



Self-Assessment Report

2024 - 2025

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1. Summary of Self-Assessment Grades

Grade 1 - Outstanding

Area (EIF)	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Overall Effectiveness	2	2	1
Quality of Education	2	2	1
Behaviors and attitudes	1	1	1
Personal Development	2	2	1
Leadership and Management	1	1	1
Safeguarding	2	2	1
Adult Skills	1	1	1
Apprenticeships	2	2	1

our CORE values



PROGRESSIVE

in our thinking to make us stand out



ASPIRATIONAL

for our learners, staff and customers



COMMITTED

to continuously driving improvements in the quality of our provision



EMPOWERING

our staff to make their own decisions and our learners to take ownership of their learning



Training Excellence and
Consultancy for Industry

2. Scope of Provision

Established in 2017 by directors Lee Childs and Ian Nelson, NC Group Ltd is a small, independent training provider. The company started in Bishop Auckland and now has several locations in the north of England, including Middlesbrough, Team Valley, Washington, Seaham, Carlisle, Workington, and Barrow-In-Furness.



In January 2025, Ofsted conducted a full inspection and awarded the NC Group an 'Outstanding' grade in all areas. This achievement serves as a key validation of our apprenticeship programmes, demonstrating that they are not only highly effective but also respected leaders in their fields.

Alongside our Ofsted achievement, we also gained Pearson accreditation for our delivery of the HNC in Engineering. This was a result of a rigorous due diligence process conducted by Pearson. We are proud to be one of the few independent providers to hold this accreditation, making it a particularly significant achievement.



Our continued dedication to excellence in IAG was externally validated by the successful completion of the matrix Standard Continuous Improvement Check (CIC2), affirming that our service delivery consistently meets the national quality benchmark.

In August 2024, NC Group announced a significant leadership restructuring, in preparation for further company growth, with Liam Noble promoted to the role of Managing Director. This key appointment saw co-founders and former MDs, Ian Nelson and Lee Childs, step up as joint CEOs, focusing on strategic oversight, client relationships, and business growth. Liam, who joined the firm in 2019, now takes charge of the daily operations and driving the company's growth to the next level.

NC Group delivers Non-Devolved, North East Combined Authority (NECA) and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TCVA) funded Adult Skills Fund (ASF) programmes within the Northeast & Northwest of England, providing upskilling and employment readiness through the delivery of tailored programmes that meet local industry needs. A proven track record of consistently high achievement rates strengthens our position as a leading provider in both the local and national adult education sectors.



Figure 1 Co-CEO's Ian Nelson(right) and Lee Childs (left) with Managing Director Liam Noble

In the **2024-25** academic year, we delivered 2466 adult programmes in the following:

Level 1 (74 learners)

- **74 learners** - Award in Health and Safety Awareness

Level 2 (1515 learners)

- **23 learners** - Certificate in the Principles of Customer Service Certificate in Cleaning Principles
- **707 learners** -Certificate in Applying Business Improvement Techniques
- **24 learners** -Certificate in the Principles of Customer Service
- **645 learners** -Certificate in the Principles of Warehousing and Storage
- **121 learners** -Certificate in Lean Organisation Management Techniques

In 2024, NC Group positioned itself to deliver the UK government's Skills Bootcamps, which are intended to help the government meet its requirement for fast-paced, advanced skill development and address regional skill deficits. NC Group partnered with Education Partnership North East (EPNE) and Education Training Collective (ETC) to deliver these bootcamps across the region. The programmes focus on resolving critical skill shortages through fast-paced training for adults aged 19 and above in digital, green, construction, and engineering sectors. The Bootcamp programme delivers flexible, employer-driven education with job interview guarantees, supporting the primary goals of workforce development through filling medium-to-higher level positions, enhancing productivity, and quickly placing workers into needed roles. It also promotes economic expansion by fulfilling the employer and economic needs.

In the **2024-25** academic year, we delivered the following Bootcamps:

- **21 learners** – Engineering Maintenance
- **10 Learners** - Leadership – Management and Innovation

Since 2020, NC Group have been an approved apprenticeship provider on APAR, previously known as RoATP. We earned main provider status in 2022. We offer apprenticeship programmes in engineering, manufacturing, business services, and health and social care across the northeast and Tees Valley.

In the **2024-25** academic year, we enrolled:

- **64 apprentices** on Level 3 Business Management Standards
- **12 apprentices** on Level 4 Manufacturing Technology Standards
- **9 apprentices** on Level 3 Building & Construction Standards
- **6 apprentices** on Level 3 Warehousing and Distribution Standards

Additionally, a small number of apprentices were enrolled on the following standards: Level 3 Business Administration, Level 4 Business Management and Level 2 Warehousing and Distribution.

2.1. Staffing and Structure

NC Group currently operates as a sub-contractor for Inspira Cumbria, Education Training Collective (ETC), Education Partnership Northeast (EPNE), and holds a direct contract for Apprenticeships.

In 2024-2025 the company employed 33 staff, 14 of which were core delivery staff who engage with pre-employment, commercial and apprenticeship training. NC Group staff includes specialist trainers and assessors in customer service, manufacturing, warehousing, and leadership.

In January 2025, new Quality Manager Andrea Dodd was appointed to enhance quality assurance operations across all provision. Bringing 18 years of further education teaching expertise and quality management experience, Andrea will develop strategic plans and analyse data while following governing standards. The company is dedicated to delivering exceptional learning experiences and maintaining its position as a top educational provider.

May 2025, saw Julie Knight join the NC Group as their new HR Business Partner and board member. Julie joins NC Group after a 24-year career at SK Chilled Foods Limited, where she was HR Director. The new HR strategy developed by Julie will focus on employee development through ability attainment and retention and employee growth while implementing best practices and legal protection to support operational success and sustainable long-term expansion.

NC group also employs a data and funding team that uses internal MIS to manage all contracts, and a recruitment team that recruits candidates to pre-employment courses.



Figure 2 NC Staff celebrating the Ofsted outstanding achievement



Figure 3 Brian Corker, Lead Engineering Practitioner, was awarded the lifetime achievement award at the Make Your Mark Ceremony 2025



Figure 4 Teaching staff delivering on various programmes 2024/2025

2.2. Governance

Governance arrangements at NC group are **OUTSTANDING** because:

'Leaders and managers have in place a highly effective board of governors. Board members draw on their experience from industry, finance and education to provide effective challenge and support to senior leaders. The board provides prudent oversight of the financial position of the organisation, safeguarding of apprentices and the quality of training that apprentices receive'. [Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]

Governance of NC Group Ltd is through a combination of robust management by our prime contract providers and governance provided by the Corporate Board of Governors. The Corporate Board contains industry experts and specialists in a number of key areas such as Quality of Teaching, Apprenticeship and AEB funding streams, Safeguarding and Education and Training.

In May 2025, NC Group welcomed new board and staff member Julie Knight. Her appointment marks a significant step in further strengthening NC Group's leadership, bringing a people-first perspective at the board level.

The processes employed through partnership review are:

- Monthly Performance Review with each of our prime partners
- Regular Audit (files, TLA observations)
- Annual external inspections from our prime providers



Figure 5 Julie Knight, appointed to the NC Group Board of Governors in May 2025

NC Groups' corporate board meets a minimum of 6 times per year and reviews all aspects of the business's operational performance. Leaders and Managers are held to account for the performance of the business, and robust challenge is provided to ensure that NC Group's performance continues to be excellent.

