

Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency Ltd (NHTA)

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53671

Name of lead inspector: Harmesh Manghra HMI

Last day of inspection: 24 September 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency (NHTA) is a private training company based in Sherwood, Nottingham. Since 1983, it has provided work-based learning to the hairdressing industry. Currently it offers training in hairdressing apprenticeships to learners and employers principally in the Greater Nottingham area under contract from the Skills Funding Agency. NHTA also provides learning for Entry to Employment (E2E) and Train to Gain under subcontracting arrangements.
2. The previous owners sold the company to the present directors in 2007. Fourteen full-time and eight part-time tutor/assessors provide practical and theory lessons, assessment and support to the learners. During the inspection week, 120 apprentices including 28 advanced apprentices are in training. Ten learners are on the E2E programme attending a Level 1 hairdressing programme and 11 learners are on the Train to Gain programme. All learners are allocated two years to complete their apprenticeship. NHTA delivers off-the-job training from its Sherwood offices and Crowns hairdressing salon in Nottingham city centre. All learners attend off-the-job training at the training centre once a fortnight. NHTA work with approximately 109 salons in the Greater Nottingham area and in Derby.
3. In March 2010 , the unemployment rate in the Nottingham City area was 13% compared to the national average of 8%. The number of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C is 65%. Some 33% of the school pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
4. The company provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Nottingham Training Network
 - Access Training

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners: Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	26 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	10 learners 119 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 4
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Capacity to improve	Grade 4
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	4
Quality of provision	4
Leadership and management	4
Safeguarding	4
Equality and diversity	4

Subject areas	Grade
Hairdressing	4

Overall effectiveness

5. The outcomes for learners are inadequate. Learners develop appropriate hairdressing skills and, improve their confidence and self-esteem satisfactorily. Progression into further education, training and employment for E2E learners is inadequate. Retention rates are very low. Success rates for Train to Gain learners are satisfactory although most learners make slow progress.
6. The quality of provision is inadequate. Support on personal and study matters is satisfactory. Programmes match the needs of the learners and the employers well. NHTA has developed appropriate level of partnerships with a range of agencies and employers to benefit the learners. Teaching and learning are inadequate with satisfactory on-the-job training with employers. Assessment for the apprentices is weak, inaccurate, infrequent and poorly planned. Target-setting in learners' progress reviews is poor. Tutors do not plan lessons sufficiently for the new learners on the E2E programme who join an established group of learners. They do not use available technology to engage learners fully into theory lessons at the training centre. Off-the-job training for the apprentices is not structured well.
7. NHTA does not have sufficient capacity to sustain and make improvements. It provides poor value for money as most learners are making slow or mediocre

progress. Leadership and management, quality improvement and safeguarding are all inadequate. The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. Learners with low prior achievement are further disadvantaged by frequent changes to their programmes and tutors. Most staff possess a minimal level of qualifications and are insufficiently experienced. Sharing of good practice from within the company and with external organisations is inadequate. NHTA does not make any use of data to improve the provision.

Main findings

- Learners' practical hairdressing skills are satisfactory and meet the expected level of the NVQ qualification. Learners work confidently when completing a variety of hairdressing processes including highlighting and hair colouring. They benefit from good one-to-one coaching from some employers. Many learners attend industry exhibitions to become aware of the standards required to work in the industry.
- Success rates for the apprentices are inadequate. Success rates for a small number of advanced apprenticeships and Train to Gain learners are satisfactory. The progression rates and achievement of qualifications for E2E learners are inadequate. Retention rates are low.
- Theory lessons for off-the-job training are inadequate. Staff have a poor understanding of the aims and objectives of the lessons. The staff do not plan lessons sufficiently to integrate new learners onto an existing E2E programme. Tutors deploy a narrow range of teaching methods. They lack confidence in using information learning technology (ILT) and do not share good practice sufficiently.
- NHTA does not plan training well. Learners make slow progress as most take two years or more to complete their apprenticeship. Many learners are capable of completing their framework earlier. Learners and employers do not receive a training plan with long-term targets for the completion of units and frameworks to aid planning of training and assessment.
- Staff turnover at NHTA is excessive and has had a major impact on the learners. Some 80% of the delivery staff have left the company since the company changed hands. The newly appointed staff have minimal qualifications and limited experience. Professional updating of the NHTA staff is poor. For example, some staff were unaware of the updates to the apprenticeship framework.
- Assessors do not assess learners' work promptly, sufficiently and accurately. Their knowledge of the principles of assessment is poor. They lack confidence to conduct broader assessments to sign-off a number of competences. Target setting is weak. Learners do not make sufficient progress due to long intervals between assessments that is further exacerbated by cancellation of appointments by assessors.
- One-to-one additional learning support is satisfactory. Learners have recently begun to receive extra support in classes at the centre or in the workplace.

Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory and impartial. Guidance on health matters is good and in particular the identification of the symptoms of dermatitis.

- The collection and use of data and other management information is ineffective. The company has a wealth of information on learners, their backgrounds, barriers and achievements. It does not use this information well to give a clear overview of each learner's progress. Data is not fully analysed and used to promote continuous improvement.
- Although the learners feel safe, the safeguarding arrangements are inadequate. Some staff have not completed Criminal Records Bureau checks. NHTA does not prioritise safeguarding. Employers do not have sufficient understanding of the safeguarding issues. Staff have adequate awareness of safeguarding issues to conduct appropriate risk assessment of workplaces and refer learners to appropriate agencies.
- Observers of teaching and assessment do not measure learning sufficiently and accept mediocre performance. They fail to identify the significant areas for improvement and grade lessons generously.
- The current arrangements for quality improvement at NHTA are inadequate. Its approach is unsystematic. Managers have not implemented some of the key aspects of quality improvement such as regular lesson observations, internal verification and devising a quality improvement plan. Internal verification and standardisation is poor. NHTA has not resolved several issues raised by the verifiers.

What does NHTA need to do to improve further?

- Raise the retention and success rates of the learners by accrediting their prior learning and achievement, improving target setting with individualised training and by setting challenging targets for achievement of qualifications, units and the framework.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by training staff to make better use of a range of activities, effective questioning and by conducting ample checks on learning to fully engage learners. Monitor and enhance tutors' performance through focused observations, accurate grading and effective support.
- Plan on and off-the-job training in detail to improve learners' progress by ensuring that the employers and learners understand their roles and have detailed information on the training they will undertake with timescales for completion of the units and qualifications.
- Employ more staff to cover for contingencies and increase the number of in-salon assessors. Develop a robust strategy to retain and develop staff skills, confidence and knowledge through regular training, shadowing and mentoring support.
- Radically improve the methods, range and frequency of the assessment through greater involvement of learners and employers in clustering assessments,

increase the use of ILT and by increasing the number of clients in salons and workplace assessors. Set challenging, specific and measurable targets and monitor learners progress closely.

- Make better use of currently available management information including data to improve the outcomes for learners. Use the information to improve staff and management capability to produce accurate, timely and analytical reports of learners' progress and to identify and act on areas for improvement.
- Make sound arrangements to meet the current government requirements for safeguarding learners by checking the background and personal details of all staff who provide services to young people and vulnerable adults.
- Reintroduce a thorough system of quality improvement to evaluate the learner journey at every step including the use of data, audits, observations and user views to improve all aspects of training. Devise a thorough quality improvement plan to maintain strengths and deal with areas for improvements. Update assessor knowledge and skills and provide feedback to them on internal verification.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the development of hairdressing skills
- the quality and level of support that is better than with other providers
- the supportive tutors
- the town centre location of the college.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the frequency of off-the-job-training from every fortnight to every week
- the frequent changes to the tutors
- the cancelled appointments for assessment
- the level of assessment in the salons
- the level and support for passing the examinations
- the care and diligence with which the tutors file and mark learners' coursework
- the clarity in communication around the course requirements, guidance and deadlines to complete tasks.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the timely and appropriate level of support
- good relationships with the assessors
- the quality of service that is better than with other large providers

