

NCG

Inspection report

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Information about the provider

1. NCG (formerly Newcastle College Group) is one of the largest providers of education, training and skills provision in the United Kingdom, and works across much of the country. Its focus is 'on meeting national and regional education, skills and employment goals for individuals and employers in line with government priorities'. NCG has a wide range of public and private sector contracts. It has a turnover of over £170 million. NCG has expanded following a series of mergers and acquisitions. It has four divisions currently: Newcastle College; West Lancashire College, in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk; Intraining, a national work-based learning organisation with headquarters in Sheffield; and Rathbone, a national youth charity with headquarters in Manchester. Rathbone is a recent acquisition, and was not included in the scope for this inspection. NCG is proactive in seeking opportunities to develop and expand. It has significant higher education provision and has recently been awarded Foundation Degree awarding powers.
2. NCG provided education and training for over 70,000 learners in 2010/11, and worked with 20,000 businesses. Over 26,000 learners enrolled on qualifications across the two colleges. The vast majority of work-based learning is through Intraining, although the colleges also run apprenticeship programmes and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace. In 2010/11, before the merger with Rathbone, around 50% of NCG's turnover was through provision at Newcastle College, with around 40% through Intraining and the remainder through West Lancashire College.
3. NCG is a large and complex organisation. Overall responsibility lies with the Chief Executive, reporting to the governing body. The Chief Executive is supported by five group executive directors and four heads of division. One group director is responsible for providing shared services across NCG, the others are responsible for planning, finance, quality and business development and resourcing. The heads of division comprise two college Principals and two Managing Directors of the training companies. Each of the divisions has its own local management structure. NCG employs around 3,600 people.
4. Both colleges serve areas that are characterised by some significant levels of social and economic deprivation, and the proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds has risen over the last four years, particularly for adult learners. Attainment of school leavers in the areas served by the colleges is below the national average.
5. The inspection focused on NCG's provision at Newcastle College, Intraining and West Lancashire College. The inspection took into account all of the provision offered in the divisions. College-based provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy and literacy was inspected directly at both colleges. College-based provision in visual arts, and business, administration and law was inspected at Newcastle College. Work-based provision in health, social care and early years,

business administration and retail, warehousing and distribution, was inspected across NCG.

6. NCG provides training on behalf of the following providers:

- Ministry of Defence
- Lancashire Adult Learning Service
- Lancashire County Council
- Gateshead College
- JTL
- C Skills
- BEST
- NECC
- Skye-Malvern House
- Watertrain
- Premier League Learning
- TDR
- Kingston University
- Rolls Royce
- Newcastle City Council.

7. The following organisations provide training on behalf of NCG:

- Lancashire Adult Learning Service
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue
- Preston Vocational Centre Ltd
- Professional Vocational Training Ltd
- Lancaster & Morecambe College
- Shropshire Council (trading as County Training)
- Lorraine Michaels (trading as Crosby Training)
- TNG Ltd (trading as Avanta)
- Training and Consultancy Ltd
- Acorn Learning Solutions Ltd
- New Image Training Ltd
- St Helens College
- Rathbone Training
- St John Ambulance
- Warren Care Ltd

- Watertrain Ltd
- Standard Practice Ltd
- Newcastle Futures Ltd
- South Birmingham College
- Local Labour Initiative Training & Enterprise Ltd
- Specialist Training and Development
- Standguide Ltd
- North East Worcestershire College
- Astral Training Ltd (formerly CEL Training Ltd)
- Best Practice Training and Development Ltd
- Circa 2007 Ltd
- Enhanced Care
- Exceed Training Company Ltd
- Blue Sky People Solutions
- Builders Merchants Federation Ltd
- New Generation Training and Consultancy
- Carlisle College
- Gateshead College
- ILC Manchester Ltd
- SB Training UK Ltd
- Orion People Solutions Ltd
- UK Network Learning Centres Ltd
- Team Academy Ltd
- Skye Training Ltd
- The Hair Project Ltd
- Apprentice Funding Assistant Ltd
- Northumberland Football Association Ltd
- Daisy Inclusive UK
- Intelligent Training Services Ltd
- North Warwickshire & Hinckley College
- Global Skills Training Ltd
- Christopher Boyton Hair Salons
- City of Wolverhampton College
- East Lancs Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Eden Training Solutions Ltd

- Academy & Hairdressing Ltd
- Accent on Training Ltd
- FirstGroup PLC
- Citrus Training Solutions Ltd
- Furness College
- Groundwork Lancs West and Wigan
- HP Enterprises Ltd
- Academy of Hair Ltd
- Hair Academy Stamford
- Hairstation Academy
- ITEC Training Solutions Ltd
- Kendal College
- L8ter Ltd
- Marr Corporation Ltd
- Prepared Training
- SASA Hairdressing Ltd
- Sean Hanna Ltd
- Solihull College
- Success Training (Scotland) Ltd
- The Assessment and Training Company Ltd
- Partnership Development Solutions Ltd
- Lakes College
- LDR Squared Ltd
- VQ Solutions Ltd
- Walsall College
- Middlesbrough College
- T & L Training Ltd
- TBG Learning Ltd
- Myths London Ltd
- Wirral Metropolitan College
- Worcester College of Technology
- Yorkshire Coast Enterprise Ltd
- Progress Sports
- Beacon Learning LLP
- Halton YMCA Ltd

- Alt Valley Community Trust Ltd, trading as The Communiversity
- Preston Vocational Centre
- North Liverpool Regeneration Company
- Northumberland Football Association Limited
- ILC Manchester Ltd
- Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council
- Elmfield Training.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16 Further education (16 to 18) Foundation learning	750 part-time learners 7,372 full-time learners 823 part-time learners 242 learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	2,350 full-time learners 6,042 part-time learners
Employer provision: NVQs in the workplace Apprenticeships	5,611 learners 15,322 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	
Health, social care and early years (work-based)	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy (college-based)	2
Visual arts (college-based)	1
Literacy (college-based)	1
Business administration (work-based)	2
Business, administration and law (college-based)	2

Overall effectiveness

8. NCG provides good quality education and training both in its colleges and through Intraining. The organisation makes a significant contribution to improving the life chances of a large number of young people and adult learners, both in the communities served by the colleges and nationally. The proportion of learners who complete their courses successfully is consistently at or above national averages. In college-based provision, successful completion rates for learners on their main qualifications have been static for the past three years, at around the national average. Learners achieve very well on the wide range of short courses resulting from recent qualification changes, and on the impressive range of additional qualifications offered by NCG. Apprentices who receive their training through Intraining, the vast majority of work-based learners, achieve well. A very

small minority of apprentices who are on college-based provision do not achieve as well.

