

INSPECTION REPORT

Lex Harvey Ltd

02 September, 2002



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 Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Lex Harvey Limited is a service company, which specialises in materials handling. The company operates nationally, with 13 main depots and four satellite sites. It also operates on customer sites. Lex Harvey Limited has offered a modern apprenticeship programme in engineering since 1977. The company now has 32 advanced modern apprentices on engineering training programmes. They are employed in 17 depots across England and Scotland.

Overall judgement

The overall quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The leadership and management of Lex Harvey Limited are good. Arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality assurance are satisfactory. The provision of work-based learning in engineering is outstanding.

GRADES

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	1
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	1

KEY STRENGTHS

- good strategic planning
- very good management of the training programme
- good investment in advanced modern apprenticeship programme
- excellent learning experience
- very effective use of learners' feedback
- good retention and achievement rates
- very good support for learners
- excellent monitoring of learners' progress
- good personal development programme

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient standardisation of formal procedures
- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in some locations
- some gaps in quality assurance process

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of additional qualifications on individual learning plans
- better links between reviews of the training programme and the self-assessment process

THE INSPECTION

1. Five inspectors spent a total of 25 days at Lex Harvey Limited (Lex Harvey) in September 2002. In addition, one inspector spent a day observing the learners' induction in August. Inspectors interviewed 22 learners, visited eight Lex Harvey locations throughout the country, one partner company and two customer sites. They interviewed 21 Lex Harvey staff, including the company director with overall responsibility for the provision. They observed and graded three learning sessions. Inspectors also observed two assessment and progress review sessions.
2. A range of paperwork was examined, including 20 portfolios of learners' evidence, 20 individual learning plans, the company's policies and procedures, staff records, minutes of meetings, promotional literature, awarding bodies' reports, and the contract with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Inspectors referred to Lex Harvey's third self-assessment report, which was produced in June 2002, and to the self-assessment action and development plan, which was updated in August 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Total	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

3. Lex Harvey is based at Bedworth, Warwickshire and is part of the Lex Mechanical Handling Division of Lex Service plc, (renamed RAC plc on 2 September 2002). Lex Harvey employs 820 staff including 480 mobile engineers. The company specialises in the hire and servicing of materials handling equipment such as fork-lift trucks and has a network of 13 main depots across England and Scotland.

4. Lex Harvey contracts with the Hertfordshire LSC to provide work-based learning in engineering. The company currently provides training for 32 young people working towards an advanced modern apprenticeship in Maintaining Automotive Vehicles. All the learners are employed by the company. They work at Lex Harvey depots and customer sites throughout the United Kingdom and attend the company's training centre in Bedworth for initial induction and an annual meeting. Trainers from the Lex Harvey technical training department travel regularly to each depot to carry out off-the-job training, monitoring progress reviews, assessments and internal verification. Each depot has at least one qualified assessor, and a mentor engineer is assigned to each learner.

5. Lex Harvey manages its own recruitment for the advanced modern apprenticeship programme, from the Warwickshire headquarters. The number of applications for the scheme reflects the level of unemployment in the different areas of the company's operations. In areas of high unemployment, the number of applications is proportionately higher. The company recognises that some groups have been under-represented on its training programme. It has made determined efforts to improve the position, and the number of applications from people from diverse backgrounds this year increased considerably.

Work-based learning for young people

6. There are good retention and achievement rates for all learners, and learners make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. All learners are employed by the company from the beginning of their training programme and are guaranteed employment on successful completion of their modern apprenticeship. On- and off-the-job training is carried out in the depots where the learners are employed. On- and off-the-job training are closely linked and staff give good support to learners. The company encourages and supports its learners in gaining additional qualifications which will improve their future employability.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

7. Lex Harvey's work-based learning programme is managed by the company's technical training team, part of the human resources department. The national customer service director has overall responsibility for the programme. He is based at the company's head office in Bedworth, Warwickshire. The training officer, supported by an administrator, is responsible for the day-to-day running of the programme. The training officer and one other technical trainer provide all the off-the-job training. There are three internal verifiers, and another internal verifier is in training. There is a qualified assessor in each of the depots where learners are training. Lex Harvey was accredited with the Investors in People standard, a national standard for improving and organisation's performance through its people. Lex Harvey has an equal opportunities policy, which is reviewed annually. Lex Harvey is accredited with ISO 9002, an international quality assurance standard, but there is no formal quality assurance system to cover the modern apprenticeship programme. A recently produced quality assurance manual includes some quality assurance procedures. Although the company employs specialist support for corporate functions such as finance, the general manager at each depot is responsible for generating profit and managing the components of the business, such as sales and service.

