

INSPECTION REPORT

North West Training Council

22 July 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of her majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

North West Training Council is a group training association based in Merseyside. It has 350 member companies mainly in Merseyside and Cheshire. There are advanced modern apprentices, foundation modern apprentices and learners on national vocational qualification (NVQ) training programmes. Most of the learners are working towards qualifications in engineering and others are working towards qualifications in construction.

Overall judgement

The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The training in engineering is satisfactory, but the training in construction is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

Construction	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- good, flexible off-the-job training
- additional qualifications gained by engineering learners
- wide range of on-the-job training
- good strategic management
- effective collaboration with employers
- good awareness of equal opportunities by staff and learners

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor retention rates
- insufficiently detailed targets at progress reviews
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities with employers

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of six inspectors spent a total of 24 days at North West Training Council (NWTC) in July 2002. Inspectors interviewed 69 learners and 37 staff. Twenty-eight workplaces were visited and 27 workplace supervisors were interviewed. Inspectors did not observe any learning sessions and no assessments or progress reviews were taking place at the time of the inspection. Inspectors examined learners' individual learning plans and portfolios of evidence. They also examined a wide range of other documents including the quality assurance manual, notes of meetings and external verifiers' reports. Inspectors studied the company's self-assessment report, which was produced in March 2002.

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. NWTC is a group training association with 350 member companies, mainly in Merseyside, south Lancashire and Cheshire. It was established in 1963 to deal with a shortage of engineering apprentices in Merseyside. It has since broadened its range of training programmes to include motor vehicle engineering and construction. NWTC also offers a range of commercial courses, including management and health and safety. Government-funded training accounts for approximately 70 per cent of NWTC's business. There are 475 learners. They are recruited by NWTC either by referral from the careers service or by companies that have recently employed them. Most of the learners are advanced modern apprentices. Three hundred and fifty-nine learners are on the engineering programmes and 116 are on construction programmes. NWTC is governed by a board of eight trustee directors, one of whom is a local authority councillor and the others are drawn from member companies. The training is funded by the learning and skills council (LSC) offices in Merseyside and Lancashire.

3. Southport and much of Cheshire are economically strong with low unemployment. Liverpool and the surrounding parts of Merseyside, such as Knowsley and parts of Sefton, have high unemployment rates and serious social problems. In April 2002, the unemployment rate in Liverpool was 7 per cent, in Knowsley it was 9.2 per cent and in Sefton it was 4.9 per cent. In Cheshire, the unemployment rate is 1.9 per cent, compared with 3.1 per cent nationally. Engineering, manufacturing and construction account for 18 per cent of employment in Merseyside. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups was 3.8 per cent in Liverpool, and less than 1 per cent in Cheshire, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 35.1 per cent in Liverpool and 27.1 per cent in Knowsley. In Lancashire it was 50.1 per cent and in Sefton 49.9 per cent, compared with 47.9 nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Work-based learning for young people is satisfactory in engineering. Off-the-job training is good and is provided in a flexible way to meet the needs of learners. Many learners gain additional qualifications and employers offer a wide range of on-the-job training. The retention rate is poor. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory in construction. There is close co-operation with employers and there are good resources for off-the-job training. Achievement and retention rates are poor and targets set during progress reviews contain little detail.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

5. NWTC is governed by a board of eight trustee directors, seven of whom are drawn from member companies. They meet four times each year to oversee the council's strategy. An executive management committee of three trustee directors and the chief executive meets every month to monitor the council's activities. The day-to-day management is the responsibility of the chief executive and he is assisted by a senior management team of two operational managers, a quality assurance manager and two commercial managers. The council employs 57 full-time staff and four part-time staff. Training officers are responsible for work-based learning. The two training centres are the bases for instructors who provide off-the-job practical training, key skills training and further education courses. Some of the learners attend further education courses at subcontracted colleges. NWTC has a recently updated business plan, an equal opportunities policy and quality assurance procedures. It is accredited with the Investors in People standard, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The council completed its third self-assessment report in March 2002.

