

North West Training Council

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		17–21 September 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate-Grade 4
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-Grade 3
Outcomes for learners		Inadequate-Grade 4
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-Grade 3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Inadequate-Grade 4

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is inadequate because:

- Too many apprentices on engineering and construction programmes leave their programmes early and the proportion of apprentices who complete successfully has declined and is low.
- Too many apprentices who stay on their programmes progress too slowly and do not complete within the planned period.
- Teaching and training are too often dull and trainers do not plan sufficiently for individual learning.
- Many aspects of North West Training Council's management are weak, quality systems, management of subcontractors, and performance management.
- North West Training Council's board does not receive sufficient information and data about the performance of learners and staff to be able to challenge senior managers effectively.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Local and a number of national companies value highly the work of North West Training Council in developing provision for their employees.
- North West Training Council works well with many communities to increase the number of under-represented groups of learners such as women and learners from minority ethnic communities.
- Trainers and assessors work collectively to give good support to learners and have an excellent focus on training learners in health and safety.

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Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Focus on improving overall success rates and success rates within the planned time to above national average by developing more reliable systems for monitoring learners' progress. Take more effective and prompt actions to increase the number of learners who stay and achieve.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment by using a wider variety of teaching styles, more technology and effective questioning techniques to inspire learners to make quicker progress. Develop and systematically observe teaching, learning and assessment sessions and provide a high-quality staff development programme to support improvements.
- Develop and implement effective systems and practices to improve learners' English, mathematics and functional skills so that all learners improve in these areas. Extend the knowledge and skills of trainers and assessors in functional skills through staff development programmes.
- Extend learners' understanding and knowledge of equality and diversity through teaching, training and learning activities including progress reviews. Ensure that trainers' and assessors' knowledge is fully developed so that they can promote effectively equality and diversity.
- Improve the planning for individual learning and the use of clear, realistic and achievable short- and long-term targets to ensure that learners progress more quickly. Ensure learners have a good understanding of their progress and contribute to any changes in their training plans.
- Strengthen the links between strategic planning and operational management to ensure there is a clear focus on further developing the strengths and eradicating the weaknesses of the provision, including the subcontracted provision.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive quality-improvement system that is fully inclusive of all the provision, including subcontractors and all aspects of learning, uses data efficiently and is monitored and evaluated appropriately by all levels of staff.
- Improve arrangements for staff appraisal so that they focus on learners' achievements and the quality of teaching and training, and include clear improvement targets.
- Develop and implement an effective learners' progress monitoring system, used by staff at all levels, so that the progress of all learners, including those at subcontractors, can be monitored reliably. Identify learners at risk of slow progress or leaving early and take prompt and effective action to increase the chances of learners staying and completing successfully.
- Ensure that the board and senior managers receive detailed reports on the performance and progress of all groups of learners.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Inadequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outcomes for learners at North West Training Council (NWTC) are inadequate. In 2010/11, in the previous Train to Gain provision, learners' overall success rates and success rates within the planned time were good. All learners are now apprentices. Since the previous inspection, overall success rates and success rates within the planned time 	

for apprentices have declined significantly and are poor.

- In 2010/11, overall success rates for the small number of public services apprentices are good although their success rates within the planned time are poor. Overall success rates and the success rates within the planned time for engineering apprentices, who are the large majority of apprentices, declined sharply and are poor. There are indications of some improvements in the current year.
- Overall success rates for building and construction apprentices are low and their success rates within the planned time are poor. Most apprentices who stay on their programmes achieve but too many leave their programmes early; a few leave because they are made redundant.
- Apprentices progressively develop satisfactory skills towards industry standards such as in machining, plastering and computer programming. Not all current apprentices make satisfactory progress and a significant number of building and construction learners are making slow progress. A small number of apprentices fail to fulfil their full potential.
- Apprentices work confidently on different activities with a minimum of supervision from their employers. Learners' written work in portfolios is satisfactory, although the quality and the range of evidence are not always good. Apprentices use appropriate personal protective equipment and adopt excellent safe working practices because of the strong focus of trainers and assessors on health and safety.
- Information and communication technology apprentices develop a good range of skills in computer programming languages and construct good websites as the result of working for a good employer who is also a subcontractor. Many motor vehicle maintenance learners feel confident to take responsibility in their work placements, for example, in carrying out basic repairs with minimum supervision.
- Success rates of apprentices aged 16 to 18 are lower than of those of older apprentices. NWTC has recruited too few learners from different heritage groups, disabled learners, or women to compare their outcomes with those achieved by learners overall.
- Apprentices develop satisfactory personal, employability and problem-solving skills through the effective support and guidance of trainers and assessors. Trainers and assessors do not sufficiently motivate learners to develop independent learning skills. Too many learners do not sufficiently reflect on their progress towards their training plan or suggest a new plan when they make slow progress.
- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Learners work well together and respect their differences. However, not all apprentices have a good enough understanding of relevant equality and diversity issues.
- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of progression routes and the local employment opportunities. A satisfactory number of apprentices have gained promotions with their employers or have achieved national awards.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. The decline in the volume of good teaching and learning since the previous inspection has contributed to a significant decline in the outcomes for apprentices, which are inadequate. Currently, most teaching, learning, assessment and reviews make a satisfactory contribution to the progress of current learners although a significant minority of learners are still making slow progress.
- Many learners benefit from good care and individual support from their trainers and assessors which make a good contribution to their progress. Not all are challenged or motivated sufficiently. Arrangements overall to monitor and take prompt actions to