STRENGTHS

- good strategic planning
- very good management of the training programme
- extensive investment in the modern apprenticeship programme
- good access to training for all staff
- very effective use of feedback from learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor communication and sharing of good practice between assessors
- little reinforcement of equality of opportunity with learners
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in some depots
- insufficient standardisation of formal procedures
- some gaps in quality assurance process
- insufficient involvement of staff in the self-assessment process

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better links between modern apprenticeship programme review and the self-assessment process

8. There is good strategic management, with clear evidence of planning to meet the future needs of learners and of the company. The company has initiated a thorough review of its training programme involving a wide range of its staff. From a detailed analysis of the outcomes of this review, the director responsible for the programme has set a challenging agenda for its future development and for the identification of the skills and knowledge needed by future learners. However, the strategic review process and the current self-assessment process are not sufficiently linked. To encourage progression in the company, all learners are employed and are guaranteed a job when they complete their training. Career progression is good. Many former learners have progressed to higher positions in the company, for example to be service managers, trainers and members of the senior management team. They are excellent role models and offer personal support and encouragement to new learners.

9. The training programme is very well managed. Good use is made of customised management information systems to record learners' progress, to ensure that the programme is well managed, and to trigger reminders to staff and learners about forthcoming activities and assessments. An assessor is responsible for the learners in each depot, and an individual mentor engineer is assigned to each learner. If a learner is unable to gain evidence for their national vocational qualification (NVQ) from their work in one depot, flexible arrangements are made to second the learner to another location to gain the necessary evidence. Each learner has a thoroughly planned personal development programme, which includes a range of additional qualifications over and above the requirements of the advanced modern apprenticeship framework, such as specialised training from manufacturers. All the training and assessment is planned well in advance on a rota system, and the depot managers are informed in writing, so there are no work conflicts.

10. Lex Harvey makes good investment in the training programme. Costs are fully covered for all learners to take part in a personal development programme at an outward-bound centre each year. This programme is highly effective in building good team relationships, developing the personal skills of younger learners and in providing evidence towards key skills units. Senior managers and the learners' mentors visit the final day of the event to listen to the presentations. In addition, the full costs of travel and accommodation are met for all learners who are seconded to another depot and for training events at the head office. The company rewards and celebrates learners' success. Good financial incentives are provided for learners to encourage them to complete the NVQ on time. Learners are given four hours each week to build their portfolio in work time. Each year, Lex Harvey runs an apprentice of the year award scheme, and holds an annual ceremony to celebrate the completion of the training programme. Learners' success is widely promoted in the organisation and externally.

11. Staff development is good. There is strong support for staff development and progression. There is an effective annual appraisal system, which focuses on staff development needs. Staff are actively encouraged and assisted to develop their professional expertise. Trainers and administrative staff involved in the training programme are encouraged to take part in any external training programmes which

would improve the quality of the learning experience for learners. Some of the staff have recently gained assessors and verifiers awards, teaching and training qualifications and key skills practitioners awards.

12. Although there are examples of good practice in assessment and verification in individual depots, there is poor communication between the assessors at different locations. There is little sharing of good practice between assessors. Apart from one opportunity provided annually, at a formal meeting of all assessors at the head office, there are no mechanisms in place to encourage continuous improvement or regular communications between all assessors and mentors.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

13. The company has an equality of opportunity policy which is updated annually, and equality of opportunity data are now collected for the training programme. The company has identified that certain groups such as women, and those from minority ethnic groups are under-represented on its programme. It has made strong and determined efforts to carefully target potential learners, for example sending publicity to community centres and schools around its depots. There has been a substantial increase in the number of enquiries received from under-represented groups. Although the number of women applying remained low, an existing female learner discussed the training programme with the two new women applicants, and both have since been accepted on to the training programme.

14. Equality of opportunity is introduced satisfactorily at the initial induction programme for learners. However, this introduction is not adequately linked to on-the job training, and there is inadequate reinforcement of the rights and responsibilities of the learners once they are in the workplace. The 10-weekly progress review is not used effectively to encourage discussion of equality of opportunity issues in the individual workplace.

