

Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Preparation for life and work

Description of the provider

1. The Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council (NCC) Entry to Employment (E2E) and Preparation for Progression provision is managed within Oakfield Solutions, a work-based learning provider based in Newcastle upon Tyne. Training is funded by Tyne and Wear LSC. Oakfield Solutions was established in 1990 as part of Trinity School, which specialises in the provision of education for young people with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The post-16 provision has developed from the work of the school but is now separate from it. Oakfield Solutions has managed the E2E contract for NCC since August 2003, as well as the European Social Fund Co-Financed Preparation for Progression contract since August 2005. They develop and manage an expanding network of subcontracted training providers across the city. Five subcontracted providers deliver training within this network: Nacro, Rathbone, North East Chamber of Commerce, Stonham Housing Association (Tyneside Foyer) and Community Service Volunteers. The provision is focused on vocational learning in catering; childcare; business administration; construction skills; small animal care; horse care; sport and leisure; customer service, retail and warehousing. Oakfield Solutions also has their own in-house delivery focused on motor vehicle repair, hairdressing and beauty therapy and practical environmental skills in partnership with Neighbourhood Services. All learning is underpinned by essential skills and personal and social education.
2. Day to day management of the E2E and preparation for progression provision is the responsibility of the general manager who reports to the head teacher of Trinity School. The general manager is responsible for strategic direction and advises on operational matters. Oakfield employs 12 members of staff, including the general manager.
3. NCC has 180 learners on the E2E and preparation for progression programmes. Currently 50 learners are directly managed by NCC, 27 of whom are men, two are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 11 have a disability. The remaining learners are subcontracted to five training providers within the city. Learners can begin and leave the programmes throughout the year. They attend up to four days a week for a minimum of 16 hours. All learners have an extended induction period which includes initial assessment.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject area

Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management are all good. Provision in preparation for life and work is good, as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

5. The provider has a good capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection, learners' progression rates have improved significantly. Overall progression rates are now at or above the LSC target rates for E2E programmes. Data is used well to monitor the performance of particular groups of learners. Aspects of quality assurance are inadequate. The lesson observation system does not have the capacity to provide an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. Very few teachers have been observed in 2007-08. The systems for assuring the quality of the learners' experience are applied inconsistently.
6. The provider has successfully taken effective steps to improve progression rates since the previous inspection. All main inspection grades have improved since the previous inspection. Weaknesses in business planning, the development of equality and diversity and the arrangements for aftercare have been addressed. However, weaknesses in target-setting identified at the previous inspection have not yet improved.

Key strengths

- Good development of personal, social and occupational skills
- Good use of enrichment activities to motivate and engage learners
- Good range of information, advice and guidance for learners
- Effective measures to improve progression rates
- Good management of the E2E network

Key areas for improvement

- Target-setting
- Monitoring of teaching and learning
- Implementation of quality improvement measures of key learning processes

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

7. Achievements and standards are good. Progression rates of learners into employment, further education or work-based learning are now high. The overall progression rate for 2006-07 was 54% and is now 63%, which is above the regional and national averages. Of these 47% went into education and 31% into employment. Progression rates have improved across all five subcontractors over the past three years.
8. Development of learners' personal, social and occupational skills is good. Many learners' self-confidence increases, their self-esteem improves and they become more adept at working with other learners. Learners develop a good range of work-related skills and knowledge. Most learners' work is of a good standard. They are particularly successful in obtaining internally-awarded certificates that acknowledge their skills and knowledge. However, too few learners are entered for externally accredited qualifications.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

9. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the better sessions, learning is well planned, with good linking of theory and practice. Learners are fully engaged. The poorer sessions contain too much tutor talk, learners are too passive and learning activities are inappropriate. Insufficient attention is given to healthy and safe working practices in some sessions.
10. Learning resources in hairdressing and beauty therapy are good. Learners receive good practical training in model salons where the layout, equipment and products are industry standard. Information and communication technology (ICT) equipment at Tyneside Foyer and the training hub are of good quality and accessible to all learners. However, the ICT equipment in the horticultural learning centre is poor quality, slow and barely fit for purpose.
11. For some learners, target-setting is insufficiently specific. Some targets are imprecise and are insufficiently detailed or challenging. In some progress reviews, learners are not fully involved and have insufficient ownership of the targets set. A few review documents contain spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors made by staff. Too few learners succeed in fulfilling all their E2E objectives.
12. Learners receive good personal support and pastoral care, suitable for their needs. Initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills and barriers to learning is satisfactory.
13. Learners attend suitable discrete sessions for literacy and numeracy, staffed by a specialist literacy and numeracy tutor assisted by two external qualified literacy specialists. However, literacy and numeracy skills are not always sufficiently reinforced during vocational sessions. Vocational tutors do not routinely embed literacy and numeracy across the other two strands of E2E or preparation for progression. Additionally tutors do

not draw learners' attention to literacy and numeracy errors sufficiently. Too few staff have recognised literacy and numeracy qualifications.

