

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Northamptonshire Industrial  
Training Limited (NITAL)

Date of visit: 10 July 2008

### Context

The monitoring visit follows the inspection in November 2006, at which Northamptonshire Industrial Training Limited (NITAL) was graded as satisfactory for leadership and management, equality of opportunity and for its arrangements for quality improvement. The work-based learning provision in construction, planning and the built environment was good, the provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies was found to be satisfactory. NITAL holds a contract with Northamptonshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The company provides training in engineering, business administration, customer service, motor vehicle and electrical installation. It also offers programmes in literacy and numeracy, and Entry to Employment (E2E). Government funding makes up approximately 95% of the annual budget of NITAL.

### Achievement and standards

What improvements have been made to the overall framework success rates of learners?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in the overall framework success rates for learners. Since the previous inspection, there is a continuing upward trend in the overall success rates for both apprentice and advanced apprentice frameworks. In the year 2005/06, 46% of apprentices achieved their framework, this increased to 48% the following year. For both apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships the provider's own data indicates that the rates continued to improve in 2007/08. For advanced apprentices the overall success rate increased from 54% in 2005/06 to 68% in 2006/07. Timely success rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices are also increasing year on year. For apprentices this has increased since 2005/06 from 11% to 49%. For advanced apprentices, the timely success rate has increased since 2005/06 from 24% to 58% in 2006/07. Since the previous inspection, NITAL have analysed their success data and have identified issues with the achievement of apprentices on motor vehicle programmes. Managers are currently developing actions to address under achievement and to develop clearly defined entry criteria to the programme.

## The quality of the provision

At the previous inspection, on- and off-the-job training for construction learners was insufficiently co-ordinated. What improvements have been made to the planning and delivery of these programmes?	Significant progress
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NITAL has made significant progress in improving the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training for construction learners. At the previous inspection little systematic planning and co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training took place. Learners had to match the tasks available in the employers' premises to the requirements of the NVQ. A training officer has the responsibility for dealing with this issue and there is now full co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. A detailed and thorough assessment is made of each employer against the requirements of the training activities needed to complete the apprenticeship framework. Where training activities cannot be carried out on an employer's premises because of the lack of equipment or resources, arrangements are made to temporarily transfer the learners to another company to complete the training activities. Issues identified with college provision are dealt with effectively. Learners who were having difficulty with a skills test are now routinely provided with time at college for directed preparation before the test taking place. The training manager meets regularly with college staff and records the issues discussed and the actions taken to deal with the problems identified. Learners benefit from the improved co-ordination of programme activities and are able to achieve their framework requirements.

At the previous inspection, responsiveness to engineering learners' identified support needs was slow, learners were unaware of the progress they were making and the accuracy and adequacy of individual learning plans was poor. What developments have been made to improve learners' awareness and their individual learning plans?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in responding to learners identified support needs and the accuracy and adequacy of individual learning plans. A new training manager took up post in June 2008. Regular audits of review records and individual learning plans are carried out and the audit process has been reviewed very recently to focus more on the quality aspects of the procedure, rather than on compliance. The results of this initial audit have been discussed with staff and some rectifying actions taken as a result. Staff have received some informal training on SMART target setting during their meetings with the training manager. Learners are given a range of information about their programmes, the purpose of individual learning plans and the formal review process during their induction. The content of individual learning plans is now more focused on the programme content; however, a few of the plans are incomplete. The quality of target setting in reviews is variable, with signs of some recent improvement. A co-ordinator for key skills and skills for life was recruited and took up the position two months before the monitoring visit. Much work has already been done to improve monitoring of progress with key skills

qualifications. Learners complete an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills during their induction. Those with identified additional support needs are offered extra individual appointments with the co-ordinator in the training centre or their workplace. Plans for these extra visits are agreed; but not formally monitored to ensure that they are completed. Individual learner progress is discussed at weekly team briefing meetings and monthly performance management meetings between the training manager and training advisors. Learners who are not making the progress expected of them may also be offered additional support. The key skills co-ordinator links informally with the training advisors before formal reviews to provide useful information about learners' progress. However, the analysis of data to compare the success rates of those receiving additional support with the rest of the learner population has not yet been carried out. E2E learners with significant social support needs are signposted towards appropriate external organisations for advice on a range of issues. No formal arrangements are in place to provide specific support for dyslexia or dyscalculia.

## Leadership and management

What steps have been taken to improve NITAL's formal business planning?	Reasonable progress
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NITAL has made reasonable progress in improving their formal business planning. The three-year company business plan is more detailed than previously. The current plan clearly states short, medium and long-term strategies to maintain and develop the business. Key performance indicators have been identified for overall and timely success rates for learners and targets for the recruitment of female engineering learners and staff qualifications have been agreed. The business plan is supported by an action plan which clearly identifies activities to be completed and managerial responsibility for their completion. However, success criteria in the action plan are generally poorly defined.

What developments have been introduced to provide and reinforce equality of opportunity awareness in learners' programmes after the induction period?	Reasonable progress
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Since the previous inspection, reasonable progress has been made in reinforcing learners' awareness of equality of opportunity. A new equality and diversity adviser has been employed since May 2007. The company has revised its equality of opportunity policy and a draft single equality scheme developed. This is waiting adoption by the board of directors. Staff have received some relevant equality and diversity training in February 2008. Learners receive training on relevant topics during their induction to the programmes. These sessions are occasionally observed by the equality and diversity adviser to ensure the appropriateness of their content. Assessors use a list of agreed questions during formal reviews to measure the learners understanding of equality and diversity issues. However, the recording of learners' responses is often insufficient and some inappropriate language is used.

At the previous inspection, the progress in implementing some quality improvement activities was slow. What steps have been taken to improve the rate of progress of implementation?	Reasonable progress
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NITAL has made reasonable progress in implementing quality improvement activities. At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that the quality improvement procedures manual included procedures for staff, learners and financial matters and it was difficult to separate out those procedures that had a direct impact on the learners' journey. The new manual is clear and thorough and contains separate sections to describe the quality improvement arrangements to monitor and develop improvements to the learners' experience. Auditing processes are now in use to monitor the induction, initial assessment, on- and off-the-job assessment, progress reviews and many other aspects of the learners' journey. Review and action plan documentation has been developed and introduced. Quality meetings are held four times a year and clearly focus on raising quality issues, developing solutions and carrying out actions to improve the learning experience. However, the updated self-assessment report identifies that an area for improvement is the slow progress in implementing some quality improvement processes, but it does not identify what these processes are and the actions required to develop them.

How effective is the self-assessment and development processes in bringing about improvement to the provision?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection, the self-assessment report was judged to be overly descriptive but broadly accurate, but strengths and areas for improvement were not supported by sufficient evidence. The report now includes supportive and evaluative evidence for strengths and areas for improvement and makes good use of data to support the judgements on achievements and standards. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the views of staff, learners and employers are sought and used to update the self-assessment report and in the development of the action plan. The number of learners and employers completing the feedback questionnaire was low despite incentives for completion of the document. NITAL recognise the low involvement of learners and employers and plan to develop initiatives to increase the number of questionnaires returned. The action plan is detailed and thorough individual responsibilities and progress of actions are recorded and monitored. However, the action plan identifies further issues within the organisation; these are not identified and evaluated in the learning and skills self-assessment report. However, all issues are dealt with through the development plan process.