and written tests in theory during or at the end of their work towards each NVQ unit, but some assessments are insufficiently rigorous. Some trainees cannot or do not attend the training centre, and this has contributed to their weak understanding of theory. Some employers do not appreciate the importance of the training at the training centre and regard it as a low priority.

Good Practice

A trainee who had difficulties relating to her workplace supervisor asked her visiting trainer to help her to deal with the difficulty. The trainer intervened and helped to resolve the difficulty. The trainee said that without the trainer's assistance and support she would have left the workplace and her training programme. She now has a full-time job in the company, which she finds enjoyable and rewarding. She has also nearly completed her training programme.

Poor Practice

In one workplace, there are four trainees. One trainee, who is working towards the AAT's qualification, can take 12 days away from work each year to attend the training centre. He has the choice of taking these days separately or in a block. The other three trainees cannot take any time off to attend the training centre because they are working towards NVQs in administration. The employer regards the AAT's qualification as a professional qualification but does not regard the NVQ in administration as such.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	17	4

21. There are three advanced modern apprentices, working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. These trainees are following training programmes in customer service, and distribution and warehousing. There are seven foundation modern apprentices. NLT also offers other work-based training, leading to NVQs at level 2 in retailing, distribution and warehousing, and customer service. There are seven trainees on these programmes. All the trainees are either employed or in work placements in the Chesterfield and Scunthorpe areas. All the training takes place in the workplace. NLT's staff give training in key skills and carry out assessments and progress reviews in the workplace.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			1		8		3		9	100
Still in training			0	0	0	0	1	33	6	67
FMA framework completed			0	0	1	12	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	1	12	0	0	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			3		3		13		3	100
Still in training			0	0	0	0	2	15	1	33
AMA framework completed			1	33	0	0	1	8	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	1	33	1	8	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			1	33	0	0	2	15	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			10		8		25		6	100
Still in training			1	10	1	12	1	4	4	67
Individual learning plan completed			4	40	5	62	8	32	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			5	50	2	25	16	64	2	33
NVQ level 2 completed			5	50	5	62	9	36	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good support for trainees
- good resources for lift truck training
- thorough internal verification at Scunthorpe

WEAKNESSES

- low rates of achievement and retention
- lack of understanding of programmes among trainees and employers
- weak integration of key skills training with occupational training
- poor training in theory

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of initial assessment to determine most appropriate programmes
- more detailed planning of assessments

22. NLT's staff provide good support for trainees. The trainees receive a satisfactory induction. Assessors visit the workplace frequently. This gives the trainees a clear understanding of the evidence they need to gather to achieve their qualifications. There are comprehensive forms for monitoring trainees' progress towards their NVQs, which set realistic dates for achievements. The self-assessment report noted NLT's thorough initial assessment of trainees' basic skills. Trainees receive additional support if the results of this assessment indicate a need for it. One trainee, who has dyslexia, has received additional help with compiling a portfolio of evidence. Another trainee, who joined NLT with poor GCSE grades and low confidence, is working towards the key skills award as well as the NVQ at level 2. This trainee is now making good progress towards the NVQ. There are computers at both training centres, which trainees make good use of to prepare evidence for their portfolios. Careers guidance is available to the trainees.

23. All the trainees in distribution and warehousing at Chesterfield receive appropriate training in operating a lift truck before starting their work placements. This training leads to a basic operators' certificate which is recognised in the industry. Trainees at Scunthorpe can also have this training if they require it. At Chesterfield, the area for training in operating a lift truck provides a realistic simulation of a working environment. It allows trainees to carry out operations using a wide range of resources. There are two battery-powered counterbalance fork-lift trucks and one battery-powered reach truck, which are of a modern standard. Rows of high, bulk racking are laid out at the distances found in warehouses in the industry and are used to store a range of equipment. Cage and flat wood pallets, containing solid concrete slabs, tyres, bricks and drums, as well as some which are empty, give trainees experience of the variety of loads they will handle in the workplace. All racking has a loading weight annotated on the shelves to allow trainees to decide whether the rack is capable of taking the load. The training centre also has a crane suspended from a mobile gantry. NLT identified the good resources for training in operating a lift truck in its self-assessment report.

24. There is good internal verification at the site in Scunthorpe. Comprehensive files contain up-to-date records of assessors' caseloads. The files also contain plans for sampling the work of all assessors across all qualifications and a range of methods of assessment. The reports of observations of assessors and of trainees' interviews propose good, relevant actions. Other files contain full details of the internal verifiers and assessors, together with their curriculum vitae and records of any further qualifications or training. Internal verification takes place throughout the process of assessment and assessors receive clear feedback. Records of internal verification are filed in alphabetical order so that they can be found quickly and easily. There are monthly meetings, with clearly recorded minutes, to standardise assessments. NLT has recently improved its system for internal verification at Chesterfield. However, the company had not introduced the planned changes fully by the time of the inspection.

