

# North West Training Council

## Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 53615

**Name of lead inspector:** Mike White HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 24–25 April 2013

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Dunnings Bridge Road  
Bootle  
Merseyside  
L30 6XT

**Telephone number:** 0151 5230808

## Re-inspection Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

### Context and focus of visit

North West Training Council (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.

Ofsted inspectors conducted a monitoring visit in April 2013 to explore the progress being made against the recommendations of the last inspection in September 2012. At that inspection quality of teaching, learning and assessment were judged to require improvement. Overall effectiveness, effectiveness of leadership and management, and outcomes for learners were judged to be inadequate. The two subjects inspected, engineering and construction crafts, were both judged to require improvement.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit which were the areas for improvement at the last inspection.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

<b>What progress has been made in developing and implementing a comprehensive quality improvement system that is fully inclusive of all the provision, including subcontractors and all aspects of learning?</b>	<b>Reasonable progress</b>
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At the previous inspection quality systems and subcontractor management were weak. Since the inspection NWTC has separated the roles of quality improvement role and subcontractor monitoring role to provide sharper focus on each activity.

Quality improvement now provides a stronger focus on the quality of the learner experience rather than contract compliance. Identified areas for improvement lead to targeted staff development or to reviewing and adjusting programme delivery. The use of learner feedback to inform quality improvement has been improved through redesigning questionnaires and introducing learner forums, although the NWTC recognises the need to strengthen the collection and use of employer feedback. The revised observation of teaching and learning process is beginning to have an impact on improving teaching, learning and assessment. It is too early yet to fully judge how effective the new quality improvement arrangements will be.

Two monthly monitoring meetings have been introduced. One meeting focuses on contract compliance and the other on learner progress and the quality of the learner experience. Support for subcontractors and opportunities for them to meet to share practice has improved

NWTC has recognised that self-assessment has previously been management led and greater staff ownership is planned for the preparation of the next self-assessment report in the summer. Staff development on the new Common Inspection Framework has been planned but not yet delivered. Different approaches to strengthening employer and learner involvement in the self-assessment processes are currently being evaluated.

### **Outcomes for learners**

<b>What progress has been made in increasing success rates and implementing effective systems to reduce the proportion of learners that leave their programme early or do not complete within the planned timescales?</b>	<b>Reasonable progress</b>
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Following the decline in success rates for 2010/11 identified in the previous inspection the decline was reversed in 2011/12 and success rates improved to slightly below national averages. This improvement was against a picture of declining national averages in 2011/12. However, the overall improvement masks differences in the performance of different subjects, with success rates for construction learners on intermediate apprenticeships continuing to decline in 2011/12. For those learners on other workplace learning provision, success rates declined in 2011/12 from a very successful position in 2010/11 to well below national averages. In the current year the number of learners on workplace learning provision has decreased and they now only make a small minority of learners.

Since the previous inspection NWTC has implemented a range of actions intended to further improve success rates. These include improved selection and recruitment procedures, earlier use of initial and diagnostic assessment to identify learners' support needs, improved tracking of learner progress, attendance and timekeeping, monthly risk banding of all learners based on progress being made and targeted support for those learners closest to their planned end dates.

Data provided during the monitoring visit for the current year indicate improvements in the number of early leavers, reduction in the number of unfunded learners and improved attendance. However, apprenticeship success rate predictions for 2012/13, whilst indicating continued improvement, show them remaining close to, although above, national averages.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **What progress has been made in improving the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment?**

### **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection too much teaching and training was dull and trainers did not sufficiently plan for individual learning or use technology to enliven their teaching.

Since the inspection, NWTC has developed a detailed strategy with clear and specific aims and objectives to improve the use and availability of information learning technology for teaching, learning and assessment. NWTC has purchased a good range of information learning technology equipment and software. Most teaching classes have good access to technology and trainers and tutors increasingly using this technology more effectively. Tutors have significantly improved the use of a virtual learning environment. Tutors often encourage learners to use the virtual learning environment to extend their learning further.

Tutors have attended training and staff development sessions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As the result of this development, tutors now use questioning techniques effectively to check learners' understanding and the involvement of learners during lessons has improved. The revised observation of teaching and learning is beginning to improve teaching practices through tutors having a better understanding of aspects of their practices which are effective or require improvement. However, although improved from the previous inspection, not all individual learning plans are sufficiently detailed or their purpose or fully understood by learners.

### **What progress has been made in developing learners' understanding and knowledge of equality and diversity through teaching, training and learning activities?**

### **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection, tutors and trainers did not extend learners' understanding of equality and diversity in sufficient depth through learning activities.

Since the inspection, tutors and trainers have received training in embedding equality and diversity in teaching, training and learning processes, and further training is planned. On most lessons observed during the monitoring visit tutors promoted effectively equality and diversity during sessions. During progress reviews trainers now discuss and check more effectively learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Links with a local charity has provided good project work for higher-level learners to design and produce specially adapted wheelchairs for playing wheelchair hockey.

The lesson observations carried out most recently comment on the impact of equality and diversity discussions within the sessions observed. However, inspectors agreed

with the NWTC's review of its lesson observations findings that the monitoring of the promotion of equality and diversity is not yet systematic or consistent. The service recognises that more needs to be done to ensure that all staff fully embed equality and diversity within their teaching and learning sessions effectively.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

<b>What progress has been made in improving the performance management of staff?</b>	<b>Reasonable progress</b>
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At the previous inspection performance management was weak. Following the inspection NWTC identified which aspects of performance management would have the largest impact on learner progress and prioritised this development.

The tracking of learner progress has been strengthened and monthly one-to-one case load reviews introduced where learner progress is monitored against each aspect of the apprenticeship framework and a risk rating applied. However, whilst actions to address slow progress are clearly identified at these meetings and having an impact on improving learner progress, the approach to recording actions is currently too fragmented to provide a clear overview of them for each learner.

The staff appraisal process and documentation have been reviewed and redesigned to provide a sharper focus on key aspects of staff performance. Key performance indicators are being developed for the different roles in the provider to provide a robust and transparent approach to staff performance management. The new process and documentation has been piloted but following the consequent evaluation is currently being amended to address some issues before its full implementation in the summer of 2013.

<b>What progress has been made in ensuring that North West Training Council's board receives sufficient information and data about the performance of learners and staff to support and challenge senior managers effectively?</b>	<b>Significant progress</b>
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At the previous inspection, the NWTC board did not receive sufficient information on the performance of learners to enable the level of analysis and challenge to managers that are required to improve the provision.

Senior managers now provide the board with extensive and detailed information about the most significant aspects of learners' performance and the organisation's progress in responding to the last inspection's findings. The information that the board receives include learners' success rates with clear comparison to national averages and previous performance, and learners who are making slow progress or have passed their completion date. The board uses the information very efficiently to support and challenge managers to tackle performance issues at NWTC. As the result of the good information which the board now receives, board members are more

assertive and ambitious for the organisation to improve the quality of its provision, for example, they have allocated significant funds to improve staff training and use of technology.

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