improve participation and progress are not effective and too many learners leave their programmes early or make slow progress.

- In the best sessions, trainers organise relevant practical learning activities to help learners develop good practical skills and to extend their knowledge and problem-solving skills. A customer-service apprentice skilfully demonstrated good skills in washing and blow-drying a client's hair while also looking after new customers. The weaker sessions are poorly organised with insufficiently varied learning activities to encourage learners to make good progress.
- Trainers and assessors have appropriate teaching and assessor qualifications and good industrial experience. Not all trainers use technology to enliven their teaching and not all learners have sufficient access to technology to support their independent learning. Workshops and learning resources are satisfactory and trainers focus appropriately on health and safety in these venues, which has contributed to learners' high levels of awareness of safe working practices.
- Trainers and assessors do not always plan for and record individual learning to help steer learners successfully through their learning programmes. Trainers and assessors do not encourage learners to develop their independent learning skills, such as learners reviewing their own progress or suggesting new plans when their progress is slow. Plans developed for new learners in the current year are more thorough but few identify specific learning objectives for individuals.
- Arrangements to identify the additional support needs of all learners through initial assessment are improving but are not consistently effective. In some cases, trainers and assessors do not offer learners additional support until after learners' programmes start. In workshops and training sessions, trainers pay particular attention to meeting learners' additional learning needs and provide satisfactory support.
- Assessment practices in learning sessions are satisfactory and help learners to improve their work. Assessors encourage learners to use a variety of different forms of evidence in well-organised portfolios, including photographs recorded on mobile telephones and witness testimony from supervisors. Not all assessment practice enables learners to complete their portfolios on time.
- Constructive feedback from trainers and assessors ensures that most learners are generally aware of their progress and what they need to do to improve further. Most trainers and assessors at progress reviews inform learners in detail about their progress but not all employers are sufficiently involved.
- Managers, trainers and assessors have introduced improved arrangements to ensure that learners can successfully achieve their functional skills. Trainers and assessors help learners improve their English and mathematics but functional skills are not sufficiently integrated into vocational learning activities and do not feature sufficiently in lesson plans. Not all trainers and assessors have sufficient knowledge to help learners improve their English and mathematical skills.
- Prior to joining, experienced staff provide learners with satisfactory information and advice and options to ensure that they have chosen the correct programme. Trainers offer constructive advice to learners on interviewing techniques, working safely and moving to higher-level qualifications. Trainers, assessors and support staff offer good support to learners on personal issues and in finding another employer if they are made redundant.
- Trainers and assessors do not extend learners' understanding of equality and diversity in sufficient depth through learning activities. Some learners have a good grasp of equality and fairness and are able to comment critically and confidently on their rights and responsibilities. The discussion of equality topics in reviews often lacks depth and detail.