NC Group are scrutinised by our partners against our contractual performance monthly.

This includes monitoring performance against the profile, the quality of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA), standards of learner work, positive destinations, and the feedback we receive from our learners. We often achieve excellent judgments from both of our prime providers in comparison to our KPI's and outcomes for our learners from this governance scrutiny.

To implement and embed the Company values and expectations, NC Group directors undertake to:

- Formulate and agree on the vision and strategy, including defining the ethos and policies of the provider.
- Seek feedback from employees about the vision, mission, and strategic aims of the business.
- Provide clarity between the governance board, directors, and the leadership team.
- Adopt a financial strategy and funding plans which are compatible with the duty to ensure the sustainability and solvency of the provider.
- Ensure exceptional teaching, training, and learning by adopting effective underpinning policies and systems, which are monitored and acted upon in a timely manner to bring swift improvement.
- Providing Continuous professional development where required for all staff

- Develop and embed curriculum which is aligned to the unique needs of specific employers. Including but not limited to bespoke curriculum content, delivery at or close to the venue of employment, and employer-led delivery.
- Meet and aim to exceed its statutory responsibilities for equality and diversity and for ensuring that all learners are safe.
- Demonstrate assurance that public funds are well spent, we will be transparent and openly accountable.
- Demonstrate effective governance arrangements, regularly reviewing performance and effectiveness.

The directors within the organisation have and are required to; maintain a balance of skills, experience, and knowledge within the operating sectors of the business.

All appointments are based on merit and are objective, promoting diversity and ensuring equality of opportunity.

The Directors ensure that there are clear governance and management structures in place that seek to guarantee there is:

- Regular reviews of the performance and effectiveness of governance.

The directors:

- Will meet as often as is required to undertake its responsibilities – Once per month as a minimum for a formal review, and once per week for SLT review.
- Have established format and rules of conduct for meetings. Members are required to attend all meetings.

3. Quality of Education

Overall, the quality of education at NC Group Ltd is judged to be **OUTSTANDING** because:

Intent

It is our intention to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for our learners and apprentices to be successful in their careers. We provide impartial IAG to ensure that our learners and apprentices can make the right education, training and employment choices, so they have the best possible chance of succeeding. We deliver an aspirational and inspirational curriculum that engages and stimulates learners, who make good progress and achieve their desired qualifications. Our learners progress to 'positive destinations' and further their careers as a direct result of the training we have provided.



Strategic Aims

1. Providing access to high-quality education and training for all, regardless of background or ability.
2. Provide outstanding vocational learning that engages and inspires.
3. Prepare our learners and apprentices for social and economic success.
4. Developing high-quality provision to meet the needs of industry, learners, and apprentices
5. Develop a reputation for exceptional standards.
6. Operate as an efficient, ethical, and sustainable business, and achieve excellence in training, consultancy services and business operations.
7. Design our courses and services to place us at the leading edge of industrial and economic development across the United Kingdom.

Implementation

Implementation is driven by the deployment of expert staff, highly effective teaching strategies, and a responsive curriculum design that maximises learning time and long-term retention.

- Expertise and Teaching Quality
- Responsive and Efficient Delivery
- Systematic Quality Assurance
- Resource Utilisation

Impact

The quality of education results in exceptional outcomes, with learners achieving high levels of subject mastery, high-value qualifications, and securing positive progression that advances their careers.

- Apprenticeship Achievement
- Positive Destinations and Career Advancement
- Adult Learning Outcomes
- Knowledge and Skills Application

Quality of Education Apprenticeship Provision

Key Strengths

- The curriculum is highly ambitious, designed by leaders and managers to very successfully meet the needs of apprentices and employers locally in the engineering and manufacturing industry. Apprentices gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours and clearly articulate their learning, demonstrating how they use it at work to have an impact. **[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]**
 - “The Training from NC group has provided our Business with a diverse range of courses that put us in a better position to deal with global responses.”*
 - “The upskilling of individuals within the Maintenance department, has, and continues to deliver significant cost savings for the business due to the reduced reliance on external resource, to complete more technical repairs across the site. All whilst improving said individuals’ future employability.”*
 - “The training program we used to have was quite a mess, but since we started using NC Group, we have streamlined our training program to basically use NC group as a one-stop shop, which makes life a whole lot easier”*

[Employer feedback summary report]

- Training and workshop facilities are well-equipped to meet the needs of industry. Tutors use the dedicated workshop facilities effectively to train engineering and maintenance apprentices in real-life working contexts. Apprentices participate in industry-relevant activities, and as a result, they develop high standards in relation to health and safety practices in live engineering environments.

[Internal workshop facilities and EAL EV reports]



Figure 6 NC Onsite training workshop

- Curriculum design and delivery is highly responsive. Where apprentices and learners already have prior learning, tutors release them from relevant modules and reduce the hours allocated to their training offer. As a result, apprentices and adult learners do not unnecessarily study curriculum content that they have previously covered and have the opportunity to move on to higher-level qualifications (and earlier in their apprenticeships).

○ ‘EAL EV feedback July 2025 – The centre has provided appropriate teaching, support, learning materials and resources.’

[Individual learner training plans, APD’s and EV Reports 2024/2025].

- Apprentices participate in exceptionally high-quality training delivered by tutors who use a wide range of highly effective teaching strategies and expertly impart knowledge in a natural yet challenging way.

○ ‘The assessment methods used were appropriate for the requirements of the awards sampled. Observations, Questioning, Witness and Learner Reports have been widely used for competency qualifications. VRQ’s have used EAL materials for knowledge and practical assessments and RPL has been used.’

○ **99%** of learners agree - ‘Teaching on my programme is excellent. My tutors are experts in their subjects and able to explain subjects well.’

○ **99%** of learners agree - ‘I am challenged on my course and set aspirational targets.’

[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025, Apprentice on programme feedback, OTLA profile]

- The curriculum is sequenced carefully and logically, ensuring apprentices master fundamental principles before moving on to more complex ideas and skills. Apprentices produce very high-quality work, such as well-presented portfolios that show a high level of understanding. **[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]**



Figure 7 3M apprentice Matthew Davies awarded Apprentice of the Year at the 2025 Make Your Mark Awards

- Apprentices are prepared exceptionally well for their end-point assessments (EPA), resulting in most apprentices who achieve gaining distinction grades. Upon completion, apprentices remain in employment and most quickly secure promoted posts such as improvement specialist, senior technologist and logistics consultant.
 - 100% apprentices passed their EPA, 92% on their first attempt and 50% with distinction
 - 100% apprentices secured employment after their apprenticeship ended
 - **100%** of learners agree – ‘I am / was well prepared for the End Point Assessment.’



Figure 8 Lab Technician Apprentice Nina Taylor who achieved in 2025

[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025, learner feedback, data summary report 2024/2025]

Quality of Education Adult Education Provision

Key Strengths

- Exceptional achievement rates. For adult-based pre-employment programmes, we achieved an overall achievement rate of 100% for Level 1 courses and an impressive 99.6% for Level 2. This performance exceeds the national average by approximately 6%, demonstrating our ability to maintain the high standards we set in the previous academic year, with achievement rates of 100% and 99.4%, respectively.

