

Nottinghamshire Training Network

Partial reinspection report

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Type of provider: Independent Learning Provider

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Introduction

Nottinghamshire Training Network (NTN) was inspected in October 2008. The quality of provision was satisfactory or better in all areas except construction, planning and the built environment, and preparation for life and work, which were inadequate. NTN's overall effectiveness was satisfactory. Ofsted is responsible for reinspecting all inadequate provision.

Information about the provider

Based in Mansfield, 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 the sharing of best practice. It operates as a not-for profit organisation under the strategic direction of a non-executive board. Subscriptions, LSC contracts and the European Social Fund are NTN's primary sources of income. The various members of the network, working as a consortium managed by NTN, provide the Train to Gain programmes. This reinspection was of the two subject areas found to be inadequate at the last inspection.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

Subject area/type of provision	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Construction, planning and the built environment	4	3

Context

At the time of the reinspection, 170 learners were on Train to Gain programmes working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 in plant operations and construction operations. All assessment is carried out in the workplace. Since the last inspection, another training provider, SPS, has joined the consortium. SPS now provides all of the training and assessment in construction trades.

Key findings

- Success rates are now satisfactory. For the first nine months of 2008/09, for which validated data are available, the overall success rate was 93%, some seven percentage points above the national rate. Some 68% of learners achieved their qualification within the planned time, which is in line with the national average. However, NTN's data show that success rates have continued to rise and increasing numbers of learners are now completing their qualification within the planned time. This represents a substantial improvement in overall and timely success rates compared to the previous year.
- Learners develop good occupational skills during their training. In particular, they develop a very good understanding of health and safety and how it relates to their job. Learners use safe working practices and their increased knowledge

contributes to them feeling safe. They also develop good levels of personal confidence and self-esteem. Assessors provide useful information about additional training and progression opportunities.

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessors provide coaching as necessary according to individual learners' needs. However, little training is structured or planned.
- SPS's arrangements for initial assessment are satisfactory. Learners' additional learning support needs are assessed effectively at the start of the programme. However, no learners are currently receiving support for literacy or numeracy. SPS refers learners to specialist language and dyslexia support agencies if appropriate. Learners receive a well-planned induction that is effective in settling them quickly into their programmes.
- Learners have insufficient understanding of their own progress. They do not receive copies of progress reviews and share little responsibility for developing or influencing the content of their programme. Assessors set targets for learners but these are not always clear, well written or sufficiently challenging.
- Learners' portfolios are largely managed by the assessors who decide what evidence to include and what tasks should be completed. Learners are poorly involved with planning for assessment or deciding what evidence to gather. In many cases learners' portfolios are not put together until very near the end of the programme.
- Aspects of assessment practice are weak. Assessors are keen to support their learners but in a minority of cases, they confuse assessment with coaching. In these cases, assessors provide too much information and help to learners who are not always aware that they are being assessed.
- Overall support for learners is good. Learners enjoy their programmes and receive good support from their assessors. They have a high regard for their assessors and appreciate the time and effort assessors contribute to their training.
- Leadership and management of the programme are satisfactory. The most effective aspects are the strong focus on learners' achievements and SPS's strong commitment to improve and change. However, SPS has not yet fully established an effective method of monitoring learners' progress.
- SPS's arrangements for developing learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity are satisfactory. All learners receive appropriate information at induction and during their training. However, NTN does not analyse equality data and has not identified whether there are any differences in the achievement of different groups of learners.

What does NTN need to do to improve further?

- Improve assessment practices by ensuring that assessors do not confuse the activities of coaching and tutoring with those of assessment.

- Increase the level of learners' involvement in the compilation of their portfolios, and in the development of targets and actions set during progress and assessment reviews.
- Improve the arrangements to ensure that learners' portfolios are completed in a timely manner.
- Develop better arrangements, which include the use of data on ethnicity and gender, to accurately monitor the progress and achievement of all learners.

Subject area/type of provision	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Preparation for life and work	4	3

Context

At the time of the reinspection, 87 learners were on Train to Gain Skills for Life programmes. Apart from one specialist centre, all training takes place in the workplace. Learners are working towards national tests in literacy, numeracy, or both, from entry level to foundation level. NTN provides the programmes in conjunction with four subcontractors who are members of the consortium.

Key findings

- Success rates are now satisfactory. In the first nine months of 2008/09, for which validated data is available, the overall success rate for Skills for Life programmes was close to the national average at 71%. Since then NTN's data show that success rates have continued to rise rapidly. The success rate for 2008/09 is a substantial improvement on the very low success rates in 2007/08.
- The standard of learners' work is satisfactory overall and their learning is supported by a good variety of worksheets. They enjoy and look forward to their learning sessions.
- The majority of learners continue to make slow progress and do not complete their qualification within the planned time. Although timely success rates have increased, they remain below the national average. During the first nine months of 2008/09, only 37% of learners completed their qualification on time compared to 57% nationally. However, since then timely success rates have continued to rise rapidly.
- Learners gain a very good range of both employability and social skills. They develop good personal skills and greatly increased levels of self-confidence. Many learners become ambitious due to their success on the programmes and are actively seeking more challenging job roles and gaining promotion.
- NTN places an appropriate emphasis on personal safety. NTN ensures that learners receive the information they need to develop safe working practices and learners feel safe.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most learning takes place at work and all training is provided on an individual basis. Tutors provide some good individual coaching. Tutors know their learners well and adapt their teaching methods to meet the learners' needs, and to make maximum use of the learning opportunities offered by employers. Skills for Life tutors work well with tutors on vocational programmes to integrate literacy and numeracy training with other vocational training.
- The recording of lesson planning is poor. Only one subcontractor uses lesson plans, and many of these still lack sufficient detail. Other tutors simply use

identified sections of the national curricula with additional planning. Tutors do not formally plan how to meet individual learners' needs, which teaching methods to use or how they will check learning.

