

# North West Training Council

## Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53615

Name of lead inspector: Ian McMillan HMI

Last day of inspection: 17 June 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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## Information about the provider

1. North West Training Council (NWTC) is a group training association with 300 active member companies which are based mainly in Merseyside, South Lancashire and Cheshire. It is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity, and is governed by a board of trustee directors. It was established in 1963 to deal with a shortage of engineering apprentices in Merseyside and has since broadened its range of training programmes to include new aspects of engineering, construction, security training and health and public services. This inspection focused on the apprenticeship and Train to Gain provision across the two main subject areas, engineering and construction.
2. Seventy permanent full-time staff are employed. Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the chief executive who is supported by a team of senior managers. Learners are referred to NWTC by the Connexions service or by employers. Government funded training, through Merseyside and Lancashire Skills Funding Agency, accounts for approximately 75% of the total business.
3. A programme in construction and engineering is provided for school pupils aged 14 to 16 who are from 6 local schools. A range of commercial management, and health and safety courses is also provided.
4. Learner numbers have grown since the last inspection. Currently there are around 900 learners, about 700 of whom are apprentices and the rest are Train to Gain learners. NWTC recruits learners mainly from Greater Merseyside, Cheshire and West Lancashire.
5. In November 2009 the unemployment rate was 9.8% in Liverpool, compared with a north-west average of 6.9% and a national average of 6.2%. The 2001 census showed that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 5.7% in Liverpool, compared with the national average of 9.1%. The proportion of school leavers in 2008 gaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above, including maths and English, was 41.2% in Liverpool, compared with 47.6% in England.
6. NWTC provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Joint Training Limited
  - Partnership For Learning
7. The following organisations provide training on behalf of NWTC:
  - Liverpool Community College
  - Instant Training
  - Deeside College
  - Knowsley College
  - South Cheshire College

- West Cheshire College
- Wigan College
- St. Helens College
- Yale College
- Wirral Metropolitan College

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	40 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships Programme led apprentices	200 learners 480 apprentices 220 apprentices

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
	Grade
Subject Areas	
Construction, planning and the built environment	3
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	3

## Overall effectiveness

8. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Senior managers provide sound leadership that is successfully raising expectations and promoting ambition for learners. A range of improvements have been successfully implemented since the previous inspection. Few learners now leave their programmes early. Success and retention rates are satisfactory and improving but too many learners still make slow progress. Programmes are satisfactorily managed. The quality of the teaching of practical work and of personal support for learners is good. One-to-one coaching for Train to Gain learners is effective. Too much classroom teaching is uninspiring. NWTC works productively with employers and subcontractors and provides training at work and college that meets the needs of learners and employers well. Learners say they feel safe. They are safeguarded and protected appropriately from abuse. The management of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Managers are aware of the need to promote them more effectively and use data better to help reduce the variations in performance across different programmes. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to monitor learners' progress and the performance of subcontractors.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications is satisfactory but many fail to do so in the planned time. Engineering learners achieve well. Success rates for construction and health and public services learners have improved recently and are now satisfactory.
- Progression for apprentices from intermediate to advanced levels is satisfactory across all programmes. Progression from programme led apprenticeship provision onto other programmes is good. Retention rates across all programmes have improved and are now good.
- Learners develop good employability skills and in engineering they achieve a good range of additional occupational skills and awards.
- Learners feel safe, and health and safety in the workplace and at the training centre are a key priority for staff and employers. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory and learners who started their training this year are progressing well.
- Teaching and training are satisfactory. Tutors use their knowledge well to develop learners' knowledge and skills. The better sessions include an appropriate blend of activities that makes learning interesting. In plastering, young apprentices show high skill levels. Poorer lessons are often dull and make ineffective use of teaching resources to stimulate and support all learners.
- Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Feedback from assessors is supportive, but often fails to identify how the work can be improved. Targets set during progress reviews are not always sufficiently useful.
- Resources for training and assessment are satisfactory; training rooms and workshop areas provide a satisfactory learning environment. However, there is slow development and use of additional teaching and training resources to support learning.
- NWTC works closely with its industrial and educational partners to develop a good range of programmes. For example, construction training options have increased to meet local labour shortage needs, and the programme led apprenticeship programmes are contributing well to reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training in Liverpool.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff are highly approachable and responsive to learners' needs. Learners receive good course information prior to starting. Progression rates from intermediate to advanced levels are satisfactory. Progression opportunities are not well promoted. Too many programme led apprentices do not have planned work experience early enough.
- The executive board and senior staff provide satisfactory leadership. They work well with a range of employers, local schools and regional priority groups to improve training opportunities for learners. Managers and staff have been successful in improving success and retention rates. NWTC provides satisfactory value for money.

