

# North Devon Pathfinder Trust

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330004

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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](http://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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring 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:

- Customer service

## Description of the provider

1. North Devon Pathfinder Trust (NDPT) began in 1994 and in 1999 became an independent charitable trust. NDPT runs **learnirect**, Learning and Skills Council (LSC), European Social Fund (ESF) programmes, Programme Centre, UK Online, Pathways to Work, Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities a Universal Service for Connexions and other small contracts. The first learners enrolled on Train to Gain in December 2006. The provision comprises 12% of NDPT's revenue.
2. NDPT offers NVQs to 58 learners on Train to Gain programmes. These are funded by the Devon and Cornwall LSC. Currently 48 learners are working towards NVQs in Customer Service, 47 at level 2 and one at level 3. All learners are employed, principally in the hospitality sector and most work between March and November. NDPT also offers NVQs in business administration and information technology to 10 further learners. NDPT staff visit learners in the workplace to carry out both on- and off-the-job training, assessment and progress reviews. On-the-job training is also carried out by employers in the workplace.
3. NDPT manages eight learning centres throughout North and West Devon located in some of the most deprived wards in the country according to the indices of multiple deprivation, three within the 10% most deprived. The local economy is largely based on tourism and hospitality and is characterised by a low wage economy. Unemployment levels are high in specific wards, and overall in the locality is above the south west rate of 4%. Jobs are often seasonal. The area has one of the lowest ethnic minority rates in the country at 1%.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Achievement and standards</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Equality of opportunity</b>	<b>Contributory grade: satisfactory: Grade 3</b>

## Sector subject area

<b>Customer service</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provider is good. Achievement and standards are good. Current learners make satisfactory progress and develop very good work based skills and knowledge. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and assessment practices are appropriate.
5. Courses meet the needs and interests of learners well and learners receive good information, advice and guidance. Support for learners is also good as are leadership and management, with good strategic and operational management. Quality processes to improve the provision are satisfactory as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity. NDPT offers good encouragement to those without previous qualifications to continue in learning.

### Capacity to improve

#### Good: Grade 2

6. NDPT's capacity to improve is good. This is the first inspection of the Train to Gain provision however recent changes have impacted well on the programme. Success rates are good and NDPT has developed very effective working relationships with employers. The self-assessment process is good with appropriate involvement of staff and NDPT makes good use of learner and employer feedback. The self-assessment report closely reflected the judgements in the inspection and is regularly monitored by staff who have developed appropriate action plans. Although some aspects of the quality improvement system are insufficiently formal much quality improvement activity is effective and NDPT has a clear strategy to address the identified areas for improvement.

## Key strengths

- Very good development of work based knowledge and skills
- High success rates for seasonal workers
- Highly effective working relationship with employers
- Good learning support
- Very effective leadership and management

## Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently detailed progress reviews
- Insufficiently formal quality improvement system

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Good: Grade 2

7. Achievement and standards are good. The development of work based skills and knowledge is very good. All learners recognise the role they play in providing good customer service and how their actions can affect other colleagues. They are much more confident at dealing with concerns raised by customers and solving problems before they develop into complaints. Managers report a significant reduction in the level of customer complaints since their involvement in the training programme started. Participation in the programme provides learners with good opportunities to study their working practices in detail, extending their knowledge and understanding of their work roles.
8. Learners value the personal development gained through their programme of learning. For many learners this is a return to study after a gap of many years and they and their managers recognise the significant improvement in their self-confidence and increased ambition to fulfil both personal and work-related goals.
9. Success rates are high. Learners are employed on a seasonal basis in a sector renowned for its' high levels of staff turnover. In 2007/08, the overall success rate was 80 per cent, and a further four learners remain in learning. This was identified in the organisations self assessment report. Timely success rates are satisfactory at 62 per cent. Analysis completed by NDPT shows that of the 13 learners that have not achieved, 11 left the industry and only two left the programme. Current learners are making satisfactory progress and most are on target to complete their qualification on time.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

10. Quality of provision is good. Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. Tutors prepare well and provide a good range of examples to demonstrate practical applications of taught sessions. Some venues however, are not conducive to learning and some lesson plans are overly generic and not specific to each session. Assessment is planned and recorded satisfactorily. Learners are fully involved in the assessment process and their evidence portfolios contain a good variety of diverse evidence, however too much assessment is undertaken towards the end of the programme. Assessors share best practice appropriately at standardisation meetings, including lessons learned from previous programmes. Staff are suitably experienced and well qualified to fulfil their roles in training and assessment.
11. Reviews of learners' progress are insufficiently detailed. Individual learning plans are not regularly used in progress reviews and little reference is made to earlier reviews. Employers are not routinely involved; though welcome the opportunity to comment when it is offered to them. Induction training, including equal opportunities, is not sufficiently well reinforced during progress reviews. NDPT has recognised this in their self assessment report and has recently introduced an equal opportunities and health and safety checklist of points to discuss. On-the-job training delivered by the employer is not recorded as part of the review, however, good use is made of challenging but achievable short and mid-term targets to maintain learners' progress.

