

North West Community Services Training Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		3–7 June 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Though many learners have significant barriers to learning, most are making good progress relative to their starting points.
- Learners significantly develop their confidence, self-esteem and employability skills. Many progress onto higher-level courses or further training. Most became valued employees and many acquire increased workplace responsibilities.
- Most teaching and learning sessions are good. The observation of teaching and learning scheme has helped to improve the quality of learning sessions and of assessment practice.
- Tutor assessors provide high quality support which helps learners to achieve. They know their learners well and demonstrate flexibility and passion to help them achieve their goals.
- Learners demonstrate good independent learning skills. They reflect thoughtfully on their professional practice and make good links between classroom learning and the workplace.
- Managers have a clear strategic vision focused on improving the lives of people in the most disadvantaged communities. Learners and employers comment very favourably on the benefits of training.
- Rigorous performance-management arrangements have helped to raise success rates and improve the overall quality of provision.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough learners complete their training programme within the planned timescales.
- Not enough teaching and learning is yet outstanding.
- Though it is an inclusive process, self-assessment is insufficiently critical. The self-assessment report accurately identifies the company's key strengths, but it does not give sufficient weight to areas for improvement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Continue to apply rigorous performance-management procedures to ensure that the proportion of learners who complete within the planned timescales rises to above the national rate.
- Support tutor assessors to develop and use a wider range of teaching and learning methods that engage and enthuse learners.
- Ensure that tutor assessors set suitably challenging targets, especially for the more-able learners.
- Strengthen the self-assessment process so that it gives sufficient weight to areas for development, as well as to strengths, when deciding key judgements.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Success rates on intermediate and advanced-level apprenticeships in 2010/11 and 2011/12 were below national rates and only a minority of learners completed their programme within the planned period of study. In-year data for 2012/13 shows that success rates have risen to well above national rates, though the proportion of learners who complete within planned timescales remain too low. In-year retention is good.
- Learners have significant barriers to learning and tutor assessors work with each learner individually to identify and overcome these difficulties. Consequently, current learners are making good progress relative to their starting points. The progress and achievement of learners is consistently good, as recorded in their individual learning plans.
- Managers carry out regular analysis of achievement, success and retention across the range of apprenticeship programmes. They identify the small gaps that exist in performance between different groups of learners and take appropriate actions to minimise these disparities.
- Learners significantly develop their confidence, self-esteem and employability skills. They enjoy their learning and the wider social and economic opportunities their enhanced confidence gives them. They gain confidence and develop new skills, which improve their employability, such as teamwork, client care and vocationally-relevant additional qualifications.
- The company is successful in recruiting a high proportion of learners from disadvantaged communities in north Liverpool and Manchester. Good partnership with a wide range of care and early years providers helps learners to gain valuable employability and job search skills.
- Tutor assessors provide good support to improve learners' English and mathematics skills. Learners become confident in applying literacy and numeracy in the home and work context. They also develop sound personal learning and thinking skills which help them to become confident and independent employees.
- Progression onto higher-level courses, employment, training or further education is good. The company has begun to improve the accuracy of its data on learner destinations. This data shows that internal progression for learners from intermediate to advanced level is good. The majority of learners remain in employment after their apprenticeship. Many acquire increased responsibilities at work. A few go on to pursue higher education programmes.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Tutor assessors provide good support for learners to promote their confidence and to enable them to be more effective in their job roles. Employers report that learners demonstrate this increased confidence in their professional practice. Most learners become better able to deal effectively and professionally with service users.
- Tutor assessors provide good encouragement to learners to take responsibility for completing their qualification. They receive encouragement to set themselves challenging targets and to choose whether to take particular tests and when. Tutor assessors further promote independent learning by actively encouraging learners to work through workbooks and tasks on their own. Learners demonstrate a good ability to reflect on their learning and professional practice.
- Tutor assessors plan sessions well. Lesson plans and schemes of work are clear, detailed and most pay close attention to individual learners' needs. The company's recently strengthened arrangements for observation of teaching and learning have contributed significantly to improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- In the best learning sessions, tutor assessors regularly check learners' understanding of their written answers through the use of appropriately challenging questioning. These sessions are lively and interactive. Tutor assessors make clear links between classroom teaching and professional practice. For example, in one session, the tutor assessor helped learners to apply the main elements of mental health legislation to practice in a care setting. In an early years session, learners developed specialist vocabulary and were able to apply their knowledge confidently to their work setting.
- In a minority of group sessions, tutor assessors rely too heavily on workbooks instead of using a wider range of learning resources to engage and enthuse learners. These sessions fail to effectively stretch and challenge the more-able learners fully.
- All learners receive an appropriate initial assessment to help North West Community Services Training Ltd (NWCS) determine the most suitable course and level for each learner. As a result most learners are on a course that matches their needs, abilities and interests. Most tutor assessors make good use of the outcomes of initial assessment to plan learning to meet individual needs. However, targets for learners in a minority of cases are insufficiently individualised. As a consequence, a few learners lack a clear understanding of what they have to do to achieve.
- NWCS staff have a good understanding of the progress that learners are making. Progress reviews are regular and thorough. The company has recently introduced a central tracking and recording system to monitor learners' progress. This has begun to have a positive effect on in-year success rates. The company's employment liaison officer has developed very good relationships with a wide range of employers in the care and early years sectors. As a result NWCS is able to provide a good range of supportive and sympathetic employers who work well with tutor assessors to monitor learners' progress, attendance and achievement.
- Tutor assessors provide constructive, detailed and useful feedback on learners' written work and practical assessments that helps them to understand what they have to do to achieve. However, a minority of tutor assessors do not write sufficiently individualised feedback on learners' work to help them improve.
- NWCS provides learners with good access to specialist tutors for English, mathematics and information and communication technology support, together with opportunities to attend workshops to support their development of these skills. Most tutor assessors integrate English and mathematics with the taught subject well. For example, in one class, the teacher made skilful use of the concept of ratio to help early years learners calculate nursery staffing ratios.
- NWCS interviews all learners before offering them a place on an apprenticeship or a pre-apprenticeship programme. Learners benefit from a group induction which clearly outlines the company's expectations, as well as providing realistic assessment of what the programmes involve. Assessors provide motivational guidance to encourage learners to progress to other

