

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Nottinghamshire Training  
Network  
Date of visit: 23 June 2009

### Context

Based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire Training Network (NTN) was established in March 2001 with the support of the Nottinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). NTN was formed to develop the capacity of the work-based learning sector through collaborative working and sharing best practice. It operates as a not-for-profit organisation under the strategic direction of a non-executive board. Income is primarily generated through subscriptions, LSC contracts, European Social Funding and Train to Gain provision that it manages on behalf of its members.

NTN's Train to Gain provision was last inspected in October 2008. At that inspection the effectiveness of the provision, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, leadership and management, equality of opportunity, health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise and business, administration and law were all graded satisfactory. Engineering and manufacturing technologies were graded good. Construction, planning and the built environment, and preparation for life and work were graded inadequate.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving learners' success rates particularly on construction and preparation for life and work courses?	Reasonable progress
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Recent data shows a very good increase in construction learners' success rates from 63% in 2007/08 to 87% in 2008/09. Preparation for life and work learners' success rates have improved slightly from 24% in 2007/08 to 39% in 2008/09 but are still low. Success rates on other programmes have broadly been maintained. However, 690 learners are still in learning so more may succeed in 2008/09. Construction learners' progress has improved significantly with 83% now completing in the expected time. The proportion of preparation for life and work learners completing in their planned time has improved from 24% in 2007/08 to 33% in 2008/09. Although progress has improved it is still too slow for learners on some courses.

## Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in improving the quality assurance arrangements and improvement planning processes and enhancing the capacity to improve?	Significant progress
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Following the last inspection a good action plan was produced to address the identified issues and build on identified strengths. Monthly quality improvement team meetings, chaired by the NTN general manager, effectively review and monitor the progress of the agreed actions. A peer review group made up of NTN consortium members review and provide feedback about the presentation, quality and the content of consortium members' self-assessment reports. Areas of best practice are effectively identified and shared with other consortium members. For example, good practice around safeguarding and *Every Child Matters* in one provider's self-assessment report was shared with others to learn from and to use. Additional staff resourcing has been provided to manage the good improvements to the Train to Gain provision. Improvement action planning has had a positive impact on the Train to Gain provision. For example, construction learners' achievements are much improved. Subcontractor monitoring processes that check compliance and improve the quality of the subcontracted provision and work with providers have further improved. NTN regularly checks the progress of effective quality improvement actions agreed with providers. NTN has given providers training on carrying out good learner progress reviews and provided them with examples of well completed reviews. Learners' progress is checked to identify any late achievement. However, information provided to monitor learner progress is inconsistent and consequently learners' progress is still too slow in some areas. The collection and use of data has improved since the last inspection. Managers now use data to assess subcontractors' performance and to improve success rates against agreed benchmarks. Overall self-assessment and action planning effectively bring about marked improvements and provide NTN and its subcontractors with a good capacity to improve.

## Quality of provision

What progress has been made to ensure reviews of learners' progress contain more detail and set meaningful and measurable targets?	Reasonable progress
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The quality and frequency of learner progress reviews is well monitored through regular quality monitoring visits carried out by NTN on its subcontractors. NTN has made recommendations and identified actions to raise and reinforce learners' awareness of equality of opportunity and health and safety issues. Review documents have been changed providing greater scope for awareness raising and reinforcement during discussions with learners. Although these amendments have only recently been introduced and some subcontractors are still to implement the

documents, more detail is now evident with which to measure learners' understanding. Reviews now give more detail about learners' progress towards achieving their qualification. In most instances, learners are clearly informed about the progress they have made and what they still need to achieve. Quality monitoring feedback indicates that reviews are now more timely and, in many instances, are more frequent than the minimum contractual requirement. NTN has made further recommendations to improve target setting for learners. However, many reviews still contain relatively broad targets with insufficient focus on specific aspects of the learners' qualifications. Employer involvement in the review process is still insufficient and employers make few comments. NTN does not formally observe learner progress reviews.

What progress has been made to develop internal verification processes?	Significant progress
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Where issues around under-developed internal verification processes with a specific subcontractor were identified at the last inspection, this subcontractor is no longer used by NTN. NTN monitors subcontractors' internal verification processes and strategies well through the quality monitoring visits. NTN staff thoroughly scrutinise internal verifier and awarding body verification reports and effectively monitor identified actions. Records of assessment and verification standardisation meetings are also reviewed. NTN staff have carried out some observations of assessors and verifiers although outcomes are not formally recorded and used to inform action planning.

## Leadership and management

What progress has been made to improve the promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity to learners and subcontractors?	Reasonable progress
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Learner progress reviews now contain written information about the monitoring and promotion of equality and diversity. However, in some reviews, questions posed to learners to assess how they are being treated, check their understanding and to improve their awareness only require a yes or no answer and do not engage learners in discussion. NTN has identified this as an area requiring improvement during their subcontractor monitoring visits. Examples of open questions and possible answers, and equality or diversity scenarios have recently been devised for subcontractors' use. The scenarios provide useful discussion opportunities to assess, expand and reinforce learners' knowledge and views. Providers are being encouraged to devise questions that are relevant to learners' work situations to promote more meaningful and pertinent discussions. NTN, through LSC funding, arranged equality and diversity update training for consortium members, which 75% of the providers working with Train to Gain learners have attended. More training is arranged for July 2009.

What progress has been made to improve NTN's monitoring of subcontractors?	Reasonable progress
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Quality monitoring visits are carried out at least every quarter for all subcontractors. Subcontractors where underperformance is identified are visited more frequently. One subcontractor is currently being monitored monthly to ensure adequate improvement is being made. NTN regularly monitors all actions identified during visits to evaluate progress. This process is well managed and documented. Quality monitoring visits focus on key areas of performance and the quality of provision and include discussions with learners and employers. However, collection and analysis of feedback from learners and employers is under-developed. The recording of this feedback has only started recently and is insufficient to be used in an analysis. Subcontractors' information is used to form judgements on teaching and learning as no observations are currently carried out by NTN staff. Although quality assurance checks are carried out of learner progress reviews, there are no formal, recorded observations of reviews. In some instances actions do not identify timescales and owners in order to accurately inform and evaluate progress.