STRENGTHS

- good strategic management
- good management information
- effective collaboration with employers
- good awareness of equal opportunities by staff and learners

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate management of subcontractors
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities with employers

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better monitoring of the strategies for improving retention rates

6. NWTC has recognised the need to change the culture of the organisation to meet its business objectives. The Investors in People standard has been used to bring about change by focusing on the development of its staff. Prior to Investors in People, the communications within the NWTC were poor and there was a lack of team working which impeded business developments. A business plan was produced with objectives which included the improvement of communications, better team working and the devolvement of managerial responsibility. A number of specific actions have been undertaken by the board of trustees to achieve these objectives. The chief executive

NORTH WEST TRAINING COUNCIL

meets with small groups of staff on an informal basis. Meetings of all staff are held where they are encouraged to contribute and ask questions of the managers. Cross-departmental meetings and meetings between sites are held to share good practice. Staff training is well supported.

7. NWTC has been in the forefront of initiatives to improve retention rates in work-based learning in Greater Merseyside. The chief executive of the council is leading a working party in association with a local learning partnership to investigate the causes of learners leaving early in Sefton. The council is working with other organisations in Greater Merseyside to develop a comprehensive handbook for learners to help them cope with personal and social problems, such as homelessness, which cause them to leave early. NWTC has also recognised the need to improve the retention rates of its own learners and has taken action. The initial assessment of all learners has been introduced and key skills is introduced to learners at an early stage.

8. NWTC has good management information. It has developed a powerful database which produces many reports. Some of these are effective, such as the information to plan and monitor case loads of staff. There is good information on the reasons for learners leaving their programme early. Monitoring of progress in off-the-job training is sound. The management information is readily available but managers are not using the information to monitor improvements in retention and achievement rates resulting from the actions taken.

9. NWTC has a well-established relationship with a large network of employers in Merseyside, Cheshire and Lancashire. There are 350 member companies. Some employers have used NWTC for their training for 25 years and many of the supervisors and managers have been trained at NWTC. The employers collaborate with NWTC in a range of activities. NWTC is responsive to requests by employers for relevant training. For example, the further education part of the apprenticeship frameworks was transferred from subcontractors to the training centres to improve the standard and to link it more closely with the on-the-job training.

10. The management of subcontractors is inadequate and this was identified in the self-assessment report. NWTC subcontracts part of the training to 10 further education colleges, although only 51 of the learners attend subcontracted training. A written agreement has been produced but three of the seven subcontractors have not signed it. Unsatisfactory practices have not been noticed. For example, some learners have not been registered for their awards until a late stage and there have been delays in assessment, which have held up the progress of learners.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

11. Learners and staff at NWTC have a good awareness of equal opportunities. An extensive policy is included in staff and learners' handbooks. The council's commitment is evident in the literature and promotional material. All of the staff have recently been trained in equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy is reviewed each year to ensure that it complies with the most recent legislation. Equal opportunities data are analysed and used to target recruitment activities. The chief executive regularly analyses the management information relating to participation by under-represented groups. Action is taken to promote training to under-represented groups, such as making a presentation to an all-girls school on careers in engineering and construction. Targets have been established for increasing participation by under-represented groups. Learners receive an introduction to equal opportunities during their induction and this is reinforced by including information, and testing the understanding of learners at the progress review meetings. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities including bullying and harassment and the rights of people who have a disability.

12. NWTC does not adequately promote equal opportunities with employers. The council provides employers with a policy if they do not already have one, but implementation is not checked. The existing policies of employers are not checked to ensure that they meet the needs of learners employed by the company. When equal opportunities is raised with learners at progress review meetings it is not raised with their employers. NWTC does not adequately challenge the display of materials in workshops which may cause offence to women. There has been one instance where a learner was relocated to another employer and the training contract terminated with the employer after a serious breach of NWTC's equal opportunities policy.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

13. NWTC has a good system for the evaluation of employers' views. In addition to regular consultation and communication by training officers, an annual evaluation is carried out by postal questionnaire to all work placement providers. The returns are analysed and they show a high level of satisfaction by employers. Specific comments sometimes identify lapses. For example, a number of employers could not remember receiving the employers' handbook and this was quickly remedied. Evaluation of learners' experience is carried out each year and leads to improvements in the training. For example, after adverse comments about the quality of some off-the-job training sessions, an additional member of staff was made available to support the training.

