

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **North West Training Council Reinspection**

**03 June 2004**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## NORTH WEST TRAINING COUNCIL REINSPECTION

### 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. 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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.

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## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. North West Training Council (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 69 per cent of NWTC's business. There are 455 learners. They are recruited by NWTC either by referral from Connexions or by companies that have recently employed them. Most of the learners are advanced modern apprentices. Two hundred and eighty-seven learners are on the engineering programmes and 168 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 Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

2. 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 February 2003, the unemployment rate in Liverpool was 10.1 per cent, in Knowsley it was 9.9 per cent and in Sefton it was 5.4 per cent. In Cheshire, the unemployment rate is 4.6 per cent, compared with 5.1 per cent nationally. Engineering, manufacturing and construction account for 18 per cent of employment in Merseyside. The 2001 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups was 5.7 per cent in Liverpool, and less than 2 per cent in Cheshire, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally. In 2002-03 the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above was 41.2 per cent in Liverpool and 33.4 per cent in Knowsley. In Lancashire it was 53.3 per cent and in Sefton 52.8 per cent, compared with 52.9 per cent nationally.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Construction

3. NWTC has 168 learners on construction programmes. There are 96 advanced modern apprentices working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 3 and 72 foundation modern apprentices at level 2 NVQ. Off-the-job training for plumbing, electrical installation, carpentry and joinery, and maintenance operations is carried out at the council's training centre. Off-the-job training for flooring, plastering, refrigeration and air conditioning is subcontracted to local colleges of further education. Most off-the-job training is on day release. Most learners are recruited by the council, with a small number being referred by employers. NWTC's training officers support and monitor the learners' progress. The length of training for each trade varies but averages 42 months for advanced modern apprentices and 18 months for foundation modern apprentices.

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Learners are employed by a wide range of employers on domestic and commercial projects across the Northwest.

### ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learner interviews	42
Number of staff interviews	11
Number of employer interviews	11
Number of subcontractor interviews	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	12
Number of partner/external agency interviews	1
Number of visits	12

### OVERALL JUDGEMENT

4. At the previous inspection in July 2002, NWTC's provision was judged to be satisfactory in leadership and management and engineering. It was judged unsatisfactory in construction. At the end of the reinspection process the quality of work-based learning in construction was found to be satisfactory.

### GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

*grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

<b>Construction</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

<b>Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

*grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

<b>Construction</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Construction

### Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	168	3

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

#### Strengths

- good development of practical skills in the workplace
- good on-the-job training opportunities
- wide range of provision
- effective actions to improve retention rates

#### Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory completion rates for modern apprentices
- some slow progress towards NVQs
- insufficient progress reviews in the workplace for plumbers
- inadequate target-setting

#### Achievement and standards

5. Learners develop good practical skills in the workplace and many produce work to industry standards. Inspectors observed a learner who was installing bathroom suites in a prestigious development. The client was impressed by the high standard of the finished work. Employers value the learners as team members.

6. Few learners complete the modern apprenticeship frameworks. Between 1999-2000 and 2000-01, only six of the 90 learners completed the advanced modern apprenticeship framework and only nine of the 43 foundation modern apprentices completed their framework. The length of the programmes means that the changes the provider has made to improve the achievement rates have not been fully realised since the previous inspection. However, most learners are making satisfactory progress and some new learners are making good progress.

7. Some learners are making slow progress with 18 per cent of current learners exceeding their planned duration on the programme. Some learners are capable of making faster progress. For example, electrical installation learners are encouraged to complete all the off-the-job practical training exercises despite being competent in the workplace. Plumbing learners are making slow progress with their NVQ portfolios. There are insufficient qualified assessors, but two new plumbing assessors are working

towards their assessor qualifications.

### **Quality of education and training**

8. Inspectors observed two learning sessions, one of which was good and the other was satisfactory.

9. Learners are employed by a wide range of employers from national contractors to sole traders specialising in domestic refurbishment and maintenance. The extensive range of work available to the learners is often very well matched to the requirements of the NVQs. Learners' work is supervised by competent and experienced staff. They spend time with the learners helping them develop their skills and competence and take a keen interest in their development. They move the learners onto different tasks and contracts to enable them to become competent across a wide range of work.

10. There have been significant improvements in the delivery of key skills since the previous inspection. However, key skills training and assessment is not an integral part of the NVQ. Some key skills evidence is collected by health and safety exercises that are additional to the occupational requirements. There is insufficient collection of key skills evidence from the workplace and in the training for the technical certificates.

