

Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency Limited (NHTA)

Reinspection report

Unique reference number: 53671

Name of lead inspector: Julia Horsman HMI

Last day of inspection: 17 November 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency Ltd (NHTA) is a private training company. The head office is in the Sherwood district of Nottingham, while the training academy including Krowns salon is in the city centre. Since 1983, NHTA has provided work-based learning to the hairdressing industry. It contracts with the Skills Funding Agency to offer intermediate and advanced apprenticeship programmes and, instead of Entry to Employment provision as at the previous inspection, it now offers the new access to apprenticeship programme. NHTA no longer provides training on behalf of other providers.
2. The company was formed as a partnership in 1983 and bought by its current owners in 2007. In addition to two directors, the company employs 12 full-time and three part-time staff. At the time of inspection there are 90 intermediate and 27 advanced apprentices employed in 87 hairdressing salons in Nottingham city centre, suburbs and surrounding areas. The majority of learners attend the academy once a fortnight. In addition, NHTA assessors visit learners' workplace salons. There are four learners on the access to apprenticeship programme.
3. Unemployment in Nottingham has risen by 10 percentage points in the last year and since July 2010 has been consistently above the national average. In May 2011, 6% of the working age population was unemployed.
4. At the previous inspection in September 2010, all the main grades of capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management were inadequate.

| Type of provision | Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11 |
|---|--|
| Provision for young learners: Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment | 10 full-time learners |
| Employer provision: Apprentices Advanced apprenticeship Train to Gain | 98 apprentices 28 advanced apprentices 11 learners |

Summary report

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

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Overall effectiveness of provision | Grade 3 |
| Capacity to improve | Grade 3 |
| | Grade |
| Outcomes for learners | 3 |
| Quality of provision | 3 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |
| Safeguarding | 2 |
| Equality and diversity | 3 |
| Subject Areas | Grade |
| Hairdressing | 3 |

Overall effectiveness

5. NHTA provides satisfactory hairdressing training, a significant improvement on the previous inspection in September 2010. The pace of learners' on-programme achievements is much improved and is now at least satisfactory. In 2010/11, 44% of learners left without completing their full apprenticeships. Although the achievement of qualifications is still slightly below national rates in 2011/12, fewer learners are leaving early without completing their programmes.
6. Learners' standards of work are satisfactory and a few learners have outstanding practical hairdressing skills. The in-house hairdressing competitions provide good opportunities for learners to show their creative skills. Learners' attendance is good at the training academy. They particularly enjoy being in the academy's salon, Krowns, carrying out treatments on the good range of clients. NHTA staff provide learners with very good care, guidance and support.
7. NHTA staff have worked hard to improve the quality of the hairdressing programmes since the previous inspection. The quality of the teaching has improved and is now satisfactory or better. Sessions are well planned. They include a good range of interesting learning activities and good resources, including information technology. Sessions are planned to be stimulating, informative and fun, but not all fully achieve this aim.

8. Changes within NHTA are effective in supporting improvements in the quality of training. Much staff development has taken place. Staff roles and responsibilities have been revised and more staff support is now in place. The implementation of new quality improvement activities is already benefitting learners. Employers are becoming more involved with NHTA in delivering their learners' work-based learning programmes. The new employers' group is already influencing positive changes, despite its initial membership being small. NHTA's capacity to improve has increased, although new processes and procedures have not yet been operating for a complete year and their impact cannot be fully evaluated.