[NC Group Data Report 2024/2025]



Figure 9 FLT training adult learning

- Overall, strong achievement and outcome rates for adults on the Skills Bootcamp programmes across both partner provision, with EPNE achievement rates outstanding, underscoring the success of the initiative in fast-tracking individuals into in-demand, medium-to-higher level roles and helping to address regional priority skills shortages. (Based on Government figures 2023/2024 – release of 2024/2025 winter 2025)

- **ETC Achievement** - 83.0% - NART 71% (+12.0%)
Positive outcomes (% of completions) 100% - NART 66% (+34%)
- **EPNE Achievement** - 100% - NART 71% (+29.0%)
Positive outcomes (% of completions) 100% - NART 66% (+34%)

[NC Group Data Report 2024/2025]

- Tutors are highly experienced and well-qualified to meet the complex needs of adult learners. Our adult education staff are dedicated to supporting learners who face various social and personal challenges. Their commitment often goes beyond the classroom, creating an environment where individuals can thrive and achieve their full potential, ultimately transforming lives and opening doors to new opportunities.

- **97%** of learners agree – ‘Through the training, I have developed skills/knowledge relevant to my career aspirations.’
- **97%** of learners agree – ‘The course met my own needs and expectations’

[T&L profile 2024/2025 – 100% good or better teaching, learner feedback 2024/2025]

- Adult learners consistently achieve high results through quality teaching across numerous subjects. Our tutors bring genuine expertise and real enthusiasm to the classroom, which helps create the kind of learning environment where adults gain new skills and feel more confident about their future goals.. Learner feedback shows high agreement on the excellent subject knowledge of our teachers, with rates of 100% at Inspira, 98% at EPNE, and 96% at SRC.

[Partner learner feedback 2024/2025]

- Achievement outcomes for learners upskilling on Bootcamp programmes are consistently high across both partner provisions:

- ETC 83.0% - NART 71% (+12.0%)
- EPNE 100% - NART 71% (+29.0%)

[NC Group Data Report 2024/2025]

- The exemplary learner satisfaction data firmly supports the high achievement rates secured across the Skills Bootcamp programmes. This unanimous endorsement, with 100% of participants confirming their needs and objectives were met, clearly reflects the high standard of delivery and content quality across all provisions.
- - **Objective Fulfilment: 100% of learners agreed** that the course successfully "fulfilled the objectives set out at the start."
 - **Personal Satisfaction: 100% of learners agreed** that the course "satisfied my own needs and expectations."
 - **Knowledge Development: 100% of learners agreed** that the "course content developed my knowledge and experience of the topic."

[Bootcamp learner feedback 2024/2025]
- Outcomes for adult learners consistently above set targets across all partners. Known destination data is strong across all areas, with job outcomes exceeding 2024/2025 targets.
 - Inspira 62.5% - Target 60% (+2.5%)
 - ETC 78.5% - Target 60% (+18.5%)
 - EPNE 64.5% - Target 60% (+4.5%)

[INC Group Data Report 2024/2025]
- Collaboration with partner organisations is highly robust and impactful, leading to high attainment and achievement. We work closely with our partners to keep improving our teaching quality. This ongoing collaboration helps us maintain strong, respectful relationships that benefit everyone involved. *'The 2024/25 academic year has demonstrated NCG's continued commitment to delivering high-quality, inclusive, and employment-focused learning experiences. Observations highlighted strong tutor expertise, effective curriculum planning, and a supportive environment that fosters learner confidence and progression.'*

[Inspira annual review report 2024/2025]
- Learners benefit from a rich and comprehensive wider curriculum. The integration of British Values and EDI principles within taught sessions enables adult learners to acquire essential social competencies which help them make positive contributions to their communities while building stronger social connections.

95.3% (608/638) of adult learners agreed that they learned about British Values, Equality and Diversity and Inclusion

[End of programme learner surveys 2024/2025]

Areas for Improvement

1. APP - The feedback received from apprentices on advice about their future is good at 92%, however, we will strive for improvement. The learner feedback identifies that some apprentices indicate that they would benefit from fuller career guidance. This was noted in the previous SAR and during the MATRIX in-year review meeting; for this reason, it remains a priority area for continued action.
2. APP – The timeliness and consistency of tracking documents require improvement. Although it does not impact the quality of education apprentices receive, further improvement is required for off-the-job logs, Schemes of work and KSB tracking documentation.
3. **APP** – The overall Achievement Rate (APP) for the 2024/2025 academic year is good at 70.5% (based on 19 learners). While this figure is a strong 8.5% above the national average (62%) and has exceeded Skills Minister Robert Halfon's plans to nationally reach a 67% achievement rate by 2024/25/025, it was 10.5% below our ambitious internal target of 81%. The programme data breakdown identified specific areas requiring improvement, and these will be monitored throughout the year through our QIP.

4. Behaviours and Attitudes

Overall, Behaviour and Attitudes at NC Group Ltd is judged to be Outstanding

Behaviour and Attitudes All Provisions

Key Strengths

- **Learner Safety:** Consistent maintenance of a safe and secure learning environment for all
- **High Attendance:** Outstanding and consistent learner attendance and punctuality: AEB provision 99.4% and 96.4% apprenticeship attendance rate (with plans to bring all apprenticeship programmes to or above our 95%)
- **Moral Conduct:** Zero tolerance for bullying and harassment, verified by strong learner and Ofsted feedback
- **Embedding EDI:** Effective integration of British values and EDI across all provisions

In Summary

- **APP** - The organisation maintains exceptionally high expectations of apprentices' behaviour and conduct, creating a strong culture of respect. Leaders and tutors do not tolerate 'banter' and sexual harassment, and apprentices understand how to challenge these behaviours if they encounter them in the workplace.

[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]

- **APP** - Apprentices demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and use technical language and problem-solving skills well due to the highly effective teaching they receive.

- **100% Learners agreed** - *'Teaching on my programme was excellent, my tutors are experts in their subjects and are able to explain their subjects well.'*

[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025, end of programme learner survey]

- **APP** - Tutors take prompt and effective action in instances of non-attendance, with full employer involvement.

[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025, attendance records, learner reviews]

- **APP/AEB** - Through OTLA, it is evident that tutors consistently embed British Values by challenging disrespectful, disruptive and narrow-minded behaviour. Learners demonstrate the use of British Values by consistently treating their peers and tutors with respect.

- *'Good classroom rules and management, encouraging individualised thinking and the importance of acting responsibly. Rule of law and acting responsibly (Workplace H&S relevance). Discussion of good and bad consequences with relevance to H&S laws.'*

- **APP** - 99% of learners agreed that they learned about British Values, Equality and Diversity and Inclusion

- **AEB** - 95.3% (608/638) of adult learners agreed that they learned about British Values, Equality and Diversity and Inclusion

[OTLA Reports 2024/2025, end of programme learner surveys 2024/2025]

- **AEB** - Attendance (AEB 99.4%) and punctuality (AEB 99.7%) on all Adult skills courses is extremely strong, demonstrating that learners are committed to, and value their training.