- the employer forum that allows them the opportunity to discuss trade related issues.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the excessive cost of the hair shows that is beyond some learners' and employers' means
- the amount of paperwork and administration
- the capacity of assessors in the workplaces
- the frequent changes in staffing that impacted adversely on their employees progress
- the link between on and off-the-job training
- greater clarity in understanding of their role in training and assessment.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

8. NHTA has failed to maintain the good standards seen by inspectors at its previous inspection in 2005. All aspects of provision including outcomes for learners, the quality of provision and leadership and management that were good at previous inspection, are now inadequate. Most aspects of training that were good have deteriorated. With the exception of a small number of advanced apprentices whose success rates have continued to improve, success rates for apprentices and the rates of positive outcomes for E2E learners have declined. NHTA has lost most of its experienced tutors and assessors. It has recently employed some more appropriately qualified staff although some have not yet started work or returned after a period of absence. Staff development is insufficiently focused on improving teaching and learning. NHTA restructured the management roles in November 2009 when the quality manager left her post. Quality improvement processes have been suspended since then. The post has been filled by an existing member of staff in the last two months. It is too soon to judge the impact of her role.
9. The self-assessment process is not inclusive. The current self-assessment report is totally inaccurate. Managers did not make use of broad-ranging evidence including data, views of the learners, employers, other partners and staff to provide a multi-dimensional view of NHTA. The company did not produce a quality improvement plan. Judgements in the self-assessment report were not based on sound evidence and did not evaluate the impact on the learners. The report did not mention difficulties in staffing and the company is not fully aware of the severe impact it has had on the learners. The claims made in the report did not match with the inspection findings. Inspectors awarded a lower grade for all aspects of the provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 4

10. Learners make good contribution to their local community through taking part in fund raising for local charities and the local hospital. Learners and employers value the awards ceremonies such as the graduation ceremony for Train to Gain learners.
11. The rates of progression for apprentices are high. Some 44% of the apprentices have progressed into advanced apprenticeship in the previous year. Success rates for a small number of advanced apprentices are satisfactory and are currently 10% above the low national average.
12. Learners develop an appropriate level of practical hairdressing skills. They work confidently when completing a variety of hairdressing processes including highlighting and hair colouring. Learners develop appropriate numeracy and literacy skills to enable them to complete their course.

13. Success rates for the apprentices are inadequate. These have continued to decline in the last three years and are now 10% below national averages. Success rates for learners on the Train to Gain programme are satisfactory. However, only 29% of the learners complete their programme within the planned timescale. The progression rates and achievement of qualifications for E2E learners is low.
14. Learners feel safe in their workplaces and in the training centre. They make appropriate choices about their health and well-being. NHTA effectively promotes healthy eating, the dangers of alcohol abuse and sexual awareness.
15. Learners make slow progress. High percentages of learners take more than the industry norm of 18 months to complete their apprenticeship. Of the 54 learners whose progress NHTA is monitoring only one learner has completed the Employment Rights and Responsibilities (ERR) component of the framework.
16. Retention rates are low for the apprentices. Some 38% of the learners leave the programme for a variety of reasons. Attendance and behaviour remains an issue for the E2E learners.
17. NHTA does not conduct analysis of the progress and achievement of learners by gender, disability, additional learning need, ethnicity or by cohort.

The quality of provision

Grade 4

18. Teaching and learning are inadequate. Theory lessons are inadequate. The observers do not identify key areas for improvement and give generous grades to the lessons. Learners benefit from good one-to-one coaching. However, tutors do not always use this time effectively to maximise the learning experience. The teaching of practical skills in the training centre is satisfactory although tutors do not adhere to high standards of health and safety for wearing gloves. They use a narrow range of teaching and learning strategies that do not meet the learners' individual needs.
19. The programmes satisfactorily meet the needs and interest of the learners and their employers. NHTA provides courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. NHTA provides a good pool of trained hairdressers to the industry. Salons are easily accessible by public transport. Learners work closely with their employers to choose relevant optional units for their NVQ to suit their aspirations and the business needs. They attend appropriate training sessions in the workplace on a regular and occasional basis as well as attending some training provided by product manufacturers. Learners are able to practise skills throughout the working week.

