

Newham Training and Education Centre

Focused monitoring visit report

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Newham Training and Education Centre (NEWTEC) provides training, mainly in childcare related programmes, alongside nursery facilities and other services for children in East London. Since 2007 it has been a wholly-owned subsidiary of Newham College of Further Education. The two main subject areas are health, public services and care and preparation for life and work. The majority of the learners on preparation for life and work courses are working towards numeracy and literacy qualifications in support of their main vocational childcare course.

An inspection in 2008 judged the overall effectiveness of NEWTEC as inadequate. At a reinspection in November 2009 NEWTEC's quality of provision and leadership and management were graded as good, with all other main aspects judged as satisfactory. Key recommendations from that reinspection included improving course reviews, making better use of data to monitor the performance of groups of learners and better organisation of class groups in preparation for life and work programmes. Those, and other aspects of the provision, were chosen as themes for review and this report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in improving quality systems, specifically ensuring that course reviews give managers more useful information for the subject area self-assessment reports? **Reasonable progress**

At the reinspection teachers and managers were not sufficiently critical, during course reviews, in evaluating the quality of individual courses. The subsequent 2009/10 self-assessment report (SAR) had clearer links between the course reviews and the subject area reports. This year managers changed the course review process again and then introduced a new system for performance assessment reviews in January 2011. The new system builds on some of the strengths in the previous approach, particularly in using learners' and partners' views to support judgements. Staff were fully involved in the design of the new system sharing ideas and practice with peers. In the revised approach, course leaders have a stronger focus on monitoring the achievement of targets and actions in the quality improvement plan. Although the performance assessment reviews have not been in place very long they are already contributing towards overall subject area reviews of progress which will then be used in this year's SAR.

NEWTEC's revised management structure now places responsibility for quality across the whole organisation with one senior manager. NEWTEC's quality improvement initiatives and activities are better planned and structured through a formal quality

cycle. Some regular initiatives, like quality health check weeks and internal audits, help keep the profile of quality improvement high with all staff.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in building on the improvements in learner responsive outcomes noted at the previous inspection and dealing with the inadequate Train to Gain outcomes? **Significant progress**

The reinspection judged overall outcomes as satisfactory, but with learner responsive success rates 'still too low and below national averages' and inadequate Train to Gain success rates. At the end of the reinspection year overall success rates for learner responsive courses jumped by 14 percentage points, and this significant improvement was repeated in 2009/10. They are now at national rates with the larger subject area, preparation for life and work, seven points above national averages. Retention rates improved notably in 2008/09, whilst pass rates improved well in both 2008/09 and 2009/10.

The previous report also noted a 10 percentage point difference between the success rates for 16- to 18-year-old and adult learners. The overall rates for the younger learners improved significantly in 2009/10 and they are now very slightly ahead of adult learner rates, although they remain five percentage points below on long courses. Success rates for the diploma in pre-school practice, which was also an area of concern at reinspection, leapt 33 percentage points to well above the national rate.

Success rates for the Train to Gain programme have also improved well. The overall rates went up nearly 30 percentage points to above national averages for the relevant programme areas. The proportion of learners who completed by their planned end date nearly doubled, although this rate is still too low.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in ensuring that preparation for life and work groups are better matched to the learners' backgrounds and abilities? **Significant progress**

A key recommendation at the reinspection was that NEWTEC should review whether learners with similar levels of skills and support needs on preparation for life and work courses could be brought together in more effective teaching groups. In the year following the inspection NEWTEC made substantial changes to the way that such learners were taught, with a better range of courses, improved allocation of learners to courses and better in-class support for those with language or learning needs. At the end of the year success rates for entry level learners had improved significantly to a very good overall rate of 91%. Similarly, foundation level results improved well, with the overall rate increasing by 13 percentage points to national

averages. The only weak area was in foundation level numeracy where results were poor.

NEWTEC responded very well to the inspection recommendation and the immediate improvements were very good. Managers have put significant effort into further improving this aspect during the current year. Provision has again been adjusted, with more discrete courses, further linking of literacy and numeracy to vocational courses and separation by age groups. Although predicted successes rates are good, it is not yet certain whether the revised approach is as effective as the previous year.

What progress has been made in ensuring that communication with employers is more frequent and effective, particularly with regards to learners' progress? **Reasonable progress**

Although not a key recommendation at the reinspection, some difficulties in employer engagement were noted in the report and also feature in NEWTEC's SAR. Assessors have been increasingly encouraged to involve employers in reviews, something which was done but not as effectively at the previous inspection. In addition, employers are now rightly engaged in assessment feedback and action planning. Since the reinspection continuity of assessors linked with employers has improved, with benefits to routine communication. An employer engagement adviser, a role that has been enhanced since the reinspection, now gives new employers a full brief on the requirements of the programme. Success rates have improved, but employers' feedback at the time of the visit suggests further work remains to involve them fully in monitoring learners' progress.