25. The proportion of trainees who remain in training and achieve their qualifications is low. Over the past three years, only two out of 22 advanced modern apprentices and only one out of 21 foundation modern apprentices have achieved their apprenticeship frameworks. Over the same period, 13 of the 21 foundation modern apprentices left their programmes early. Of the 25 young people who started other programmes of work-based training in 1999-2000, 33 per cent achieved all the targets on their individual training plans. In 2000-01, no trainee on these programmes has achieved the targets on their individual training plan and 33 per cent have left early.

26. Trainees and their employers have a poor understanding of their programmes. Some trainees are unsure whether they are following a foundation or advanced modern apprenticeship or working towards a single NVQ. Trainees have a weak awareness of the requirements of their training programmes, particularly of the additional qualifications required, and cannot identify essential components of their NVQs. Some employers do not know whether training is available in NLT's workshops and cannot identify the requirements of their trainees' programmes.

27. There is little integration of training in key skills with the occupational training. Most trainees work towards the key skills award at the end of their programmes. Trainees receive training in theory in the workplace, but there is a lack of learning material to reinforce the training. Trainees have to find relevant information in the workplace. Assessors use written and oral questions to test trainees' knowledge, but discuss only the incorrect answers with the trainees. In Chesterfield, NLT is preparing training material to use at its training centre to assist with training in some aspects of distribution and warehousing. Staff at the site in Scunthorpe are developing training material to assist trainees with work towards their NVQs and the key skills award.

28. Some initial assessments fail to determine the most appropriate optional units for trainees to take. Some trainees are in roles at work which could generate evidence for optional units which they are not taking. Some have to develop skills which they do not exercise in their usual roles in order to generate evidence for the optional units which they are taking. NLT has recently improved the process of initial assessment. The initial assessment now includes a scan of the trainee's skills to determine the most appropriate optional units. The planning of assessments does not involve specifying precise dates and timescales for assessment.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

29. NLT is a private training organisation and a registered charity. Its member companies elect a board of directors. A chief executive and three full-time managers are responsible for managing the company. One manager takes responsibility for finance; one is responsible for services to customers; and the third is responsible for quality assurance and the company's site in Scunthorpe. In addition, training staff carry out training in the training centres and manage the training which takes place in the workplace and at college. A team of administrators supports the training staff. The company has an equal opportunities policy and a manual setting out its framework for quality assurance. NLT wrote its third annual self-assessment report in November 2000, in preparation for the inspection.

STRENGTHS

- clear strategic planning aided by good communications
- good training for staff
- recent initiatives to promote equality of opportunity
- good process for self-assessment
- effective use of feedback from trainees

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate data to guide decisions by management
- low awareness of equal opportunities among trainees
- no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- underdeveloped training in equal opportunities for staff
- ineffective arrangements to assure quality of training
- inadequate collection of feedback from employers
- insufficient sharing of good practice

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more frequent and informative communication with employers
- written job descriptions for all staff
- systematic appraisals of individual staff
- better awareness among trainees of procedures for complaints and appeals
- fuller coverage of training in the quality assurance manual

30. NLT's directors meet regularly, at least once every three months, to discuss strategy. The chief executive, appropriate managers and up to three members of staff usually attend the meetings. The board approves an annual strategic plan, which departmental managers then communicate to staff and use to produce appropriate business plans and

action plans for their teams. This process is open and thorough, helping all staff clearly to understand the business strategy and how they can contribute to it. Staff have appropriate authority and financial control. There is good communication throughout the organisation, which assists planning. Approximately once every six weeks, the chief executive holds a staff meeting at each of NLT's two sites. At these meetings, staff can raise any matters which concern them. These meetings are clearly minuted. There are also regular management and team meetings. NLT identified these arrangements as a strength in its self-assessment report. Communication with employers and subcontractors takes place occasionally, but employers' understanding of NLT's values and strategy is not always good.

31. Staff understand their roles in the organisation but few have written job descriptions. NLT plans to produce written job descriptions for all staff. NLT appraises the contributions of its teams of staff towards the objectives in its business plan and generates plans for training for each team. NLT offers support for its staff to attend a wide range of extremely appropriate courses. The marketing manager has recently completed a postgraduate diploma in marketing. Most of the assessors are to undertake qualifications in accrediting prior learning. One member of staff has followed courses in counselling and dealing with bereavement. These courses motivate staff. Staff can request an appraisal of their individual performance but few staff have done so.