Engineering**Apprenticeships****Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment overall requires improvement. Although trainers and assessors have made some improvements to teaching and learning which have contributed to better success rates in the current year, the majority of sessions include little variation in teaching methods, poor use of questioning techniques to check individuals' understanding and insufficient planning for individual learning. These weaknesses have contributed to apprentices' inadequate overall success rates and poor success rates within the planned time.
- In the good or better sessions, trainers use their experience to plan learning activities that fully involve learners. They link theory and practice effectively and, because of this approach, apprentices successfully apply their knowledge to their work and compare and contrast different working practices competently. Apprentices explain complex engineering processes confidently.
- Not all trainers plan sufficiently for individuals' learning. Although trainers and assessors have a satisfactory knowledge of learners' progress, too often learners do not have written, clear and measurable targets. Trainers do not sufficiently encourage learners to develop independent learning.
- Most learners undertake a satisfactory initial assessment that includes diagnostic testing to determine a suitable level of the programme. However, not all learners who can benefit from this test undertake the assessment. Learners identified as requiring additional learning support do not currently receive planned support, relying mainly on help from assessors. A tutor has recently been appointed to support identified learners.
- Assessors review apprentices' progress regularly. Many apprentices have workplace mentors to support their training and progress. However, trainers and assessors do not set clear short- and long-term learning goals, and too often employers do not attend learners' progress review meetings.
- Assessors arrange assessments in the workplace at convenient times for learners and employers. However, not all assessors plan in sufficient detail to ensure all learners make the necessary progress to complete their portfolios before the planned end date. Assessors do not plan adequately for the full range of evidence that learners require.
- Learners' portfolios are generally well organised and include a good range of evidence including their application of knowledge, photographs of completed tasks and design calculations. Most assessors provide good written feedback about the evidence in the portfolios and any improvements which are required.
- Trainers and assessors support learners with English and mathematics to help them to progress in their training. However, trainers and assessors do not extend all learners' levels of English and mathematics. Trainers and assessors do not review and record learners' English and mathematics development.
- All apprentices complete a well-planned induction programme introducing them to the programme structure; their rights and responsibilities; and equality and diversity matters. The assessors maintain regular contact with learners and employers in the workplace to advise, support and inform individuals of training needs and developments such as additional customised units and progression opportunities to higher education.
- Assessors and trainers satisfactorily promote equality and diversity during learners' workplace review sessions. Assessors use a range of questions to stimulate discussion and extend learners' understanding. Not all trainers and assessors include a sufficiently broad range of relevant discussions on equality and diversity issues in teaching, training and

coaching sessions.

Construction Crafts Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. The procedure to monitor learners' progress, attendance and retention, and take prompt action to address problems is ineffective. Too many learners have left their programmes early or have made slow progress resulting in inadequate overall success rates and success rates within the planned time.
- Assessors and trainers do not systematically monitor and take effective and prompt actions to identify learners who are at the risk of leaving their programmes early. Although they record the progress of learners, too often trainers and assessors fail to take effective action to improve the slow progress of many learners.
- Learners' progress reviews are weak. Employers are often not present at progress review meetings and generally do not contribute to the setting of learning goals.
- In the better sessions, trainers use their experience effectively and use examples to enliven their training. Trainers routinely check learners' knowledge and skills through effective use of observation of learners' practical tasks and questioning techniques.
- In the weaker sessions, trainers do not provide effective individual learning. The quality of individual learning plans is too variable and often weak. In the weaker plans, trainers do not include sufficiently detailed short- and long-term targets, the plans are not updated with learners' progress and learners find the targets unrealistic and unclear.
- Trainers and assessors use the workshop facilities to plan and deliver their training. They discuss extensively health and safety issues with learners and discuss good health and safety practices. However, the plumbing workshop is not adequately organised.
- Most learners undertake a satisfactory initial assessment which includes diagnostic testing to determine their English and mathematics levels. Trainers and assessors support learners satisfactorily to progress through their qualifications.
- Assessors arrange assessments in the workplace at convenient times for learners and employers. Learners' portfolios include a wide range of satisfactory evidence, including photographic evidence. Assessors and trainers give constructive feedback on practical aspects of learners' work during training sessions.
- Some learners' portfolios include a high standard of work. However, assessors do not usually correct spelling and grammatical errors and do not provide sufficient feedback on how learners can improve their writing skills.
- Managers have made some improvements to provide better English and mathematics for apprentices, such as recruiting a tutor. Trainers and assessors support learners in English and mathematics, but they are not qualified to extend learners' skills in these subjects.
- Trainers provide satisfactory advice and guidance at induction. Much of the advice and guidance with trainers and assessors offered during the programmes is informal and not recorded. Not all employers sufficiently support and encourage learners' progress to further learning.
- Trainers and assessors discuss with learners their rights and responsibilities at work. Assessors discuss briefly equality and diversity matters at reviews; often they do not make equality and diversity relevant to learners' life and work.