14. Self-assessment has contributed to the cultural change within NWTC. Small teams compiled each section of the report. Each team includes staff from each level and role within the organisation. One member of the team is always independent of the rest of the subject area to ensure honest and critical feedback. Although inspectors identified additional weaknesses, the process has helped staff to understand some of the problems facing the organisation.

15. The quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. Quality assurance of subcontractors is weak. A quality assurance questionnaire is given to subcontractors to help identify any problems in training, assessment or verification. Copies of key documents, such as recent external verifiers' reports are requested, but there is no system to follow up any problems. The procedure for internal verification has recently been given out. In engineering, internal verification has identified the lack of assessment by direct observation in the workplace, although guidance was given in early 2002. The proportion of assessments by this method is still very small. An audit system is being established which concentrates on contractual points, such as the frequency of the reviews, rather than the quality of the reviews. It has not picked up the lack of targets in the progress reviews. The action plan which followed the previous inspection contained many areas which are still weaknesses, although some progress has been made. There is no record of action-planning being used as a mechanism for continuously managing the process of improvement. Similarly, self-assessment has not been a regular feature of quality assurance.

Poor Practice
<i>An external verifier reported, in October 2001, that the range of assessment evidence in learners' portfolios is too narrow. The internal verifier wrote to all assessors requesting them to carry out more assessments by observation. There has been no significant increase in the number of assessments by observation.</i>

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	116	4

16. NWTC has 116 learners on construction training programmes. There are 94 advanced modern apprentices, 18 foundation modern apprentices and four are on NVQ programmes. The training programmes with the largest number of learners are plumbing with 45, electrical installation with 37, and carpentry and joinery with 12. The other learners are being trained in maintenance operations, gas fitting, refrigeration and air conditioning and flooring. All learners are employed, except one learner who is on an NVQ programme. Some learners are selected by NWTC directly, while others are referred by their employer. All learners undertake assessment to identify their suitability for training, the level of programme and the most appropriate trade. They attend an induction at NWTC and with their employer. Most learners attend off-the-job training for one day each week, but others attend for a block of time. Off-the-job training is offered at two of NWTC's training centres and by four subcontracted colleges. The progress of learners is reviewed by NWTC's training officers at regular intervals and a record is kept of the review meeting.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	55		54		35		36		15							
Retained*	0		0		0		15		8							
Successfully completed	0		0		0		8		5							
Still in learning	35		36		13		7		3							

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	15		12		13		1									
Retained*	0		5		3		0	0								
Successfully completed	0		1		0		0	0								
Still in learning	11		4		3		0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		3		4		30		22							
Retained*	0		3		4	100	10		10	45						
Successfully completed	0		1		4	100	9		10	45						
Still in learning	1		2		0	0	1		0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good resources for off-the-job training
- close relationships with employers
- good range of on-the-job training opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- insufficiently detailed targets at progress reviews
- poor planning of off-the-job training in carpentry and joinery

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective use of work-based evidence
- better resources for off-the-job training in carpentry and joinery

17. The construction training is good, but too few of the learners stay on the programme long enough to benefit or to achieve qualifications. Learners appreciate the help, support and encouragement they are given by their employer and by the staff of NWTC. The resources at NWTC's training centre and at the subcontracted college are good. The council has its own specialist gas-fitting assessment centre. The emphasis placed on health, safety and welfare is sound. Instructors have appropriate occupational

qualifications and experience and most have teaching or training qualifications. The training officers who visit learners in the workplace are experienced in construction.

