

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Nacro  
Date of visit: 14 August 2008

### Context

Nacro is a national registered charity, and company limited by guarantee. It has undergone a major national restructure that had completed its first stage at the previous inspection. Nacro has reduced its adult provision but increased its youth activity and prison-based programmes. Over 90% of the work-based learning provision is entry to employment (E2E) with programme-led apprenticeships forming the remainder.

This monitoring visit follows Ofsted's inspection of Nacro in June 2007. At the inspection, the overall effectiveness and all other aspects of provision were satisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve the previously low success rates?	Reasonable progress
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Nacro has worked hard to raise staff awareness about how their individual contributions help meet apprenticeship success rate targets. Training, to improve planning for delivery and assessment of framework components, and help them understand the financial implications of meeting targets, has taken place. Individual sector subject area internal minimum levels of performance have been set, intended to raise success rates above the Learning and Skills Council minimum levels of performance targets. Managers have improved access to, and understanding of, data to monitor progress and outcomes. Individual staff targets for learner outcomes are set and monitored regularly through support and supervision sessions.

Improved emphasis on ensuring clear progression routes from E2E ensures that learners are actively supported to progress. E2E progression rates have improved steadily from 38% in 2004/05, to 44% in 2006/07, and 46% at period nine in 2007/08.

Success rate data indicates steady improvement in overall apprenticeship success rates from 19.4% in 2005/06, to 36.8% in 2006/07. In-year apprenticeship success rates at period nine for 2007/08 are 30.6%. Timely success rates remain very low.

They improved from 7.1% in 2005/06, to 25.9% in 2006/07, but dipped in 2007/08 and remain significantly below national timely success rates. Nacro no longer delivers a sports apprenticeship where success rates were very low.

### Quality of provision

What improvements have been made in target-setting, assessment and recording of progress and what impact have these made on outcomes?	Reasonable progress
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Inadequate target-setting and progress reviews were areas for improvement in E2E at the previous inspection. Assessment and recording of progress was insufficiently thorough. Nacro have redesigned and improved review documents for all provision. The new documents focus on each programme component and help ensure that staff plan and target outcomes realistically. Staff training on target-setting has taken place and their quality is audited. Training to raise staff skills in planning and recording assessments to maximise outcomes has taken place.

Nacro has identified that the quality of target-setting still varies. The sample seen at the visit supports this. The best targets were very clear and specific, but some are too broad and, in one, legibility was poor and relied on the learner's good memory to recall the required tasks. However, all learners interviewed clearly understood their personal targets for completion by their next review date. All were making at least satisfactory progress. The apprentices seen were on target to achieve their apprenticeship framework early.

What improvements in teaching and learning have been introduced to promote differentiated learning activities?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, aspects of unsatisfactory teaching in E2E related to the insufficient account taken of learners' individual needs. The development of tutors' skills in planning for individual needs is an integral part of teacher training programmes that many staff have now completed or are working on. Regional training on lesson planning supplements this. Nacro staff leading these developments work closely with the university tutors for the teaching qualifications. The implication of different learning styles has more consideration when planning learning. In the best lesson plans sampled, simplified and extended activities are clearly planned and recorded. Opportunities to share good practice in teaching and learning, through joint planning and resource development, have grown as the new regional structure has developed.

How effective are actions to improve the work related element in E2E, and co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training in engineering?	Reasonable progress
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The E2E provision now has increased vocational focus. Following a review of the range of work placements, opportunities for work experience are available with tasters in the first six weeks where appropriate. Older learners, who are clear about their intended occupation, can start work experience immediately. The percentage of learners who have opportunity for work experience rose from 31% to 36% between 2006/07 and 2007/08 and many more gain vocational skills in workshops. Support for learners on work experience is very good. Many examples exist of effective help to overcome personal barriers or to change placement when appropriate. Communication with employers is good and staff work well with them to tackle any issues with learners.

Staff on apprenticeship programmes have had effective training in co-ordinating learners' on- and off-the-job training. Schemes of work now link the technical certificate to practical work in the workplace. Assessment is carefully planned with employers to ensure that appropriate assessment activities are available. Learner files show improved co-ordination of training and assessment. However, Nacro staff do not record or co-ordinate workplace training or development to ensure it is appropriately accredited.

#### Leadership and management

How effectively have teaching staff been supported to improve their qualifications and experience?	Reasonable progress
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Nacro placed a high priority for this improvement in their post-inspection action plan. The number of staff nationally who have achieved teaching qualifications has increased from 33 in June 2007, to 134 in August 2008. Currently 51 staff are qualified at level 4. A national audit of staff training and qualifications has been completed. Currently, on average, just over 50% of teaching staff in each region have at least a basic teaching qualification. All unqualified staff are working to gain an appropriate teaching qualification, and some with basic qualifications working for a higher level. It is now a contractual requirement that all newly appointed, unqualified, teaching staff achieve qualified status, within an agreed timescale.

Nacro staff have been actively involved in a wide range of in-house staff development activities and national initiatives. This includes the Quality Improvement Agency led skills for life improvement programme, to help meet the particular needs of their target group. Staff are working in preparation for the introduction of the foundation learning tier and credit based qualifications.

## Equality of opportunity

How effectively do current arrangements support and promote equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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Nacro has a strong focus on actions to improve the promotion of equality and diversity. A group of training providers recently carried out a peer review of equality and diversity within Nacro. They identified a number of key issues and a detailed action plan was produced to resolve them. All staff now benefit from improved corporate equality and diversity training. Further investment in resources for regional staff supports training designed to challenge perceptions. Reviews place a greater focus on equality and diversity. Learner files are checked to assess the impact of the staff training programme. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is still an area for development. They understand issues of bullying and harassment, but many identify equality as simply 'respect for others' and some view it as 'treating everyone the same'.

At the previous inspection, differing participation and success rates between groups of learners were identified. Action to tackle some of the differences has been taken. Recent analysis shows some narrowing in differing achievement between some groups of learners. Nacro's recruitment profile has historically been mainly boys and young men. New provision, in Darlington, based on the television programme 'Ladettes to Ladies' has proved successful in doubling the recruitment of girls in the first six months of this year.

## Quality improvement

How far do developments in quality improvement and sharing good practice promote consistency of performance across the provision?	Reasonable progress
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The recent restructure of Nacro provides a sound basis for effective regional support for quality improvement and has already produced examples of improvement. A well-structured regional delivery standards team work well with regional managers and centre staff to monitor and manage improvement. Regional delivery standards officers use data analysis and risk assessment to effectively identify good and poor practice in centres. Staff effectively work across the regions to improve the quality of provision. Regular meetings between regional and national managers ensure a strategic approach to organisational development. Staff performance management by national and regional managers promotes improvement. However, for a large national provider the developments are relatively new. Senior managers recognise that inconsistencies remain.

## Self-assessment and improvement planning

How effectively is the self-assessment and post-inspection action plan/improvement plan used to drive continuous improvement?	Reasonable progress
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The current self-assessment report is closely based on the previous inspection report. However, it links well with the quality improvement plan to drive improvements. Staff use the development plan effectively as a working document. Key aspects of quality improvement include target-setting and observation of teaching and learning. A more thorough audit process is used. Effective measures to improve provision include curriculum review and extensive staff training. However, some of the improvements are relatively new. They contribute to improved systems but do not yet show their full affect on learners.

The revised self-assessment process is more streamlined and links fully to quality improvement systems. Clear norms are identified for all aspects of the *Common Inspection Framework* to measure provision against and provide appropriate evidence to support judgements. Data is used well. Areas for improvement automatically feed into the closely monitored development plan. This new process will complete its first cycle in September 2008.