9. The quality of provision is good overall, with some outstanding aspects. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Many teachers are adept at enthusing learners through imaginative teaching that makes good use of new technologies, although in a minority of sessions learners are not challenged sufficiently. The breadth of the curriculum and the progression routes available throughout NCG are outstanding. Resources for learning are, on the whole, superb. NCG's partnership work produces outstanding benefits for learners. Pastoral support for learners, especially those who need extra help, is excellent. Support to help all learners succeed is good.

10. NCG's leaders are extremely ambitious for the organisation, and their vision has led to a rapid and successful expansion of NCG in a relatively short space of time. The management structure created by NCG has ensured that the different divisions focus well on ensuring that learners succeed. Provision at West Lancashire College, in particular, has continued to improve. Quality assurance arrangements are sophisticated and rigorous. However, self-assessment judgements pay insufficient attention to variations in learners' outcomes and are, on occasion, overgenerous. The promotion of equality and diversity has a high profile throughout the organisation, and is good. Arrangements for the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults are outstanding.

Main findings

- The proportion of learners who complete their courses successfully is high, both for college-based and work-based learners. However, success rates on long college-based courses have been static over the last three years, at around the national average. Success rates on short courses are very high. Data presented by NCG during the inspection indicate that a higher proportion of learners completed their course during the current year than in 2010/11.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve the full framework is above the national average. Success rates are higher for apprenticeships delivered through Intraining, which accounts for the vast majority of apprentices, than on college-based provision.
- Many learners, both in college-based and work-based provision, make good progress from their starting points, developing vocational skills of a high order and improving their literacy and numeracy. For a significant proportion of learners, their success has the potential to transform their lives. Learners on academic courses make satisfactory progress.
- The standard of learners' work is high. Staff have high expectations and promote high professional standards in vocational work. Learners develop skills and knowledge that match or exceed those required by their qualification aims. In some areas, for example visual arts, learners produce superb work.
- NCG provides a comprehensive range of progression routes, to the benefit of learners. For learners who complete their courses successfully, high progression

rates both within NCG and to employment or higher education significantly enhance their future prospects.

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The well-qualified staff have high expectations of learners and use a wide range of teaching, learning and coaching methods to keep learners interested and motivated. A strong emphasis on developing teachers' and assessors' skills through professional development pervades the organisation.
- Teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) confidently and the high-quality learning materials are appreciated and used well by learners. Learners benefit from the stunning realistic working environments in vocational areas.
- Assessment of learners is good. Assessments are timely and reliable. Learners often receive constructive feedback. Teachers use effective initial and diagnostic assessments to compile detailed profiles of their learners and use these well to support learners. However, too often learners' personal targets are not specific or focused sufficiently on how learners might improve their standard of work.
- The promotion of equality and diversity issues within lessons is very effective and learners have a good understanding of these matters. This helps to create a culture of respect between staff and learners.
- NCG makes exceptional and very successful efforts to meet the needs and interests of learners. The colleges provide a broad and diverse curriculum with extensive progression routes and excellent curriculum enrichment within subject areas. Intraining ensures that an excellent range of apprenticeship pathways are available across the country. Curriculum innovation, including successful initiatives targeting the unemployed, is habitual and focused closely on local and national skills priorities.
- NCG has established many strong and effective partnerships with employers, other public sector agencies and community groups that provide clear benefits to current learners and underpin successful initiatives to widen participation. Both NCG colleges provide strong local catalysts for economic growth. Partners, including employers, are impressed by the responsiveness and flexibility of NCG.
- Guidance and support for learners are good. Personal and welfare support, including NCG's own maintenance allowances, are very strong. Learning support, including the use of adaptive technology, is extensive and highly effective. However, the quality of academic support experienced by learners, in the form of tutorials, progress reviews and the use of electronic individual learning plans, is too variable.
- Leadership and management are good. NCG has high aspirations and an ambitious vision that is focused on meeting identified needs and priorities through expansion. Management structures are highly effective and business planning processes are outstanding. Governors are extremely supportive and monitor financial performance and group developments very effectively. Accommodation and resources to support learning are of high quality.
- Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Staff training is comprehensive and learners have considerable confidence that any reported issues will be dealt

with swiftly. Learners' health, safety and welfare are given a very high priority. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Achievement gaps have narrowed and clear policies and procedures promote a culture of respect and consideration that ensures discrimination is appropriately tackled.

- NCG actively seeks the views of learners and employers to improve provision. Quality assurance arrangements are extensive and are improving the quality of provision. However, the impact in raising success rates on learners' main course of study is more variable. Self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical and is overgenerous in evaluating the overall effectiveness of provision and some other aspects. NCG provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

What does NCG need to do to improve further?