The effectiveness of leadership and management**Inadequate**

- The overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate. Managers, trainers and assessors have too little focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring that as many learners as possible achieve their qualifications.
- Managers and staff use partnerships to good effect to extend opportunities for learners and recruit from under-represented groups. Learners benefit from gaining practical experience and employment through successful initiatives including those with social enterprises and community housing. They work effectively with local schools to increase the recruitment of under-represented learners in apprenticeship programmes.
- Monitoring of staff performance is weak. Appraisals are not linked to the quality of teaching and learning nor to the success of learners. Managers and staff have paid insufficient attention to identifying and addressing the causes of declining overall success rates and success rates within the planned time.
- The board of NWTC has recently recruited individuals from local industry and business and recognises some of the weaknesses identified by inspectors. However, the board does not receive vital reports and information on the performance of staff and learners needed to enable the level of analysis and challenge to managers that are required to improve the provision. The links between strategic and business plans, self-assessment and quality improvement and data analysis are very weak.
- NWTC does not have a clear strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The observation of teaching and learning is ineffective and does not cover all aspects of learners' experience. Too few staff have been observed since 2011 and subcontractors are not included. Managers do not analyse the outcomes of observations, identify any performance trends nor develop clear action plans to bring about improvements. Senior managers and the board do not receive reports about the overall outcomes of the observation of teaching and learning processes.
- Planning for future development is inadequate. There is no clear strategy to monitor and improve all stages of the learning process across all provision, including that provided by subcontractors. The audit process does not focus on the quality of the experience of learners and too many staff do not recognise their role and responsibility for quality improvement.
- NWTC's response to the previous inspection has been weak and learners' outcomes have declined. Self-assessment is weak, does not include subcontracted provision, and does not recognise key weaknesses identified by inspectors nor lead to effective quality-improvement planning.
- The identification and monitoring of learners' progress are weak. NWTC does not have a reliable and effective system to set and monitor clear milestones of learners' progress and alert assessors and trainers when intervention is needed to support learners. Managers do not monitor the performance of different groups of learners, including those in subcontractors, nor trends in performance by trainers and assessors.
- Management of subcontractors is incomplete. NWTC supports some subcontractors well, for example through regular monthly compliance audits. Overall, managers have too little focus on quality improvement and provide too few opportunities for subcontractors to meet and share practice. Managers have paid insufficient attention in some cases to ensure that the subcontractors have all relevant validation and systems in place before recruiting learners.
- Employers, including some from high profile industries, value the very effective working relationships with managers and staff from NWTC. This communication results in responsive, flexible provision that promotes good development of skills and meets industry

needs. Despite effective working between staff, curriculum management requires improvement to ensure that systematic planning, monitoring and reviewing contribute effectively to high-quality teaching and learning.

- The response to issues that may influence the well-being or safety of learners is excellent. Managers and staff respond swiftly and effectively to reports about bullying or harassment. However, equality and diversity do not feature prominently in strategic plans or in the limited quality monitoring of the provision. Staff have not received recent training in equality and diversity.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners including those with subcontractors. Attention to the health and safety of learners, particularly in engineering and construction, is excellent.

Record of Main Findings (RMF 2012)**North West Training Council****Learning types:****Apprenticeships**

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	4	4
Outcomes for learners	4	4
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	4	4

Subject areas graded for quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	3
Construction crafts	3

Provider details

Provider name	
Inspection dates	17–21 September 2012
Lead inspector	Shahram Safavi HMI
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18 and 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year 2010/11	967
CEO	Paul Musa
Date of previous inspection	17 June 2010
Website address	www.nwtc.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Apprenticeship level	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher
Number of apprentices	157	432	54
Age of full-time learners	14-16	16-18	19+
Total by age	0	366	277
Number of part-time learners	0		
Number of main sites	2		
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)		
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following 11 subcontractors: ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Alt Valley Community Trust ■ Annette Barnes Consultancy Limited ■ Bright Future Software Limited ■ Deeside College ■ Dianthas Limited ■ Knowsley Community College ■ Liverpool Community College ■ SB Training (UK) Limited ■ Total People ■ Wigan & Leigh College ■ Yale College 		

¹ The main subcontractors only

Additional socio-economic information

NWTC operates from Bootle, Merseyside. It recruits learners from a wide geographical area which includes: Cheshire; Merseyside; Greater Manchester; and north and mid Wales. The company provides training for around 370 employers, the majority of which are small- to medium-sized engineering and construction employers; a number are national employers. More recently, NWTC has started to provide training for employers that are involved in health and social care, information and communication technology and customer services.

Information about this inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the director of operations as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners and employers. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. These views are reflected throughout the report. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Subject inspectors looked in detail at a sample of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

What inspection judgements mean

Provider		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding provider is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its learners' needs. This ensures that learners are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good provider is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its learners' needs. Learners are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A provider that requires improvement is performing less well than it might be reasonably expected in one or more of the key areas. This provider will receive a full inspection 12-18 months after the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A provider that is inadequate is one where the provider is failing to give its learners an acceptable standard of education and/or training and the provider's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the provider. This provider will receive a re-inspection within 12-15 months after the date of this inspection.

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