

Nacro

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Voluntary organisation

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Nacro is a national registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It aims to reduce the number of people who commit crime. Nacro's services directorate (Nacro, the service) manages the training programmes. Nacro receives funding to deliver foundation learning for around 2500 learners annually from the Young People's Learning Agency. Approximately 25% of Nacro's business is government funded training.

This focused monitoring visit follows the inspection in January 2010 at which inspectors judged the outcomes for learners, quality of provision, leadership and management and overall effectiveness as satisfactory. Inspectors judged arrangements for safeguarding and the promotion of equality and diversity as good. At the inspection, the quality of provision in preparation for life and work was satisfactory.

Nacro is experiencing a period of significant change at both strategic and operational levels across all areas of its work. As part of the restructuring, many staff are recently employed and/or have new or revised roles and responsibilities. At the previous inspection, Nacro offered Entry to employment (E2e) programmes. Most of the provision now consists of foundation learning programmes, which the service delivers at 56 centres, within 11 geographical regions. The service also offers apprenticeship programmes in childcare, small animal care, motor vehicle engineering and business administration to around 95 learners. This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Nacro made in ensuring that the self-assessment report accurately reflects the strengths of the service and that the process is rigorous and inclusive?

Reasonable progress

At the inspection, aspects of the self-assessment report were not sufficiently evaluative. The whole organisational approach has now improved the inclusivity, transparency and structure of the self-assessment process. The process now draws on the self-assessment of the provision offered at each of the training centres, which informs each region's self-assessment, in turn informing the overall service's self-assessment report. These arrangements and the supportive documents focus well on each aspect of learners' programmes, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The priority that is given to outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching and learning in each centre is good. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and the resulting report takes appropriate account of the views of learners. The quality improvement plan, which includes responses to the previous

inspection findings, is detailed. However, due to the organisational changes, the pace of some improvements and actions has been slow. Consequently, the service recognises that its current overall self-assessment report does not sufficiently consider the variations in the performance of different regions and centres.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has Nacro made to improve learners' success rates including success rates for literacy and numeracy qualifications? Reasonable progress

At the inspection, only the E2e programme was inspected and outcomes for learners were satisfactory overall. Since then, Nacro has changed this provision from E2e to foundation learning. Overall, the service has improved learner outcomes when the current year is compared to the previous year's performance. Since the inspection, the success rates on functional skills programmes have increased by eight percentage points to 32% in English, by nine percentage points to 35% in mathematics, and by nine percentage points to 22% in information and communication technology. The success rates of learners completing their personal and social development awards improved from 53% in 2009/10 to 68% in 2010/11 and also stand 68% in the current year to date. The success rates of learners completing their key objectives have improved slightly from 66% in 2010/11 to 70% year in the current year.

The service continues to offer a wide range of vocational qualifications to meet both local and regional priorities, and employers' needs. The proportion of learners completing these courses successfully remains satisfactory although they have declined slightly since the last inspection.

What progress has Nacro made to improve learners' progression rates into further education, training and employment? Insufficient progress

At the inspection, the proportion of learners who progressed into further education, training and employment was low at 45%. Since then, the service has made insufficient progress to bring about an improvement. In 2010/11, the proportion of learners on E2e programmes who progressed into further education, training and employment improved to 52%. However, the progression rate for learners on foundation learning is very low at 27%. In 2010/11, the combined progression rate for learners on E2e and foundation learning programmes is low at 37%. It remains low at 37% in the current year.

Staff have a good understanding of learners' progression pathways and recognise the need for further developing links with both employers and apprenticeship providers. The service has just started to re-engage with employers in order to

improve the number of both work placements as well as progression into employed training.

Quality of provision

What progress has Nacro made to improve the quality of teaching and training?

Reasonable progress

At the inspection, inspectors recommended that teaching and learning be further developed to meet learners' individual needs. They also recommended that a sufficient number of qualified tutors should deliver literacy, language and numeracy provision. The service has taken a number of appropriate actions to respond to these recommendations including fully reviewing training arrangements for tutors and developing and implementing new policies. As part of the restructuring, the service now has a national training manager who is responsible for all aspects of staff training and works jointly with the business improvement team to support improvements in teaching and learning. The service has provided good support for tutors to gain relevant and appropriate teaching qualifications. It maintains a detailed record of staff qualifications. Observation of teaching and learning is well established. In the teaching sessions observed during this visit, tutors monitored learners' progress satisfactorily. During these sessions, tutors responded to individual learners' needs appropriately, for example through planning a range of practical activities for learners, which included good integration of literacy and numeracy topics.

Nacro is revising and developing its staff performance management system which includes discussions about improving teaching practices during appraisal meetings. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this action.

Leadership and management

What progress has Nacro made to engage with employers and stakeholders to improve the provision?

Insufficient progress

At the inspection, Nacro's engagement with employers and other stakeholders was insufficiently developed. The service now engages its learners better and more systematically through forums and surveys, and uses their feedback adequately to inform its improvement plans. However, the service has not fully established arrangements to inform learners about improvements which it makes in response to their feedback. In some centres, staff work well with employers to develop provision for learners. For example in one centre, good collaboration with the Army has led to the development and delivery of a suitable programme which is very effective in preparing learners who wish to progress to a career in the Army. However, arrangements to collect employers' feedback, and to involve them in the development of provision systematically in all the centres, are still underdeveloped. Nacro has recently implemented a stakeholder strategy; however, it is too recent to assess the impact of this initiative.

What progress has Nacro made to improve its quality improvement arrangements?**Insufficient progress**

At the inspection, quality arrangements were not sufficiently effective to monitor and improve variations in the quality of provision across different centres. In all centres, managers continue to monitor the quality of learning processes, for example, all tutors are still observed and graded on their performance. The service is in the process of centralising its quality assurance and improvement arrangements and has very recently completed the recruitment of staff for this transition. It has developed detailed and extensive plans to significantly change all aspects of its quality systems and processes, including the collection, analysis and use of data and learner information. New arrangements to check the quality of teaching and learning are being implemented to monitor the quality of learners' individual plans and progress reviews, and to encourage the sharing of good practice. A clear calendar identifying the quality assurance and improvement activities that are conducted in all the centres and regions is now being implemented. However, further work is required to establish these arrangements to ensure the centralised quality system is fully functional. The service acknowledges that the pace of the development of quality systems has been slow.

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