- Improve both success rates and the progress that learners make in the minority of areas where there is weaker performance, through more rigorous monitoring of learners' progress towards meeting clear and specific targets for achievement.
- Develop, through stronger performance management, quality assurance and staff training, greater consistency in the quality of tutorials, progress reviews and the use of electronic individual learning plans, so that all learners enjoy equally strong support and guidance to achieve to their full potential.
- Improve the effectiveness of self-assessment by taking a more self-critical approach to comparing the effectiveness of provision against all available and appropriate performance measures.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the friendly staff, who provide very good support for learners
- the additional support received by learners with disabilities
- being kept up to date with their progress by staff
- the high-quality learning resources and excellent accommodation
- the way staff treat everyone equally and with respect
- the helpful information and guidance they receive from staff
- the city centre location of Newcastle College.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the opening times of the Learner Zone and access to computers at Newcastle College
- the control of heating in some classrooms
- the expensive canteens
- the access to lifts in some buildings in Newcastle College.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**What employers like:**

- the careful selection of the optional units attached to learners' qualifications to ensure they match job roles
- the quick and responsive actions NCG takes to respond to their learners' needs
- the flexibility of assessors when planning visits and the good responses to employers' requests
- the benefits of training in developing learners' understanding of occupational practices, processes and skills.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the use of in-house training to support their learners' progress and assessment.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

11. NCG has a good capacity to improve. Despite a slight decline in college-based long course success rates in 2010/11, overall success rates on college courses have continued to rise. Group data for college courses for 2011/12 show a rise in retention rates, reversing a two-year trend of decline. Success rates at Intraining, although variable in different occupational areas, are generally above national averages. Management structures are highly effective and targets are set and monitored to aid improvement. Business planning processes are also highly effective and governors are very supportive of group developments. NCG has invested significantly in improving accommodation and resources to support learning and has the necessary financial and staff resources to continue to make improvements.

12. The self-assessment reports, while overgenerous in evaluating the effectiveness of provision, do identify many significant strengths and the process engages managers, staff, learners and employers in reviewing the quality of provision. Quality assurance arrangements are effective and quality improvement activities are beneficial, although they have not led to sustained improvements in learners' outcomes in all areas. Managers and staff at all levels are committed to securing improvements and the curriculum offer is revised continually to meet the needs and interests of learners better.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

13. The proportion of learners who complete their courses successfully is high, although this judgement disguises some variations in learners' outcomes. Overall success rates in 2010/11 were significantly above the national average. In that year, around half of all enrolments on college-based provision were on long courses, and roughly half on short courses of various durations. Success rates on long courses, which often comprise learners' main qualification aim, were close to the national average, and have not improved over the last three years. Success rates on short courses, many of which are significant qualifications, were very high. Success rates on long courses vary between different subject areas. While they are at or above national average in many, they are below average in some, for example, in science and mathematics and construction. Outcomes for learners aged 16 to 18 are slightly better than those for adult learners. Data show no significant differences in outcomes for different groups of learners by gender or ethnicity. Learners in receipt of additional learning support achieve well. Data presented by NCG during the inspection indicate an increase in the proportion of learners completing their courses during 2011/12.

14. Learners on college-based vocational courses, which represent the bulk of college-based provision, achieve well. The transition from one-year to two-year courses for many learners has had a slightly negative impact on overall retention rates. Nevertheless, most learners achieve their main qualification and a good range of additional qualifications, and success rates are generally above the

average for the qualifications offered. Over 1,000 students take A/AS levels in the sixth-form college; results have improved steadily over the last three years, and are now close to the national average, although this overall picture disguises significant variations in results between subjects. On GCSE courses, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C is satisfactory. Success rates on access to higher education courses are also satisfactory. The introduction of functional skills qualifications in literacy and numeracy has been very successful; success rates are outstanding for the very high number of learners who take these qualifications.

15. Most of the work-based learning provision is delivered through Intraining, with a small minority through the two colleges. The successful completion rate of apprenticeship frameworks through Intraining in 2010/11 was above the national average. In business administration, by far the largest occupational area, success rates have improved steadily and were good. Data presented by NCG indicate that achievements should improve further in 2011/12. Outcomes in other occupational areas are more variable but are generally good. Apprenticeships delivered through the colleges are less successful, with high success rates in a few occupational areas but low success rates in others. NVQs in the workplace constitute an increasingly small proportion of work-based provision. The proportion of learners on these programmes who complete within the planned timescale has increased and is around the national average. On Skills for Life programmes, learners' outcomes are outstanding.

16. Most learners, particularly those on vocational courses and apprenticeships, make good progress from their starting points. They develop increasingly high skill levels, and improve their literacy and numeracy. The personal, social and work-related skills they develop are instrumental in improving their employment prospects. Progression rates to higher levels of course within NCG, and to further training, employment or higher education, are high. The progress made by students on A/AS-level courses, as measured by value-added data that compares their final results with their GCSE results on entry, is satisfactory.

17. The standard of learners' work is good overall, with examples of exceptional work seen by inspectors. Learners enjoy their lessons, and most are very motivated and ambitious to achieve high standards. In most vocational areas and in work-based provision, teachers' and assessors' high expectations, accompanied by superb learning environments, help learners to aspire to producing high calibre work that reflects professional standards.

18. Learners feel exceptionally safe in all parts of NCG's provision. Learners' safety and welfare are given high priority throughout the organisation, and arrangements for reinforcing health and safety are exemplary. Measures to raise learners' awareness of, and tackle, any issues of bullying or harassment, including through electronic means, are equally secure. Staff are keen to promote the importance of healthy lifestyles to learners when opportunities arise.

19. Learners throughout NCG make a positive contribution to the communities served by the organisation, for example through volunteering and fundraising

activities. Within the organisation, learners' levels of involvement with decision-making forums are inconsistent.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

20. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The large majority of lessons observed by inspectors were good, and in some cases outstanding. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They plan their sessions carefully and have high expectations of their learners. The best lessons use highly interactive activities that capture the imagination and interest of learners. Teachers use questions well to encourage learners' participation and help to build their confidence. In the minority of less effective lessons observed by inspectors attendance was sometimes low, teachers did not use their time well or check the progress of all learners adequately, and they did not challenge learners sufficiently.

21. The promotion of equality and diversity within lessons is very effective and learners have a good understanding of such matters. This helps to create a general culture of respect between staff and learners. Learners benefit from the high-quality realistic working environments in vocational areas. For example, the Newcastle Aviation Academy at Newcastle Airport provides very good accommodation and equipment for engineering learners.

22. Effective initial and diagnostic assessments are used by teachers to compile detailed profiles of their learners, and these are used well to support learners. In a minority of cases, diagnostic assessment for work-based trainees does not take place until some months after the start of the programme.

23. Arrangements for meeting the additional learning needs of learners are outstanding. Support staff are well trained and provide very high levels of support that lead to the good progress of learners. Inspectors observed sessions where learners with disabilities received excellent support, including the provision of session notes on the college's virtual learning environment prior to the lesson.