20. Partnerships with the local schools, referral agencies, Connexions, the local minority ethnic community groups and other training providers are effective. NHTA has worked very well to promote its services through a range of media including website and email. Partnerships with employers remain effective. NHTA has made strong efforts to promote hairdressing to minority groups with limited success.
21. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners are introduced to the company and the hairdressing industry via an informative induction. Initial assessment is conducted well to determine the motivation and prior achievement of learners. Information, advice and guidance are impartial and focussed on careers in the industry. Guidance on health matters is good and in particular the identification of the symptoms of dermatitis.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

22. NHTA is working well to fill the gaps in the market to train learners for the hairdressing industry. Leaders and managers have developed a supportive culture but they accept mediocre or poor performance from their learners and staff. The new owners have invested well in computer-based and paper-based learning resources. However, staff do not feel confident in using ILT. Since the present directors purchased the company more than half of the staff have left the company. Some posts such as the quality manager and key skills tutors were vacant for considerable time. NHTA cancelled many off-the-job training and assessments at short notice due to a shortage of staff. This has had a major impact on learners and has slowed their progress. The managing director has conducted a thorough needs analysis of the market and is clear about his plans. However, he has not fully appreciated the impact of poor capacity and the lack of well qualified staff to deliver his mission. NHTA does not collect and use data to set targets for attendance, retention, success rates or achievement of qualifications. Data is not used to plan and review the training provision. NHTA is not aware of how each of its learner cohorts are performing.
23. NHTA does not meet the government requirements for safeguarding learners. It has not conducted checks on all its staff through the Criminal Records Bureau. Learners have an appropriate awareness of safeguarding issues, however, employers recollection of safeguarding issues is poor. Learners enjoy their learning and feel safe both in the training centre and in their work placements. Learners are well aware of the protocol of action if they have any issues regarding safeguarding. Assessors do not promote safeguarding issues during reviews. Staff have developed appropriate links with the referral agencies and take effective action to respond to concerns. All staff have attended relevant awareness training.
24. The promotion of equality and diversity is weak. Staff have not attended any training on equality and diversity except to meet the provider's legal obligations. Staff awareness of equality and diversity is poor as demonstrated

by some deeply held stereotypical views and inappropriate use of language in teaching sessions. NHTA does not monitor and analyse data on participation and performance of various groups and cohorts of learners to identify and close the achievement gap. Despite some attempts to promote hairdressing to minority ethnic groups NHTA has been unsuccessful at attracting learners from minority ethnic groups. It does not offer training in hairdressing for African and Caribbean hair. Learners have a good understanding of bullying and harassment and know who to contact if they have any issues. Although learners feel protected from bullying and harassment the company does not routinely follow up incidents of bullying. Some incidents of bullying have not been resolved to the satisfaction of the learners. Both the buildings used by NHTA are on the first and second floors. The company has not made alternative arrangements for access for wheelchair users or for people with mobility difficulties.

25. NHTA has been successful at consulting with the learners on an informal basis. It has made some changes to the programme such as the introduction of a uniform for the learners and visits to trade shows. Engaging with the employers has been less successful. Despite making strong efforts, attendance at the employer forum is poor. Employers focus on the industry issues rather than training and quality improvement.

Information about the inspection

26. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the Skills Funding Agency and the local Young People's Learning Agency, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
27. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the training provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency (NHTA)

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	16-18 Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	117	0	117
Part-time learners	22	10	12
Overall effectiveness	4	4	4
Capacity to improve	4		
Outcomes for learners	4	4	4
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	4		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4		
How well do learners progress?	4		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2		
Quality of provision	4		
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	4		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3		
Leadership and management	4		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	4		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	NA		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	4		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	4		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	4		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	4		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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