

North West Training Council

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		20 – 24 April 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-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:

- most apprentices complete their apprenticeship successfully in the planned timescale and progress to meaningful and relevant employment in their chosen career
- apprentices develop good vocational skills and knowledge which they apply well at work and to the benefit of their employers
- most apprentices study qualifications at a higher level than that required by their apprenticeship framework, enhancing their employment prospects and career opportunities
- tutors use the good resources at the training centre to provide good training in the theory and practice of engineering
- most apprentices develop good English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills
- through effective performance management, senior managers have eliminated most underperformance successfully and brought about significant improvements in learners' achievement
- the needs of local engineering employers are met well.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- progress reviews and target-setting are not good enough to promote even better progress and achievement among apprentices and to ensure that every apprentice completes on time
- a minority of theory teaching requires improvement
- assessment is not sufficiently well planned to make best use of assessors' and apprentices' time and to provide early indications of apprentices' development and achievements
- tutors and assessors do not promote or reinforce apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity adequately, particularly in the workplace
- the process for observing teaching, learning and assessment requires further improvement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the rate of progress for all apprentices by setting clear and challenging targets at review sessions and supporting apprentices to achieve them.
- Improve the assessment of apprentices' competence by increasing the number of direct observations of their performance in the workplace and using formative assessments more often in the early stages of training to contribute to their development plans.
- Eradicate the minority of less effective teaching and learning by continuing to develop tutors' skills through professional development and ensuring that tutors use effective strategies to aid apprentices' attainment of new knowledge.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity in training and review sessions to broaden learners' understanding in their work context.
- Improve the observation of teaching, learning and assessment to provide leaders and managers with a more precise and accurate understanding of the quality of provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- North West Training Council (NWTC) provides intermediate, advanced and higher apprenticeships, mostly in engineering and motor vehicle maintenance and repair. A very small number of apprentices are undertaking training as security alarm technicians. Around two thirds of apprentices are aged 16 to 18 years and the majority are studying at advanced level.
- Overall, apprenticeship success rates are high though the rate for the relatively small number of intermediate apprentices requires improvement. More apprentices succeed in the planned timescale than nationally. Most of the current apprentices are making good progress towards completing their qualification although a minority are not making the progress expected of them. The performance gap between men and women has narrowed and is now negligible. Apprentices from different groups achieve at similar rates.
- The majority of apprentices progress to, and achieve successfully, a higher level of qualification than is required for their apprenticeship. Attendance and timekeeping at lessons and practical workshops are good. Apprentices' behaviour at the training centre is exemplary.
- Apprentices produce work of a high standard, particularly in the workplace. The quality of practical work in the training centre is high and apprentices transfer these skills aptly to their workplace where they quickly develop the confidence and skill to operate complex and expensive equipment, install high-quality systems and carry out complex repairs and maintenance activities.
- Apprentices apply themselves well and enjoy their learning. They improve their subject knowledge and practical and critical thinking skills well. Apprentices develop confidence, communication skills and the ability to contribute positively to their workplace well.
- Almost all apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology at their first attempt. The standard of most apprentices' written work is good.
- All apprentices take up permanent, full-time employment on completion of their training. However, managers recognise that they do not have sufficient data to evaluate the impact of training on apprentices' further progression.

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

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and reflects the good outcomes apprentices achieve. Apprentices enjoy their learning and benefit from good care and support, which helps them to make good progress.
- NWTC staff and employers support apprentices well. Assessors visit the majority of workplaces regularly and provide effective individualised support in theory and vocational work. Apprentices develop good vocational and communication skills including the effective use of engineering-related mathematics. Informal support from workplace mentors encourages and motivates apprentices.
- In most theory lessons tutors develop the subject matter systematically, provide good individual support, make good use of helpful learning materials and assess learning through suitable questioning and written assessment. In an electrical installation lesson, the tutor developed apprentices' understanding of conduit capacity well using his own industry experience to illuminate the learning and frequent short assessments to check apprentices' progress.
- In a minority of theory lessons tutors do not explain the theory well enough and because assessment of learning is not sufficiently systematic, apprentices in these lessons do not make enough progress.
- In practical lessons, tutors engage apprentices' interest quickly through the use of interactive web-based quizzes; apprentices work diligently throughout their sessions, make good progress and develop good practical skills. Tutors use questioning effectively to assess and develop learning. Tutors challenge more able apprentices to make the progress expected of them by providing a good range of extension activities.
- Tutors monitor the progress that apprentices make towards the achievement of units of the qualification well in the centre. Apprentices have a good understanding of the progress they are making and what else they need to achieve. However, target-setting during progress reviews in the workplace is often too vague with insufficient focus on agreeing measurable learning outcomes to help improve performance and progress.
- The planning of assessment is inconsistent and does not always maximise opportunities for gathering evidence in the workplace. On a minority of advanced apprenticeship programmes, assessment is left too late, not starting until the final year of the programme.
- Apprentices' portfolios are orderly, presented well and contain a good standard of written work showing how apprentices undertake a range of relevant work in their companies. Assessors give apprentices good verbal feedback on what they need to do to improve both in the training centre and at work. However, written feedback is not always supplied and is often superficial. It does not summarise clearly the standard of apprentices' work sufficiently, nor does it inform them of what they need to do to improve further.
- Tutors promote and reinforce the importance of good written English skills well in the centre. The majority of tutors correct apprentices' spelling, punctuation and grammar and incorrect use of technical terminology. For example, in one report on dismantling and reassembling a motor, an apprentice was reminded that it was a motor he was working on, not a machine. Lists of technical vocabulary used in engineering are displayed in workshops and used to help apprentices improve their spelling. However, assessors do not always correct apprentices' written work in the workplace or promote the professional standard expected by employers.
- Recruitment officers provide apprentices with useful information, advice and guidance when they start their apprenticeships that enable them to make informed decisions about their career path and choose the most appropriate qualifications and employer to meet their aspirations. As a result, apprentices achieve well and progress to permanent roles with their employer following the completion of their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices feel safe in the training centre and within the workplace. All tutors and apprentices promote and reinforce high standards of health and safety in workshops. Apprentices routinely wear appropriate personal protective equipment and follow the instructions clearly displayed in