- **AEB** - 96% of adult learners agreed *'I understand the importance of attendance and punctuality.'*

[NC Group Data Report 2024/2025, SRC learner survey 2024/2025]



Figure 10 NC Group 1st Apprentice Celebration Evening 2025

- **APP/AEB** - Learners have a positive attitude towards their training, which is demonstrated in their levels of behaviour and high levels of respect for their tutors and peers as observed during OTLA's.
 - *'Learners were respectful of the learning environment, contributing to a focused atmosphere. They listened attentively to each other and to the tutor, creating a space where everyone felt comfortable sharing their thoughts.'*
 - *"Not only does "TUTORS NAME" support us in the classroom, but he also always responds to emails or calls and gives support and advice"*
 - *"Honestly, I would fall asleep normally in a course, but "TUTORS NAME" is so enthusiastic and full of energy, she has kept me interested"*
 - *'A respectful and inclusive learning environment successfully promoted active engagement from all learners.'*

[OTLA Reports 2024/2025, Learner voice comments]

- **APP/AEB** - Behaviour expectations are made clear to learners at the start of their programmes and are reinforced through the programme induction and throughout delivered sessions. Learners behave consistently well and value the relationships that they have with staff and their peers.
[Template induction PowerPoint presentations, classroom displays and internal/external OTLA feedback]



Figure 11 NC Group Leadership delivers funds raised by our learners and staff to a local charity providing essential support for young people's mental health.

Areas for Improvement

1. **APP** – Attendance of some programmes requires improvement. Although overall apprentices' attendance is high at 96.4%, there are pockets of low attendance on L3 Team Leader Supervisor (88%) and Business Administration (75%) programmes, which fall below the expected target (95%), and need addressing to ensure that there is no long-term impact on apprentice progress and achievement.
2. **APP** – Employer participation in progress reviews requires improvement in a minority of cases. Although learners benefit from good-quality progress reviews, these reviews could be further enriched by the regular attendance of, and contributions from, their respective employers. This is particularly important in larger manufacturing cohorts, where scheduling line manager support and attendance can be challenging in some instances. This is largely attributed to vast and varied shift patterns and restricted availability to leave 'shop' floors to attend reviews during office working hours.

5. Personal Development

Overall, personal development at NC Group Ltd is judged to be **OUTSTANDING** because:

Key Strengths

- **Progression:** Learners are well prepared for their next steps and achieve high levels of success
- **Goal Attainment:** High percentage of learners meet their personal goals and ambitions
- **Personal Development:** Positive development of learners' resilience, confidence and independence

Personal Development All Provisions

In summary:

- **APP** - Leaders provide a curriculum that includes a broad range of opportunities for apprentices to develop skills and knowledge beyond the core content of the apprenticeship. *[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]*
- **APP** - Apprentices benefit from emotional intelligence training that helps them develop communication skills. *[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]*
- **APP** - Apprentices gain crucial life experience beyond the wider curriculum through participation in social action projects (St Andrews Church, Reid St School, Quinns retreat & Safer Communities). Apprentices participate in opportunities, such as supporting local community projects and competitions, to enhance their knowledge and build their confidence. *[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]*



Figure 12 3M Apprentices volunteering as part of the 'Real Me' programme

- **APP** - Apprentices learn about the risks they could face, including radicalisation and knife crime, from the start of their programmes and meet with the local police force to learn about the risks of terrorism and radicalisation. *[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]*
- **AEB** – The development of essential softer skills remains a priority in all programmes which leads to better job readiness and increased confidence for unemployed learners.
 - 95% of learners agreed 'I now feel motivated to find work in my local sector'
 - 96% of learners agreed they 'improved their communication abilities through the course.'
 - 96% of learners agreed 'The course developed my knowledge and experience of the topic'*[Inspira, EPNE and SRC learner surveys 2024/2025]*



Figure 13 Robert Hamilton, a second-year Toolmaking apprentice, is making St Andrews Church a new key.

- **AEB** – Adult learners are extremely satisfied with their studies, with 96% (614/638) of **AEB** learners agreeing that they “know what to do next” regarding employment further training or apprenticeship. They acknowledge that their chosen courses gave them the skills and knowledge to ensure that they can achieve their goals.

- *'The tutor effectively built upon the information shared by the careers service spokesperson this morning. Learners gained further insights into available resources and strategies to maximise their benefits, directly supporting their future career development.'*

[OTLA Reports 2024/2025, end of programme learner surveys SRC and EPNE 2024/2025]

- **B'CAMP** – The Skills Bootcamp programme delivered a 100% positive progression rate, with all completing adult learners transitioning into higher-value duties and increased responsibility within their existing employment, thereby immediately contributing to the government's objective of filling medium-to-higher level roles and fast-tracking career advancement.

[NC Group Data Report 2024/2025, Bootcamp learner progression reports 2004/2025]

6. Leadership & Management

Overall, leadership and management at NC Group Ltd are judged to be **OUTSTANDING** because:

Leadership and Management

NC Group established a new leadership structure in 2024 to achieve sustainable growth and develop future leadership talent. The company appointed Joint CEOs to enable the founding directors to concentrate on business development and client relationship building and quality maintenance. The new structure delivers strong management oversight while the Managing Director leads daily operations to maintain flexible high-quality management and deliver outstanding industry training.

Key Strengths

- **Curriculum Improvement:** Leaders have improved the curriculum to ensure that learners follow courses which better develop their knowledge and skills.
- **Subcontracted Provision:** We maintain a strong oversight of subcontracted provision.
- **Governance and Strategy:** Robust governance with leaders driving high-quality, inclusive education and training to all.
- **Invested Staff Development:** Excellent understanding of staff strengths with identified areas for further development which are fully supported.
- **Positive Safeguarding Culture:** Effective culture of safeguarding is promoted to protect all stakeholders.

In summary:

- 'Leaders and managers recruit highly experienced staff with strong industry backgrounds and teaching expertise, supporting them with extensive training and support for professional development.'
 - *'The quality of internal staffing and internal staff expertise and competence appropriate for staff checked'*
 - *'IQAs and the Assessors reviewed on this occasion have the correct competencies to deliver the qualifications listed on this engagement and have knowledge of the qualifications content. The staff CPD log is held on 'One drive HR Documents' and also within the 'EAL EQA Evidence File'*

[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025, EAL EV report July 2025, HR records and staff CPD records]

- Employers highly value the training their apprentices receive and are very complimentary about the leadership of the organisation.
 - *'The strengths of NC in terms of apprenticeship training are undoubtedly the standard and experience of the trainers providing the courses, their leadership and coaching has a massive effect on the outcomes of our apprentices. The programmes in their current forms suit our business requirements perfectly.'*
 - *'The Training from NC group has provided our Business with a diverse range of courses that puts us in a better position, to deal with global responses.'*
 - *'NC Group have provided a brilliant service to NMUK, after becoming an apprenticeships provider at short notice'*

[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025, employer feedback 2024/2025]



- A highly effective board of governors provides prudent oversight and effective challenge and support to senior leaders, drawing on experience from industry, finance, and education. **[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]**

