

# Lomax Training Services Ltd

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Construction, planning and the built environment

## Description of the provider

1. Lomax Training Services (LTS) is a privately owned work-based learning provider established in 2000. It works closely with the energy and utilities industry, training the existing workforce and new entrants. LTS is managed by the owner and managing director, a general manager, company secretary and a small team of operational managers. LTS has 22 direct employees who operate from a head office in Sunderland and four training centres in the north. Around half of its business is delivering commercially funded training programmes. The training available covers a wide range of utilities and domestic services.
2. LTS secured a Train to Gain contract from Tyne and Wear LSC in 2006. It provides National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 2 and 3 in gas network operations and domestic gas services to eight Train to Gain learners. LTS also has a subcontract to deliver gas services apprenticeships from the North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC) with 26 learners in Sunderland. All learners have planned off-the-job training at one of the training centres. On-the-job training takes place in the workplace through employers with the support of LTS trainer/assessors. NVQ assessment takes place in the workplace and in the training centres.
3. The proportion of school leavers in Sunderland who achieved five or more GCSEs at grades C or above including English and mathematics in 2008 is 43% which is below the England average of 48%. LTS holds the ISO 9001 quality standard and is recognised as an Investor in People.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Sector subject area

Construction, planning and the built environment	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are good, the quality of provision, and leadership and management are satisfactory. Provision in construction, planning and the built environment is satisfactory.

### Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. LTS has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Overall and timely success rates on advanced apprenticeships have been maintained at very high levels over a three year period. Overall success rates on Train to Gain have been maintained at satisfactory levels over the last two years. Timely success rates are high in 2006/07 but they declined in 2007/08 and are now satisfactory. During 2007/08 and in the current year, a rising number of learners have lost their jobs through redundancy which has had a negative effect on success rates. Current learners make good progress towards their qualifications.
6. Learners develop good industry relevant skills and knowledge. Teaching is satisfactory. Few staff currently have teaching qualifications. Learners' progress reviews are weak and targets are insufficiently challenging. Good resources enhance the learners' experience. Learners and employers benefit from a wide range of training and services. Good strategic planning and very effective partnership working place LTS in a strong position. However, progress is hampered by not having accurate and reliable data to inform managers and the incomplete quality assurance arrangements.
7. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Staff are not sufficiently involved in the process and only have a limited understanding of the key judgements and grades. Learners' and employers' views are taken into account. Judgements in the self-assessment report are supported by sufficient evidence. Inspection findings match some of the key strengths and areas for improvement but additional strengths and areas for improvement were identified. Inspection grades are the same as those in the self-assessment report, except for achievement and standards which ITS underestimated. A quality improvement plan is linked effectively to the self-assessment report. Most targets are suitably measurable. Too many target dates are identified as ongoing. It is not clear in these instances what progress has been made.

## Key strengths

- Very high success rates on advanced apprenticeships
- Good development of learners' skills and knowledge
- Wide range of provision for the energy and utilities sector
- Good resources for training
- Good strategic and business planning
- Very effective partnership working

## Key areas for improvement

- Weak learner progress reviews
- Insufficient literacy and numeracy support for Train to Gain learners
- Insufficiently developed use and analysis of data
- Incomplete quality assurance arrangements

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

8. Achievement and standards are good. This was underestimated in the self-assessment report. Success rates on the advanced apprenticeship programme are very high. Over a three year period from 2005/06, overall success rates have been maintained at very high levels at 100%, 86% and 100%, all significantly above national averages. Since 2005/06, of the 25 learners completing training 24 have achieved all qualifications on the advanced apprenticeship framework. Almost all learners achieve by their planned end dates. Retention on the advanced apprenticeship programme is very good; only one learner has left the programme early since the beginning of the subcontract. Of the eight advanced apprentices completing in 2008/09, all have completed their qualifications successfully. Current advanced apprentices are making good progress.
9. Learners develop good practical skills and technical knowledge on both the advanced apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. Health and safety procedures, crucial to the industry, are followed diligently by learners in their work at the training centre and in the workplace. Learners follow logical procedures when fault finding on gas and electrical components which enables them to locate and rectify problems successfully. Portfolios are good and contain a wide range of evidence which is cross-referenced well to the units. A good proportion of previous learners take professional updating courses at LTS. A few have employed apprentices themselves who are now being trained by LTS.
10. Train to Gain success rates are satisfactory. Timely success rates were good in 2006/07 at 79%, but they declined to 64% in 2007/08 and are now satisfactory. During 2008/09, the number of learners on Train to Gain fell significantly; only five learners started up to period ten. All of these learners were made redundant and did not achieve their qualifications. Currently eight Train to Gain learners are on gas servicing and are making good progress. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are satisfactory, as identified in the self-assessment report. Resources for training are good. LTS has well-equipped training centres spread across the north. Class sizes are generally small and learners receive much individual attention and learn quickly. A good range of learning resources is used well to support learners' understanding. Classrooms provide a good environment for learning and have interactive whiteboards which are used effectively by tutors. Workshops are equipped with modern industry-standard equipment and provide good practise training and assessment areas.



Various manufacturers have donated a wide range of boilers, equipment and appliances. Tools and equipment are well maintained and of a good standard.