24. The college has an extensive platform for ILT and very good equipment. Teachers use smart boards well and use presentations appropriately in short, sharp sessions, often to pose additional questions for learners and to review learning. High quality learning materials are appreciated and used well by learners, although they report, and inspection evidence confirmed that, on occasions, the IT equipment does not function properly and slows down learning.

25. Managers responsible for teaching and learning within NCG adopt a reflective approach and they have a strong focus on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The very broad range of staff training focuses suitably on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Innovative projects develop the skills of teachers further. Staff who are observed for sessions judged to be less than good receive effective support to improve. However, observations for teachers judged to be good or better do not always lead to their receiving specific individual targets for further improvement. The overall self-assessment on teaching and learning for NCG is insufficiently self-critical. It only reports on the strengths of teaching and

learning, without reviewing areas for improvement, some of which are highlighted in school self-assessment reports.

26. Assessors of work-based learning trainees have good and relevant industrial or vocational experiences and/or qualifications, and nearly all hold relevant assessor qualifications. Others are working towards achieving them. Assessments are planned very well, although some records of these are brief and lack detail. The observation and assessment decisions are valid and reliable, and feedback gives learners a very clear idea of how well they have done and what they need to prepare for next time. Learners make excellent use of technology but do not make sufficient use of video evidence.

27. Assessment of college-based learners is timely and reliable. Learners often receive constructive feedback, indicating how the standard of their work could be improved and how they could apply their knowledge more critically. In a minority of cases, feedback does not present sufficient challenge to learners.

28. Staff have developed a comprehensive electronic system to record the personal targets of learners. This allows staff and students to communicate messages swiftly and easily. However, too many personal targets of learners are about meeting coursework deadlines or their attendance and punctuality, and are not specific or focused sufficiently on how learners might improve their standard of work.

29. NCG provision is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of learners. At Newcastle College a broad and diverse curriculum provides wide-ranging progression routes from foundation to advanced level in almost all vocational areas as well as extensive access to higher education. Qualification and progression opportunities are equally strong at West Lancashire College, although the range of subject areas is not as broad. Both colleges provide a wide range of entry-level courses.

30. Extensive use of additional qualifications and broader skills development strengthen learners' progression prospects and workplace skills. For example, the development of enterprise skills is encouraged and facilitated. An excellent range of apprenticeship pathways are available through Intraining, with plans to develop higher-level apprenticeships in priority areas. Work-based provision is widely spread across the country and caters for a broad and diverse range of learners.

31. Strong business planning processes underpin considerable curriculum innovation, which is closely linked to local and national skills priorities and to prioritising progression potential for learners. Newcastle College has been pivotal in developing new provision to boost employment in the aviation, subsea technology and renewable energy industries in the North East. It encourages increased access to courses through flexible curriculum design; for example, it has introduced roll-on, roll-off courses in vocational science, introduced January intakes and provided extra weekly hours on some other vocational courses. Initiatives targeted at young people not in education, employment or training are

very effective in increasing participation. The employment gateways and their associated sector-based work academies are having some success in assisting unemployed adults to find sustainable jobs.

32. In both colleges, curriculum enrichment activities are extensive, often promoted through strong employer engagement and often used well to promote equality and diversity. Cross-college enrichment programmes are more limited, although the students' union arranges a programme of events and learning support staff provide a valuable enrichment programme. The scale of vocational provision for school students aged 14 to 16 is modest, but both colleges provide extensive taster and summer school programmes to support progression into further education at 16.

33. Partnership working across NCG with employers, other public sector agencies and community groups is outstanding, providing clear benefits to current learners and creating new initiatives to widen participation. The two colleges provide strong local catalysts for economic growth. West Lancashire College's work in supporting a local failing school is valued highly by the local authority. Among many successful collaborations at Newcastle College are: the partnership with Proctor & Gamble, which has provided a process plant in the college used by science and engineering students; the partnership with Northumberland Water, which provides reciprocal training benefits; the partnership with Jet2.com, which has provided investment in facilities and qualifications; and the partnership with Subsea North East, which has developed a new curriculum to meet an identified skills gap in the region.

34. At Intraining, good use is made of partnership links to extend the range of work-based learning provision, particularly with specialist, subcontracted training providers. Collaboration with an awarding body has led to the development of excellent support resources for learners. At local levels, collaborative relationships with Connexions, schools and other training providers create good opportunities to negotiate new benefits and opportunities for learners.

35. Support for learners is good. Initial advice and guidance focus strongly on placing learners on the most appropriate programme, though some school development plans rightly recognise the need to improve the match between applicants and courses further. Guidance on progression, careers and higher education throughout the learners' journey is good. Partnership arrangements between Newcastle College, local secondary schools and the local authority have not yet secured impartial advice and guidance to students on their most appropriate post-16 opportunities.

36. Support services are extensive, well publicised, readily accessible and valued highly by learners. Since the government's withdrawal of the education maintenance allowance, the colleges have provided localised maintenance allowances at a similar level. Students have access to high-quality nursery provision and, provided they meet attendance targets, free bus passes. Arrangements to monitor and support most vulnerable groups of learners are good and are improving for those making the transition from care homes.

37. Learning support is excellent. Learning support assistants are numerous and well deployed. Inspectors frequently witnessed very effective additional learning support in lessons at both colleges. The range of assistive technology available for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is exceptional. At the colleges, learners receiving support achieve slightly higher rates of success than other learners. Work-based learners also have access to an extensive range of support resources, including workbooks and a skills disk. Regular reviews of their progress involve employers, supervisors or workplace mentors and are recorded well. Extensive use is made of the excellent E-Track tool to monitor and track learners' progress in work-based learning.