- Leaders and tutors provide very good support for apprentices with special needs and/or disabilities, using strategies such as individualised plans, adapted programmes, and one-to-one support.
 - *100% of learners agreed - 'I know how to access support and feedback whilst on my programme to help me know what to do and progress my learning'*
 - *100% of learners agreed - 'I received good support during taught sessions to help me learn and progress'***[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025, learner feedback 2024/2025]**
- Leaders and managers have good oversight of the quality of their apprenticeship provision, utilising activities such as observations of teaching and external review.
 [Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025, OTLA reports, Ops Excellence reports, SLT slide decks, Board Minutes]
- **APP** - Leaders ensure there is a flexible approach to delivery, to meet the specific needs of the local area. For example, leaders and managers ensure workplace practices are developed for all apprentices through designing programmes in line with local employers, ensuring apprentices work on industry-relevant equipment and follow required safe working practices. Employers greatly value the training provided to their apprentices and appreciate our flexible approach to delivery. This positive relationship is demonstrated by the fact that 35% of our apprenticeship provision comes from repeat custom.
 - *'Specifically in terms of the compliance training with regards to lifting and slinging, forklift and banksman training, it has allowed us to upskill the workforce and to improve processes throughout the factory.'*
 - *'Employees are now trained up to provide training in the best way with guidelines provided from the training.'*
 - *'From our point of view NC Group have catered to all our needs. My point of contact is Abby Bailey who is very helpful as well as very knowledgeable.'***[A3's, training plans and employer feedback 2024/2025, employer records]**
- **APP/AEB** - Leaders and managers demonstrate clear intent, as displayed through a very clear strategic vision. They have been extremely successful in engaging with local and regional employers and have selected relevant adult short courses and apprenticeship programmes to help fill skills gaps in industry.
 [Partnership Provision, Achievement Rates, and Job Outcomes – NC Group Data Report 2024/2025]
- **APP** – Employers provide positive feedback on the programmes delivered by NC group, with satisfaction ratings at 97%.
 [Employer Feedback Survey Report 2024/2025]
- **APP/AEB** - Leaders and managers have strong oversight of the quality of their apprenticeship and adult skills provision. They carry out a wide range of activities, including observations of teaching and reviews of the quality of apprentices' work and the feedback that apprentices receive. This ensures that apprentices benefit from high-quality training.
 [Ofsted feedback, internal quality audit reports, apprentice reviews, learning walkthrough reports and OTLA Profile – 100% 'good' or 'better' 2024/2025]
- Leadership and management successfully launched two major digital communication resources in 2025, which included a new staff intranet and the **'BREATHE'** HR system. The new platforms address 2024 employee concerns about poor daily communication by providing user-friendly systems for staff communication, including a newsfeed, newly built departmental site intranets, an important dates calendar, and a platform for employee voice and feedback. It also provides simple, one-click access to useful tools, such as the HR system and the expense recording app. Impact will be quantified via the 2025/2026 employee feedback survey; however, interim verbal feedback across the organisation is very positive in addressing concerns.
 [Employee Feedback Survey Report 39% of staff reported internal communication as a barrier 2024/2025]
- **APP/AEB** - Robust quality improvement processes are in place, which clearly define objectives and targets against purposeful strategic priorities. Improvements are accurately and quickly identified through robust analysis, and actions are taken to ensure secure, swift improvements. Activity is set and monitored through weekly SLT meetings and monthly Operations Excellence reviews.



Figure 14 Senior leaders running in charity event to raise donations for Quinns Retreat

[SLT presentation slides, audit reports and Operations Excellence Data slides]

- **APP/AEB** - Leaders and managers critically analyse data and introduce mechanisms that ensure that improvements are secured where there is a need. A quality Improvement plan ensures that areas identified as less than outstanding have targeted improvements and managers are held accountable for their achievement.

[NC Group Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2024/2025, Quality Calendar (SharePoint, Planner)]

- **APP/AEB** – The organisation has established a highly effective governance board which maintains robust oversight of its operations. The board members bring more than 60 years of combined experience in education, quality assurance, and safeguarding practices to their roles. In May 2025, the appointment of HR consultant Julie Knight further strengthened its oversight capabilities.
- **SAFE** - NC Group requires all new and existing staff members to complete mandatory annual safeguarding training, which includes KCSIE, safeguarding and PREVENT. We have established a new leadership structure to enhance our protective oversight system. Additionally, we now have a female DSL and an experienced Lead HR Consultant. This strategic leadership combination provides robust oversight, which develops our compliance and enables us to create a balanced, protected, safe learning environment for learners and staff.

[HR records, staff CPD records]

- **SAFE** – Leaders use robust safer recruitment practices, including disclosure and barring checks (DBS) and carry out validation checks on employee qualifications. The organisation maintains and tracks specific policies and procedures that create an effective safety system, protecting learners throughout the entire organisation.

[HR records, policy document register]

7. Safeguarding

Overall, safeguarding at NC Group Ltd is judged to be **OUTSTANDING** because:

NC Group has worked tirelessly to create a recognised safe and welcoming environment where learners and staff feel secure and confident in raising concerns. All teaching areas have clear display boards identifying the safeguarding team and their contact details. Tutors also use portable displays for all off-site sessions, ensuring every learner is aware of who to contact for support. Our commitment to safeguarding has been reinforced at a board level with the appointment of a new safeguarding lead. They will work directly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to offer a strategic perspective, ensuring all our safeguarding practices are robust and effective.

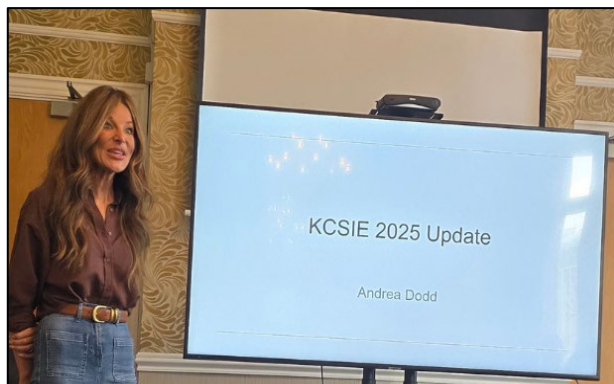


Figure 15 Staff CPD event September 2025

Our dedication to safeguarding is strengthened through mandatory training; all staff participate in mandatory professional development and receive annual updates on Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and safeguarding. In 2025 we took an important step by appointing a female Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), adding to a more balanced leadership team that creates greater equality and accessibility for all learners and staff.

Our newly appointed board member and HR lead, Julie Knight, is a key addition to our safeguarding leadership, bringing over 20 years of HR expertise to the team. Working alongside our Board Safeguarding Governor and HR assistant, Julie will strengthen our people-focused approach to safeguarding.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. *Apprentices feel safe and know who to contact if they have a concern.* A culture exists where sexual harassment is not tolerated. Leaders and managers ensure apprentices learn about risks such as radicalisation and knife crime. **[Ofsted Inspection Report January 2025]**
- All learners strongly indicate that they feel safe and secure whilst on programme.
 - 100% apprenticeship learners agreed 'I felt safe and secure whilst on my apprenticeship programme'. **[End of programme learner survey 2024/2025]**
 - 96% of adult learners agreed 'I feel safe whilst attending this course'. **[SRC learner survey 2024/2025]**
- 96% of adult learners agreed 'I know who to ask for help if my safety or wellbeing, or that of a fellow student, is at risk'. **[SRC learner survey 2024/2025]**
- 100% apprenticeship learners agreed 'I understand safeguarding and who to report my concerns to'. **[End of programme learner survey 2024/2025]**
- The organisation ensures comprehensive support for the mental and physical health of its community by retaining the services of a corporate wellbeing provision for learners and staff. Internal evidence demonstrates that the service has a good uptake by both learners and staff, reinforcing support of personal well-being. **[Internal safeguarding register records]**
- All new staff are subject to a rigorous internal safer recruitment process prior to employment starting to ensure that the safeguarding of learners and current staff are protected. **[Internal HR records]**

8. Overall Effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of NC Group Ltd is **OUTSTANDING** because:

This judgment is validated by the January 2025 Ofsted inspection, which awarded the NC Group an 'Outstanding' grade in all areas, confirming that the provider securely and consistently meets the highest criteria for overall effectiveness.