12. Working relationships with employers are highly effective. NDPT has developed highly productive working relationships with workplace managers. Employers are fully involved in planning training programmes and ensure NDPT are fully conversant with organisational policies and procedures. NDPT make significant contributions to seasonal workplace inductions, not only to explain the benefits of achieving a qualification, but also to provide early training on employment policies and procedures, health and safety and disability awareness. Staff from NDPT are also consulted by workplace managers, keen to implement staff development and associated appraisal systems, along with management development training. Some employers have adopted NDPT systems to complement their own, for example, the implementation of a complaints procedure. This strength is recognised in the self assessment report.
13. Initial assessment is satisfactory, incorporating appropriate assessments of literacy and numeracy and an analysis of learners' job roles. The results of the literacy and numeracy assessments are however not always apparent in the planning of an individual training programme although good support is given when required.
14. Practical support for learners is good. Learners benefit from a high level of support from staff and managers in the workplace in addition to NDPT staff directly involved in programme delivery, who learners can contact at any time. Staff are skilled at identifying individual learner needs and adapting working practices to meet those needs. Staff from NDPT provide training and assessment out of normal working hours to ensure shift workers have the opportunity to study for a qualification. Additional support is also provided during the closed season when most learners are unemployed. NDPT provides a good range of specialised learning resources for learners with additional learning needs, including suitable adaptive technology for learners with dyslexia. NDPT also has a number of laptop computers available for free loan to learners who would not otherwise be able access information technology. The motivation and level of enthusiasm learners have for their programme is excellent. Success of learners is celebrated well by the provider and employers through the media and local presentations. Most learners have been away from learning for some time and staff inspire many to go on to further learning. Support is often continued to ensure learners succeed after employment has finished. Learners receive clear information, advice and guidance on the range of opportunities available in NDPT and local colleges. The strong support is recognised in the self assessment report.



## Leadership and management

**Good: Grade 2**

### Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory Grade 3

15. Leadership and management are good. The management and board of NDPT give good leadership and discharge their responsibilities effectively. The board demonstrates clear strategic thinking, good awareness of the issues surrounding the programme and supports the executive well. The clear direction and positive culture of improvement from the top is valued by staff, learners and employers. The close alignment of capacity, skills and funding opportunities meets the Trust's purpose well in supporting the less advantaged in the local area. NDPT transferred the information technology qualification from Train to Gain to learn direct when qualification took longer than expected for most learners. NDPT has very effective strategic and operational partnerships to support the learners and develop capacity to meet their needs. For example NDPT has fostered and encouraged an effective local support network.
16. Management is very effective. The management style is open and regarded highly by staff. Management information systems have improved and are well suited to organisational requirements. NDPT manages resources well, carefully building capacity to deliver the programme. Accommodation is good and located to ensure easy access for most learners. NDPT recruits staff with good qualifications and appropriate experience. NDPT encourages staff to extend their professional development through both formal and informal training. The programme is well managed. NDPT carefully manages Learners' progress through their qualification. Communication between team members and managers is good. Communication between NDPT and employers is also good. Relationships with employers are very good and further training and development opportunities for learners are encouraged and developed well.
17. Quality improvement is satisfactory. Quality improvement measures have been effective in improving the programme. Good use is made of employer and learner satisfaction surveys, for example learner feedback leads to a more effective induction for learners. Internal verification is satisfactory. An appropriate strategy is in place supported by useful planning and monitoring documents. Moderation and standardisation meetings are well planned and effective. Feedback to assessors is detailed, although there is an over reliance on the verification of portfolios and too little emphasis on the observation of assessment practice.
18. Although much quality improvement activity is effective some aspects of the quality improvement system are insufficiently formal. Observation and evaluation of training, coaching and review are not recorded. Progress reviews are insufficiently detailed. The document audit system, clearly in place in other areas of work is not yet fully implemented across Train to Gain provision. Formal recording and analysis of staff development is insufficient, however these are recognised in the self assessment report. Appropriate steps are in place to improve the system.
19. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners receive very good care and support. Appropriate systems and policies are in place. NDPT carries out appropriate analysis and awareness of success rates of particular learner groups is good. Staff undertake appropriate training and have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Staff deal with

inappropriate behaviour promptly and effectively. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements and arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable adults, should they join the programme, are satisfactory. Staff have received appropriate training and all staff are CRB checked. Staff are knowledgeable about the correct way to respond in the event of any issue arising. NDPT has a very good network of support agencies to provide specialist advice and guidance to learners. Individual needs of learners are taken into account and met. The strategy to meet learners' literacy numeracy and language needs is satisfactory. The strategy takes good account of the organisation's strength in Skills for Life offered by their skilled specialist staff. Appropriate information is given at induction and learners' awareness of equality and diversity is generally satisfactory. Good use is made of legislative case studies as part of the qualification, for example, the Disability Discrimination Act, which benefits learners and employers. However NDPT recognises that learners understanding of their rights and responsibilities is insufficiently reinforced during their programme and has developed a series of questions for reviews.

## What learners like:

- The flexibility of staff to meet business and individual needs
- Supportive staff – ‘they understand what my problems are’
- Laptop loan scheme
- ‘Getting to understand more about the business’
- Improving their understanding
- individual coaching
- Workshops
- Increased levels of confidence
- ‘Endless patience of NDPT staff’

## What learners think could improve:

- Access to an on-line learning resource
- Marketing of NDPT – ‘you should be better known’