38. Both colleges have developed the progression coach role recently to promote more strongly the amount of progress made by individual learners. However, there remains too much variability within the colleges in the quality of learners' tutorial experience and in how effectively teachers use progress reviews and electronic individual learning plans to help learners to improve their performance. Too often targets concentrate simply on the completion of work and lack specific and measurable targets designed to help learners to improve their skills.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

39. NCG has an ambitious vision that is clearly focused on achieving its mission and objectives. Management structures are considered carefully and highly effective. The group management structure provides an extensive range of services to support the divisions and enables directors to monitor performance and developments very effectively. Business planning processes are outstanding and financial target-setting and monitoring are excellent. NCG has a growth agenda and has expanded provision successfully in both new and existing areas of work. Provision is focused strongly on meeting identified local, regional and national priorities and is developed using an extensive range of information, including a thorough analysis of learners' and employers' needs. NCG works with an extensive number of partner organisations and has highly effective arrangements for managing subcontracted provision.

40. Governors are excellent ambassadors for NCG and provide high levels of support to group directors; they contribute significantly to setting the strategic direction of the group. Governors have a wide range of useful experience and expertise in areas such as audit, finance and human resources. They monitor financial performance exceptionally well and governors receive useful reports from the divisions that keep them well informed of developments. Academic performance monitoring is less effective and governors are not sufficiently aware of areas of relatively weaker performance. Governors fulfil their statutory duties in relation to child protection and equalities legislation and are developing the use of advisory boards further to aid their monitoring of performance.

41. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. NCG promotes the safeguarding of learners exceptionally well. Policies and procedures are very detailed and staff training is thorough. Designated managers in each division ensure that the

safeguarding of learners is prioritised. Staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and learners have considerable confidence that any issues reported will be dealt with swiftly. Site security arrangements at both West Lancashire College and Newcastle College are well considered and include regular security patrols and extensive CCTV coverage. Arrangements for ensuring learners' health, safety and welfare in the workplace are comprehensive and robust. Learners have access to a wide range of health, safety and welfare services provided either by NCG or through the well-established and highly effective links with external agencies.

42. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. NCG has appropriate policies and procedures in place that promote a culture of consideration and respect. Staff training is thorough and ensures managers and staff are aware of their responsibilities. Awareness-raising activities at both West Lancashire College and Newcastle College, including the annual diversity competition, promote equality and diversity themes well. Within curriculum areas the promotion of equality and diversity is good overall and outstanding in art and design and in literacy. At Intraining, the promotion of equality and diversity is not as effective as at the colleges and the development of learners' understanding is more limited. NCG analyses learners' success rates by age, gender, ethnicity and disability and has been successful in narrowing overall achievement gaps. Where achievement gaps are identified within curriculum areas, actions are planned to improve performance, although the targets set are not always sufficiently specific.

43. Learners have many opportunities to express their views and contribute to promoting improvement through a wide range of learner forums and surveys. Class representatives at each of the colleges meet frequently with managers and staff to review the quality of provision and to suggest improvements. However, the effectiveness of learner forums is inconsistent with some being insufficiently focused on promoting improvements within the curriculum and overly focused on more generic, non-curriculum issues. The views of learners at Intraining are frequently sought through apprentice surveys; although improving, response rates are relatively low. Many curriculum areas and Intraining use employer forums effectively to enable employers to contribute their views.

44. NCG has invested significant resources into quality assurance and quality improvement activities. The quality reference manual provides useful guidance and aids consistency of approach. Quarterly quality reviews monitor business performance targets and review the outcomes of teaching and learning observations and student surveys very effectively. Quality improvement activities are beneficial in improving aspects of provision but the impact in raising success rates, especially on learners' main course of study, is inconsistent. While success rates improved in several curriculum areas in 2010/11, long-course success rates declined slightly to be below the corresponding national average. Self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical, especially, but not only, in relation to improvements in learners' outcomes. Insufficient attention or weighting is given to comparing NCG's performance against appropriate national averages in relation to success rates, high grades and value-added information. Several grades awarded in the self-assessment report are overgenerous.

45. NCG manages its high-quality resources extremely effectively. Significant investment continues to improve the quality of accommodation and resources to support learning. The shared services model provides an effective and efficient range of resources to the divisions and uses best practice procurement processes. Several initiatives to promote sustainability, including waste recycling and the incorporation of energy-saving measures into new buildings, demonstrate a strong commitment to developing resources in a sustainable manner. Given the good learners' outcomes and the good progress made by learners, NCG provides good value for money.

Subject areas

Health, social care and early years (work-based)

Grade 2

Context

46. At the time of inspection, over 3,800 learners were on apprenticeship programmes, and around 300 were taking NVQs in the workplace. This represents a significant increase in apprenticeship provision compared with previous years. Around 70% of the provision is through Intraining; the remainder is through the colleges.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory and learners enjoy their programmes. Success rates have been variable in the past, with learners based at Intraining significantly more successful than those on college-based provision. Learners on health and social care courses have been less successful than those on child-development programmes.
- Current learners are making good progress. They are challenged sufficiently and work at a pace well suited to their individual needs. Learners' work is generally of a good standard and they improve their practical skills, to the benefit of their workplaces.
- Learners develop effective personal and social skills and demonstrate increased confidence. They have an appropriate level of awareness of key issues, such as the importance of respecting rights and dignity, and the need to observe confidentiality. Most learners are aware of the progress they are making and what they have to do to complete their course.
- All learners develop useful skills that are valued by employers. A high proportion of learners are given increased responsibilities and a few receive higher pay upon gaining their qualification. Most learners are ambitious and motivated to be successful.
- Good attention is given to safe working practices and to raising awareness of occupational health and safety guidance and procedures. Learners have a good understanding of the importance of safeguarding the people they work with and care for, and know what to do to report concerns. All learners say they feel safe in their workplaces.
- Teaching, training and assessment are good. Assessment is consistent and planned effectively. Mandatory training provided by employers is, on occasions, identified and integrated insufficiently within the apprenticeships. The best assessors use a variety of interesting methods to motivate learners and assess their competence. Assessors make good use of their relevant vocational experience. The pace of learning is matched well to learners' preferences, needs and interests.
- Induction and initial assessments are thorough and are used effectively to prepare learners for their programme and to plan support and assessment. However, written learning plans do not always contain personal objectives or

wider aspects of learning and development, and assessors do not always encourage learners to develop broader interests or take greater responsibility for their learning.

