



MERLIN SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTIONS LTD

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines our strategic direction and ambitions for the period 2023 to 2025 and formalises the strategic direction provided via the Senior Team Meeting of May 22. We want all of our students to achieve above and beyond their own expectations and experience motivational learning which will shape and change both their professional and personal lives.

We believe that our programmes will significantly contribute to their personal development and provide our students with relevant employability skills, alongside gaining relevant professional and technical skills. We believe this will enhance their opportunities and contribute significantly to the economy.

We are committed to working closely and productively with all Government Organisations, Employers and Business Partners to ensure that together we can identify local and national shortages in key areas and deliver a suitably trained and qualified workforce that is skilled for success to meet those shortages.

In this plan we will set out how we will continue to better understand how we use technology within our curriculum to support the Governments sustainability targets, specifically but not restricted to, Goal 13, achieving Net zero by 2050. Therefore, working directly with employers to utilise their existing technologies and applying them to deliver change.

We will continue to ensure that we offer a safe and supportive place for our learners, we must continue to develop our processes for seeking, analysing and acting on the feedback we receive. Additionally, we must continue to build better relationships with industry leaders and employers, both operationally and strategically to provide workforce solutions to meet specific needs.

In summary Merlin Supply Chain Solutions must continue to offer high quality education and training to support those industries that we support, we will ensure that every aspect of our training provides value for money, including exploring new and innovative ways of working that improve outcomes for learners and provide employers with a suitably trained and motivated workforce. We must maintain our well-earned industry reputation for excellence and integrity and being responsive to our employer's needs.





Part 2

OUR MISSION

The mission is to Provide an environment where learning can take place in a manner that the learner can achieve all that they can be, and then a bit more. We aim to achieve this mission through an organisation-wide commitment to and application of four core values:

Ambition

Ambition is part of our DNA as an organisation – we are always looking for ways to grow, develop our products for the benefit of each of our Learners.

All our Learners are supported to develop and achieve their ambitions.

Our staff have high aspirations for every student and for themselves.

They are encouraged to be bold and creative in their work.

Embrace technology to enhance the learner experience

Collaboration

Learners and staff must work closely together to ensure that every learner achieve success.

We must work closely with our employers to ensure that our programmes meet their expectations.

We must work collaboratively with our partners to draw in outside expertise and experiences to help us secure better outcomes for ourselves, Employers and Learners alike.

Excellence

Our staff are dedicated to deliver a great learning experience; learning that is consistently high quality, relevant and focused on Awarding Organisation's outcomes.

Opportunity

Achieve annual Growth through client referral and repeat business.

Part 3

OUR VISION

Our Vision is to:

Change Learners lives and opportunities through the Quality of Excellent Education and Training

Part 3a – to allow us to achieve our Vision and Mission we have identified the following Strategic Objectives:

- Create a safe and inclusive environment where learners can achieve beyond their expectations.
- Develop and deliver a curriculum that meets the needs of the learner, employer an industry, regardless of industry and sector.
- Build great relationships with our clients, to ensure that our curriculum, learner progress and learner outcomes exceed expectations.
- Maintain an effective and inclusive learner 360 review and leaner feedback process. – Learner Voice.
- Consistently provide excellence in leadership to effectively support and guide the organisation.
- Continually develop and support all staff members to ensure that they can deliver our objectives.
- Ensure effective management of our Quality and Compliance processes.
- Maximise utilisation of equipment to support the long term financial sustainability.
- Expand our use of digital technology to support learning.
- Maintain all regulatory frameworks [IHTTC, DVSA Awarding Bodies].
- Develop our training estate to support growth
- Maintain staffing levels suitable to meet our delivery needs





Part 4

STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- Dedicated training team
- Great technical and industry knowledge
- Excellent relationships with employers
- Excellent relationships with key stakeholders
- Availability of equipment for training
- Use of IT to assist delivery
- Staff development Opportunities
- Ultimate Parent Company backing
- Availability of training facilities
- Good liquidity and improving Financial Health

Opportunities

- Grow our Apprenticeship provision to a wider client base
- Improve our overall first Time Pass Rate for Driver training
- Include sustainability initiatives to support Net Zero targets
- Improve pay and conditions for staff
- Improve Financial Health by increasing EBITDA
- Continue to enhance our learner enrichment curriculum.