Furthermore, following a robust self-assessment in September 2025, NC Group is able to evidence maintenance of high standards across all key judgements including for adult provision (Quality of Education; Behaviours and Attitudes, Personal Development and Leadership and Management).

This outcome is achieved due to NC Group consistently delivering exceptionally high-quality training through an ambitious curriculum that successfully meets the needs of learners and employers. This has resulted in outstanding achievement rates in adult learning programmes and apprenticeship End-Point Assessments. Additionally, arrangements for safeguarding were validated as effective by Ofsted and remain robust in all areas.

Key overall strengths summary

- **Overall Effectiveness:** NC Group achieved an '**Outstanding**' grade in all areas during the January 2025 Ofsted inspection.
- **Adult Education Outcomes:** Achievement rates for adult-based programmes are **exceptional**, reaching 100% for Level 1 courses and 99.6% for Level 2, exceeding the national average by approximately 6%.
- **Apprenticeship Outcomes:** Apprentices are exceptionally well prepared for their End-Point Assessments (EPA), resulting in most achieving distinction grades. **100% of apprentices passed their EPA** (92% on their first attempt, with 50% achieving a distinction), and 100% secured employment afterwards.
- **Quality of Teaching:** Training is of **exceptionally high quality**, delivered by tutors who are experts in their subjects, with 99% of learners agreeing that teaching is excellent.
- **Curriculum Design:** The curriculum is **highly ambitious**, carefully sequenced, and successfully meets the needs of apprentices and employers locally, particularly in the engineering and manufacturing industry.
- **Governance and Leadership:** Governance arrangements are judged as **OUTSTANDING**, with a highly effective board providing prudent oversight and effective challenge to senior leaders.
- **Learner Behaviour and Attendance:** Behaviour and Attitudes are **Outstanding**. Attendance is extremely strong on Adult Skills courses and high for apprenticeships overall.
- **Safeguarding:** The arrangements for safeguarding are **effective**, creating a recognised safe and welcoming environment where learners and staff feel secure.



Key overall areas for improvement summary

- **Apprenticeship Achievement Rate - Internal Target:** The overall Apprenticeship Achievement Rate (AAR) of 70.5% is below the ambitious internal target of 81% (National Average: 62%). Key risks linked with large cohort delivery must be identified, and specific mitigation actions implemented to minimise future impact."
- **Apprentice Attendance:** Address pockets of low attendance on specific apprenticeship programmes (e.g., L3 Team Leader Supervisor at 88% and Business Administration at 75%), which currently fall below the expected 95% target.
- **Tracking Consistency:** Improvement is required in the timeliness and consistency of apprenticeship tracking documents, including off-the-job logs, Schemes of work, and KSB tracking documentation.
- **Career Guidance (APP):** Apprentices would benefit from fuller career guidance and advice about their future, as noted in learner feedback (92% satisfaction, but striving for improvement).
- **Employer Participation:** Increase employer participation in apprentice progress reviews, particularly in larger manufacturing cohorts where scheduling line manager attendance can be challenging.

9. NEW EIF Transition Analysis

This report has been prepared drawing on the NC Group Ltd Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2024–2025 and measures performance against the inspection evaluation areas established in the renewed **Further Education and Skills Inspection Toolkit**, which becomes effective from November 2025 (EIF).

The NC Group was awarded an **Outstanding (Grade 1)** grade in all areas during a full inspection in January 2025. The analysis below measures the evidence presented in the SAR (dated September 2025) against the criteria for the 'Strong Standard' and 'Exceptional' grades outlined in the new framework.

For the evaluation areas within the **new EIF** (specifically **Safeguarding, Inclusion, Leadership and Governance, Contribution to Meeting Skills Needs, Curriculum, Teaching and Training, Achievement, and Participation and Development**), the scale used typically includes four distinct levels of effectiveness:

- Urgent Improvement (where applicable)
- Needs Attention
- Expected Standard
- Strong Standard, and
- Exceptional.

The new evaluation of further education and skills providers uses two different grading scales across the seven evaluation areas. Safeguarding uses a binary scale ('Met'/'Not met'), while the other six areas use a five-point scale ranging from 'Urgent improvement' to 'Exceptional'.

Here is a summary of the marking criteria covering all sections, based on the definitions provided in the sources:

I. Grading Criteria for Core Performance Areas (5-Point Scale)

The following criteria apply to: Inclusion, Leadership and governance, Contribution to meeting skills needs (for specified institutions), Curriculum, teaching and training, Achievement, and Participation and development.

Grade	Summary of Criteria
Exceptional	Transformation and Sustained Excellence: Performance goes beyond the 'strong standard' and has been sustained over time. Leaders' actions have a transformational impact on all learners, particularly vulnerable groups, ensuring highly positive outcomes and experiences. There are no significant areas for improvement that leaders have not already prioritised.
Strong Standard	High Quality and Consistency: Meets the 'expected standard' <i>plus</i> performance is consistently high across all provision. Leaders show detailed insight, are tenacious in pursuing high standards, and ensure staff benefit from highly tailored professional learning. Learners make extensive progress and develop a thorough and secure understanding, applying their knowledge expertly and automatically. Diversity is celebrated, and equality is actively pursued.
Expected Standard	Appropriate and Generally Effective: Leaders and staff generally establish a culture where learners' needs are met. Strengths and weaknesses are understood, and appropriate action is <i>largely</i> taken to drive improvement. The curriculum is largely well sequenced, relevant to employment priorities, and accessible to all groups. Learners typically make appropriate progress, achieve well, and are usually ready for the next stage. High expectations for attendance and behaviour are set and typically met.
Needs Attention	Inconsistency and Slow Pace: The expected standard has not been met. Analysis of weaknesses lacks precision. Actions are often poorly targeted or inconsistent, and improvements are not leading to sustainable change at a swift enough pace. Gaps exist in curriculum planning, leading to insufficient time for practice or

	revisiting important topics. Learners (especially vulnerable groups) make slow progress, and achievement rates may be declining or too low.
Urgent Improvement	Serious Failure and Lack of Impact: Performance is fundamentally inadequate. Leaders do not identify and/or prioritise the right issues, or take very limited action with little or no impact. The curriculum lacks ambition, structure, and coherence. Achievement rates are consistently very low, and learners make very slow or minimal progress. Statutory requirements or program principles (e.g., 16-19 study programs, high needs provision, apprenticeship principles) are not met. Bullying or victimisation is common and not addressed properly.

II. Grading Criteria for Safeguarding (Binary Scale)

This area is evaluated at the whole-provider level. The standards are developed from statutory guidance, including 'Keeping children safe in education' and 'Working together to safeguard children'.

Grade	Summary of Criteria
Met	Open Culture and Statutory Compliance: Leaders establish an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Learners are kept safe and feel safe, including off-site. The provider works effectively with multi-agency partners. Leaders and staff are vigilant and fulfil all relevant statutory requirements related to child-on-child violence, safer recruitment, reporting, referrals, record-keeping, and the 'Prevent' duty. Policies are clear and reflect current statutory guidance.
Not met	Serious and Widespread Failures: Serious and/or widespread failures in safeguarding practice lead to learners being unsafe. Leaders have not taken sufficient action to resolve issues or are not open to challenge. Leaders do not fulfil core statutory responsibilities (e.g., child-on-child violence, safer recruitment, referrals, 'Prevent' duty). Learners do not know how to report issues or do not trust that their concerns will be acted on. Staff lack appropriate safeguarding training, risking significant harm.