15. Equality of opportunity is not monitored satisfactorily in some workplace locations. Policies are not clearly displayed in some depots, and no specific written guidance is available for learners. Offensive materials are displayed in some locations. Inappropriate changing facilities were initially made available for one woman, although this was subsequently put right.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

16. There are many examples of continuous improvement to the training programme at operational level. The structure has been improved to provide a much closer link between on- and off-the-job training. Instead of learners travelling to two training centres away from their workplace, trainers now travel to local depots and carry out training in rooms next to the workplace. However, training facilities at some sites are inadequate. Some learners have to travel to nearby depots to take part in training as there are no on-site facilities at their workplaces. The recruitment process has been removed from the local depots and is carried out centrally to ensure consistency of approach. Initial assessment procedures have been expanded to include accreditation of prior learning. The induction programme has been thoroughly revised to include material more relevant for young people. The content of the training programme has been continuously reviewed to increase its relevance to learners. Key skills training is now completely integrated with the programme, and three additional key skills have been introduced to improve the range of qualifications available to learners. Communications have been improved by amending the timing of monitoring and feedback. Procedures are being rewritten, and existing ones amended.

17. Lex Harvey makes very effective use of feedback from learners to make improvements to the training programme. Good mechanisms are in place for collecting feedback from learners, for example there is a systematic, annual monitoring of all learners with a full questionnaire. Additionally, all learners are brought together once a

year at the head office and consulted in depth for their views on the programme. Feedback from these annual reviews is analysed in detail, and changes are introduced quickly. For example, learners felt that electrical work should be introduced earlier in the programme and this is now in place. Assignments have been comprehensively reviewed and re-written in response to specific feedback from learners. Individual feedback from learners has also resulted in prompt action, for example to provide additional secondments to gain evidence or additional experience. As a direct result of individual feedback, additional NVQ units are now being made available, over and above the modern apprenticeship framework requirements.

18. Although the company has written procedures for most of its activities accredited to ISO 9002, these do not adequately cover training undertaken on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme. This weakness has been recognised by the company in its self-assessment report, and is now being rectified. Similarly, some key decisions made in relation to the training programme are not formally recorded, although the company has recently introduced a standardised procedure for recording outcomes of scheduled meetings between staff.

19. Although improvements are taking place, there are gaps in the overall quality assurance process. For example, there is no systematic monitoring of training sessions, and no observation of trainers takes place. All work-based assessors are observed on a rota basis twice a year by the internal verifiers. However, there is little formal monitoring by trainers of on-the-job training. Accreditation of prior learning is incomplete for some learners.

20. This year, several learners were co-opted on to a learners' working party, and were given time to contribute to the self-assessment process. However, apart from this initiative, there was little involvement of staff outside the training department in the self-assessment process. Few assessors or workshop managers were actively involved or consulted, and some were unaware that a self-assessment review was taking place. The results of the self-assessment review were not sufficiently communicated to those involved in the programme.

21. The self-assessment report identified most of the key strengths and some of the weaknesses found during the inspection. The grades in the self-assessment report largely reflected those given in the inspection. The self-assessment report is being used to draw up appropriate development plans which are being put into practice and are reviewed regularly.

Good Practice

A learners' working party was originally set up as part of the self-assessment process. The learners' group now provides an active contribution to many aspects of the programme, for example to change the language used in questionnaires to make them more understandable by other learners, and to help to design assignments which will be more relevant to young people.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 1

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	36	1

22. Lex Harvey has 36 learners following an advanced modern apprenticeship programme in maintaining automotive vehicles at NVQ level 3. On-the-job training is given by mentor engineers at 11 of the 17 Lex Harvey sites and six of its customer sites. A combination of on- and off-the-job training is carried out at nine depots by technical trainers. All learners are employed by the company and are guaranteed a job on completion of their training. There are twenty-one qualified NVQ assessors and each depot has at least one in place. Recruitment for the training programme takes place annually. Learners are recruited nationally in various ways, through mail-outs to schools and organisations such as the Connexions service, advertisements in the local press, and by word of mouth. Key skills evidence is taken from the NVQ programme, then cross-referenced to the key skills modules in a separate portfolio.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	13		10		14		20		17		12				
Retained*	0		0		0		11	55	12	71	9	75				
Successfully completed	0		0		0		7	35	12	71	9	75				
Still in learning	13		9		10		4	20	0	0	0	0				

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good-quality learning experience
- good retention and achievement rates
- very good support for learners
- excellent monitoring of learners' progress
- wide range of assessment methods
- very good personal development programmes
- good range of additional qualifications achieved by learners

WEAKNESSES

- unsystematic accreditation of prior achievement and learning
- lack of awareness of key skills by learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of initial assessment to identify special educational needs
- further development of training facilities at some sites
- better recording of additional qualifications on individual learning plans

23. The learning experience is of good quality. Learners are taught individually or in small groups. Even in group sessions, each learner continues to work on individual tasks at their own pace, supported by the trainer. At the end of each session, learners complete a written assessment. If a learner achieves less than 80 per cent, the trainer draws up an individualised action plan. Training staff make sure they adapt their teaching to the learners' individual needs.

