

North West Training College Ltd

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

North West Training College Ltd is a private training provider based in Liverpool. It was previously known as North West Community Services (Training) Ltd. At the last inspection, the provider had two training centres in Liverpool and one in Preston. The Preston centre closed due to decreasing numbers and one Liverpool centre relocated to a new building. North West Training College does not currently subcontract any of its provision. It has a direct contract to deliver apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 in childcare, and health and social care. The college still delivers foundation learning as a subcontractor of Oakmere Community College and also delivers a pre-apprenticeship programme as a subcontractor of Greater Merseyside Learning Provider Federation.

The most recent inspection report was published in February 2010. North West Training College was graded satisfactory in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, leadership and management, and equality and diversity. Quality of provision and safeguarding were graded good. Both the health, public services and care, and the preparation for life and work provision were graded satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in developing more comprehensive, robust and evaluative quality improvement systems?	Reasonable progress
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The previous inspection identified the need for improvement in the rigour of the quality improvement arrangements. The quality improvement strategy, framework and documentation have been revised and are now more comprehensive. An effective annual calendar promotes a more coherent and systematic approach to quality improvement activities. The self-assessment process is further developed to provide greater staff involvement and ownership. Detailed quality improvement plans are now in place for each subject area. However, the targets on these plans are not always sufficiently specific or measurable. The self-assessment report provides a broadly accurate picture of the provision. Good use is made of feedback from employers and learners to inform improvements in provision. However, the direct involvement of learners in the self-assessment process remains underdeveloped. The observation of the teaching and learning process is effective and judgements by observers were broadly in agreement with those of inspectors. However, the observation documentation continues to be insufficiently focused on identifying the impact on learning. Plans are in place to provide further training for the extended team of observers.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes since the last inspection?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, North West Training College has implemented effective strategies to improve success rates and retention. Initial and diagnostic assessments are more effective in identifying learners' support needs and matching learners to programmes. The pre-apprenticeship programme provides a stepping stone between foundation learning and apprenticeships. The learning support provision is now increased and more flexible. Tutors and the learning support officer work very closely to identify underperforming learners and provide a high level of targeted support. Good use is made of effective strategies to promote progress.

Success rates for advanced apprentices increased to 97% in 2010/11. However, success rates for intermediate apprentices decreased from 76.4% in 2009/10 to 55.8% in 2010/11. North West Training College data indicate a significant impact on intermediate apprenticeship success rates with the closure in 2010/11 of one of the college's centres and the relocation of another. Provider data indicate an improving trend in success rates in the current year. In 2010/11, foundation learners had satisfactory progression into further education and employment. In 2010/11, achievement rates for functional skills were high for English, mathematics, and information and communication technology, at entry level. Current foundation learners are making good progress in functional skills, satisfactory progress towards their key objectives and good achievement of additional qualifications.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in implementing an effective strategy for Skills for Life and functional skills?

Significant progress

At the last inspection, a revised Skills for Life strategy was in place but it was too recent to judge its effectiveness. North West Training College has developed comprehensive structures for the effective implementation of the Skills for Life and functional skills strategy. A functional skills champion provides a high level of guidance and support to staff. The strategy is detailed with a range of clear and specific objectives. The development plan is being implemented and monitored effectively. A good range of staff training and development workshops have been provided to support the implementation of the functional skills strategy. Tutors and assessors are making satisfactory progress towards achieving functional skills qualifications at level 2. A detailed tracking document monitors staff progress towards this objective. Revised lesson plans clearly identify opportunities for functional skills development within sessions and are used effectively by tutors. Assessor feedback highlights learners' development of functional skills. An effective tracking and recording system is in place for monitoring the development of functional skills for individual learners. Current learners are making good progress. Learners receive a high level of individual support to develop their functional skills.

Leadership and management

What progress has the provider made in the collection and systematic use of data to monitor and improve performance?

Insufficient progress

North West Training College has made insufficient progress in the collection and systematic use of data to monitor and improve performance. Since the previous inspection, the college has made a significant investment in purchasing and implementing a new management information system. However, while it provides more detailed and timely data for many aspects of management, its usefulness for managing and monitoring learner progress is still in the early stages of implementation. The plan for the introduction of the new system is not sufficiently broken down into small implementation steps with interim review dates for its completion. Close working arrangements between tutors and the learning support officer effectively identify those learners requiring additional support and a high level of support is quickly provided. However, the use of data at individual staff supervision meetings is not sufficiently systematic or rigorous in relation to monitoring learner progress, or measuring the impact of support or progress towards staff performance targets.

What progress has been made in promoting equality and diversity to learners?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, an effective equality and diversity steering group is now in place to lead further developments. Staff have benefited from additional training to develop their knowledge, understanding and confidence in promoting equality and diversity to learners. The redesigned induction programme gives learners a good introductory awareness of equality and diversity. A satisfactory range of learning resources have been purchased or internally developed to support the effective promotion of equality and diversity during training sessions and progress reviews. A wide range of promotional materials displayed throughout the training centres are very effective in celebrating diversity and raising learners' awareness of different cultures. Learners benefit from good resources to develop their understanding of internet safety and issues around cyber bullying. Teaching and learning observations now routinely monitor the promotion of equality and diversity. However, observation records indicate some inconsistencies in the identification and recording of this promotion. Discussions with learners and reviews of learners' portfolio work indicate that learners have at least a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity.

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