classrooms and workshops. Tooling and hand-held devices are stored away appropriately at the end of the session and workshop areas are kept clean at all times.

- Apprentices have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities with respect to equality and safeguarding, which are promoted well throughout the centre. However, in lessons and progress reviews, tutors and assessors fail to promote a deeper understanding of diversity and, as a result, apprentices lack knowledge of, for example, communication customs expected by clients and business owners from other cultures.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have aspirational and ambitious expectations for the achievement of their apprentices. Since the previous inspection they have been unremitting in their pursuit of, and attempts to eliminate, underperformance. Where underperformance by managers and tutors has been identified, this has been managed well. Three senior managers are now fully accountable to the chief executive for the impact of their managerial actions and for the tutors and assessors they manage.
- The newly appointed chairman of the board has a very good understanding of NWTC. The board monitors the impact of managerial changes and organisational performance very actively through, for example, fortnightly meetings with senior managers and monthly meetings with staff representatives. Currently, the board is under-resourced and is seeking new members with complementary professional expertise.
- Communication throughout the organisation has considerably improved and a much greater openness prevails. Managers keep staff fully informed about key priorities and ensure that they have every opportunity to contribute to the decision-making processes. Staff morale has improved and staff exhibit a strong commitment to the success of the organisation.
- Managers' close scrutiny of apprentices' progress is having a beneficial impact on improving overall success rates and the number of apprentices who complete on, or before, their planned end date. The learner tracking system has recently been developed but, as managers acknowledge, further improvements are required to be able to produce more detailed reports about all aspects of apprentices' achievements and progress.
- Tutors and assessors have undertaken a wide range of training to help them improve the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment. Overall, this is having a beneficial impact on improving the quality of the provision. However, there remains a small amount of underperformance, which managers are working hard to eliminate.
- Leaders and managers plan, establish and manage high-quality engineering apprenticeships successfully to meet the needs of the local and national engineering communities. They use close and effective partnership working with businesses of all sizes and industry bodies to promote the benefits of apprenticeships. For example, NWTC is piloting the new apprenticeship standard in automotive mechatronics, developed as part of the Government's trailblazer programme, with a prestigious national motor vehicle manufacturer.
- The promotion of inclusivity, equality and diversity for apprentices and staff is good. Apprenticeship programmes provide coherent and substantive courses of study at different levels to challenge, stimulate and enrich individual learners. There is little difference in the performance and experience of different groups. However, insufficient attention has been given to setting realistic, measurable and challenging targets, for example, for recruiting female apprentices and those from minority ethnic groups.
- Since the previous inspection, managers have strengthened quality assurance arrangements significantly but with variable impact. They have improved the self-assessment process and the judgements in the self-assessment report are based on a wide range of evidence including apprentices' and employers' feedback. The performance of subcontracted provision is managed well. The process for observing teaching, learning and assessment is not yet rigorous enough.

Overall, there is a mismatch between the grades awarded and the identified strengths and areas for improvement. Action planning following observation is not sufficiently detailed and specific to help tutors to improve further.

- Arrangements to support the development of all learners' English, mathematics and functional skills and support for learners with additional learning needs are effective. However, the development of professional and technical language skills in the workplace requires improvement.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good and meet statutory requirements. Leaders and managers regularly review arrangements to keep learners safe, which include a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week helpline. Apprentices feel safe in the training centre and on employers' premises. Most apprentices are aware of the dangers of the misuse of the internet and electronic communication devices and have a basic understanding of the dangers of terrorism, extremism and radicalisation.

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	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	NA	NA
Outcomes for learners	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	NA	NA
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	NA	NA
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	NA	NA

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	2
Motor vehicle	2

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	873							
Principal/CEO	Mr Paul Musa							
Date of previous inspection	November 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+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	25	5	174	113	4		4	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	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:	■ City of Liverpool College							

Contextual information

NWTC operates from Bootle, Merseyside. It recruits learners primarily from the North West of England including Cheshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. It delivers engineering training for around 300 employers including both national and small- to medium-sized employers. NWTC is taking part in the pilot of the new automotive mechatronics trailblazer apprenticeship in partnership with an international motor vehicle manufacturer.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Phil Romain HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of Operational Quality, HR and Administration 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 relevant 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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