- Feedback on learners' work is purposeful and constructive. Portfolios are well organised and reflect the standard of work completed. Equality and diversity issues are considered at induction and during mandatory training, and are promoted well during assessment and review.
- Assessment and support for literacy and numeracy are effective. A small minority of learners benefit from progression opportunities from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships.
- Partnerships with many employers, including an NHS Trust, are effective. Employers support learning well but too few are encouraged to attend progress reviews to help plan for additional learning opportunities.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements for individual support and meeting specific needs are good. Current learners receive timely information at induction to support their long-term progression, and the best assessors provide advice on further opportunities such as university nurse training and allied health and early years professions.
- Leadership and management are good. A strong focus on improving performance and quality is having a positive impact, although self-assessment in the past has not focused sufficiently on areas of weaker outcomes for learners across NCG.
- All staff share a firmly held determination to make sure learners' interests remain a central focus in all decision making across the provider. Staff are supportive of senior managers and are aware of key priorities and NCG's strategic direction.

What does NCG need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on college-based provision by identifying and tackling the reasons for learners not completing their programmes.
- Ensure that learning plans include individualised learning objectives that motivate independent learning and the development of wider learning and work-related skills.
- Ensure that the outcomes of employers' mandatory training are optimised and used effectively to support learners' progress and assessments.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy (college-based)

Grade 2

Context

47. Both colleges offer a wide range of courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy, hair and media make-up, nail technology and spa treatments. Courses are provided from entry level to higher education. Learners study on a full- or part-time basis. Most full-time learners are aged 16 to 18. Enrichment courses include customer service, stone therapy and bamboo and chocolate massage. At the time of the inspection, over 1,100 learners were on full-time courses with around 400 studying part time. Most of the provision is at Newcastle College.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on long courses in 2010/11 were high on many courses, particularly at advanced level. However, success rates were no better than satisfactory on some significant programmes, for example the intermediate-level diplomas in hairdressing, barbering and beauty therapy. Success rates on the range of short courses that learners take as valuable additional qualifications are consistently high.
- Learners enjoy their lessons, feel safe and work exceptionally safely in practical lessons. Most learners demonstrate high standards of work, which helps to prepare them for employment. They participate readily in a wide range of activities, including fundraising for charities and working with external groups, to benefit wider communities. Learners actively take part in and contribute to college life.
- Learners are keenly aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They take an informative additional qualification on preventing dermatitis. Learners are supported well by the college to choose healthy food at lunchtime and to take part in enjoyable activities that provide regular exercise.
- A high proportion of learners progress to higher levels of learning at the end of their course. The progression rate of foundation learners is high. Attendance is good overall and learners are punctual to lessons.
- The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use information about learners very effectively when planning lessons to meet the needs of each individual. Most lessons have a brisk pace and ensure that learners make good progress. Teachers' demonstration skills are strong and they ensure that learners are fully involved.
- Many learners demonstrate good commercial skills, especially in beauty therapy. They interact professionally with clients and reflect on their performance to strive to improve. Learners have too few clients in a minority of lessons at West Lancashire College and their confidence, commercial skills and client-handling skills are underdeveloped in those lessons.
- Teachers are excellent role models and learners benefit greatly from their teachers' industrial experience. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively,

and exceptionally well in a minority of lessons. Assessment practices are generally good but teachers' questions do not always check learning effectively. The targets set in learners' individual learning plans are not always sufficiently specific or developmental.

- High-quality resources enhance learning. The realistic work environment is outstanding and enables many learners to develop high professional standards. Teachers use ILT very effectively in lessons. The virtual learning environment contains a range of valuable resources.
- The range of courses, from entry level to higher education, is outstanding. The extensive enrichment curriculum provides learners with an exceptional choice of subjects. Learners' main qualifications are enhanced by many exciting enrichment activities and qualifications that increase learners' knowledge of the industry.
- Partnerships with employers, product companies and a large number of external organisations are outstanding. They contribute significantly to learners' enjoyment, development and preparation for employment. Learners benefit from informative demonstrations and specialist training by external experts.
- Support for learners is outstanding. Personal support is valued highly by learners and support for learning by teachers and support assistants is very good. The college works tirelessly with a range of external agencies to meet the personal needs of learners most effectively.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers instil a culture of high aspirations among staff and learners. Performance against targets is monitored regularly. Strategies for improvement are starting to increase the number of clients and more learners have remained on their courses in the current year. Safeguarding is outstanding. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.
- Staff training is focused sharply on improving teaching and learning. Engagement with learners and employers is very effective. Self-assessment is generally accurate but actions to improve quality have not led to sufficient improvements in the proportion of learners who attain their qualifications.

What does NCG need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that learners are successful by ensuring that they remain on their courses and that target-setting for individual learners is always specific and developmental.
- Ensure that all learners develop the skills necessary for dealing with clients effectively and good commercial skills by increasing the number of clients at West Lancashire College.
- Improve the effectiveness of assessment for learning by ensuring that questioning techniques evaluate learning robustly in all lessons.

Visual arts (college-based)

Grade 1

Context

48. At the time of the inspection, over 1,800 learners were enrolled on visual arts provision, the vast majority at Newcastle College. Most learners study full time. The college offers a wide range of vocational courses in all the arts, including fashion and business marketing, 3D design, textiles, art and design, and photography. Academic programmes at A/AS level attract large numbers, and a small number of learners take GCSE art. Most learners are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Success rates on vocational programmes in 2010/11 were high, and in some cases outstanding. Success rates on academic programmes, which represent a relatively small proportion of overall provision, were close to the national average. In-year data presented by the college indicate a further improvement in retention rates in the current year.
- Learners enjoy their courses and make excellent progress from a wide variety of starting points. They develop very good practical, analytical and transferable vocational skills. Progression between levels of course, and from the college to suitable destinations, including prestigious universities, is very good; a high proportion of learners progress to higher education courses at the college. During the inspection attendance at, and punctuality to, a minority of lessons was poor.
- The standard of learners' work is excellent. They produce creative and innovative work, using a variety of media, techniques and processes, and are encouraged to be experimental in their approach. For example, inspectors saw some stunning photographic work. Sketchbooks and worksheets demonstrate a clear understanding of the design cycle and the finished products are presented to a very high standard.
- Learners benefit enormously from the strong links with industry and other stakeholders, and through live briefs with clients. Excellent opportunities are made available for learners to showcase their work, both inside and outside the college, to mutual benefit. Displays within the college contribute to a highly stimulating learning environment. The range and quality of resources are excellent. Accommodation is of a high quality and working spaces are clean and well maintained.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Many lessons are vibrant and exciting. Lessons encourage creative learning and challenging assignments make good reference to industry practice. Team teaching is used effectively to give learners a variety of opportunities to sample different workshops and develop specialist skills. The use of ILT is particularly well integrated into teaching and learning.
- A wide range of assessment techniques ensures that learners know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Good use is made of peer assessment and group critiques in many lessons. Teachers monitor