- Equality, diversity, and safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Learners are safe. All staff have completed a Criminal Records Bureau check. NWTC has successfully widened participation and contributed to local social inclusion. Equality and diversity are insufficiently well promoted in progress reviews. The use of data to identify underperformance by learner groups is underdeveloped.
- Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Managers have implemented actions which have improved retention rates and raised the success rates. However, some elements of quality assurance are operated ineffectively and self-assessment lacks sufficient rigour and does not concentrate enough on the quality of the provision.

### What does NWTC need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and the use of resources within lessons so that no lessons are dull and the needs of all learners are met.
- Improve success rates and increase the proportion of learners who complete their programmes successfully within agreed timescales by ensuring that feedback after assessment helps learners improve their work, learning targets set during progress reviews are helpful and that work experience is provided in a more timely way on programme led apprenticeship provision.
- Improve progression rates by providing learners with more information about progression opportunities, establishing appropriate targets for progression, helping programme led apprentices learners more to find employment and ensuring they develop their job search skills better.
- Ensure that an assessment of Train to Gain learners' knowledge and skills takes place at the start of their programme and that relevant additional learning support is provided in a timely way.
- Develop quality assurance arrangements so that all elements of it contribute effectively to the improvement of the quality of the provision, data are used effectively at all levels of the organisation to identify strengths and areas for improvement and the self-assessment report is sufficiently rigorous.
- Involve learners and employers more in helping to develop and improve the provision.
- Develop arrangements to promote equality and diversity matters within individual progress reviews.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- having assessors and tutors who are ex-practitioners and are supportive and who meet their needs flexibly
- the good recognition of their efforts through the annual awards event
- being treated as adults
- being supported well to gain employment
- gaining qualifications while at work

- gaining new skills on a course that they enjoy.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more work experience
- more job search training to improve their chances of getting a job
- more resources that support their course work.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way NWTC supports the local engineering community through its courses and partnership working
- the flexibility of NWTC's staff in meeting their needs and the needs of their learners
- how NWTC provides tailor-made courses to suit their requirements
- the way the training improves staff performance in the workplace
- the effectiveness of communications.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more structured feedback about the progress of their Train to Gain learners
- more practical experience for learners when they attend the training centre
- more feedback on the response to employer surveys
- more opportunities to support the development of NWTC's programmes and provide work placement.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. NWTC has a satisfactory capacity to make and sustain improvements. It is making satisfactory progress in improving the outcomes for learners. Retention rates have improved significantly and have contributed to the improving trend in overall and timely success rates since the last inspection. Construction and Train to Gain provision has grown to meet local needs, many of the strengths identified at the last inspection have been maintained and some of the key areas for improvement dealt with. However, the quality of key learning processes and the failure to ensure learners complete their programmes in the planned time remain areas for improvement.
10. NWTC has worked hard to secure a more stable financial position since the last inspection. While resources are satisfactory managers are aware of the need to increase their investment in resources to support learning. Employers and learners are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. NWTC's current self-assessment report and quality improvement plan are too descriptive and not sufficiently critical.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