32. NLT has contracts with 13 subcontracted colleges and training providers. The contracts clearly specify appropriate requirements relating to training, health and safety, equal opportunities and insurance. A comprehensive service level agreement gives details of the subcontractors' responsibility to facilitate NLT's monitoring and to provide reports on trainees' progress and attendance. Similar documents specify the responsibilities of employers.

33. NLT regularly produces accurate and detailed financial data. The four local LSCs with which NLT contracts require regular provision of data about trainees. NLT complies with this requirement. However, NLT cannot easily supply other data, such as data on trainees' retention, achievement, progress and employment broken down by training centre, subcontractor and employer, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. NLT has not set targets, except for some recent targets relating to key skills. NLT is currently developing its management information system to incorporate the new requirements of the Learning and Skills Council.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

34. NLT has recently carried out various initiatives to promote equality of opportunity. Seven months ago, it established a new role of equal opportunities co-ordinator. The equal opportunities co-ordinator has had effective training and developed a good understanding of equal opportunities. NLT has updated its equal opportunities policy and distributed it to all subcontractors and employers. However, NLT has not checked that employers have received the policy and understand the reasons for it. NLT has requested copies of employers' own equal opportunities policies and answers to some specific questions on equal opportunities. NLT has also offered to help small employers which do not have their own policies to develop equal opportunities policies. The company has made changes to trainees' inductions, which now include a video and a related discussion about equal opportunities. NLT runs a two-year programme for school pupils. The pupils attend NLT's training centre for one day each week and develop engineering skills and work towards units of a level 2 NVQ. This initiative attracts some girls into engineering. It also aims to assist pupils with social difficulties.

35. NLT informs trainees of their rights and responsibilities during induction, when equal opportunities is discussed. However, NLT does not reinforce this information during trainees' programmes. NLT's training staff do not discuss equal opportunities in depth during reviews of trainees' progress. NLT has amended the form used for progress reviews to include a section on equal opportunities but entries consist of brief and repetitive comments. NLT does not monitor the extent to which employers promote equal opportunities in the workplace. The company collects data on equal opportunities but does not analyse it. It does not set targets relating to equal opportunities or encourage employers to recruit trainees from groups which are under-represented on its training programmes. Very few trainees in engineering are women or members of minority ethnic groups. There has been little training in equal opportunities for staff. Some staff have attended awareness raising events. Only two staff have had any in-depth training. However, NLT plans to make training compulsory for all staff. NLT has a complaints procedure but trainees are not aware of the procedure or even that they can make a complaint. Although trainees receive details of the procedure for NVQ appeals, few understand that they can appeal against unfair assessments. At NLT's premises in Chesterfield, there is a lift to all floors. The first floor of the premises in Scunthorpe is not accessible to trainees with restricted mobility, but NLT makes suitable alternative arrangements for wheelchair users.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

36. NLT's arrangements to assure the quality of its training are ineffective. NLT has recently introduced various initiatives which have not had sufficient time to have an impact on trainees. It has recently changed its processes for assuring quality and appointed a new member of staff to lead this development. There is a satisfactory quality assurance manual but it does not yet cover all aspects of the company's activities. NLT has carried out audits of various activities. These have uncovered weak practice across the organisation, such as inadequate completion of the paperwork for some reviews of trainees' progress. NLT has started to rectify these problems. An important improvement is the company's new process of self-assessment, which now involves all staff. During self-assessment, groups of staff from across the company meet to discuss general issues. Groups of staff involved in specific programmes then meet to analyse specific areas of concern. This has led to many weaknesses being identified. However, the self-assessment report did not accurately identify all the key strengths and weaknesses.

37. NLT obtains feedback from trainees at the start, during and at the end of their training. The company analyses this feedback comprehensively. NLT develops action plans to remedy general and specific problems identified from the feedback. NLT analyses the feedback in sufficient detail to be able to rectify problems which affect only one trainee. NLT has recently attempted to obtain feedback from employers but has had little success and has insufficient data to help it enhance its service to employers. NLT has no system to ensure that its subcontractors are providing training of the quality required. There is little sharing of good practice within and across NLT's occupational teams. NLT has introduced new procedures for internal verification in business administration and retailing and customer service. These systems are thorough and staff are applying them effectively. Internal verification in engineering is effective overall, especially at the site in Chesterfield, but does not involve observation of assessors in the workplace.