learners' progress carefully and learners are clear about what they need to do to improve their work further. Learners at all levels develop the skills to work independently.

- The range of provision is excellent and the department is highly responsive to the external environment in the arts. Highly effective partnerships with local employers, schools and charitable organisations add to the breadth of experience offered to learners. Learners benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities designed to enhance their main qualifications.
- Information, advice and guidance for prospective and current learners are excellent, and often innovative. Learners are prepared thoroughly for their courses, for example, through the use of summer schools for learners progressing from intermediate-level courses to advanced courses, and taster courses for school pupils.
- Staff identify learners who need extra help at the start of the course and learners benefit from very good support from learning mentors and personal coaches. Teachers pay good attention to the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Staff give the promotion of equality and diversity a high priority and embed a strong focus on equal opportunities into course documentation and assignment design.
- Curriculum management is outstanding. Managers have high expectations and transmit these highly effectively to staff and learners. Much emphasis is put on supporting and developing teachers to be excellent practitioners and to inculcating high professional standards. Teachers are well qualified and many have current or recent experience as practitioners in the arts.

What does NCG need to do to improve further?

- Reinforce high professional standards and the importance of developing learners' employment prospects further, by emphasising to learners the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Literacy (college-based)

Grade 1

Context

49. At the time of the inspection, over 5,000 learners were taking literacy courses at the two colleges, with around 90% of these learners based at Newcastle College. Around three fifths of the learners were on full-time courses. Most enrolments are on functional skills courses in English at various levels; the remainder are on a range of adult literacy courses. Around three-quarters of learners are aged 16 to 18.

Key findings

- Learners achieve outstandingly well. Success rates on most courses in 2010/11 were high; in functional skills, they were particularly high, being significantly above the national average for these qualifications. Data presented during the inspection indicate that success rates should improve further in 2011/12.
- Learners develop very good literacy and personal skills. Students aged 16 to 18 make outstanding progress in improving their English skills. Adult learners work to a high standard. Learners who speak English as an additional language make particularly impressive progress.
- Learners are keen to learn and enjoy their sessions. They participate well in lessons and exhibit a determination to improve their language skills. The skills learners develop improve their employment prospects and their social and personal development. Many learners progress to higher-level literacy and vocational programmes.
- Learners appreciate the strong emphasis placed upon their safety and welfare. Learners enjoy a safe learning environment where they are protected from bullying and harassment. Arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable learners are outstanding.
- The quality of provision is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations of their learners and this has a positive impact on learners' responses and their progress. Teachers plan their lessons effectively and make very good use of highly engaging and often innovative teaching resources. Teachers are adept at ensuring that the context of learning is relevant to learners' interests. Teachers embed equality and diversity exceptionally well within lessons.
- Teachers have expert knowledge and understanding of their learners' needs and inspire them to achieve. Initial assessment is very effective and learners complete a detailed induction and assessment period. Tutors use assessment evidence well to inform their planning to support individual learners' needs.
- Assessment is good. Teachers use a good range of different assessment strategies to check and confirm learning. Most teachers give detailed and regular feedback to learners about how they can improve their skills and knowledge. However, some adult learners do not always receive sufficiently detailed feedback.

- Learners' progress is monitored closely through regular reviews where targets for improvement are set. Targets set by some teachers are not always sufficiently precise to guide learners to know what they have to do and by when.
- Learning resources are good. Lessons take place in professionally presented classrooms and learners value this highly. Tutors use a good variety of multi-sensory learning resources to interest and engage learners. Most tutors are appropriately qualified with teaching qualifications and have relevant experience.
- The range of courses meets the needs and interests of the users particularly well. Progression routes are clear and coherent. Learners participate in a wide range of additional activities that contribute to their enjoyment and achievement. These include charitable projects, enterprising activities such as running a café, computer workshops and healthy eating taster sessions.
- Partnerships are very productive. Teachers work well with local primary schools and community centres to help parents improve their literacy skills. Visits from representatives of the police and fire services are valued highly by learners.
- Teachers provide outstanding support for learners and care passionately about their overall development. Learners with very low starting points and complex social issues achieve well. Literacy support staff work very closely with teachers to tailor specific additional support for learners when required.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Managers and teachers pay close attention to ensuring that all learners, regardless of their starting points or backgrounds, have every opportunity to achieve.
- Curriculum management is outstanding. Staff have implemented successful actions to improve the provision and raise the profile of literacy. Teachers receive clear communications and directions from managers and they understand their roles and responsibilities. Management is open and consultative.

What does NCG need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the targets on learners' individual learning plans are precise and indicate to learners exactly what they need to do to improve.