11. Learners' attainment of qualifications and learning goals is satisfactory. Train to Gain success rates are satisfactory but completion rates within agreed timescales are poor. Framework achievement rates for intermediate and advanced apprentices are good in engineering and satisfactory across all other programmes. In construction and health and public services programmes too many learners fail to complete their programmes in a timely manner. Current learners are making satisfactory progress and retention rates are good. Adult learners generally achieve at a higher rate than other learners.
12. Learners achieve a satisfactory standard of work. In engineering and construction programmes learners apply and demonstrate a good range of vocational skills. Many Train to Gain learners show significant improvement in self-confidence and make good contributions to productivity in their job roles. These benefits are highly valued by employers.
13. Learners have a good understanding of safe working practices and adopt them well in learning and at work. They feel safe and know their rights and responsibilities. Learners increase their confidence and communication skills, and in engineering particularly, they learn how to make more informed career and progression choices. Progression from advanced to higher levels in engineering is good but progression from intermediate to advanced levels across all programmes is satisfactory. Programme led apprentices progress well onto other programmes. Learners are generally well motivated and enjoy their learning.

14. A satisfactory range of activities is used to support learners' awareness of health and well-being issues. These include sexual health awareness and support clinics and a good range of healthy eating options in the training centre canteen. Learners' and staff contributions to the community are satisfactory. Construction apprentices undertake some good community project work.

## The quality of provision

Grade 3

15. Teaching and training are satisfactory. NWTC provides satisfactory accommodation for learning and assessment. Tutors possess good industrial and commercial knowledge and use it well during apprenticeship training sessions. Practical sessions are effective in ensuring learners develop good vocational skills. Train to Gain learners benefit from effective workplace coaching and training which extend their skills and knowledge. The more effective learning sessions promote learning well by being interesting and well planned and providing a good blend of activities that meet individual learner needs. In contrast, too many lessons are dull and lack an effective use of teaching and learning resources to stimulate or support learning.
16. Assessment practices are satisfactory. They are flexibly provided and responsive to employer and learner needs. Assessors provide supportive feedback which recognises good work but often fails to identify what learners need to do to achieve higher standards and grades. Targets set during progress reviews are not always sufficiently useful. Reviews held for Train to Gain learners do not develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity sufficiently.
17. The provision is provided flexibly and satisfactorily meets the needs of employers and learners. Many learners achieve relevant additional qualifications that are highly valued by their employers. However, more promotion of higher level qualifications needs to take place, in particular for intermediate level learners. The provision is responsive to the needs of local industry, offering, for example, bespoke programmes and the range of apprenticeship options, particularly in construction, has been increased.
18. Partnership working is strong and effective. It has been influential in shaping the provision of, for example, programmes for school pupils aged 14 to 16 and programme led apprenticeship programmes that help reduce the number of learners not in education, employment or training in Liverpool. NWTC is well represented on regional industry and educational forums and careers events.
19. Tutors and assessors provide personalised support which is highly effective in meeting the needs of learners. Learners appreciate this good personal support that has helped increase retention rates. Initial and diagnostic assessment is provided systematically for apprentices and suitable help is available where needed. These arrangements are less effective for Train to Gain learners. NWTC is aware that it does not evaluate fully the impact of its support interventions.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 3

20. Senior staff have a clear vision of where the organisation needs to be in order to maintain a position of sustainable financial viability and develop its business effectiveness. More use is now made of performance data to monitor the provision. However, not all staff across the organisation fully understand performance data. The executive board scrutinises how well contractual obligations are being met. However, the board does not provide sufficient challenge to managers to improve success rates or reduce variations in the performance of different programmes.
21. Satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding learners and ensuring their safety are in place. Learners feel safe. A high priority is given to health and safety and learners are protected well. The policy and procedures for safeguarding have been disseminated to staff who have received at least basic awareness training in safeguarding and are aware of how to recognise need and how to respond. They respond quickly when learners are in need of additional pastoral, vocational, welfare or financial support. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been made on all staff and appropriate records are maintained. A designated member of staff is responsible for safeguarding.
22. The management of equality and diversity is satisfactory. NWTC has appropriate policies and procedures for equality of opportunity, the prevention of bullying and harassment, and for dealing with complaints. The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory, but under-developed in progress reviews. Managers are aware of the need for more staff development in this area and have further training planned. There are no significant variations in performance between females and learners from the minority ethnic community when compared with other groups; however, managers do not monitor variations sufficiently.
23. Most learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity issues. These issues are covered well at induction but they are not sufficiently embedded within the training programmes. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory but more needs to be done to promote and reinforce these matters within Train to Gain programmes.
24. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups broadly matches that in the local community. Managers are aware of the need to improve participation rates from people living in disadvantaged wards and are working closely with a number of organisations to improve matters. NWTC has worked well with local engineering manufacturing companies and is starting a project with local girls' schools to develop an engineering training taster programme that promotes engineering careers to women.
25. Engagement with users and stakeholders is satisfactory. Links with employers are good. These links bring tangible benefits to learners, including suitable progression opportunities, but work needs to be done to ensure that programme led apprentices receive more work experience. Employers confirm

