

Nacro

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Re-inspection Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Nacro is the largest crime reduction charity in the United Kingdom. Its education and training provision focuses on disadvantaged young people to stop them becoming involved, or further involved, in crime. In 2012/13 full- and part-time education programmes reached over 3,000 young people, three quarters of whom were aged from 16 to 18 years old and studying at or below foundation level. Almost half are young offenders or known to the youth justice system. Nacro runs study programmes from 38 centres across England. These replace Foundation Learning programmes which ceased at the end of July 2013.

At its previous inspection, in February 2013, inspectors judged that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment required improvement. Overall effectiveness, outcomes for learners, and the effectiveness of leadership and management were judged to be inadequate, as was the Foundation Learning programme.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Nacro made in improving the effectiveness of the self-assessment process and in implementing improvement plans?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, the self-assessment process had not been sufficiently robust in presenting the quality of provision accurately. Nacro was in the very early stages of implementing an improvement plan. Since then Nacro has extensively revised the self-assessment process. Data used when arriving at judgements are detailed and reliable. A new annual cycle of quality improvement and review provides better information about activity at course and centre level. Nacro recognises that the current draft of the self-assessment report may overestimate the impact of some remedial actions taken immediately following the inspection and is reviewing this for subsequent versions.

Improvement planning is thorough. A suitable post inspection action plan is well established. It directly addresses areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Its goals are carefully designed to ensure sustainable medium- and long-term changes which benefit learners, as well as short-term results. An accompanying 'headline impact' report contains a useful range of numerical targets. Regular updates of performance against these targets provide a clear indication of the impact of improvement activity. An effective operational plan focuses closely on detailed processes driving timely implementation of improvements.

Monitoring of the plans is rigorous. Senior leaders review progress weekly. A board comprising trustees, funding body and local authority representatives reviews progress monthly. Currently, all actions are complete or on track.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has Nacro made in raising success rates and ensuring learners achieve their planned learning objectives? Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, success rates were low, and declining, and too few learners were achieving their planned learning objectives. Since then Nacro has addressed the decline in success rates. Provisional data for 2012/13 show a small increase, particularly towards the end of the year. Nacro is awaiting the external verification of learners' assessments to confirm this trend further, but recognises success rates remain low. It is using its new management information system effectively to track performance and identify learners' support needs, but it is too early to see any impact on qualification achievement.

Nacro is currently reviewing and rationalising the qualifications it offers to improve delivery and outcomes through more focused deployment of staff and other resources. Within the review it is ensuring the qualifications it offers match entry criteria for college courses and that vocational awards are those employers recognise.

There has been a large improvement in the achievement of planned learning objectives. Provider data indicate that most leavers in 2012/13 achieved. Nacro has introduced more robust criteria for judging the achievement of key objectives by learners following the 16 to 18 study programmes. It has set a modest target for the achievement of these objectives for 2013/14.

How much progress has Nacro made in preparing learners effectively so they move onto further learning or employment? Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, too few learners moved onto further learning and employment. Appropriately, Nacro regards progression to these destinations as a key outcome for its learners. Progression rates have improved significantly since the inspection but remain low at 53% for 2012/13 overall. Progression rates at a small number of centres are far higher and the future of centres with particularly low rates is under review. In 2012/13, two thirds of progressions were into further education, reflecting the excellent links most centres have with further education colleges. Nacro is introducing a range of initiatives to increase the very small number of learners who progress into apprenticeships.

Employability training now forms part of all learners' programmes. A strong emphasis on personal and social development is helping learners to consider future options

confidently. A new nationwide engagement strategy is driving the development of effective links with national and other large employers. Centres are increasing their already good engagement with local employers and with other training providers. The volume and take up of work placements are improving, although vary between centres. Partnership arrangements with local authorities are strong. It is, as yet, too early to measure the full impact of these measures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

How much progress has there been in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that learners' development of English and mathematics skills is consistently good? **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection the development of learners' English and mathematics was variable. Since then Nacro has taken a range of appropriate actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment in this area.

Nacro has provided all tutors with well-received training through their 'Teach like a champion' programme. Training has focused appropriately on strategies to integrate the teaching of English and mathematics more effectively in learning sessions across the curriculum. Vocational courses now routinely include activities to develop these skills. In addition, learners following vocational courses also now attend classes in English and mathematics. English and mathematics tutors meet frequently with vocational teachers to ensure a coherent approach. In the better sessions that inspectors observed during the monitoring visit, learners developed their skills in contexts which were highly relevant to their vocational learning. Weaker sessions lacked such relevance and were not so effective.

The consistency of target setting on individual learning plans has improved. Tutors review learners' progress towards the targets regularly but do not always take sufficient account of them when planning sessions. Feedback learners receive on their written English work is frequent and effective, but Nacro recognises that assessment of mathematics work is not yet detailed enough.

How much progress has Nacro made in improving the rigour and focus of the teaching observation scheme to raise standards and improve the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment nationally? **Reasonable progress**

Following the previous inspection, Nacro identified weaknesses in how it observed learning sessions which routinely led to over-generous grading. It has used external support effectively to devise a much improved scheme. It has reduced the number of staff carrying out observations, and provided them with extensive and effective training for their role. These measures, coupled with sound moderation and standardisation arrangements, have substantially improved the accuracy of observers' judgements. In joint lesson observations during the monitoring visit,

judgements of Nacro observers were consistent with those of inspectors. The quality of written reports by Nacro observers is, however, variable and not always sufficiently evaluative.

Nacro has suitably prioritised improvement planning to support tutors whose sessions they grade as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. Tutors' improvement plans are generally clear, detailed and integrated well with performance management arrangements. Around a quarter of staff with such plans have either left or are leaving the organisation. Of the small number who have been re-observed so far, most have received an improved grade. From October 2013, Nacro has further revised the scheme. Re-observation of a tutor, following a session resulting in a low grade, is now suitably rapid. It is still too early to judge the impact on consistency and standards across Nacro as a whole.

Leadership and management

What progress has Nacro made in its use of management information and data to track learners' progress and identify gaps in performance between different groups? **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection, the management of data was poor, the tracking of learners' progress was weak and managers were not identifying gaps in achievement between different groups. Nacro recognised deficiencies in its collection, reporting and analysis of data, and has made good use of external expertise in developing a more robust and effective system. Managers and staff now have good access to, and regularly use, accurate data on learners' performance at national, area and centre level. The system regularly provides updates on progress against key performance indicators for each centre and the organisation as a whole. Tracking of individual learners' progress towards objectives, including attendance and punctuality, is routine and used effectively to identify learners needing extra support.

Nacro's data reports now identify clearly where performance gaps exist. Detailed reporting covers the achievement of different age groups, as well as progression and success rates by gender, ethnicity and offender status, and for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Analysis shows trends over the past three years. Although data show some success in narrowing achievement gaps, it is too early to see the full impact of recent analysis.

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