1. Safeguarding (Whole-Provider Level)

Evaluation Area	NC Group SAR Summary (2024–2025)	New EIF Grading (Nov 2025)
Safeguarding	NC Group maintains an effective culture where apprentices feel safe and know who to contact. A "culture exists where sexual harassment is not tolerated". All staff complete mandatory annual safeguarding training, including <i>Keeping Children Safe in Education</i> (KCSIE) and PREVENT. Apprentices learn about risks such as radicalisation and knife crime, meeting with the local police. Leadership enhanced protective oversight with the appointment of a new female Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and an experienced HR Consultant/board member. Robust safer recruitment practices are in place, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and qualification validation.	Met

Analysis against New EIF Criteria: The evidence indicates that NC Group's safeguarding practices meet the level defined as 'Exceptional'. Leaders have sustained exceptionally high standards, ensuring learners are kept safe and feel safe, including those not on site. The explicit zero-tolerance culture toward sexual harassment, detailed staff training (KCSIE, PREVENT), proactive teaching about external risks (knife crime, radicalisation), and robust systems (safer recruitment, DBS) indicate a comprehensive and highly effective system. The strategic additions to leadership (new DSL and HR lead) demonstrate sustained investment and focus, contributing to a "transformational impact" on learner well-being.

Justification: This grading is justified because the evidence indicates a sustained, comprehensive approach to safety, meeting and exceeding the 'Met' standard requirements for safeguarding.

- **Culture and Safety:** NC Group maintains a recognised **safe and welcoming environment**, and **100% of apprenticeship learners agreed** they understand safeguarding and who to report concerns to.
- **Systems and Compliance:** All staff complete **mandatory annual safeguarding training**, including KCSIE and PREVENT. Leaders use **robust safer recruitment practices**, including DBS checks and qualification validation, fulfilling statutory requirements.
- **Proactive Risk Mitigation:** Apprentices are taught about external risks such as **radicalisation and knife crime**, demonstrating the embedding of teaching about staying safe in an age-appropriate way.
- **Strategic Leadership:** Leaders established a new leadership structure to enhance protective oversight with the appointment of a **female Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and an experienced Lead HR Consultant. This proactive investment in leadership and resources demonstrates sustained high standards, supporting the implicit criteria for the highest standard of effectiveness.

2. Inclusion (Whole-Provider Level)

Evaluation Area	NC Group SAR Summary (2024–2025)	New EIF Grading (Nov 2025)
Inclusion	Leaders intend to provide "high-quality, inclusive education and training to all ". Very good support is provided for apprentices with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including strategies like individualised plans , adapted programmes , and one-to-one support. For subcontracted Adult Education Budget (AEB) programmes , learners identified with "Difficulty or disability" achieved highly: Inspira (100% achievement), ETC (100% achievement), and Education Partnership NE (EPNE) (99.3% achievement). Overall AEB achievement rates are 100% (Level 1) and 99.7% (Level 2), demonstrating high expectations for all learners.	Exceptional

Analysis against New EIF Criteria: The evidence strongly aligns with the 'Exceptional' grade in Inclusion. The provider clearly identifies individual support needs and successfully reduces barriers, as evidenced by the near-universal 100% achievement rates reported across multiple cohorts of learners with difficulties or disabilities. This demonstrates sustained success and transformational impact, ensuring that barriers to learning are reduced exceptionally well for all groups.

Justification: This grade is supported because NC Group demonstrates that barriers to learning are **reduced exceptionally well** to ensure **highly positive outcomes and experiences** for vulnerable groups, meeting the key requirements of the 'Exceptional' grade descriptor.

- **Reduction of Barriers:** Leaders provide **very good support for apprentices with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND)** using strategies such as **individualised plans**, adapted programmes, and one-to-one support. These actions align with continually adapting support and reducing barriers swiftly and consistently.
- **Exceptional Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups:** Achievement rates for learners identified with "Difficulty or disability" are reported as **100%** at Inspira, **100%** at ETC, and **99.3%** at EPNE. This sustained success in securing positive outcomes for learners with SEND and/or high needs demonstrates the **transformational impact** required for an 'Exceptional' grade.
- **Overall Performance:** Overall AEB achievement rates are 100% (Level 1) and 99.7% (Level 2), confirming high expectations are set and met for all learners

3. Leadership and Governance (Whole-Provider Level)

Evaluation Area	NC Group SAR Summary (2024–2025)	New EIF Grading (Nov 2025)
Leadership and Governance	Governance arrangements are judged as Outstanding. Leaders enacted a clear strategic vision. A highly effective board of governors (with over 60 years combined experience) provides prudent oversight and effective challenge. Leaders launched major digital resources (staff intranet and 'BREATHE' HR system) in 2025 to address prior employee concerns (39% of staff cited internal communication as a barrier in 2024/2025). They maintain strong oversight of subcontracted provision .	Exceptional

Analysis against New EIF Criteria: The leadership demonstrates sustained high standards and transformational impact, meeting the 'Exceptional' criteria. The proactive implementation of the BREATHE HR system specifically to tackle staff workload and communication burdens shows leaders are tenacious in addressing weaknesses. This depth of self-awareness and systematic resolution of priorities indicates that there are **no significant areas for improvement that leaders have not already prioritised**.

Justification: The leadership has demonstrated the resolve and strategic insight necessary to sustain high standards and proactively address known weaknesses, satisfying the criteria that **no significant areas for improvement**.

- **Strategic Insight and Vision:** Leaders maintain a clear and ambitious vision and have a highly effective governance board with **over 60 years of combined experience** that provides prudent oversight and effective challenge.
- **Proactive Improvement and Staff Welfare:** Leaders identified poor internal communication as a barrier for **39% of staff in 2024/2025**. To address this, they successfully launched **two major digital communication resources in 2025**, including the **'BREATHE' HR system**. This swift, strategic resolution of a known staff barrier demonstrates a key facet of the 'Exceptional' standard: that leaders have already prioritised and acted upon major internal improvements.
- **Sustained Quality:** Robust quality improvement processes are embedded, ensuring improvements are accurately and quickly identified through robust analysis, with managers held accountable for achievement

4. Contribution to Meeting Skills Needs (Whole-Provider Level)

(Note: While this area is primarily required for FE colleges, the performance of Independent Training Providers (ITP) like NC Group is evaluated contextually.)

Evaluation Area	NC Group SAR Summary (2024–2025)	New EIF Grading (Nov 2025)
Contribution to Meeting Skills Needs	Leaders are "extremely successful" in engaging with local/regional employers. Curriculum design is highly ambitious and "very successfully meet[s] the needs of apprentices and employers locally in the engineering and manufacturing industry". The curriculum includes bespoke content and delivery at the employment venue. Employer satisfaction is high (97%). Job outcomes significantly exceed targets (e.g., ETC achieved 78.5% positive destinations against a 60% target).	Exceptional

Analysis against New EIF Criteria: The evidence aligns with the 'Exceptional' grade. Leaders engage widely and consistently, resulting in a highly tailored curriculum and strong employer partnerships. The strong job outcomes confirm that NC Group makes an **exceptional contribution** to meeting local skills needs by ensuring learners thoroughly and securely develop a wide range of skills.