that NWTC is responsive and flexible in its approach to meeting their needs. Learners' and employers' involvement in helping improve the provision is under-developed.

26. Arrangements to improve the quality of the provision are satisfactory. A range of recently introduced actions have improved the provision. For example, close scrutiny of individual learners' progress by managers and more timely support interventions when the pace of a learner's progress slows have significantly improved success and retention rates. However, some key features of quality improvement are not fully established. For example, observations of teaching and training take place but are not used effectively to inform improvements. Information and data are used well by managers and senior staff but there is insufficient use of them by other staff to gauge performance. The results of learner and employer questionnaires are not analysed well enough to inform improvements and self-assessment is not focused enough on the quality of the provision and where improvement is needed.
27. NWTC secures satisfactory value for money. Learners make appropriate progress. Success and retention rates are satisfactory overall and are improving. They are good in engineering. Resources are satisfactory.

## Subject areas

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

#### Context

28. Currently around 350 learners are working towards qualifications in engineering or manufacturing. Apprentices account for about 70% of all engineering learners. The majority of apprentices are aged 16 to 18 years. Only 4 apprentices are female. The remaining 30% of learners are on intermediate and advanced Train to Gain programmes. Most learners are employed. An engineering programme is provided for 10 learners aged 14 to 16.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Apprenticeship success rates are good and are consistently above national rates. Overall success rates on Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory but too many learners make slow progress. Retention rates for learners who started in 2009 are good and these learners are making satisfactory progress. Learners aged 14 to 16 have satisfactory achievement rates.
- The standard of learners' work is good and demonstrates that learners have a good knowledge of engineering and manufacturing practices. Progression rates from intermediate to advanced studies for apprentices are good. Many learners complete a satisfactory range of additional qualifications and awards, thereby improving their employability and skill levels. Employers appreciate the benefits and additional skills that learners bring to their organisation.
- Assessment is satisfactory. It is well planned and flexibly managed to meet the needs of learners. Learners' progress is monitored satisfactorily. Reviews are frequent. Progress tracking on Train to Gain programmes does not always identify clearly learners who are making slow progress or encourage learners sufficiently to complete within agreed timescales.
- Learners feel safe, demonstrate safe working practices and are fully aware of their responsibilities with regard to health and safety. Tutors and employers reinforce safe working practices well. Tutors, for example, discuss safety and well-being throughout learners' programmes and during progress reviews.
- Teaching and training are satisfactory. Training officers are very experienced and willingly share their skills and experience with learners in order to develop their understanding. Teaching and learning resources, for example textbooks and computers, are insufficient to support learning. In too many lessons tutors fail to challenge and motivate the more able learners.
- The range of provision is appropriate and programmes are responsive to the needs of learners and employers. Learners achieve a good range of additional National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) units and other qualifications to fulfil employers' skill requirements.

- Partnership working is well developed. Communication with partners is good. However, employers and learners are not sufficiently involved in self-assessment or the development and improvement of programmes and too few programme led apprentices have planned work experience.
- Support arrangements are satisfactory. The provision of effective individual support is a key factor in the improvement in retention rates. Learners receive good support from NWTC staff and from their employers whilst at work.
- Some aspects of support are less effective. When learners attend NWTC's training centre they do not have sufficient tutorial provision and programme led apprentices receive too little help to develop their job search skills and to find employment.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Reviews of apprentices' progress are held regularly and are generally effective. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Actions taken to improve retention rates and raise success rates have been successful. There is insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity.

