

# North West Training Council

## Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		11 – 15 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-4
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider requires improvement because:

- Outcomes for apprentices, although improved, remain below national averages for similar providers.
- Progress towards improving the rigour of the lesson observation system has been slow and the proportion of lessons requiring improvement remains too high.
- Marking and helpful feedback on written assessed work to assist apprentices' progress is insufficiently rigorous.
- Teachers are not confident enough to successfully promote diversity in lessons.
- The use of challenging, specific and measurable targets at both team and whole-provider level has not been implemented sufficiently well to promote rapid improvement.

### This provider has the following strengths:

- Apprentices develop good engineering skills.
- Good practical assessment in the workplace.
- Improving proportion of apprentices achieving merit or distinction on technical certificates.
- Apprentices feel safe, are treated fairly and work safely in the training environments.
- Good collaborative working with local community organisations to benefit both disabled and disadvantaged people.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for apprentices by making sure that:
  - lessons include appropriate pace and activity to challenge all learners
  - all teachers and trainers provide apprentices with helpful verbal and written comments on how to improve
  - the proportion of good or better lessons increases by ensuring that lesson observations are rigorous and provide staff with useful and challenging feedback to improve their practice.
- Make sure that training is effective in developing the confidence of all staff to promote diversity in engineering contexts.
- Ensure that quality improvement activities lead to rapid improvement by:
  - consistently using rigorous and challenging targets across the organisation
  - ensuring that all quality improvement action plans clearly identify the responsibilities of all staff and have specific and measurable success criteria
  - providing the board of trustees with timely and comprehensive information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcomes for learners require improvement. Engineering apprenticeship success rates, which account for the very large majority of apprentices, have improved since the previous inspection by over 13 percentage points and in 2012/13 the majority of apprentices successfully completed. However, they remain below national averages. Provider data for the current year indicate continued improvement.</li> <li>▪ For the few apprentices on subcontracted apprenticeship provision in information and communication technology, success rates were excellent in its first year of delivery in 2012/13. Success rates on motor vehicle apprenticeships have been consistently good over time and well-above national averages.</li> <li>▪ Success rates in construction and the subcontracted provision in health and social care, and business administration declined in 2012/13 to well-below national averages. A strategic decision was made to withdraw from this provision and from the use of subcontractors and to refocus the provision on the core business of engineering. This withdrawal from subcontracted provision was managed to reduce the impact on apprentices and the small remaining cohorts in 2013/14 are achieving well.</li> <li>▪ Attendance in engineering provision is high and punctuality is good and improving. Almost all apprentices who need to take English and mathematics qualifications successfully achieve them at their first or second attempt. The proportion of engineering apprentices achieving higher level passes on their technical certificates has increased from 15% in 2011 to 44% in 2013. The proportions of those apprentices leaving their apprenticeships early or who have extended beyond their planned end dates are decreasing year-on-year.</li> <li>▪ Apprentices develop good vocational skills and many perform complex and exacting activities within the workplace. For example, one apprentice has recently installed thermocouples within a container to enable designers to monitor temperature ranges within compartments. Encouragement from trainers and assessors also enables apprentices to develop their social and personal skills and increase their self-confidence.</li> </ul>	