Part 5

TEACHING AND LEARNING WITHIN MERLIN SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTIONS

Our Vision is to:

Change Learners lives and opportunities through the Quality of Excellent Education and Training

The teaching and learner process have historically focused on the practical elements of our provision, namely within the LGV apprenticeships and our classroom based lessons, although improving, is not yet consistently good and so we must get better in that area. Particularly as we are diversifying our provision into other sectors and industries. We will improve our quality assurance arrangements to ensure that all teaching staff participate in development sessions and allow teaching staff to share best practice across all of our provision.

We have a variety of programmes within the Logistics and Business Administration Sectors and during the life of this strategy we would seek to continue to deliver these and moreover increase the number of courses.

Furthermore, we will review all programmes for validity in an industry where technology plays an ever increasing role. We will review the programme for value for money to the employer, consistently seeking feedback from employers on learner development.

We aim to review and enhance our learner enrichment programmes that are embedded within these programmes to ensure they provide a wide and varied opportunity for learning.

We must retain our membership of the Logistics Sector Trailblazer Group where the Logistics Sector programmes are developed to support and help shape the ever changing face of logistics.

The courses that we currently have on offer include:

Logistics Sector

- LGV Driver C+E
- Urban Driver
- International Freight Forwarder
- Warehouse and Transport Supervisor

Business Administration

- Customer Service
- Business Administrator

The curriculum for each of these programmes must be designed and developed specifically with the needs of the employer in mind. We will continue to work directly with employers to design and shape curriculum, ensuring that we have carefully considered the employers desired outputs, measured against the technical aspects of the programme, quality outputs and funding rules.

We will maintain effective partner relationships with other ITPs and EPAOs to ensure that we remain current for all technical and teaching updates. Similarly, we will retain our chair within the AELP Logistic Sector forum. Our DSO and ADSO, must maintain their links with the local authorities and provide regular updates for all staff.

Part 6

OUR DIGITAL STRATEGY

Digital literacy skills are an essential part of life in this modern age and it is vital that we support all of our learners to gain knowledge and skills to be able to competently and confidently live and work in a society that is increasingly digital. And most of our programmes expect a degree of knowledge and understanding of technological systems.

We learned many lessons during the Covid pandemic, particularly in respect of enhancing our ability to deliver quality online teaching and learning and remote service delivery. Over the life of this plan we will build on this to bring a more blended approach to our provision.

In doing so, we did recognise the significant levels of digital poverty faced by our students, as such we offer to issue each learner with IT hardware suitable to complete their programme. The cost of this hardware is funded central from Merlin Supply Chain Solutions.

Similarly, we recognise that some of our learners do not have connectivity outside of their working environment and as such we seek support from employers that allows students are be permitted to connect to work networks whilst on programme.

We utilise an array of online platforms to assist and provide a blended learning approach. Our Ihasco LMS provides the learner with access to online self-study in the areas of Safeguarding and Cyber Security Awareness. Logistics sector learners on driving programmes will be given access to DTS Anytime to practice for their Theory and Hazard

Perception Tests

We provide all learners have access to BKSB Live for functional skills assessment, development and assignments. All learners have access to APTEM, which is our new fit for purpose Learner Management System, that gives the learners a personalised record for their programme. Each learner uploads their work to this platform and tutors review and provide feedback.

We, within our wider Group are ISO 27001 accredited and our IT Director provides IAG to the team regarding the procurement, deployment and security.

Part 7

OUR FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Merlin Supply Chain Solutions financial performance forms part of KNP Logistics Group financial accounting processes, including all audits. Merlin Supply Chain Solutions MD designs, agrees and reports on financials to the Group MD and FD.

Our historic financial performance has been reasonable, however, the current operating position is weak producing reduced earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortisation (EBITDA). Prior financial forecasts have been typified by a reliance on income growth which has not been realised. Our poor financial performance has hampered investment in our resource base.

Thus far our customer base has focussed on a single sector namely Logistics, with the main Group being the largest beneficiary. The impact of this Group focus is such that we have exhausted further growth and we must seek a wider client base in a variety of sectors. Our expansion into Health and Social care will assist in diluting the reliance on logistics customers.

