



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JULY 1998

REINSPECTION SEPTEMBER 1999

Leeds Automotive Training Group

SUMMARY

Leeds Automotive Training Group provides training services to the road haulage industry and to the motor trade. Motor-vehicle training is good. Warehousing and fork-truck training is satisfactory. The company is careful to ensure equality of opportunity for all its trainees, and the support given to trainees during their training is good. At the time of the first inspection, there were few management and quality assurance systems or procedures in place to underpin and improve the delivery of training other than those required to meet contractual or awarding body requirements. The company was reinspected 14 months after the original inspection. Considerable improvements have been made to the management of training. There is a clear business plan that sets company targets against which performance is regularly reviewed. Within the company there is a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Procedures to manage and assure the quality of training have been introduced, although those are still new and are not yet fully operational.

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of Leeds Automotive Training Group, the original published report text for those areas which have been reinspected has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings.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

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2
Retailing & customer service	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ high-quality training reflects the needs of trainees and industry
- ◆ excellent working relationship between staff and local employers
- ◆ understanding and relevant support for trainees
- ◆ well-qualified and experienced staff
- ◆ detailed strategic and operational planning
- ◆ strong commitment to continuous improvement



KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job learning
- ◆ data not used to improve quality of training

INTRODUCTION

1. Leeds Automotive Training Group (LATG) developed from the Leeds Motor Trade Group, originally formed by garage owners to provide staff training for employees through locally based training facilities, staffed by professional tutors. The company has developed its training portfolio and now offers a range of programmes to the road-haulage industry and to the motor trade. LATG holds contracts with Leeds Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) for adult and youth training. It also holds a contract with Wakefield TEC for youth training. This contract was taken over by LATG following the closure of a Wakefield training provider. The company achieved recognition as an Investor in People in March 1999, 8 months after the first inspection.

2. At the time of the first inspection, there were 239 trainees, receiving training for the following national vocational qualifications (NVQs): vehicle mechanical and electronic systems, maintenance and repair (light and heavy vehicles), vehicle-body repair and vehicle refinishing, wholesaling, warehousing and stores, and fork-truck operations. Of these trainees, 47 were modern apprentices, the remainder being youth trainees. Adult trainees were also working towards the basic fork-truck operator's certificate. In addition, two trainees were working towards an NVQ in transporting goods by road and one trainee was following a young driver's award programme. At the time of the re-inspection, there were 165 trainees working towards NVQs with the company. Ninety trainees were modern apprentices, 19 were national trainees and a further 56 were on other government-funded youth-training programmes. The company stopped training adults in June 1999.

3. Since the first inspection, LATG has ceased to deliver fork-truck training, which had been subcontracted to another training provider. LATG subcontracts the delivery of key skills training in information technology to a local training organisation. The delivery of NVQ training and assessment for 26 trainees is carried out by two local further education colleges, one of which competes with LATG for trainees. This represents six fewer trainees than at the first inspection. The strongest competition to LATG comes from a national training provider for the motor-vehicle industry, which holds contracts with the majority of large local employers for manufacturers' product-specific training.

4. Unemployment in Leeds has fallen during the past 12 months and, at 4.1 per cent, is lower than the overall figure of 5.1 per cent for the Yorkshire and Humberside region, the same as the national average for unemployment. (Office for National Statistics, July 1999). Unemployment is highest in the 25-to-49 age group, who make up 60 per cent of all of the area's unemployed. Twenty-four per cent of those aged between 16 and 24 are unemployed. (Figures produced April 1999.) Employment opportunities within the sectors covered by LATG are



currently good. The 1991 census of population showed that minority ethnic groups make up 5.9 per cent of the Leeds population.