18. The close relationship between NWTC's staff and the employers helps the learners to find suitable jobs. The council's staff are in frequent contact with the employers. The workplace supervisors are skilled and spend substantial time in on-the-job training. Employers take a close interest in the welfare and development of their learners and are enthusiastic about the training and keen to help learners to progress. NWTC and employers work effectively together to provide alternative ways of continuing the training when the workload of the smaller firms threatens continuity of training. To meet the needs of learners working for small companies, flexible attendance has been developed, which allows the learners to attend the training centre when their employer is less busy.

19. The range of on-the-job training opportunities is good. There is a good range of qualifications available to learners within each trade. The training officers work with the supervisors to ensure learners gain a good mixture of practical skills and experience and this was identified in the self-assessment report. Key skills training and assessment are well established and an integral part of the occupational training and assessment.

20. The retention and achievement rates in construction are poor. For advanced modern apprentices, the proportion of learners who leave without completing the framework has increased from 47 per cent in 1997-98 to 63 per cent in 1999-2000. In the more recent year, none of the other 13 learners has completed the programme. Of the foundation modern apprentices who started in 1999-2000, 77 per cent have left without completing the framework. Only a small proportion have achieved the level 2 NVQ. Carpentry and joinery have particularly poor achievement rates. The rate of progress of those who remain on the training programme is slow, with some learners in their fifth year. Of the 35 learners who left NWTC since April 2001, only four have completed the framework and one has partially completed. The other 30 have left without completing any of their target qualifications. NWTC monitors the reasons for leaving and a large proportion leave in the early stages of their training due to dismissal or absence. The weakness in retention and achievement rates was not taken into account sufficiently in the self-assessment report.

21. The frequency of learners reviews is good. Learners know how long their training will take and the work they need to do to complete it. However, the reviews do not give sufficiently detailed targets to help learners make progress towards their NVQ and key skills qualification. They are not given measurable targets to achieve by the time of the next review meeting. The records of the reviews contain general statements about the next phase of the training and they are not routinely followed-up at the next review. The planning of off-the-job training in carpentry and joinery is poor. There are no schemes of work or lesson plans, and learners do not know what topics or practical projects they will be moving on to next. This only affects 10 per cent of learners. In the other trades, the off-the-job training is well planned.

22. Work-based evidence is not used effectively in the creation of portfolios of evidence. Assessment in the workplace by observation takes place, but does not extend to all learners in all trades. There is excessive use of written descriptions by learners when other evidence from the workplace would be better. Some learners in electrical installations are repeating and writing-up practical tasks in the training centre when they have already produced evidence of competence through witness testimony. The off-the-job training resources in carpentry and joinery do not match those in other trades. There are few battery-operated power tools and the woodworking machinery is inadequate.

Good Practice

Thirty-six school students participated in courses in construction at NWTC's training centres. Occupations included carpentry and joinery, plumbing, painting and decorating and electrical installation. Seven students gained qualifications at level 1, one gained a level 2 qualification, and five have applied to join the apprenticeship programme.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	359	3

23. NWTC offers qualifications in electrical, mechanical and fabrication engineering. It also offers qualifications in motor vehicle repair and maintenance, motor vehicle body repair, vehicle paint refinishing and electrical security. There are 359 learners, 300 advanced modern apprentices, 27 foundation modern apprentices and 32 are on other NVQ programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3. However, the tables do not include those who started after April 2002. Four of the learners are working towards an NVQ in cabinet making. Learners are recruited from a number of sources including the careers service, job fairs, from employers and by direct contact. All applicants are interviewed and are given initial assessment tests, which are used for selection and to decide the appropriate level of qualification and vocational area. Almost all learners are employed. Modern apprentices on engineering, technology and manufacturing programmes work towards a level 2 NVQ in performing engineering operations, either full time or for one day each week. Training towards the level 3 NVQ and key skills is in the workplace. The further education part of the apprenticeship frameworks takes place either at NWTC or at a further education college. The engineering department consists of a manager, a further education co-ordinator and six full-time training officers, who are all qualified assessors and internal verifiers. The training officers visit learners in the workplace every six weeks to review their progress.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	116		127		122		101		86							
Retained*	0		2		6		48		38							
Successfully completed	0		2		6		8		19							
Still in learning	97		85		59		40		19							