- Tutors base learners' targets on the national curricula with insufficient reference to learners' work-based or social goals. Although individual coaching is set in the context of learners' work roles, tutors do not check that learners can transfer their new skills to other situations.
- Relationships with employers are good. Employers recognise how the Train to Gain programmes are benefiting both their workforce and their business. Communication with training staff and employers is also good and coaching takes place at a time to suit both employers and learners, often during early morning or evening shifts.
- Overall support for learners is satisfactory. Support for learners with dyslexia is highly effective. All staff are supportive and approachable. They have a good understanding of learners' personal learning needs and respond appropriately. All learners benefit from a comprehensive initial assessment. NTN and their partners have good links with specialist support agencies.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. NTN has made reasonable progress in remedying the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Success rates have increased considerably. NTN has introduced individual learning plans and regular reviews of learners' progress are now taking place. Since the last inspection, NTN has developed and implemented a satisfactory Skills for Life strategy.
- Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. They receive appropriate information at induction and staff develop their knowledge further during reviews. However, NTN does not analyse equality data and has not identified whether there are any differences in the achievement of different groups of learners.

What does NTN need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve timely success rates by monitoring learners' progress and taking prompt and effective action where learners are failing to meet their targets.
- Improve the quality of target setting by ensuring that learners are clear about what they have to do and when tasks should be completed.
- Improve the quality and detail of lesson plans by incorporating information on individual learners' needs, teaching methods to be used, timings of activities, and how learning will be checked.
- Develop better arrangements, which include the use of data on ethnicity and gender, to accurately monitor the progress and achievement of all learners.

Additional Themes

Inspectors explored the following themes as part of this reinspection.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in developing strategies to ensure that feedback from learners and employers contributes to self-assessment and quality improvement planning?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection, although capacity to improve was satisfactory, learners' views did not contribute effectively to the judgements in the self-assessment report. Since then NTN has made reasonable progress in implementing strategies to collect and use feedback to contribute to quality improvement. NTN reacts swiftly and effectively to individual concerns raised by learners. Since the last inspection, NTN has employed a new member of staff with a specific role to develop and improve the use of feedback from learners, and NTN is involved in projects about the use of the learner voice. NTN makes good use of its visits to subcontractors to interview learners and talk to them about the quality of their experience. A monthly feedback day is used effectively to draw together any feedback from learners and to look for trends and themes. NTN is in the process of drawing up questionnaires which will allow it to collect information on the quality of learners' training across the network. Although individual subcontractors collect and use feedback, NTN has not developed an effective way of collating and analysing this information. Quality assurance monitoring of subcontractors does not include thorough monitoring of the systems and procedures they use to collect feedback or evaluate their effectiveness.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving success rates for learners, and in particular ensuring that success is timely?	Reasonable progress
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In the year since the last inspection, NTN has made reasonable progress in increasing success rates. Achievement and standards were satisfactory at the last inspection. However, success rates in the two areas reinspected were low. Validated data are available for the first nine months of 2008/09. These data show an overall increase in success rates. On Skills for Life programmes, the overall success rate has improved substantially from 27% in 2007/08, to 71% in 2008/09. Overall success rates for NVQ programmes at level 3 have improved from 40% to 80% over the same period but on NVQ programmes at level 2 they remained 12 percentage points below the national average. Timely success rates during the first nine months of 2008/09 were very low and some 20 percentage points below the national average. However, on Skills for Life programmes and on NVQ programmes at level 3 they had improved substantially since the previous year. In the last three months of 2008/09 NTN has made good progress in increasing both overall and timely success rates.

The vast majority of learners leaving during this period achieved their qualification and a much larger proportion did so by their planned target date.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving the quality assurance of subcontractors work?

Insufficient progress

Insufficient monitoring of subcontractors was a key area for improvement at the last inspection. Since then NTN has made insufficient progress in developing and implementing strategies to quality assure the training provided by member of the consortium. Although much work has taken place to audit subcontractors' files and paperwork there is still too much focus on compliance rather than quality. NTN does not monitor subcontractors' progress with their quality improvement plans or moderate their self-assessments effectively. Success rates on engineering, which were high at the last inspection, have fallen during the first nine months of 2008/09 and are now very low at 45 percentage points below the national average. NTN does not monitor the quality of internal verification and is not aware of the weakness in assessment practice in construction NVQs. Although individual subcontractors have arrangements for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning these are not rigorously scrutinised by NTN. Insufficient use of data to monitor and improve the provision was noted in the last inspection report and this remains an area for improvement. NTN does not monitor overall and timely success rates on an ongoing basis during quality visits to subcontractors. Systems for monitoring the progress of learners are still being developed and embedded.

What progress has been made in improving learners' and staff understanding of, and the promotion of, equality of opportunity?

Insufficient progress

At the last inspection, a minority of learners had a very limited understanding of diversity and NTN did not analyse data on equality. At the monitoring visit NTN had made reasonable progress in improving this through training and improvements in the discussion of equality during progress reviews. However, NTN has made insufficient progress in using data on equality of opportunity effectively to monitor the performance of different groups of learners and different subcontractors. Not all subcontractors include an analysis of equality data in their self-assessment. In other cases, although an analysis has been carried out and revealed differences in performance, it has not resulted in any action to address these differences. NTN does not collect, collate or analyse data on the achievements of different groups of learners from the subcontractors.

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