courses and employment. A significant number of learners progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships.

- All classes have very clear ground rules about appropriate behaviour and language in the classroom. Learners treat each with respect and courtesy. Taught sessions are motivating and engaging to learners from a wide range of different backgrounds. Tutor assessors make good use of their personal experience to inspire learners to achieve. NWCS nurtures respectful relationships between learners and assessors which contribute effectively to learners' progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- NWCS has a clear vision to improve the lives and employability of people from the most deprived areas of north Liverpool and Manchester. The culture of the company aims to raise aspirations and to set the highest standards irrespective of learners' backgrounds. Staff work hard to inspire learners to take positive action to become independent learners and thinkers and to develop professional knowledge, skills and attitudes for work.
- Following a period of poor performance some two years ago, senior managers carried out a restructuring of the company, which resulted in the removal of the middle tier of management and its replacement with a small team focused on performance management and raising standards. Clear lines of responsibility and accountability through individual target-setting have resulted in considerable in-year improvements in outcomes for learners and in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Measures to improve the overall quality of provision have been effective. A newly appointed quality manager and a team of quality assurance staff now support tutor assessors through a strengthened observation of teaching and learning scheme. The company has invested wisely in staff training for tutor assessors to help improve their professional practice. Most tutor assessors are now able to use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies to motivate and engage learners. Tutor assessors are better able to develop and support learners' skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology.
- Tutor assessors value the support and opportunities for personal development they receive through the observation of their teaching and learning, and are enthusiastic about the positive benefits to themselves and their learners. More rigorous performance management of tutor assessors through monthly individual meetings with senior managers has resulted in good in-year improvements in retention and success rates. The company closely aligns the annual staff appraisal targets with the quality improvement plan and with company-wide priorities.
- Learners are very positive about their experience of learning and the benefits of their programme. NWCS gains learners' views through questionnaires and discussions in focus groups. Recently, the company has set up a 'world café' which learners visited to share their thoughts and feelings about the quality of provision. NWCS makes good use of posters and wall displays to promptly report back to learners the actions it has taken to make improvements following feedback.
- Self-assessment is an inclusive process and most of the company's judgements about its performance match those of inspectors. However, the self-assessment report is descriptive in many places and too often it glosses over key areas for improvement.
- Employers express high levels of satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the company and the positive impact of the apprenticeship programme on the professional practice of learners. Employers report that NWCS tutor assessors are knowledgeable, reliable and responsive to their needs as well as to those of learners. The company makes good use of the views of stakeholders to determine its curriculum offer and to review the extent to which its current offer meets local needs.
- The company promotes equality, diversity and inclusion well. It works particularly effectively to provide learning and employment opportunities for the most disadvantaged people in the communities it serves. Marketing materials reflect a diverse society and the company monitors

participation and achievement of different groups. Appropriate actions are in place to narrow any identified achievement gaps.

- The company meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners, and takes appropriate measures to manage risk.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Early years and playwork	2

Provider details

North West Community Services Training Ltd	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 538
	Part-time: 0
Principal/CEO	Joan Furnival
Date of previous inspection	February 2010
Website address	www.nwcstraining.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	0	0	0	10	0	29	0	0
Part-time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	47	86	27	84	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Additional socio-economic information

The 2011 census records the city of Liverpool as having a population of 466,415, of whom 14% belong to a minority ethnic group compared with 19% nationally. Liverpool is the most deprived local authority area in England. Persistently high levels of deprivation, worklessness and multiple disadvantages characterise the city. The level of deprivation is particularly widespread in neighbourhoods in north Liverpool. Some 20% of people of working age are unemployed compared with a national average of 11.5%. The proportion of adults without a qualification at foundation, intermediate or advanced level is considerably higher than for England as a whole.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Jai Sharda HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the director of learning 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 online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded one sector subject area.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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