- The majority of apprentices benefit from achieving additional vocational qualifications that are chosen in consultation with employers to provide personal and business benefits. The large majority of apprentices progress to higher national certificates. However, North West Training Council (NWTTC) recognises that they do not sufficiently collect other measures of progression such as, for example, promotion in the workplace or progression onto degree programmes.
- Apprentices have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work, and their behaviour towards colleagues and staff within the training centre provides an atmosphere of mutual respect. Good attention is given to health and safety, safe working practices, and the use of appropriate personal protective equipment because of the strong focus of trainers and assessors on health and safety.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. This is reflected in the outcomes for apprentices, which, while improving, were still below national averages in 2012/13.
- Apprentices develop good engineering skills in the centre workshops and in their workplaces. Teachers and trainers are effective in supporting the apprentices to become competent engineers. However, some learning activities, especially in theory and other discreet taught sessions, do not always meet the needs of the most able or those who find the work challenging.
- Where apprentices make most progress, theory and mathematics are carefully linked to vocational concepts. For example, in an engineering materials session, the apprentices successfully used phase diagrams and an understanding of the eutectic point to deepen their understanding of the characteristics of alloys such as Tinman solder.
- The pace of learning in some taught sessions is too slow and the teachers do not always sufficiently plan to meet the needs of all the apprentices. In addition, the teachers do not check that all the apprentices are making progress or that no one has fallen behind. This is especially noticeable where theory and mathematical concepts are not put into relevant engineering contexts.
- Where the apprentices are learning to use milling machines, computer-aided machines and other relevant engineering technologies they show great enthusiasm, make good progress and feel proud of their developing professional skills. Trainers support this progress by effectively checking apprentices' underpinning knowledge.
- Mentors, often informally, play an effective role in helping apprentices develop relevant vocational skills and provide guidance and support. Training officers form productive working relationships with apprentices and work well to place them on programmes which are appropriate to their needs and that also meet the needs of employers.
- Assessment in the workplace is good. Experienced assessors give apprentices clear indications of what is expected of them at the beginning of each assessment. The assessors ask pertinent questions to probe and confirm the apprentices' understanding of underpinning knowledge and safety issues.
- Teachers and trainers provide comprehensive verbal feedback to apprentices in the workplace which clearly indicates what they need to do to improve. However, they do not always record feedback in apprentices' reviews and assessed assignments. Where feedback is recorded, the comments are often too general and not specific enough to help the apprentices improve.
- Many apprentices do not develop literacy and numeracy skills much beyond those they have when they arrive. Apprentices' written work in portfolios is not routinely checked or corrected for spelling and grammar. Some marked work does not contain helpful comments on how to improve and mathematical concepts are not linked to relevant engineering examples.
- The workshops are well equipped with a wide range of traditional engineering equipment. Much of the equipment is old, but well maintained. Teachers and trainers reinforce health and safety procedures and regulations well and most risk assessments are up to date and kept centrally.

However, some of the workshop copies are out of date by several years and more care needs to be taken over document revision control.

- Apprentices feel safe in both the workplace and in the central training and workshop areas. Inspectors observed safe working practices during the inspection week.
- Teachers and trainers successfully help apprentices to develop good personal, social and employability skills. Most plan effectively to develop apprentices' broader thinking skills and to promote team working. In a minority of lessons, however, the teachers do not always use targeted questions to check learning. As a result, the progress of the class slows down when it becomes apparent that some apprentices do not understand concepts being discussed.
- Staff provide appropriate and timely initial advice and guidance to potential apprentices. While they use initial assessment effectively to diagnose apprentices' additional support needs, the results are not always used in taught programmes to support them to improve. During workplace visits, assessors provide useful information, advice and guidance to enable learners to progress.
- The promotion of equality is well developed across the engineering provision. However, teachers and trainers do not always capitalise upon naturally occurring opportunities in the workplace to develop apprentices broader understanding of diversity. Assessors, teachers and trainers do not demonstrate confidence in promoting understanding of diversity. Managers acknowledge that, despite professional development sessions on equality and diversity, more work needs to be done.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