We will work with clients for programmes other than LGV driving, with the aim to increase investment opportunities. Additionally, we will continue to work with other Government departments to support and enhance growth plans. At the time of writing, the financial position is stabilising and we are confidently forecasting an EBITDA of 5% to close out the 2022/23 financial year. To achieve this, we have set ourselves challenging targets across all sectors to support our strategic aims, but these do not stretch ourselves so much as to impact the learner experience.

To assist us in achieving this figure, we will implement fully costed curriculum across all sectors from April 23. We will identify and exploit further opportunities to achieve viable cohort sizes and maximise the use of blended learning to enrich the learner experience and make them widely employable.

We will continue to develop and enhance the use of data to inform performance management. In doing so we will provide timely and accurate financial information to enable us to take advantage of future opportunities and reduce risk.

We will review our functional skills delivery model to that of our competitors to ensure that we are providing a balance of efficiency and quality.

We will continue to invest in our driver training equipment to ensure that it is fit for purpose and fitted with the most up to date technology to support a sustainable training programme. We will continue to ensure that they are maintained regularly and in line with the wider Groups mechanisms for maintenance.

We must maximise the utilisation of all driver training equipment to achieve an average of 90% utilisation. Coupled with this we must seek to have a robust booking system to maximise seat capacity per vehicle. Over the life of this plan we will migrate to a more efficient and better paid workforce, notwithstanding the need to attract, reward and retain our tutors, administrators and managers, we should target our pay to turnover at 45% reducing to 40% at the end of this cycle.

We will consistently review the use of sub-contractors to ensure that we limit the use of sub-contractors to 10% of turnover. Where subcontractors are used quality and compliance standards are contracted.





Part 8

OUR PEOPLE

Our people are our best assets and we have some very experienced and knowledgeable members of staff, which we need to support and develop. We will continue to review our people policies in line with the wider Group HR Policies which Merlin Supply Chain Solutions' derive.

It is essential every member of staff understands and can support our key objectives and has the skill to complete their own and collective tasks. We must continue to improve our performance review process to ensure that every staff member has a Personal Development Plan that includes non-work related goals.

Whilst we believe that we have consistency in approach to selecting and recruiting staff with parity in their salaries, terms and conditions this hasn't always been that case in practice and we will strive to rectify this over the life of the strategy.

We must place a greater emphasis of continuing professional development, with a particular focus on teaching and learning, specifically in the field of functional skills and digital skills.

We do need to ensure that progression and development of staff are consistent and remove any barriers that may prevent staff members progressing within the company.

We will consistently review pay and subject to improving financial health ensure that they are aligned to both industry and regional norms.

Part 9

KEY RISKS

We have a robust Business Continuity Plan that details what actions need to take place in case of a catastrophic incident that effects the overall running of the business. This includes the responsibilities of the management and leadership team.

Outside of the Business Continuity Plan we have our Quality Improvement Plan which seeks to identify those areas of our provision that requires improvement, references to both these documents in this section act as single line entries. We will over the next 12 months we will design a single source Risk Register which will cover both strategic and operational risks each with a mitigation to reduce the overall risk.

We have however identified the following 5 high level risks as follow:

- We lack external scrutiny of our provision
- We fail to develop our staff in a meaningful way
- We fail to consistently monitor data to track income and expenditure
- We do not quickly enough improve the quality of our provision where required
- We are unable to deliver commitment to our staff which is adversely affecting morale.





Part 10

OUR IMPACT 2025

By the academic year 2024/2025, we expect our strategic impacts to be as follows

Participation

Apprentices – 300 across all programmes
Bootcamps -1400 – across all pathways
SBWA – 50 - into work

Sector Spread

Logistics – 150 learners on Programme

- 25% LGV Driver C+E
- 25% Urban Driver
- 30% Warehouse and Transport Supervisor
- 10% Customer Service
- 10% Business Administration

Additional programmes to be delivered

- Assessor Coach – Level 4
- Learner Mentor – Level 3
- Customer Service – Level 2

Key Impacts

We must continue to increase the opportunity to bring women on to the LGV Driver C+E Apprenticeships.
We must support learner with high needs or EHCP to achieve their qualification and Apprenticeship Completion.
We seek to have 90% of learners with a positive destination.
More learners completing their programme on time and in full.

