

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: North East Chamber of Commerce  
Date of visit: 20 August 2007

### Context:

The North East Chamber of Commerce, Trade & Industry (NECC) is a company limited by guarantee and owned by its members. North East Chamber of Commerce (Training) Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of NECC. NECC is the only regional Chamber of Commerce in the UK and one of the largest in the Country. The head office is in Durham and NECC operates from six training centres throughout the North East region, located in the main cities and towns. Funding contracts are held with five Local Learning & Skills Councils (LSC), Tees Valley as lead, North Yorkshire, County Durham, Tyne & Wear and Northumberland and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) contracts in Sunderland.

The NECC was last inspected in May 2005. At this inspection all aspects of provision and leadership and management were satisfactory except for health and social care which was good and retail which was unsatisfactory. A partial reinspection of the retail sector in June 2006 judged the provision satisfactory. This is the first monitoring visit since the reinspection process.

### Achievement and standards

What actions have been taken to make improvements in the success rates of learners?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

NECC has made significant progress in improving the success rates of learners. Using the provider performance report data, advanced apprentice success rates improved during 2004-05 to 2005-06 by 12 percentage points. The apprenticeship success rate has also increased by 17 percentage points. National vocational qualification (NVQ) only programmes success rates also improved by 17 percentage points during the same period. These rates are now more in line with or just exceeding the national averages. In-year data on the provider performance report shows performance roughly in line with last year at around the national average rates at 53%, except for NVQs which are higher at 73% against a 64% national average. The provider period 12 data, which is not validated, however, shows a continued rising success rate at the same level as for 2005-06 for 2006-07.

Detailed monitoring of success rates takes place using a range of tools. A dashboard system reports data in a number of formats to all centres. These pictorial

representations of data inform and guide discussions at team meetings. Each training adviser monitors unit achievement by for each learner. The qualification success rate report from the provider gateway monitors timely success rates.

Management actions focus on raising the performance throughout the whole company well. Key to this is access to accurate data to monitor performance against targets effectively as well as to be able to set the targets accurately for each member of staff. Managers use these to gauge staff performance as part of the annual performance related pay system. Targets are set for success rates, percentage of learners with employed status, and percentage of learners past planned end date. Training advisers also have targets for minimum average caseloads of learners. Wall charts record and display unit achievement by each training adviser.

### Quality of Training

How has the provider improved the quality of learning within its provision?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

Significant progress has been made in improvements in the quality of learning. Learner success rates have continued to improve. Timely success rates are also improving. The number of learners who go past their predicted end date has decreased from 17% to 9%. Observation of teaching and learning has recently been re-launched. The process is comprehensive and well planned; observation of each trainer/assessor takes place twice per year. The process covers different parts of the learner journey, including learning as well as teaching. A panel of appropriate staff moderate the process. Some over-grading takes place. Good audit processes of key functions improve the quality of the learner experience. A traffic light system appropriately identifies centres with problem areas. Managers use these to take relevant actions.

Good improvements to induction and assessment processes ensure effective matching of learners to the qualification and employer. Some improvements have been made to the identification of support needs to better ensure learners receive timely support. Staff are being trained in both level 3 and level 4 skills for life qualifications, however, insufficient analysis is made of data on skills for life support and its effectiveness. Training advisers from across different sector subject areas now share their practice on a regular basis.

What actions have been taken to improve the quality of learner reviews and target-setting?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

NECC have made reasonable progress in improving the quality of learners' reviews and target-setting. Reduced paperwork allows trainers/advisers to devote more time to learners themselves. Staff record unit progression on reviews in an easily understandable format. Wall charts monitor learner progress and a range of measures are in place to identify learners who are not progressing as planned. Staff have received training in target-setting. The internal verification strategy is well planned and understood. The internal verifiers give good support to assessors and use a traffic light system well to identify assessors who need additional support.

A new teaching pack includes standardised materials. The review documentation is not part of this pack. Individual learner progress, especially for skills for life, key skills or technical certificates is not always sufficiently recorded on lesson plans, attendance registers or the learner contact report.

## Leadership and Management

What systems have been developed to enable managers to better monitor new initiatives and development plans?	Significant progress
--	----------------------

Significant progress has been made in developing systems to enable managers to better monitor new initiatives and development plans. Newly appointed staff developed and implemented a '100-day' business plan after the previous inspection in 2005. All staff contributed to the creation of this plan. A second 100-day business plan is in place for 2007. A management re-structuring has taken place to create sector groups and north and south hubs to cover geographical considerations, and new sector managers have been appointed in each sector subject area. This new structure enables managers to oversee and monitor development actions well.

Clear, detailed and equitable targets have been set for all staff and a performance related pay scheme instigated. The creation of company wide targets is effective in creating a collective approach to target achievement. Staff and sector managers are now accountable for these targets.

A range of meetings monitor progress against the identified targets. These include individual team and hub meetings, where progress is evaluated and completed tasks shaded in on record sheets. Systems to gather feedback from staff are in place using forms distributed along with information bulletins.

What actions have been taken to improve the quality improvement systems?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

NECC have made reasonable progress in changes to the quality improvement systems. The self-assessment process is well established, inclusive and based firmly around the *Common Inspection Framework*. Individual staff members complete a questionnaire designed to reflect the key questions. Management groups review this information. An annual event allows staff representatives to collate these findings and identify key strengths and weaknesses for each sector subject area. Staff from other areas challenge and moderate the results of this process. NECC use a peer referencing partnership to moderate the final document. The development and quality action plans link to the self-assessment process well. A colour coding, traffic light system, highlights the priority areas.

The observation of teaching and learning system has recently been re-launched. Actions arising from the observations appropriately inform annual appraisals and performance reviews. Data is analysed and used well to set priority areas for

development and take appropriate management actions. Staff have a clear idea of their own targets and the success rates of their learners. However, they do not use data to monitor the effectiveness of support provided. The audit processes identify issues earlier. Improvements in the sharing of good practice have improved at target achievement groups and newly created sector groups. Practice is not shared well across different sector groups. The IV strategy has been effective in standardising practice and in giving clear, planned support to assessors.

What initiatives have been used to attract learners from identified under-represented populations?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

NECC has made insufficient progress to attract learners from under-represented groups onto NECC learning programmes. Staff have attended equality and diversity awareness training. A newly appointed human resources manager is responsible for learning and development. A system of road shows updated all centres on new legislation requirements. Managers are working to raise the profile of equality and diversity at events such as employer and member forums. Inductions for staff and learners cover equality and diversity.

Staff from NECC are active in the LSC equality and diversity network group and also attend an equality and diversity consultancy group event where good practice is identified and shared. NECC promote work-based learning generally through partnerships and activities with Connexions, local schools and other partners.

Data analysis is carried out and staff are aware of learner categories on programme. Case studies use non-stereotypical images and examples to promote vocational subject areas to the under-represented groups. Posters include women engineers and motor vehicle technicians as well as a male dental nurse. These are of good quality and promote involvement but they do not identify or challenge the stereotypical cultural barriers in each of these areas. Information, advice and guidance interviews discuss learner needs and promote non-typical vocational areas.

NECC, however, do not have detailed strategies to identify and reduce the impact of both real and perceived barriers to access by the under-represented groups in their learning programmes.