Business administration (work-based)

Grade 2

Context

50. At the time of the inspection, around 8,000 apprentices were on a range of business and management programmes across England. Around 500 further learners were taking NVQs in the workplace. Most learners are on business administration, customer service or management and team-leading programmes; others are on a range of accountancy, marketing, financial services, contact centre operations, management and sales and telesales programmes. Nearly 94% of learners are aged over 19. NCG works with a wide range of companies across the country.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners' success rates on apprenticeship frameworks were high in 2010/11, at around three percentage points above the national average. For the much smaller number of learners on workplace NVQs, completions within the planned timescale were satisfactory.
- Learners develop very good personal and work skills, including increased self-confidence and improved reflective practice. This has led to learners taking on additional responsibilities and becoming more effective in their job roles. One third of learners progressed to further apprenticeship frameworks in 2010/11, while others have gained promotion.
- Learners feel safe. Risk assessments are thorough and are used well to ensure the safeguarding and health and safety of learners. Learners are clear about the procedures for reporting any concerns and are confident that these would be tackled. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work.
- Teaching, training and learning are good. Positive relationships between assessors and their learners result in learners enjoying their learning and making good progress. Learners benefit from the assessors' very good work-related skills and experience. High-quality learning materials support the development of theory and underpinning of knowledge very well.
- Assessment practice is excellent. Assessment visits are frequent and well planned. Assessors use a wide variety of assessment activities to meet individual learners' needs. Teachers use questions particularly well to ensure detailed coverage of performance criteria and to stimulate learners' reflection on assessment evidence provided.
- Learners' progress is particularly well monitored at each of the assessment visits. A computer-based tracking system provides learners with a very clear picture of their progress against the different parts of the framework. All learners observed during the inspection are meeting the challenging targets set at each visit and making good or better progress towards achieving their apprenticeship frameworks.

- The support to develop literacy or numeracy needs, following initial assessment, is very effective. However, a minority of learners who could benefit from achieving key skills at a level higher than the framework requires are not offered this opportunity.
- The needs and interests of learners and employers are met very well. The very wide range of qualifications on offer meets the needs of learners particularly effectively. Employers value the flexibility in assessment arrangements to meet business needs and pressures. Needs analysis is highly effective in ensuring that the framework and choice of optional units supports the requirements of both learner and employer.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are well developed and embedded into learners' reviews. Learners receive good support to overcome personal difficulties enabling them to continue with their apprenticeship. Assessors discuss career progression and give good advice on further learning opportunities.
- Management of the provision is good. Performance management of assessors is very strong with frequent individual meetings between assessors and their managers. Assessors have clear performance targets and these are reflected in their high expectations of learners. Team meetings address operational issues well and enable the sharing of good practice.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Assessors benefit from good staff development to increase their understanding of equality and diversity and safeguarding of learners. Safeguarding and equality and diversity are promoted to learners through induction materials and at progress reviews.
- Employers confirm good communication by assessors. Assessors seek feedback on the quality of provision. Where issues are identified they are quickly and effectively resolved to the satisfaction of learner and employer.

What does NCG need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the proportion of learners taking NVQs in the workplace who complete the qualification within the planned timescale by ensuring that their progress towards completion is monitored rigorously.
- Ensure that all learners are sufficiently stretched by offering them literacy and numeracy at an appropriately challenging level.

Business, administration and law (college-based)**Grade 2****Context**

51. At the time of the inspection, around 2,350 learners were taking courses in business studies, accountancy and law. Around 900 of these were on full-time courses, with the vast majority based at Newcastle College. Many of the learners on part-time courses take programmes in trade union studies.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are particularly high on A/AS-level courses in applied business and law, and on trade union programmes. On vocational business programmes and accountancy, learners' achievements are inconsistent. On access to higher education programmes, success rates are satisfactory.
- The standard of learners' work is good. In lessons they demonstrate good understanding and application of knowledge. In law lessons, many students use critical reasoning skills well. Learners enjoy their courses and develop good workplace skills. Progression rates between different levels of courses, and on to higher education, are high for those learners who succeed.
- The college offers a broad range of additional qualifications, which are embedded fully within the BTEC diploma programmes. Through these, learners develop team and leadership skills and higher levels of literacy and numeracy. A/AS-level students have access to an optional programme of additional qualifications.
- Students feel safe on the college campus. Safety is a key focus of college management. Students' awareness of safeguarding issues is first raised at induction and then reinforced during lessons and tutorials and through prominently displayed posters.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well planned with clear objectives understood by students. In the best lessons, teachers make excellent use of both active learning and ILT. Students are engaged, enthused, and challenged. In less effective lessons, students are insufficiently challenged, ILT is not used effectively and questioning does not adequately check students' learning and understanding.
- Assessment feedback is constructive and helpful for students wanting to improve their performance. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements. Learners' progress is reviewed carefully each term, although not all learners benefit from being set specific and challenging targets to improve their work.
- Partnership links with specific schools and regional universities are good. Newcastle College provides a series of taster sessions for prospective students and provides access to facilities and resources for students from local schools on NVQ programmes. A major focus for these links is on the environment and to encourage students to think in terms of sustainability.

- International links have been formed with schools in Ghana through the British Council. Staff use links with local and national employers well to provide students with a more realistic understanding of commerce and employment opportunities.
- Support for students is very good. Students enjoy easy access to a wide range of support organised around learning zones and this has helped many of them to continue on their programmes and subsequently progress onto higher levels. The assistive technology team provides a wide range of specialist resources to support students with specific support needs such as visual or hearing impairment. Induction for students is thorough and covers all aspects of their programmes.
- Leadership and management are good. Communication with staff is clear, frequent and focused. Quality assurance systems are effective in improving programme performance. Retention rates have increased during the current year following effective action to redesign curriculum planning and delivery.
- Arrangements for staff development are good. All staff are involved in self-assessment through regular course reviews. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but insufficiently self-critical.
- Equality and diversity are well promoted. Achievement gaps are identified and tackled, for example, through changes to teaching and learning strategies. Students demonstrate a good understanding of equality and diversity in lessons and were able to apply their knowledge of legislation in practical role-play sessions when recruiting and selecting employees.

What does NCG need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all learners are set challenging targets and that progress towards these is monitored rigorously to raise achievement further.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning further by sharing effectively the very good practice that exists within the department.

Information about the inspection

52. Ten of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and 12 additional inspectors, assisted by NCG's Group Director of Standards and Performance as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment reports and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection reports, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspections.

53. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
NCG

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	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	8,475	51	6,579	1,845	0
Part-time learners	37,986	155	2,431	15,059	20,341
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	1				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2				
Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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