5. Within the Leeds area, 58 per cent of school leavers progress to further education, which is roughly comparable with regional figures. Eleven per cent of school leavers take up employment with linked training programmes. In 1997, 4.9 per cent of school leavers from the region entered employment or training within the skilled engineering sector. Unemployment among school leavers in the Leeds area is comparable with the region as a whole, but is 2 per cent higher than the national average. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 38 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. LATG produced its first self-assessment report in early May 1998. This report was supplemented with additional information, following discussions with the TEC. All staff were aware of the self-assessment process and participated in activities designed to increase their understanding of the self-assessment framework. The training manager produced the main body of the report, with extra information supplied by the youth training co-ordinator. Inspectors confirmed the judgements made in the self-assessment report about motor-vehicle training, equal opportunities and trainee support. Inspectors found several important weaknesses in warehousing, quality assurance and management of training which the company had not identified in its self-assessment. The youth training manager prepared a report summarising the actions taken following the first inspection. It highlighted areas where weaknesses still needed to be addressed, and proposed revised grades for all areas.

7. During the first inspection, a team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at LATG at the end of June and the beginning of July 1998. All of the sectors covered by the company were inspected, with the exception of transport, for which there were only two trainees on the NVQ programme. Inspectors examined company and awarding body documents. They met staff from the company and from all of the subcontractors. They also spoke to employers, trainees and a representative from Leeds TEC. Assessment records, monitoring documents, trainees and employers' files, and trainees' work and portfolios were examined. Training, assessment and monitoring sessions were observed. Training in the local colleges had stopped for the summer vacation and could not be observed.

8. Reinspection was carried out by a team of 3 inspectors for a total of 6 days in September 1999. They interviewed training staff and members of LATG's management team, and examined documents relating to the management of training and quality assurance. Inspectors agreed with the grades given by the company for both areas that were reinspected. The following table shows the grades awarded to on- and off-the-job instruction sessions which were observed by inspectors during the first inspection:

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering		4				4
Retailing & customer service		3				3
Total	0	7	0	0	0	7

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering (motor vehicle)

Grade 2

9. LATG had 213 trainees on motor-vehicle programmes at the time of inspection. There were 112 employers providing work placements or employment for trainees, 95 per cent of whom were employed. All trainees were working towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3, with 47 trainees on modern apprenticeship programmes. Sixteen trainees attend a local college for day-release training, and a further 13 motor-vehicle trainees attend a different college on vehicle-body repair and vehicle-refinishing programmes. Trainees receive comprehensive induction to their training, and their prior experience as individuals is used to inform action-plans. There is a strong health and safety culture which is reinforced by regular inspection and monitoring by employers. The company's self-assessment report failed to recognise several weaknesses identified by inspectors. However, inspectors agreed with the grade awarded by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured portfolios
- ◆ enthusiastic and well-motivated trainees
- ◆ excellent working relationships with employers, trainers and trainees
- ◆ trainees' good understanding of the NVQ framework and assessment process
- ◆ well-qualified and experienced staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor understanding of NVQs among workplace staff
- ◆ some trainees lack awareness of assessment opportunities
- ◆ no evidence of modern apprenticeship mandatory units in training plans

10. Off-the-job training provided by LATG is very effective. The trainers combined theory and practice competently. Trainees' participation in training sessions is encouraged, using effective question-and-answer techniques and awarding body workbooks. Key skills development is an integral part of the work covered within the classroom sessions. The provider is currently working to map key skills against the evidence produced by trainees in the workplace. Trainees benefit from regular portfolio development sessions which are held in both group and individual settings, to assist them with the compilation of portfolios and the identification of further evidence to meet NVQ requirements. Within the modern apprenticeship training plans, no date has been set for assessment of key skills. The additional unit required within the modern apprenticeship framework is not recorded in trainees' individual training plans.

11. Within the work placement, opportunities for assessing trainees are not formally planned. However, opportunities for assessment are used as they arise

naturally. Workplace supervisors have little understanding of NVQs or key skills. LATG relies on trainees initiating the assessment process. This leads to slow progress for some less-motivated trainees. The workshop facilities to support practical training are excellent, at both LATG and the subcontracted provider's premises. There is little regular use being made of these workshop facilities at LATG. Motor-vehicle training and assessment are supported by well-qualified and occupationally experienced staff.

Retailing & customer service (warehousing)

Grade 3

12. LATG has 18 trainees on adult training, six of whom were undertaking their Road Transport Industry Training Board (RTITB) fork-truck operator's licence during inspection. Training is carried out at both the subcontracted training provider's premises and the LATG site. The training premises on both sites are well resourced with fork-trucks. Eight trainees are working towards NVQs in wholesale warehousing and stores, seven at level 2 and one on a modern apprenticeship programme. In addition, all eight youth trainees are employed, and off-the-job training is carried out on a day-release basis at a local college. The self-assessment report failed to identify all of the weaknesses found by inspectors. This area was consequently overgraded by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ adult trainees' clear understanding of the training and assessment process
- ◆ very good achievement rates on fork-truck programmes
- ◆ excellent job outcomes
- ◆ high-quality fork-truck training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of understanding of training and assessment among warehousing trainees
- ◆ ineffective tracking and monitoring of warehousing trainees
- ◆ confusion over responsibility for warehouse trainees' programmes
- ◆ no set assessment targets for warehousing trainees

13. The quality of training varies between the two occupational groups. The main emphasis on the adult programmes is on gaining the fork-truck operator's licence, followed by securing full-time employment. The length of the training programme is determined on an individual basis. It relates mainly to the length of time for which the trainee has been unemployed and the support needed in order to re-enter the job market. Extra training is given to long-term unemployed trainees to improve job-search skills. Internal verification is carried out mainly at the college, which has good systems in place.

14. The warehousing trainees are all employed in parts departments within garages. Four of the eight trainees have come from another local training provider whose business has closed. This has led to problems in establishing trainees' progress against their NVQs, because their portfolios are not yet available and detailed action-planning is difficult. Monitoring of warehousing trainees is carried out on a regular basis, but it is not always effective, as there is no systematic review to ensure that planned actions have been carried out. Where trainees have a portfolio, they are kept at the college and they are fully documented showing clear tracking systems. The training provider keeps no tracking documents in the trainees' files, and, consequently, assessment of progress cannot be monitored effectively.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

15. LATG has an equal opportunities policy which is effectively promoted and managed. The company monitors the gender, ethnicity and disability of those recruited to training. LATG promotes its policy in the community through attending careers conventions and through visits to local schools. The equal opportunities policy is included in staff and trainee induction packs. Inspectors confirmed the grade awarded in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ emphasis during induction on trainees' responsibilities to equal opportunities
- ◆ regular staff attendance at equal opportunities awareness sessions
- ◆ recruitment data are monitored
- ◆ employers are well informed about the equal opportunities policy
- ◆ good use of external networks

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ limited evaluation of the company's equal opportunities policy
- ◆ no lavatory on ground floor for female trainees

16. LATG recognises the importance of equal opportunities for those undertaking training. Care is taken to ensure that the recruitment process and promotional literature are free from bias. There are now several female trainees in motor-vehicle training which is traditionally a male-dominated area. Staff attend awareness-raising sessions, and trainees are fully informed of their responsibilities during induction. Employers commit themselves to equal opportunities in the subcontractors' agreement, which they sign on offering employment or placements. LATG is a member of Leeds TEC's equal opportunities network group and is committed to achieving the TEC's own equality standard.

17. LATG currently has neither a working group nor individuals responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy. However, there is a person with designated responsibility for keeping the policy up to date. Access for wheelchair users is adequate, but there is no lavatory on the ground floor for female trainees.

Trainee support

Grade 2

18. LATG demonstrates the importance of effective support for trainees through comprehensive recruitment interviews, induction processes and aptitude testing to ensure that trainees are matched with an appropriate programme and work placement. Further support is given through regular visits to trainees in the workplace to discuss pastoral support needs. Inspectors confirmed the grade awarded in the provider's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive induction and selection process
- ◆ frequent visits to monitor trainees' progress
- ◆ excellent relationship with trainers, employers and trainees
- ◆ high proportion of motor-vehicle trainees progress from NVQ level 2 to 3
- ◆ well-qualified and industry-experienced trainers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ initial assessment not used to inform or identify additional support needs
- ◆ some trainees' inability to identify assessment opportunities
- ◆ some trainees' inability to evaluate their own NVQ progress

GOOD PRACTICE

Some difficulties are encountered with specific NVQ units in motor vehicle, as not all trainees are able to participate in the whole range of tasks required at their work placement. This situation is identified during review sessions with trainees and overcome by simulation at LATG's premises, arranged following liaison with the awarding body.

19. The staff at LATG demonstrate an understanding and supportive attitude towards trainees. The company's extensive links forged by staff with local employers within the motor trade ensure that trainees go to suitable work placements and achieve a high degree of job satisfaction.

20. The assessment process is generally led by trainees who identify their own assessment opportunities and then contact staff at LATG to carry out the process. Staff respond promptly to these requests, in order to ensure that trainees remain motivated. This system works effectively for most trainees, but some are unable to demonstrate the degree of maturity and organisational skills which this process requires. These trainees do not have a clear idea of their progress towards NVQ achievement. While a formal initial assessment procedure is in place, the results of this assessment form no part of the individual training plan. They are not used to highlight any support which may be offered to trainees or to identify support which could be needed by the trainee in order to complete his/her NVQ successfully. LATG's staff conduct regular pastoral monitoring visits which are

used to identify additional support needs as they occur. Staff who have up-to-date knowledge of the industry provide relevant career advice.

Management of training

Grade 3

21. LATG operates from a single site in Leeds and offers a range of youth training programmes with both Leeds and Wakefield TECs. LATG is managed by two operational staff, one responsible for work-based training and one for administration. Both managers report to a managing director who is responsible for the strategic direction of the company. The management team meets formally on a monthly basis to discuss operational issues. The company employs a further six full-time staff who have responsibility for recruitment of trainees, training, assessment and general administration. Organisational structures within LATG are clear and all staff have job descriptions which outline their individual roles and responsibilities. LATG subcontracts some NVQ training and assessment to two local colleges of further education, and one commercial training provider is used to deliver training in information technology key skills. LATG has effective, long-established working relationships with many local employers. The company currently uses 110 employers and work-placement providers to enable trainees to develop their skills and prove their competence within a working environment. These range from national car dealerships, body repair shops, tyre fitters, van hire companies and parcel delivery services. LATG achieved recognition as an Investor in People in March 1999.

Inspectors identified the following main weaknesses at the first inspection carried out in July 1998:

- ◆ no overall company business plan from which operational targets can be taken
- ◆ no clear team or individual objectives
- ◆ few documented management policies or procedures
- ◆ ineffective liaison with college subcontractors
- ◆ poor use of management information

22. Management responsibility for the delivery of work-based training has changed since the first inspection and significant progress has been made against the company's action plan submitted in October 1998. LATG re-graded this area in its second self-assessment report at grade 3. Inspectors recognised the efforts taken by LATG to address the original weaknesses and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ detailed strategic and operational planning
- ◆ comprehensive and thorough staff appraisal
- ◆ clear focus on meeting the needs of trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped management policies and procedures
- ◆ poor co-ordination of subcontracted on- and off-the-job training

23. Strategic direction for LATG is detailed within its business plan, which includes seven strategic objectives linked to development and action plans that are regularly reviewed. Individual targets are negotiated and set with staff and formally monitored on a quarterly basis. Targets currently relate to numbers of trainees starting programmes, TEC funding and NVQs achieved, but managers are in the process of identifying and setting wider operational targets. LATG uses a specialised computer software application that contains all the relevant basic information on trainees required by the TEC. The system has been further developed since the last inspection and is now able to provide management with a range of aggregated information at operational level that is required for active programme management. This has resulted in the company being able to monitor overall trends more effectively.

24. There is a strong commitment to staff development and the annual appraisal system identifies opportunities for personal development. Staff are trained to cover several aspects of the business, and managers encourage multi-skilling. For example, one individual who joined the company as a fork-truck instructor received training to enable him to deliver the hazardous freight course and carry out NVQ assessment. Another is currently undertaking training to deliver the certificate in professional competence (CPC) national and international qualifications. The company keeps detailed records of staff training and has recently introduced a system for evaluating the effectiveness of development activities

25. Quarterly progress reviews are well documented and any problems identified are quickly addressed. One trainee who was unable to use a body repair jig in his workplace was relocated for a short period to an alternative placement so that he could develop the necessary skills to complete his NVQ. The regular team meetings are minuted and individual trainees' progress and specific programme resource requirements are fully discussed.

26. LATG has a long-established equal opportunity and health and safety policy, both of which are legal requirements. Since the last inspection, several additional policies and procedures have been developed to cover aspects relating to the training process, examples of which include the recruitment and induction of trainees and placement vetting. There are, however, no policies and procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff and for ensuring consistency of the wider operational aspects of the company.

27. Communications with the college subcontractors has improved since the last inspection and LATG's staff now meet with the college's staff each term to discuss trainees' progress. Co-ordination of the on- and off-the-job training that is subcontracted to the colleges remains weak, and employers are not kept regularly

informed of the knowledge and skills that their trainees are learning off the job so that they can link development activities in the workplace. This is compounded by the lack of regular communication by LATG's staff with employers, to increase their understanding of the NVQ requirements.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

28. LATG meets the requirements of the awarding bodies and those of the two TECs with which it has contracts. Within the company, there are well-established procedures for internal verification. Feedback from trainees is gathered on a regular basis. The company has completed telephone surveys through which it can determine employers' levels of satisfaction with the training offered. Since the first inspection in July 1998, the managing director has recognised the inadequacies in the company's quality assurance arrangements. This has resulted in a review of the company's quality systems. Procedures have been developed to cover both administrative and operational activities. Further procedures are currently being developed to ensure that all aspects of the business activity are included. Responsibility for the development of these procedures lies with the newly promoted youth training manager.

The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ documented internal quality procedures restricted to NVQ verification
- ◆ evaluation action plans not followed through
- ◆ quality of subcontractors' provision not monitored
- ◆ no analysis of trainees' achievement or destination data
- ◆ data not used to improve quality of training

29. The grade awarded to quality assurance following the first inspection was a grade 4. Inspectors agreed with the grade 3 given by the company in its second self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ established and effective internal verification procedures
- ◆ strong focus on continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ quality assurance procedures not fully operational
- ◆ data not used to improve the quality of training

30. LATG is committed to self-assessment and has made many changes since the first inspection. Many weaknesses previously identified have now been remedied. The self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection covered all of the key areas and gave an accurate picture of developments that had taken place. The company's mission statement contains a commitment to high-quality training for

those within the retail motor industry. There is a keen focus upon continuously improving the quality of training. The views of trainees are now gathered twice a year as opposed to annually. Questionnaires are issued to all trainees, whereas previously only those trainees undertaking training at LATG's premises were consulted. This now includes those undertaking training and assessment at the two colleges of further education. Response rates are high, with 69 per cent of questionnaires returned from the last evaluation. Findings are summarised and discussed at the company's development meeting held shortly after each evaluation. Action points for improvement are identified.

31. Internal verification is rigorous. Records are maintained to demonstrate that all assessors are observed and that they conduct assessments of a different unit at each observation. All portfolios at NVQ levels 2 and 3 are subject to 100 per cent verification. The company has plans to ensure that the standard of training by LATG's trainers and assessors is consistent and of a high quality. A timetable of observations has been scheduled to commence in October 1999, whereby each trainer is observed twice a year against set criteria to include planning, delivery and evaluation of training sessions. At the end of the observation, the trainer will receive feedback and a copy of the observation report. Difficulties are being encountered by LATG in establishing classroom observations of sessions delivered by the two colleges of further education. Endeavours are being made by LATG's management to resolve this situation. Information has been obtained to ascertain the qualifications of these subcontracted staff and external quality reports have been obtained.

32. There is a clear commitment from managers to the development and implementation of a wide range of procedures to ensure the quality of training. A wide range of quality assurance procedures are currently being developed and are contained within two manuals, one for administration duties, the other for operational training-related activities. Staff are involved in the development of quality assurance procedures that are relevant to their duties. For example, placement officers have contributed to the placement vetting and monitoring procedure, while assessors have helped to develop the assessment and verification procedures. Most of the procedures have been formulated. However, they are not yet fully established and their effectiveness cannot be fully ascertained.

33. Analysis has been conducted of trainees' achievement and destination data. This is formally recorded on a period-by-period basis. Comparisons have been made between achievement to date and their performance in the previous year. LATG has been able to identify a significant improvement in the achievement of NVQ units and full qualifications and expects to exceed its targets. Analysis of trainees' destination data is in its early stages and has yet to influence the quality of training.