NEWTEC has made reasonable progress in gathering and using the wider employers' views. Their views have been sought in the past two years as part of a quality initiative, leading to appropriate analysis and actions taken, for instance in the current development of an employer information pack. However, this work is based on a small sample of views. Routine, informal feedback from employers is passed on by staff; the impact has been reinforced by the employer engagement adviser.

What progress has been made in aiding staff development, particularly through the system for observing learning sessions? **Significant progress**

At the reinspection, NEWTEC's systems for observing and improving the quality of teaching and learning were thorough and very effective. These systems have continued to be refined and extended to include work-based assessments and tutorials. Many teachers are now taking teacher training qualifications which are helping develop their skills. NEWTEC's observers and observers from the teacher training programme work well together to provide regular assessment and feedback. Grades awarded by observers from each organisation are highly consistent. Standardisation of teaching and learning observations is enhanced through meetings, joint observations and observers sharing reports with each other. A mentor system

for all staff is helping teachers to discuss issues and areas they need to improve. Some teachers now carry out informal peer assessment to help share ideas and good practice, particularly when they are teaching different age groups. Observers believe that the observation system, mentoring and staff training have been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and learning. They say that teachers are now using a wider range of experiential learning activities, like role play, and using technology more interactively. All teachers have an individual action plan that contains their development needs from all the quality improvement initiatives, and that is routinely monitored by their line managers.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in using the changed management structures to improve overall effectiveness and ensure that capacity to improve is better than satisfactory? **Reasonable progress**

NEWTEC's capacity to improve was judged as satisfactory at the previous inspection. Subsequent changes to management arrangements and procedures have helped make this aspect more effective. In 2010 the senior management structure was changed in a well thought out and carefully planned way. Amongst other things the new system put an increased emphasis on improving quality. A head of quality and standards now has a key role to play in the new team. Leadership meetings routinely review quality matters and the achievement of a strategic plan which has a welcome focus on quality improvement. This process is aided by a very extensive, though somewhat complex, range of initiatives. These include routine meetings of a quality improvement team; clearly articulated targets linked to regular analysis of performance; regularly reviewed strategic and quality improvement plans; short term action and review meetings; 'nudge' targets to help improvements at a strategic level; and, a comprehensive quality review cycle. Some externally supported functions, such as human relations and finance, provided by Newham College, are included in overall improvement review and action planning, although they are not directly subject to NEWTEC's quality checks. The board of trustees is taking a more informed and closer role in quality improvement activities.

What progress had been made in better using data, notably to monitor and then improve success rates and performance by different groups of learners? **Reasonable progress**

A key area for improvement at the reinspection was for NEWTEC to use data more appropriately and accurately to monitor performance and achievement of targets, including achievement by different groups. Since then, managers have extended the range of data reports to ensure they are more accurate and suitable for different staff to use in an effective way. More challenging and realistic targets are now set and monitored for courses, ages, levels and different groups. This has contributed to the improvements in success rates. However, NEWTEC has not set a challenging target for improving the completion of Train to Gain programmes by planned end dates. Managers rightly recognise that they need to improve further systems for

more accurately monitoring attendance data and withdrawals which should enable them to better judge in-year retention rates.

A steering group continues to evaluate participation and performance by different groups every three months. NEWTEC recognises that some groups, like Black Caribbean, young White learners and those with a disability or learning difficulty, have lower success rates than all learners. The organisation devised a strategy some years ago with very specific activities to improve success by these identified groups. This strategy has recently been reintroduced. Although not all the actions are being fully carried out, differences in performance are narrowing.

What progress has been made in further improving safeguarding arrangements for learners?

Reasonable progress

NEWTEC’s safeguarding arrangements were good at the reinspection. In its most recent self-assessment report NEWTEC has judged its safeguarding arrangements to be outstanding. Since the reinspection, staff and learner awareness of safeguarding issues has been raised through a significant amount of training, some of which is focused well on challenges facing people within Newham and multi-agency working. Designated safeguarding officers make excellent use of their training and partnership links when dealing with safeguarding issues. This has resulted in learners carrying on with their studies while receiving support from external health professionals, counsellors and NEWTEC staff. The board and Chief Executive Officer now receive regular reports on safeguarding enabling them to more effectively monitor cases that arise, to ensure they are dealt with appropriately.

NEWTEC’s policy is that Criminal Records Bureau checks for all staff should be updated every three years. NEWTEC does not carry out systematic checks of renewal status, and the current arrangements are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring the renewals and applications are carried out in a sufficiently timely way.

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