12. On-the-job training is good. Employers ensure learners have a wide range of experience to cover the NVQ requirements. Theory sessions in the training centre are largely tutor led using traditional instructional techniques. Learners are often passive in these sessions. Lesson plans are detailed in specifying learner and activities but in many cases outcomes for learners are not stated clearly. Practical workshop activities reinforce technical concepts effectively. Assessment covers health and safety thoroughly and is effective in promoting good working practices. Most assessment is carried out by direct observation of learners at work. Feedback is thorough and constructive. Learners are clear on their progress and what they need to do to improve.
13. A wide range of provision in energy and utilities ensures that learners' and employers' needs are met. Learners are able to gain the correct licensing qualifications as well as continue their personal development. Training and assessment is flexible which helps minimise any inconvenience to employers. Learners contact assessors frequently to request assessment in the workplace and assessors respond quickly to these needs. LTS is constantly reviewing its provision to help ensure it keeps pace with modern energy-saving technology and renewable energy sources such as solar power and wind turbines.
14. Support for learners is satisfactory. Initial assessment is carried out using proprietary systems and the results are adequately recorded. NECC also carries out initial assessment for apprentices but LTS is not always made aware of the results. Learners receive sufficient information, advice and guidance over the programmes and are made aware of their progression opportunities.
15. A significant number of Train to Gain learners are identified with additional learning support needs, particularly on the utilities programme. Referrals are made to other providers to support these learners and to provide Skills for Life qualifications, but take-up is very low. Supportive tutors provide additional tuition to help learners develop their skills, but these staff do not have literacy and numeracy qualifications themselves. Most learners go on to achieve their qualification but significant numbers of Train to Gain learners do not improve their literacy and numeracy skills as a result of the training. LTS is in the process of establishing Skills for Life within their vocational programmes but this development is at a very early stage.
16. Learners' progress reviews are weak. The reviews carried out by LTS concentrate mainly on the NVQ, without sufficiently covering other components of the framework. Targets are not always clear and do not have measurable timescales. Equality of opportunity is not covered sufficiently in the reviews. NECC also carries out additional reviews but the results and targets are not always shared with LTS who carries out all the training.

## Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategic and business planning are good. Strategic direction is focused clearly on meeting the needs of the energy and utilities industry. LTS has developed well-considered strategic objectives which include continuous improvement of learners' performance and experience, business growth, diversification and workforce development. Staff contribute effectively to the development of the company strategy and business planning which is actively encouraged by managers. Annual business plans consider internal and external factors carefully. Business priorities reflect strategic aims effectively.
18. LTS works very effectively with a wide range of partners. It is very responsive to employers' individual training needs. For example, it has recently designed and delivered practical training to utilities operatives on the location and rectification of gas escapes. It has developed realistic training environments so that learners develop these skills in safe conditions. LTS has responded positively to employers' needs for external registration and certification enabling employers to meet the needs of its clients. Partnership working with NECC is good and enables LTS to meet employers' needs for apprenticeship training. Good links are in place with local colleges which help employers to access NVQ training and assessment promptly. LTS works effectively with the energy and utilities sector skills council and makes a good contribution to local and national developments.
19. LTS's approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. An appropriate equal opportunities policy and procedures are in place. Equality of opportunity is covered satisfactorily at induction but is not apparent in other parts of the training. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is slightly above the local population but very few female learners are enrolled. A female gas services learner won a national award for women into construction in 2008. Training has been provided recently for a group of Polish workers. LTS gave high levels of support and all the learners completed their training and achieved their qualifications. Training for unemployed learners enables most to gain employment. Many Train to Gain learners have long-established barriers to learning which are quickly and effectively removed by tutors. Data to monitor the participation and performance of different groups is insufficient. Monitoring of equality of opportunity on-site is not well developed. All staff have had recent training in equality and diversity and a good proportion have achieved accredited qualifications.
20. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Written procedures have been put in place recently. Staff who deal with apprentices aged 16 to 18 have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance. Not all staff have had training in safeguarding.

21. Curriculum management is effective. All relevant staff have assessor and verifier qualifications, but only one has a formal teaching qualification; others are due to start teacher training soon. Internal verification is thorough and ensures the consistency of assessment. Annual appraisals identify personal development needs effectively, and set appropriate targets linked to performance. Continuing professional development is effective and staff keep up-to-date and understand changes in the sector. Health and safety is given high priority. Capturing the outcomes for *Every Child Matters* themes has only been considered recently. Complaints are dealt with appropriately and details are recorded well. Feedback from learners confirms a high level of satisfaction. Arrangements to collect employers' feedback are developed insufficiently.
22. Data is not readily accessible and is not used systematically to inform managers and staff about learners' performance. Managers do not have an accurate view on overall success rates or timely progress. Effective monitoring systems accurately record learners' progress but this information is not routinely shared with managers who cannot independently evaluate whether learners are making good progress.
23. Aspects of quality assurance are incomplete, as identified in the self-assessment report. An annual quality cycle has recently been put in place with activities for each month. No targets have been set for improving teaching and learning or the quality of learners' experience. The procedures for observing teaching are not clear regarding the follow up arrangements to resolve areas for improvement. The grades from observations have not been analysed to determine the quality of teaching. The evidence recorded on teaching observations does not always support the judgements or grade awarded. Although paired observations have taken place, LTS has no moderation process to ensure the consistency of grading. The observation of other key learner processes such as reviews, induction and initial assessment are not yet in place. The quality of the apprenticeship subcontract is not frequently monitored by NECC.

## What learners like:

- The opportunity to work and learn
- Good resources at the training centre
- The good quality training provided
- 'The chance to gain recognition of my skills and knowledge'
- Very supportive and knowledgeable assessors
- Training which is enjoyable and relevant to the day-to-day job
- Being given details on the content of the programme

## What learners think could improve:

- Block attendance instead of day release at the training centre
- Taking key skills earlier in the programme
- More visits to carry out assessment
- More information about the course before starting

## Annex

## Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider 2007 to 2008

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	24	79
		timely	24	79
	2007/08	overall	33	78
		timely	33	64

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection