



TRAINING REVIEW

PROPOSALS FROM THE NTF FOR THE PROVISION OF TRAINING FOR STABLE STAFF AND TRAINERS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper responds to a recommendation made in the 2004 Stable and Stud Staff Commission (SSSC) report that a Training Review Group be set up *“to agree the priorities and objectives for industry training, the optimal structure for the delivery of both entry level instruction and continuing professional development, and the way ahead for funding.”*
- 1.2 The contents have the approval of the NTF Council and reflect the views of the NTF executive and a range of trainers, who replied to a briefing paper supplied by the NTF.
- 1.3 We have concentrated on the needs of trainers and stable staff and do not address training needs of other groups in racing.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 Trainers agreed that the objectives of industry training should be:
 - (a) To produce a suitably skilled workforce
 - (b) To produce a properly motivated workforce
 - (c) To increase staff retention
 - (d) To increase staff recruitment
 - (e) To improve the management understanding of trainers and their management staff
- 2.2 All within an efficient cost structure
- 2.3 We believe these objectives are already recognised by the industry.

3 Priorities

- 3.1 Trainers may have slightly differing requirements of a training programme from their employees.
- 3.2 Trainers look for evidence of direct competence and skills in riding and care of racehorses. They also seek a wider awareness by staff of issues such as Health and Safety, which benefit the workplace in general. Whether that competence is accompanied by a formal qualification is currently immaterial to them.

- 3.3 Stable staff will see the acquisition of skills as a basis for job satisfaction and a route to promotion within a clear career structure. For younger recruits, the presence of formal qualifications may assist in persuading parents to allow them to enter racing as a career and deter careers advisers from suggesting alternatives.
- 3.4 The principle connecting these aspirations is that both parties should be satisfied that qualifications awarded for successful participation in a training programme reflect an appropriate level of relevant knowledge and skills. If this does not occur, employers will disregard qualifications and employees will be disheartened, being ill-equipped for the demands of the job and having restricted prospects of promotion.
- 3.5 The priorities therefore should be to establish the range of knowledge and skills to be contained in the training programme and how their attainment can be rigorously assessed in order to obtain a qualification.
- 3.6 Once these elements are in place, it is vital that training is promoted in the industry so that trainers and their staff willingly participate in the programme.
- 3.7 Finally, the training programme must be accessible so trainers and their staff are able to participate.

4 Content of training programme

Entry Level

- 4.1 The industry's current training programme for stable staff consists of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) controlled by racing's own Awarding Body, the British Horseracing Education and Standards Trust.
- 4.2 As well as offering a nationally recognised qualification framework, through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) NVQs attract a large amount of government funding without which racing would have difficulty supporting a comprehensive training programme.
- 4.3 In view of these benefits, it would seem sensible for racing to concentrate on ensuring that its NVQs meet the needs of employers and employees rather than invent new or switch to other qualifications.
- 4.4 We understand that there is scope for each industry to tailor NVQs to their own requirements. However, one frequent comment from trainers is that the inclusion of some Key Skills (numeracy, literacy and IT) in the Apprenticeship framework is counterproductive. Many young people enter racing because it is a manual occupation and being expected to attain in academic subjects standards, which they failed in eleven years of schooling, can be off-putting.
- 4.5 A view has been expressed that teaching "life skills" (e.g. cooking, changing an electrical plug) would prepare young people better for an independent existence.

- 4.6 When asked by the NTF, trainers constantly express the view that training should aim to teach young people “basic horsemanship and stable craft”. They would expect qualifications to reflect this.
- 4.7 In 2004, BHEST assisted the NTF with a survey of trainers’ attitudes towards the content and effectiveness of NVQs. The results are shown in Appendix A.
- (a) With a few exceptions, trainers thought the content was correct.
 - (b) While a large majority said that at each level NVQ achievers showed appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding in the subjects, it is a concern that this was not true in all cases.
 - (c) Trainers’ responses were less positive in respect of NVQs effect on recruitment and retention relevance when advertising for and selecting staff
- 4.8 There may be a number of reasons for this but we believe the most significant is that while NVQs 1 and 2 may indicate a certain level of basic knowledge, the missing ingredient is experience. There is a world of difference between compiling a portfolio to demonstrate that you know the right answers to set questions and putting that knowledge into practice on a daily basis. Trainers are looking for the latter and are unlikely to give more credibility to qualifications until there is a clear link between them and an employee’s daily performance.
- 4.9 How this is achieved is more problematic and needs further discussion between employers and training providers. Our suggestions would be to
- (a) Introduce a specific minimum period over which each Level is assessed so there is a closer link between attainment and experience.
 - (b) Ensure the employer plays a part in the assessment process so that they have confidence in the measurements used and it becomes more transparent.
- 4.10 One important area, about which some trainers have significant concerns, is riding instruction. It is often said that the instruction given at the British Racing School (BRS) and Northern Racing College (NRC) aims to get trainees, who may have very little experience, riding like jockeys rather than teaching them the basics to instil balance and “a proper seat”. As a result they often don’t have the right knowledge to maintain their confidence once they begin riding horses in training.
- 4.11 In this respect trainers are sometimes accused of having excessive expectations of the Schools. At the same time, for reasons of Health and Safety and the demands of Employers’ Liability Insurance, it is vital for trainers to be certain that new recruits are not at undue risk from poor fundamental riding skills.
- 4.12 Other amendments to the syllabus indicated by the trainers’ responses to the survey must be incorporated in the programme. In particular, trainers have commented that a level of detail appears to have been

lost in recent years from the Level 1 and 2 requirements. For instance, at Level 1, it should be necessary to understand how to fit a bridle correctly, not just to “tack up and un-tack.” This suggests that basic knowledge needs to be backed up with an understanding of how that knowledge should be applied.

Continuing Development

- 4.13 Lack of recognition of qualifications has a further negative effect in that it may discourage older staff, particularly at management level, from seeking training opportunities.
- 4.14 The content of training for older, more experienced staff can be gauged from the demand for training demonstrated in the Racing Ahead project (See paragraph 5.5) and should include
- (a) More detailed understanding of subjects connected with the horse (e.g. veterinary, nutrition, farriery, clipping, box driving, breaking.)
 - (b) Health and Safety, First Aid and Fire Risk Assessment
 - (c) Personnel management including training, assessing and mentoring.
- 4.15 Method of delivery is, as usual, the key question as access to training will have a large bearing on volume of take-up. We recommend that the lessons learnt during the Racing Ahead project are used as the basis for future policy. (See paragraph 5.5 below.)
- 4.16 Career structure
- (a) Racing is often criticised for lacking a clear career structure. The SSSC correctly points out that “*career development does not always mean promotion*” and that “*the acquisition of new skills and offering fresh challenges*” may be equally relevant.
 - (b) The NTF agrees. Training stables traditionally have a relatively flat hierarchy so the NTF characterises career development as being about providing opportunities for people to learn to be better at what they do rather than giving them different job titles.
 - (c) While the variety of job titles and descriptions is limited, employers must be allowed flexibility in deciding how to deploy their staff and structure their labour resource.
 - (d) Access to training is therefore more important than the creation of an artificial career ladder. The success of Racing Ahead (see paragraph 5.5) illustrates the level of pent up demand for training.

Training for trainers

- 4.17 Training needs for trainers are likely to include business management, personnel management and employment law, health and safety and marketing.
- 4.18 A greater penetration of these skills amongst licensed trainers is a legitimate objective. However, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is usually a requirement of professional bodies to support recognition of its qualifications. In the absence of such qualifications we do not support compulsory CPD for trainers.
- 4.19 The difficulty is that most trainers are short of time and money. Even when the BRS arranged seminars on equine subjects (breaking and schooling), interest from trainers was minimal and the seminars were cancelled. In 2000, the NTF arranged marketing seminars funded by the Levy Board. They were staged in various parts of the country but were poorly attended. More effective dissemination of marketing advice was achieved when the NTF and BHB teamed up with professionals to produce a series of leaflets, circulated to all trainers, containing marketing best practice.
- 4.20 Recent Health and Safety seminars have been well attended, reflecting the trainers' realisation of the serious ramifications of a failure to comply with legal requirements.
- 4.21 The NTF has recently been investigating the possibility of retaining business advisers to provide support to trainers. We are attracted to the SSSC's recommendation that the NTF "set up and manage a register of business mentors to be available to their members". Our experience is that there is very little demand for such a service and it would appear most trainers rely on their accountants to advise them on financial and business matters.
- (a) However, we propose to revisit an idea we first started in 2001 under the title Business First. This was a small self-help group of newly licensed trainers who we brought together to share experience of setting up a business. Experts on various business skills were invited to the meetings. Unfortunately time and geographical constraints led to the group's demise.
 - (b) We still believe there is some mileage in a variation on this theme. By concentrating efforts on those who have been exposed to the business and staff management modules at the mandatory BRS Trainers Course greater take up of external business advice is likely to be achieved.
 - (c) In this way we would aim to gain wider acceptance of the usefulness of training in business skills over a period of time.
- 4.22 In summary, unless trainers themselves recognise a need, demand for continuing development is low therefore we believe it is important to find ways of building demand for training rather than expect trainers to attend courses.

5 Structure

- 5.1 The optimal structure for the delivery of training must take account of the following factors:
- (a) Removing employees from the work place to train them is costly and unpopular with employers and employees because few trainers have spare capacity in the yard.
 - (b) Training needs to be practical in nature and most yards already have most of the required facilities to hand.
 - (c) The SSSC report highlighted the weakness of concentrating the training function in only two locations (Newmarket and Doncaster.) A greater geographical spread was preferred.
- 5.2 Both the BRS and NRC have integrated recruitment and training functions that produce a steady stream of new recruits to racing. They both play an important role but the industry requires a cost effective means of increasing capacity to enhance their role.
- 5.3 The NTF believes training should principally be work-based and that a system should be introduced to assist and encourage trainers to deliver training to staff of all age groups and level of experience.
- 5.4 One way of achieving this would be to assist and support trainers who were prepared to introduce accredited training regimes in their yards.
- (a) Trainers would have to commit themselves to certain statutory requirements within the framework of employment law and health and safety.
 - (b) Financial assistance would probably be aimed at support for staff involved in the delivery of training such as mentors and assessors.
 - (c) These trainers would become models of best practice for the development of staff.
 - (d) The system would not preclude other trainers from employing staff on an industry training scheme but assisting “accredited” trainers to raise standards creates an incentive to other trainers.
 - (e) Inculcating recognised “training staff” would help to identify another rung on the career ladder and stem the flow of experienced staff from the industry.
- 5.5 In our view, the Racing Ahead Project (pioneered by the BRS using European Social Fund and supported by West Suffolk College in 2001/2) was an excellent model for the delivery of training.
- (a) Its modular “bite sized” structure efficiently matched training courses with demand from staff
 - (b) Being tailored to employers’ and employees’ expressed needs it was outstandingly successful in changing attitudes.

- (c) In the long term, by offering easily accessible training, this structure would have fitted the concept of skills “passports” suggested in the SSSC report.
 - (d) This model could be easily shaped to fit the NVQ syllabus.
 - (e) The recruitment of Nick Carlisle, a respected participant in racing, to visit trainers and their staff was crucial and an element that should be repeated to identify local demand for training and match it with accessible training provision.
 - (f) Its weakness was that it depended on a centre providing a high level of training provision to a large local captive market. Similar conditions do not currently prevail elsewhere.
 - (g) Due to the specialised funding of Racing Ahead it may not be possible to role out similar schemes in other regions around Britain but this needs further enquiry.
 - (h) The NTF has investigated ways of providing training locally through partnerships with Equine Colleges. Unfortunately it appears that current funding streams are either inadequate or structured in such a way that a sustainable model is difficult to devise. We would be keen to open a discussion with LSC to see whether adjustments to this system could bring valuable benefits for racing.
 - (i) Our conclusion is that the optimal system will involve a select group of trainers setting up in-house training regimes to develop best practice, which will foster the evolution of a training culture in racing stables. Funding should be directed to assist them to do so.
- 5.6 In 2001/2 the NTF set up a system for trainers to access funding through the college system under the Outreach Programme to offer NVQ training to staff of all ages. A small number of trainers adopted the program before outside influences prevented it gaining wider acceptance. We recommend investigating whether the programme still exists in a form that could be used in racing and adapted to the in-house training concepts we propose in this paper.
- 5.7 LANTRA, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for land-based industry is in the second tranche of SSCs to participate in the roll out of Sector Skills Agreements (SSA).
- (a) SSAs are “the opportunity for everyone involved to....shape the future of education, training and business support.” It is a five phase project to assess current and future skills needs, assess current provision, analyse gaps and weaknesses, agree scope for collaborative effort and develop a costed action plan.
 - (b) The NTF, SLA and BHEST are members of LANTRA’s Equine Industry Group and it may be possible to derive some benefits. We have begun investigating further to see whether there are practical applications for racing. In particular, SSAs may offer an opportunity to persuade government that existing funding

mechanisms should be redirected to allow local provision of training as proposed in the NTF model.

6 Funding

- 6.1 Between 50% and 60% of the industry's funding for training comes from government sources, making us particularly dependent on government support as mentioned in paragraph 4.2 above.
- 6.2 Trainers currently provide about 20% of the total funds with the Levy Board contributing about 22%. It is impossible to comment on the adequacy of this funding until the future training strategy for the industry has been developed. While it might be assumed that additional training provision would require greater resources, redistribution of current funding may offer alternative strategies to achieve the desired ends.
- 6.3 Trainers would only accept the case for making an increased contribution if they could be sure it would result in a greater number of staff recruited and retained in racing. Contributing to training initiatives that take place in their own yards would be welcomed more than alternative methods of augmenting central funding, over which individual trainers have no direct control.
- 6.4 The NTF has already demonstrated that Outreach Programmes offer a source of funding through the college system directly to trainers or their staff for implementing in-house training towards NVQs. This model needs to be investigated again.
- 6.5 In September 2009, the Levy Board will close and many of its functions are expected to devolve to the BHB. It will therefore be important to consider what undertakings BHB is able to give at this point to its financial commitments to training. Needless to say this question is bound up with the continuing review of industry funding and distribution of resulting revenue.
- 6.6 The NTF considers that jockeys should make a contribution to the funding of stable staff training.
 - (a) Due to the mandatory training scheme, all new staff aged 16 to 19 must attend a course at one of the racing schools (or another provider of Level 2 training.) As a result, a foundation course at one of the racing schools is now the building block for the careers of nearly all British jockeys.
 - (b) In recognition of this, we believe a financial contribution by jockeys out of prize money is justified.
 - (c) It has also been suggested that jockeys could be involved in the training itself by offering the benefits of their experience to young stable staff.

7 Promotion

- 7.1 Neither employers nor employees will participate in training unless they are convinced they will benefit from it.
- 7.2 Changing attitudes takes a long time and in our view will be achieved by setting examples rather than verbal persuasion. If the right training models can be developed and put into action initially by a small group of trainers, who consequently experience and can demonstrate the benefits, other will follow. They have to see that they will gain an advantage.
- 7.3 This approach coincides with our suggestion in 5.4 above that selected trainers are given an incentive to implement best practice.
- 7.4 We also believe that there is pent up demand from staff to “skill up” (as shown by the Racing Ahead project) and for those with ambition only accessibility to training is needed to gain their participation.
- 7.5 A clear message in the final report from the Racing Ahead project is that there is a strong case for an ambassador for training to meet employers and employees to sell the concept and identify particular skills levels for which there is a regional demand for training.
- 7.6 In addition to pure job satisfaction, at some point staff will expect improved skills to be reflected in pay and promotion. Of course this already happens and such is the shortage of “experienced staff” that the best command high wages in the best stables. However, while the NTF/SLA agreement on pay and conditions currently links pay to the attainment of NVQs, the NTF is currently reviewing these terms to strengthen the relationship between rewards and real skills.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 It is a relatively straight forward task to set out the correct content of training; racing’s problem is to find the optimal method of delivering and funding training and persuading employers and employees to participate.
- 8.2 Both the British Racing School and Northern Racing College play a vital part in recruiting young people and giving them a platform for the attainment of qualifications. Beyond this, the racing industry requires a training program with greater scope to train staff of all ages.
- 8.3 We believe a relatively small amount of central funding and investigation of college funding systems could achieve significant benefits by creating an environment conducive to encouraging trainers to set up their own training structures in-house.

R. Arnold
10th June 2005