14. Enrichment activities to motivate and engage learners are good. Creative and innovative methods are used during induction. Learners have good access to a local charity which funds external activities and projects. To qualify, learners must first prepare and present a clear and well-researched case that demonstrates the benefits of the activity or project to their community and their own development. If funding is approved, learners become actively engaged in planning, team working, budgeting, negotiating and evaluating the success of each activity.
15. The range of information, advice and guidance given to learners is good. Learners receive good information about healthy eating, drugs and alcohol misuse, and sexual health. When needed, they are referred for appropriate individual guidance sessions. A Connexions personal adviser is permanently available to give good advice to learners about progressing from E2E. Progression is actively promoted to learners from the start of the programme.
16. The programmes are insufficiently co-ordinated. The results of initial assessment are not always used effectively to design individual learning programmes. Some employers are not well informed about learners' learning programmes and do not receive information on their off-the-job progress. For some learners there is insufficient work sampling and work experience.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

17. The management of E2E and preparation for progression is good. NCC have taken effective management actions to improve progression rates since the previous inspection. Initial assessment and induction have improved. A wider range of courses have been introduced and great care is taken to ensure learners are on the correct course. Support arrangements are thorough. An annual development day has been introduced to ensure all staff and subcontractors are aware of initiatives to improve progression rates and to share good practice. Subcontracted provision is monitored more closely. High numbers of E2E learners progress to apprenticeship programmes.
18. NCC manages the E2E provider network very effectively. NCC works with five subcontractors in delivering the E2E programme, overseeing all E2E provision in the city. Monitoring and evaluation of each subcontractor's performance against detailed service level agreements is thorough. These agreements contain specific references to the need for improved progression rates and sanctions which may be imposed for poor performance. NCC has maintained good relationships with the subcontracting companies and has encouraged and fostered a culture of collaboration. Communications between NCC and subcontractors are good. Performance management through frequent individual review meetings is strong. Regular staff and subcontractor meetings provide good opportunities for exchanging information and sharing best practice. All staff understand issues affecting the business and its performance.

19. Management information is comprehensive and is used well to monitor in-house and subcontractors' performance. Data is collected on all learners, and managers receive detailed reports and sophisticated analyses of performance. Data is discussed individually with each subcontractor at their progress review meetings. This includes a thorough analysis of the performance of learners by gender and ethnicity.
20. The appraisal system, based on the Newcastle local education authority's scheme, is satisfactory. Appraisal meetings are held for all staff in November or December and reviewed in June. The system is effective in encouraging individuals to reflect on their performance and development needs. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, target-setting at appraisal is weak. Few staff have personal targets to improve progression rates or to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Currently no staff members have obtained the nationally-recognised qualifications for teaching literacy and numeracy. Too few teachers are qualified to teach in the learning and skills sector.
21. The previous inspection found weaknesses in NCC's business-planning. This has been addressed and is now satisfactory. The organisation has produced an adequate development plan which identifies key objectives and milestones for improvement of the provision.
22. Some aspects of quality assurance are weak. NCC has a satisfactory quality assurance framework covering all aspects of training. An audit schedule has been produced which includes audits of subcontractors. However, audits do not always lead to fully monitored actions for improvement. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are inadequate. Very few lessons have been observed in 2007-08. Observation reports often do not have precise targets or action points to help teachers improve. There is little evidence of actions followed through by teachers and no summary of the key characteristics of teaching and learning. NCC do not systematically analyse grade profiles or differences between grades to identify improvements. Staff do not have targets to improve observation grades. Some staff have not been observed for some time. NCC has an outline schedule for observations for the next training year but this has not yet been shared with relevant staff.
23. NCC makes effective use of learner feedback. Learners' questionnaires are analysed and the results shared with subcontractors and with staff. Feedback from learners has led to improvements in work placements, access to computers, time spent in classrooms and to eating facilities.
24. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good. A detailed equality and diversity strategy is in place. Equality of opportunity is discussed at most meetings. The general manager is directly responsible for equal opportunities. All staff have received recent training on equality and diversity. Progress reviews are used to reinforce equality of opportunity with learners. Marketing materials are well designed and contain suitable images of underrepresented groups. Marketing materials are available in Braille and other languages. NCC effectively monitors the gender, ethnicity and disabilities of learners. Information is shared with subcontractors and actions are taken to try to correct imbalances. Subcontractors have good links with agencies and outreach workers and work closely with underrepresented groups.

25. Equal opportunities policies and procedures are adequate. Learners' have at least a basic understanding of equality and diversity. NCC has an equality and diversity strategy and an *Every Child Matters* strategy. Some policies need updating. Complaints are thoroughly investigated and well documented. All subcontractors have now carried out accessibility audits on their premises and have action plans to improve access where necessary. However, the horticulture centre is inaccessible to people with restricted mobility.
26. Staff, learners and subcontractors contribute to the production of the self-assessment report. The report is clearly written. Inspection findings matched all grades within the report and confirmed many of the strengths and areas for improvement. However, the report overstated some strengths, particularly in the achievement of accredited qualifications and in quality improvement. NCC failed to identify areas for improvement found during inspection, especially in quality assurance, target-setting for staff, the reinforcement of literacy and numeracy skills and the co-ordination of programmes.

What learners like:

- The helpful and supportive staff and atmosphere
- Learning and developing new skills
- Being treated as adults
- Work experience/placement
- Help to find a college course
- Improved job prospects
- The help to prepare for, and find, a job
- Bonding with other learners
- Learning how to use equipment and practical activities
- Gaining confidence and improving communication skills
- 'It's very educational, I missed loads of school so it's good to get help with my basic skills'
- 'I feel safe here'

What learners think could improve:

- Transport provided by the training organisation
- 'More help with my numeracy, especially with fractions'
- A room for breaks and better facilities, such as a fridge and toaster
- Better resources - tools on motor vehicle courses, more models in hairdressing and beauty therapy
- Two tutors for all sessions on motor vehicle courses
- More space in the garage
- Faster computers for learners on horticulture courses

Annex

Learners' achievements

Outcomes on **Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes** managed by the provider 2004 to 2006.

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate*	Progression rate**
04-05	468	2%	40%
05-06	411	3%	49%
06-07	322	11%	54%

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period