24. Retention and achievement rates are good. In particular, in the three years to 1999-2000, rates of retention and achievement were high. In 1998-99 rates of retention and achievement were good at 71 per cent. Lex Harvey has clearly defined company disciplinary procedures which apply to all employees, and in 2002, had to dismiss two learners for gross misconduct. As a direct result, the rate of retention in 1999-2000 dropped to 55 per cent. Although the company was obliged to dismiss the two learners from the advanced modern apprenticeship scheme, it continued to offer them support to gain their NVQs.

25. Learners receive very good support. If a learner cannot gather the required evidence of competences from the depot where they are based, flexible arrangements are made for the learner to complete the work at another depot. If they have to travel any great distance to do this, then the company pays the full accommodation and subsistence costs. Pastoral support is also good but informal. All learners are given a 24-hour contact telephone number and some learners use this regularly. One learner could not use the information technology (IT) equipment in the workplace to complete an assignment because he was ill so one of the trainers took a laptop computer to the learner's home.

26. Monitoring of learners' progress is excellent. A comprehensive action plan is produced and monitored and written feedback is given to each assessor. A full written summary is also produced at depot level. Interim reviews of learners' progress are

conducted every two weeks and include unit progress, attendance and performance in the depot. Individual targets are clearly agreed, and the thorough 10-weekly progress reviews include areas such as attendance, punctuality, attitude, job performance and NVQ progress.

27. A wide range of assessment methods are used to build comprehensive and well structured portfolios. The methods include written assignments, job cards, direct observation witness testimonies, story-boards and diverse assessment meetings. The learners follow a separate background knowledge programme, devised by the trainers, to support the NVQ. All topics included in the programme are clearly listed on the back of the individual learning plan and assessed through various assignments and tests. Training resources are varied and of a high standard. The trainer takes the learning resources to each depot. There are three qualified internal verifiers and internal verification is good. The awarding body procedure is followed. Additional learning support is good but informal. Assessors and managers show enthusiasm and commitment to the process of learning and learners reflect this strong commitment. The initial assessment does not include an assessment of additional support needs, and some learners are not being given the additional support they need in the workplace.

28. There are very good programmes for personal development which go beyond the NVQ framework. Learners attend an annual, eight-day residential training and personal development programme. This programme is very effective in developing team working, communication and leadership skills. In addition to the coaching skills unit of the advanced modern apprenticeship programme, learners are encouraged to resit general certificates of secondary education (GCSE) examinations to improve their grades, and to take additional NVQ units to broaden their personal skills and achievements.

29. A good range of additional qualifications are offered to learners, and they attend courses outside the modern apprenticeship framework. Providing the course is relevant to the learners' training, learners are given good support in following additional training. Learners have taken additional courses in electronics, abrasive wheels, welding and lift truck manufacturers' updating programmes. There are also additional learning opportunities such as special projects and specialist short courses. These include manufacturing a brake pipe clamp and courses on electronics, chain and fork inspection, and in liquid petroleum gas and diesel propulsion. However, additional qualifications undertaken by learners are not recorded on their individual learning plan.

30. Applicants for the advanced modern apprenticeship programme are given an initial assessment which includes a mechanical aptitude test, an assessment of basic skills, a personality test, and a key skills assessment. For successful candidates, the results of these assessments are recorded on the individual learning plans. Learners are given three separate one-day induction sessions, an induction to the modern apprenticeship programme and an employee induction, both at the company's head office, and an induction to their depot with their assessor.

31. The process for the accreditation of prior achievement and learning is unsystematic. Some learners with additional qualifications such as other NVQs and GCSEs are not told that their prior achievements may be accredited. For example, the preferred entry requirements for the training programme are two GCSE passes, grades A to C, in mathematics and English. One second year learner, who had 10 GCSE passes, grades A to C, and another with two A level passes, were not aware that their achievements could be accredited towards their key skills awards. Previous awards are not always clearly recorded on the individual learning plan. Internal and external qualifications are not cross-matched systematically to the NVQ for use as evidence. The company has recognised this weakness, and there are signs of improvement to the accreditation process for new learners.

32. Some learners lack awareness of key skills. Training in key skills was not introduced until the third year of the programme for some learners and they have made little progress. They are not clear about the process and system for completing the key skills units. Learners in their final year spend one day under supervision at the head office collating, cross-referencing and recording evidence from their NVQ and background knowledge portfolios.

Good Practice

One learner became seriously ill in the third year of the advanced modern apprenticeship programme. The company immediately amended the individual learning plan, and re-arranged the training programme around the learner's treatment. The company has also made arrangements to support the learner beyond the due completion date if necessary.