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	20		30		41		6									
Retained*	0		6		7		0	0								
Successfully completed	0		0		2		0	0								
Still in learning	16		6		5		0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	84		24		52		67		50							
Retained*	11		8		27		35		14	28						
Successfully completed	11		3		26		32		14	28						
Still in learning	18		5		1		3		0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good, flexible off-the-job training
- additional qualifications gained by learners
- wide range of on-the-job training
- good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention rates
- narrow range of assessment evidence in some portfolios
- insufficiently detailed targets at progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- greater understanding by employers of the NVQ requirements

24. Off-the-job training in engineering is good. The resources are satisfactory and the staff are skilled and experienced. The foundation engineering training has been reorganised to allow greater flexibility in attendance to meet the needs of learners. The number of dates on which learners can start the workshop training has been increased and a range of patterns of attendance has been created. The further education provision at NWTC is also good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. The

council took over the teaching and assessment of the further education awards from other training providers after feedback from employers and learners. The achievements have now improved significantly. NWTC compares its results with those of local providers to ensure it continues to maintain a good standard.

25. Learners attend local colleges to gain qualifications beyond the requirements of their apprenticeship framework. Many study for a higher level technical qualification. Sixty per cent of learners in their third or fourth year achieve qualifications at a higher level than those required by the framework and 42 per cent gain additional units. In addition, learners often gain additional qualifications relating to their work, such as in the use of abrasive wheels and crane operations.

26. Employers offer a wide range of experience in the workplace. The engineering employers range from small engineering companies to large national organisations. With individual employers, the scope of experience enables learners to progress from basic operations to complex tasks, with a minimum of supervision. The on-the-job training is well planned.

27. The frequent contact that training officers have with learners gives them good support and this was identified in the self-assessment report. Those who have difficulty in progressing with the NVQ receive additional visits and individual support. However, much of the support is not recorded. Learners who are not able to complete parts of their NVQ are found temporary placements where they can achieve their objectives. Some employers offer additional help for the learners. One learner on a high level further education course in aeronautical studies was given individual support and tuition by the company's chief engineer. Another learner was given extra help by NWTC and his workplace supervisor when his portfolio was stolen.

28. The retention rates are poor in all engineering programmes and this was identified in the self-assessment report. About half of the modern apprentices leave before they reach the third year of their training programme. Most early leavers do so in the early stages of their programme and NWTC monitors the reasons for leaving. Most are for personal and social reasons beyond the control of the council. NWTC has encouraged recruitment from the more deprived parts of the area, despite the likelihood of them leaving before completing the framework. Initial assessment has been strengthened substantially, but it is too soon to identify improvements in the retention rates. The achievement rates of those learners who remain on the programme into the third or fourth year is good. Of the learners who completed their planned learning period during the year 2001-02, 84 per cent achieved the full framework. The achievement rates have improved substantially each year over a period of three years. A strong emphasis on key skills achievement in recent years has ensured that learners are not held back from completing the framework. Key skills is now an integral part of the vocational training.

29. There is a poor range of evidence collected by learners in engineering. The predominant evidence in the portfolios is descriptions of work from the workplace, but

there is little direct evidence. Many learners have not been assessed in the workplace by observation by a qualified assessor. There are a few examples where witness testimony has been used, but the details are often insufficient to be confident that the witness has observed competent performance. The questioning of learners' knowledge is not adequately recorded.

30. The records of progress review meetings are superficial and do not focus adequately on progress towards the NVQ. The learners' progress is discussed at the meetings, but no specific targets are agreed for completion by the next review. The reviews do not adequately guide the employer in the allocation of workplace tasks that would benefit the learner. Individual learning plans are not discussed at the review meetings and they are not amended to reflect any changes in the learners' needs. Some employers have little understanding of the requirements of the NVQ.