11. The standard of literacy and numeracy support for learners is satisfactory. A thorough assessment process is now used. In addition to a number of vocationally relevant assessments, some assessment of personality is made. Key skills and literacy and numeracy needs are also assessed. Only three of the current learners need additional support with literacy or numeracy. If learners have other support needs then these are provided. For example, one learner with dyslexia has support from a reader when taking written tests. Recruitment and assessment procedures ensure that learners have the necessary skills to complete the training. Pastoral support has improved and learners have appropriate guidance onto courses.

12. The planning of off-the-job training in carpentry and joinery is now satisfactory. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. Training facilities and resources are generally satisfactory. Several new staff for training and assessment have been appointed and have appropriate occupational experience.

13. The weakness of insufficiently detailed targets at progress reviews has been resolved. However, there are insufficient progress reviews in the workplace for plumbing learners, they have not been reviewed **on site** for over two years. This has made it difficult to monitor their progress and working conditions and to involve supervisors in targets to be achieved between progress reviews.

14. There is a wide range of training provision. Programmes are offered in specialist areas including wall and floor tiling, refrigeration and air conditioning, maintenance operations and plastering. Community programmes help the long-term unemployed to enter work in construction. School link programmes provide local pupils with the



opportunity to gain foundation qualifications in various trades.

## Leadership and management

15. Management has implemented effective actions to improve the retention rates. Poor retention rates were a weakness at the previous inspection, but the provider has worked hard to identify reasons for learners leaving early. A thorough initial assessment has been introduced recently with appropriate selection criteria for the different programmes and occupations. More training and assessment staff have been employed and learners have more frequent progress reviews, often every six weeks. The frequency of progress reviews matches the individual needs of learners. The learners' knowledge of equality is checked. In 2001-02, nearly 40 per cent of foundation modern apprentices had left within six months and 62 per cent within 12 months. In 2003-04, the early leaver figures have dropped to just 5 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. There have been similar improvements for the advanced modern apprentices. Early leaver figures over the same period have reduced from 32 per cent to 3 per cent within six months and from 43 per cent to 7 per cent within 12 months. All 80 learners on modern apprenticeships in 2003-04 are still in learning.

16. Most of the external verifier reports show no major weaknesses. Where actions are noted for the provider they are usually rectified. The exception to this is in plumbing where direct qualification claim status was withdrawn from NWTC. This weakness was eventually resolved but only after a six months delay. Internal verification is now satisfactory. An assessment sampling plan is now in place and all work is sampled, often over and above what is required by the awarding body. The sampling system details direct observation of assessments in the workplace within the plan. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. However, there is no quality assurance **procedure for this process**. Meetings are held each month to discuss assessment and internal verification and to ensure standardisation of practice.

17. Staff are not provided with targets for essential areas of their work. There are no clear and meaningful targets and criteria to adequately monitor and review their progress. Three months before the end of funding, training officers are reminded to look at individual learners' progress. General instructions are given to encourage staff to focus on achievement rates. No specific targets are given to staff to encourage achievement ahead of time.

18. Monitoring of subcontractors has improved. Termly meetings are now held and are recorded. Use is made of subcontractor inspection reports and self-assessments. A monitoring checklist is now used to gain information on the subcontractors' quality assurance arrangements. This is currently based around the collection of subcontractor policies and procedures, but this has not led to qualitative judgements. There are plans to extend this process. Some use is made of subcontractors' observation of teaching and learning to ensure standards.

19. Some quality assurance processes are new and not fully established. Teaching is now observed on a regular, planned basis and a seven-point scale is used to evaluate its

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effectiveness. However, no central collation of this teaching profile has been made for management purposes. Some internal observations that have been given good grades do not reflect the weaknesses noted by the observer. Auditing of key processes has begun but this is not yet fully established.

20. Self-assessment is now an ongoing quality assurance process at NWTC. The current self-assessment is a draft document which is to be updated as part of the yearly cycle in July. Staff teams meet to give input to the report, although some are more involved than others. Learners' and employers' views are incorporated through the use of questionnaires. The views of the LSC are actively sought as a valued partner. Subcontractors' views are to be included through actions from termly meetings. Inspectors' views matched the strengths and weaknesses identified by the provider for reinspection, but some of the weaknesses were not recognised.