

# Norfolk Training Services

## Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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## FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Norfolk Training Services (NTS) was established as a group training association for the transport industry in 1969 and became a limited company in 1974. It has sites in Norwich and Kings Lynn. NTS delivers apprenticeships in engineering, construction, business administration, retail and commercial services, and preparation for life and work. It also delivers programmes in Entry to Employment (E2E), Train to Gain and Skills for Jobs. The company has around 100 staff and 650 learners.

NTS was inspected in June 2006. The overall effectiveness and leadership and management were judged to be good. The contributory grades of equality of opportunity and quality improvement were judged to be satisfactory. Provision in preparation for life and work and business administration and law was judged to be good. Provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies was judged to be satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit, which include the two mandatory themes of outcomes for learners and self-assessment and improvement planning. In particular, inspectors explored outcomes for learners on apprenticeships, E2E and Train to Gain.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Norfolk Training Services Ltd made in improving the effectiveness of the self-assessment process to bring about improvements?	Reasonable progress
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NTS has addressed many of the areas for improvement in the self-assessment report well. At the previous inspection arrangements for self-assessment were satisfactory but the report was too detailed for staff to work to effectively. The most recent self-assessment report is appropriately evaluative and critical; however, it is still too detailed and descriptive. Identified areas for improvement have been competently addressed to bring about clear improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and learner attendance. Regular management meetings monitor the self-assessment action plan and update progress against agreed company targets and objectives. Quality improvement days enable staff and managers to identify company strengths, areas for improvements and how improvements can be most effectively implemented. NTS prioritises areas for improvement well, and responsibility for taking actions forward is clearly identified. However, not all managers yet consistently review and update actions for their programme areas. Learners have already benefitted from the recently established 'quality champions' programme which has improved the quality of teaching and learning.

## Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving the outcomes for learners? Reasonable progress

Overall success rates for apprentices have improved. For 2008/09 success rates were around 70%, in line with national rates. Overall timely success rates also improved to 53%, above the national rate. Success rates in business, administration and law and retail and commercial services in 2008/09 are significantly above the national rates for apprentices in 2007/08. In 2008/09 the overall success rate for engineering apprentices aged 16-18 have improved considerably to 57% but remain slightly below the national rate. .

The proportion of learners on E2E programmes achieving their agreed objectives has improved to 79% in 2008/09. Learners' rates of progression have improved slightly from 47% in 2006/07 to around 50% in 2008/09.

School pupils continue to achieve well, with high overall pass rates on Level 1 programmes. Success rates for learners on Train to Gain are high at 85%. Adult learners on Skills for Jobs programmes make significant progress, even with a rapid expansion in learner numbers, 57% of leavers in 2008/09 progressed into jobs.

Learners enjoy their programmes and gain good employability skills. They also improve skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Many learners show gains in confidence, and awareness of health and safety and personal wellbeing.

What progress has Norfolk Training Services Ltd made in improving the quality of training, learning and assessment to meet the needs of all learners? Reasonable progress

NTS has continued to improve the quality of training, learning and assessment to meet the needs of learners. The training at NTS is now more interesting and relevant to learners. Attendance of learners has improved. Courses are more carefully planned using detailed lesson plans and schemes of work. NTS has invested in improved training resources and workshop equipment which provide learners with more up to date facilities and a better learning environment, helping to maintain learners' interest. More effective monitoring of the quality of training including regular lesson observations now leads to improved teaching and learning. Managers use the frequent evaluation of learners' satisfaction levels with their training to bring about continuous improvement. Managers systematically and quickly follow up any non-attendance to determine reasons for absence. NTS routinely inform employers and where appropriate parents of any learner absences, reducing absenteeism. Managers regularly monitor learners' progress and take early action to rectify slow progress. However, the absence of any agreed milestones on engineering programmes makes it difficult for managers to accurately assess learners' progress against expectations.

What progress has Norfolk Training Services Ltd made in monitoring the progress of learners on E2E programmes?	Significant progress
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At the last inspection, staff did not sufficiently monitor the progress of E2E learners, and no centralised record was kept of units completed by each learner. Since then, NTS has improved its arrangements for recording and monitoring learners' progress. Clear aims and objectives are agreed with learners, and progress against these is reviewed regularly with E2E learners. Assessors make more frequent visits to learners on work placement. The outcomes of learner reviews, including their progress towards achievement of agreed qualifications are routinely recorded on a central tracker database accessible to staff. Managers monitor these progress records regularly, and staff give additional support to those learners identified as being at risk of not completing on time.

#### Leadership and management

What progress has Norfolk Training Services Ltd made in providing additional support to meet the development needs of learners on apprenticeship programmes?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection, individual support for learners in preparation for life and work was good, and this continues to be good. On apprenticeship programmes, although learners' support needs were quickly identified, some aspects of additional support were weak, in particular poor communications and a lack of awareness by some vocational staff of support arrangements. Since then, the management of learning support for apprentices has been centralised and has improved considerably. Communications between tutors, assessors and learning support staff are frequent and effective. Learners now receive prompt and well structured support for the development of their skills in literacy, numeracy, and their progress is closely monitored.

How much progress has Norfolk Training Services Ltd made in maintaining and improving the effectiveness of strategies to promote equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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Since the last inspection, NTS has continued to promote and provide opportunities to people who have little or no prior attainment to gain skills, qualifications and employment. NTS has strengthened its links with schools and pupil referral units to provide good opportunities for younger, often disengaged learners to gain useful qualifications and develop personal skills. Of the 67% of learners on E2E programmes with learning difficulties, 87% achieved a qualification in basic skills. NTS has also expanded its work with unemployed adults considerably through a range of new programmes.

At the previous inspection, equality of opportunity formed part of all learners' induction, but there was poor appreciation of equality of opportunity by some staff. Since then, NTS has provided regular additional training for its staff. Updated guide questions on equality and diversity are used effectively by assessors to develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity during reviews.

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