What does North West Training Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates from good to outstanding in engineering apprenticeship programmes over the next year, by, for example, providing more planned work experience to ensure programme led apprentices complete their programme successfully and through more challenging teaching.
- Sharpen the focus placed on the progress being made by Train to Gain learners during their progress reviews and ensure support arrangements are put in place when progress slows so that qualifications are achieved within the planned timescales.
- Develop teaching and learning resources, including computer-based resources, to make lessons more interesting, interactive and productive. Ensure teaching provides suitable challenge for the more able learners.
- Promote equality and diversity and reinforce learners' understanding of relevant issues more thoroughly during progress reviews. Develop arrangements to improve programme led and unemployed apprentices' job search skills and help them better to find employment.

## Construction, planning and the built environment

## Grade 3

### Context

29. Currently around 550 learners are working towards qualifications in construction. These include bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, building services, plastering and electrical installation. Most learners are apprentices aged 16 to 18 working towards intermediate qualifications. Approximately 80 learners are on NWTC's Train to Gain programme. In addition, programmes are provided for 30 learners aged 14 to 16. There are no female learners.

### Key findings

- Success rates are satisfactory and improving. Train to Gain success rates were satisfactory in 2008/09 and so far in 2009/10 they are high. Construction apprenticeship framework completion rates have improved. They were poor and are now satisfactory. Too many learners, both apprentices and Train to Gain, fail to complete their programmes within the agreed timescale.
- Learners develop their skills well. Apprentices develop good practical skills, particularly in plastering. Some programme led apprentices benefit from participation in external project work but not enough work experience is planned into their programmes. Train to Gain learners build effectively on their existing competencies and develop good additional skills.
- Learners feel safe in the training centre and in their work placements. Particular care is taken to ensure safeguarding arrangements are good for the 14 to 16 year old learners who attend the training centre. Learners make a positive contribution to the local community by working on local construction projects.
- Teaching and training are satisfactory. The more effective learning sessions take good account of learners' needs. In these sessions tutors use their experience well to bring their subject to life. Learners enjoy these sessions. Not all lessons are this effective; some lessons are uninteresting and in some, learning and teaching resources are insufficient to meet the needs of all learners.
- Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Opportunities for assessment are arranged flexibly to meet learners' needs. Assessor feedback to learners is generally helpful, clear and concise. Train to Gain learners receive additional training if required. Learners often complete additional NVQ units to meet employer needs.
- Progress reviews are satisfactory overall. Reviews provide strong pastoral support but fail to set clear enough targets to guide future learning. In Train to Gain reviews insufficient discussion takes place to enable learners to develop their understanding of equality and diversity.
- The range of provision is satisfactory and provides a sufficient choice of subjects to meet learners' progression and career aspirations. NWTC has been successful in developing good partnerships with schools, local employers and

the construction sector in order to provide a blend of programmes that meet their needs.

- Support arrangements are satisfactory. Learners receive increasingly effective individual support to complete their work and stay in learning. Apprentices' additional support needs are identified early. Within the Train to Gain provision the identification of additional support needs is not systematic and too many learners make slow progress as a result.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers focus strongly on the quality of the provision and are succeeding in improving learners' outcomes. Self-assessment and quality improvement are satisfactory. Staff are closely involved in evaluating the performance of individual learners but there is insufficient analysis at departmental level to help drive improvement.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff visit schools to promote construction to female groups. Insufficient attention is given to raising the awareness of Train to Gain learners to equality and diversity issues

What does North West Training Council need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve success rates through, for example, providing more planned work experience for programme led apprentices and developing more resources to support learning.
- Ensure learners complete their programmes in the planned time by identifying Train to Gain learners' support needs earlier, improving the support all learners receive when their progress slows and through the setting of sharper and more helpful learning targets during progress reviews.
- Make teaching more interesting by providing appropriate training for some teachers. Develop teaching resources so that the needs of all learners are met.
- Improve the learner review process to better promote and develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity.

## Information about the inspection

30. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operational manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the main subject areas the provider offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## North West Training Council

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners			
Part-time learners	955	55	900
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3		
How well do learners progress?	3		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	3		
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	3		
Quality of provision	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3		
Leadership and management	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3		

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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