### **Requires improvement**

- At the time of the previous inspection, a growth strategy increasing provision through the use of subcontractors had been poorly managed and led to poor success rates. NWTC have refocused their provision on developing the core activity of engineering and withdrawn from using subcontractors to deliver provision. The future development of provision is underpinned by a new strategic plan that is better linked to operational management.
- At the previous inspection the process for tracking apprentices' progress or identifying those apprentices at risk of leaving or not achieving successfully was ineffective. A much improved tracking process has been introduced and linked to monthly one-to-one staff supervision meetings to determine and implement appropriate support for at-risk apprentices. The proportion of apprentices leaving early and unsuccessfully has significantly reduced, although success rates remain below national averages.
- A greater range and depth of information is provided frequently to the board to enable them in their role of support and challenge, and board members have been given training to enable them to better carry out this role. A new chairperson and additional board members have recently been recruited to broaden the range of expertise, including one new member with significant expertise within education and training. However, information to the board has been largely focused on apprentice outcomes with insufficient focus on other aspects such as teaching, learning and assessment to ensure appropriate, timely and challenging actions being taken for their improvement.
- Performance management of staff, a weakness at the previous inspection, has improved with the introduction of key performance indicators, more rigorous staff appraisal and frequent one-to-one supervision meetings to discuss apprentices' progress. However, target-setting throughout the organisation remains an area for further improvement with too many targets insufficiently specific or measurable or not sufficiently challenging to ensure a rapid pace of improvement.
- The pace of progress to improve teaching, learning and assessment has been slow. A revised process for observing teaching, learning and assessment was introduced following the previous inspection but was insufficiently rigorous and led to an unrealistic picture of the quality. A further recent revision to the process and increased expectations are now providing a more

accurate picture, and, in joint observations during the inspection, findings of inspectors and internal observers were in agreement.

- A new head of operational quality has strengthened quality improvement activity, introducing a quality improvement calendar covering all aspects of the apprentices' journey. The process for collecting the reasons for any early leavers has also been reviewed and strengthened. The self-assessment process is inclusive of staff and uses apprentice and employer survey feedback. However the self-assessment report puts too much emphasis on improvement activities before their impact can be fully measured. The quality improvement plan does not clearly distinguish between the actions being taken and the success criteria, and responsibility focuses on managers rather than giving ownership of the actions to staff.
- Revised apprentice surveys provide a clearer focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and have been strengthened through the introduction of apprentice forums. However, the process for systematically analysing results to identify reasons for any apprentice concerns is not yet sufficiently well developed and the approach to action planning and monitoring improvements is fragmented.
- Staff are well qualified and have good industrial experience. Accommodation is in need of renovation and many workshop resources are old but well maintained. Computing facilities have recently been improved but some are still slow or unreliable.
- Close working with employers is effective in providing programmes that meet their needs and in particular NWTC provides for a niche training service in tool making. Some provision has been delivered to meet other local needs, for example, provision aimed at females and unemployed adults in a deprived area of Liverpool.
- The new strategic plan provides strong commitment to increasing participation by under-represented groups, a weakness at the previous inspection. Strong partnership with the Greenbank sports project to develop adapted wheelchairs for playing wheelchair hockey is very effective in raising apprentices' awareness of disability. A range of local partnerships to improve recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups and females have had modest success.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding apprentices. Apprentices benefit from some good promotion of healthy living, healthy eating and activities to promote sexual health. Very good attention to health and safety includes good attention to risk avoidance. Some apprentices improve working conditions for others by introducing new health and safety initiatives in the workplace.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	3
Motor Vehicle	3

## Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	16+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: N/A								
	Part-time: 1165								
Principal/CEO	Paul Musa								
Date of previous inspection	April 2013								
Website address	www.nwtc.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	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Part-time	NA	NA	NA	54	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+		
	42	12	226	108	2		39		
Number of learners aged 14-16									
Full-time	NA								
Part-time	NA								
Number of community learners	NA								
Number of employability learners	NA								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ City of Liverpool College</li><li>■ St Helens College</li><li>■ Wigan and Leigh College</li><li>■ Deeside College</li></ul>								

## Contextual information

NWTC operates from Bootle, Merseyside. It recruits learners primarily from the North West of England including Cheshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. The provider delivers engineering training for around 300 employers including both national and small- to medium-sized employers. At the time of the previous inspection NWTC offered apprenticeships in information and communication technology, business administration and health and social care through subcontracted arrangements. The provider no longer offers these apprenticeships. Construction apprenticeships were delivered directly by the provider at the time of the previous inspection. NWTC now operates as a subcontractor for CSkills to deliver these apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Mike White HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two 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 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 the sector subject areas listed in the report above.



## 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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