Justification: The provider demonstrates widespread engagement and measurable outcomes that make a highly effective contribution to local and regional skills gaps, preparing learners **exceptionally well** for work.

- **Extensive Engagement:** Leaders are "**extremely successful in engaging with local and regional employers**". They select courses and apprenticeship programmes specifically to **help fill skills gaps in industry**.
- **Curriculum Quality and Impact:** The curriculum is highly ambitious and "**very successfully meet[s] the needs of apprentices and employers locally in the engineering and manufacturing industry**". This focused curriculum design and delivery aligns with the requirement that the content is expertly planned and taught highly effectively.
- **High Outcomes:** Employer satisfaction is extremely high at **97%**. Furthermore, job outcomes consistently exceeded targets across all partners (e.g., ETC achieved 78.5% positive destinations against a 60% target). These high outcomes confirm that learners thoroughly and securely develop the skills needed to prepare them exceptionally well for next step

5. Curriculum, Teaching and Training (Provision-Type Level)

Evaluation Area	NC Group SAR Summary (2024–2025)	New EIF Grading (Nov 2025)
Curriculum, Teaching and Training (CTT)	The quality of education is Outstanding. The curriculum is ambitious, logically sequenced, and responsive to prior learning. Tutors are experts who use a wide range of "highly effective teaching strategies". Learner satisfaction with teaching is consistently high (99% agreement on teaching excellence). The Teaching and Learning Observation Profile (OTLA) confirms 100% "Good or better" teaching and learning . The organisation uses a "Gold Award" to capture and disseminate tutor-created pedagogical/digital resources and facilitate formal Continuous Professional Development (CPD).	Exceptional

Analysis against New EIF Criteria: The performance meets the level required for 'Exceptional'. Key indicators include mastery of teaching by experts, confirmation of consistently high quality (100% "Good or better" observation rate), and the system (the "Gold Award") used to disseminate best practice and systematically improve curriculum quality. The ambition and sequencing of the curriculum demonstrate a transformational impact on learning.

Justification: The quality of teaching and curriculum effectiveness is consistently outstanding, incorporating systematic mechanisms for the ongoing development and dissemination of expert practice, supporting the criteria for an exceptionally high-quality curriculum.

- **Expert Teaching and Delivery:** Tutors are highly effective and demonstrate expertise. This is reflected in the internal observation data, which shows 100% "Good or better" teaching and learning. Learner surveys confirm this quality, with 99% of learners agreeing that teaching is excellent.
- **Curriculum Structure:** The curriculum is **sequenced carefully and logically**, ensuring apprentices master fundamental principles before moving on to more complex ideas, fulfilling the ambition of the curriculum.
- **Systematic Improvement:** The organisation systematically uses a **"Gold Award"** to formally acknowledge and disseminate excellent tutor-created pedagogical/digital resources and facilitate formal CPD. This demonstrates a mechanism for continually enhancing staff expertise, which is characteristic of the **'Exceptional'** grade.

6. Achievement (Provision-Type Level)

Evaluation Area	NC Group SAR Summary (2024–2025)	New EIF Grading (Nov 2025)
Achievement	AEB achievement rates are exceptional: 100% (Level 1) and 99.7% (Level 2). Apprenticeship End-Point Assessment (EPA) success is high: 100% pass rate (92% first attempt), with 50% achieving distinction grades. Post-apprenticeship outcomes are outstanding, with 100% securing employment afterwards. The overall Apprenticeship Achievement Rate (AAR) is 70.5%, which is 8.5% above the national average (62%).	Exceptional

Analysis against New EIF Criteria: This data supports an 'Exceptional' grading, requiring that all learners achieve exceptionally high levels of knowledge and skill. The near-perfect AEB completion, the highly successful EPA outcomes (50% distinctions), and the 100% positive progression to employment demonstrate mastery of skills and a transformational impact on career readiness.

Justification: Achievement is judged 'Exceptional' due to the transformational impact on learners' careers and the exceptionally high levels of attainment demonstrated across multiple outcome measures, particularly the quality of apprenticeship achievements.

- High Attainment: Apprenticeship End-Point Assessment (EPA) success includes a **100% pass rate** (92% first attempt) with **50% of apprentices achieving distinction grades**. This high level of successful outcome demonstrates that learners develop exceptionally high levels of subject knowledge and skill.
- Progression: **100% of apprentices secured employment** after completing their apprenticeship. This outcome directly points to the **transformational impact** on their readiness for future careers.
- Overall Achievement: AEB achievement rates are reported as 100% (Level 1) and 99.7% (Level 2). The overall Apprenticeship Achievement Rate (AAR) of 70.5% is **8.5% above the national average** (62%). While the AAR missed the internal target of 81%, the strength of the positive destinations and distinction rates confirms performance consistent with the highest grade.

7. Participation and Development (Provision-Type Level)

Evaluation Area	NC Group SAR Summary (2024–2025)	New EIF Grading (Nov 2025)
Participation and Development	Learner behaviour and attitudes are Outstanding. AEB attendance (99.4%) and punctuality (99.7%) are extremely strong. Overall Apprenticeship attendance is high (96.4%). The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities, including emotional intelligence training and participation in social action projects (volunteering). Learners develop crucial life skills and are taught about risks (radicalisation, knife crime). 96% of AEB learners know what their next steps are regarding employment or training. <i>Area for Improvement: Pockets of low attendance</i> in specific apprenticeship cohorts (L3 Team Leader Supervisor at 88% and Business Administration at 75%) fall below the 95% target.	Strong Standard

Analysis against New EIF Criteria: The overall strong attendance in AEB (99.4%), excellent learner behaviour, and rich wider curriculum focusing on development align with the 'Strong Standard'. However, the explicitly noted internal inconsistency in apprenticeship attendance (pockets at 88% and 75%) prevents the awarding of the 'Exceptional' grade. The 'Exceptional' grade requires highly focused work resulting in very high attendance rates over a sustained period, and that all **significant areas for improvement have been prioritised**.

Justification: This grade reflects strong performance across attendance, behaviour, and wider personal development. However, it is limited to the 'Strong Standard' and does not achieve 'Exceptional' due to identified inconsistencies that leaders have not yet resolved, thereby failing the 'no significant areas for improvement' criteria required for the highest grade.

Strong Performance Evidence:

- **Attendance/Behaviour:** AEB attendance (99.4%) and punctuality (99.7%) are extremely strong. Overall, Apprenticeship attendance is high at **96.4%**. Learners demonstrate exceptional conduct and attitudes.
- **Wider Curriculum:** Apprentices receive a rich curriculum, including **emotional intelligence training** and participation in **social action projects**. They are prepared for the next steps, demonstrated by **96% of AEB learners** knowing what to do next regarding employment or training.

Limiting Factor (Prevents Exceptional Grade): The SAR explicitly identifies an **Area for Improvement** that attendance needs addressing in "**pockets of low attendance**" on specific apprenticeship cohorts (L3 Team Leader Supervisor at **88%** and Business Administration at **75%**), which fall below the 95% target. This identified inconsistency constitutes a "significant area for improvement that leaders have not already prioritised" and resolved, restricting the grade to **Strong Standard**.