Main findings

- Overall success rates for intermediate apprentices in 2010/11 have improved slightly since 2009/10. Overall success rates for the lower numbers of advanced apprentices remain similar to 2009/10. Both remain slightly below national rates. However, on-programme completion of NVQ units shows marked improvement compared to the same period in 2009/10. Progression from level 2 to level 3 programmes is good.
- NHTA celebrates learners' achievements well. Learners receive rewards for meeting or exceeding their targets. The 'learner of the month', receives a certificate, prize and their photo displayed in the winners' gallery and NHTA newsletter. Achievement of advanced apprenticeship frameworks are celebrated in a cap and gown degree-style ceremony.
- Standards of learners' practical hairdressing are generally satisfactory for the stage on their programmes. Level 2 learners quickly improve their interpersonal and communication skills through regular interaction with clients. Additional activities such as barbering enable learners to enhance their skills and increase their employability. In-house hairdressing competitions provide learners with opportunities to exhibit their creative skills; some are outstanding.
- Learners feel safe. Safeguarding and health and safety are introduced effectively in the induction programme and routinely reinforced at the academy. Suitably qualified staff complete health and safety risk assessments. Learners use safe salon working practices. NHTA has a zero bullying policy and learners are confidently using the support available across a range of safeguarding issues.
- Teaching and learning sessions are satisfactory or better. Good planning and use of a wide variety of stimulating practical activities and learning aids, maintain learners' interest in the majority of sessions. Greatly increased numbers of clients at the academy provide much improved learning and assessment opportunities. Weaker learning sessions fail to deliver the full potential of the session plans.
- Assessment at the academy salon and in learners' work-place salons are available on demand and provided by five NHTA assessors. NHTA internal verification appropriately includes the 10 work-place salon assessors in regular support and moderation.
- Apprenticeship programmes at NHTA satisfactorily meet the needs and interests of learners. Flexible training and assessment are now available. Target setting is now individualised and has reduced programme length for the majority of

learners. Reviews are effective in monitoring progress and increasing the involvement of employers to support development in co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training.

- Partnership working by NHTA staff benefits learners. Relationships with employers now include contracts to identify their roles in delivering the apprenticeship programmes. The new employer group makes a good contribution to developments. NHTA held a successful gala event for level 3 learners in partnership with a local college; developing schools links aim to increase male recruitment onto NHTA programmes.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. The new interview and induction process is good. It enables learners to become familiar with specialist support staff. Staff are approachable and supportive, which is particularly important as a high proportion of learners have additional support needs for health and other difficulties. Co-ordination of specific additional learning support, including that for dyslexia is underdeveloped.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Aspirations are high. The energetic, knowledgeable and focused approach in driving quality improvements since early 2011 has been impressive. New staff structures provide improved channels of communication and support. Staff development has been extensive. Teamwork with staff in managing the changes is good. Highly successful marketing strategies have greatly increased client numbers at the academy.
- Safeguarding arrangements are greatly improved and are good. NHTA's new, designated safeguarding officer has good external links with the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and the local childrens' safeguarding board. A safeguarding policy, good staff training and strong promotion to learners and information to employers, have increased awareness of safeguarding issues across the provision. Detailed, confidential learner records are stored securely.
- Equality and diversity are promoted effectively with learners during the induction programme and reinforced at reviews. Much staff training has taken place. However, the equality and diversity topics identified in planning are insufficiently relevant to hairdressing, in learning sessions. Data are used effectively to monitor achievement of different learners and cohorts. Those with additional learning needs achieve well at NHTA.
- Quality improvement is good. The self-assessment report and quality improvement plan are appropriately detailed, providing good information to support staff in using them effectively. Targets in the quality improvement plan are being achieved well. Self-assessment is an inclusive process, effectively using learner, employer and staff feedback. The self-assessment report is evaluative and mostly reflects the inspection findings.

What does NHTA need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the number of learners who successfully complete their apprenticeship in the agreed time through continued development of: target setting and the monitoring of learners' progress; frequent assessment in

learners' work-place salons; effective use of NHTA assessors' time for salon visits; and by maintaining the substantial client base at the academy.

- Continue to improve the quality of learning sessions by disseminating good practise from the better sessions, and sharing ideas for effective use of learning resources, to ensure the pace of teaching meets learners' diverse needs.
- Fully embed the processes for identifying, recording and disseminating the full range of learners' additional learning needs to ensure they are met and support for other specific learning needs is coordinated effectively.
- Engage fully with all employers to improve the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training to further support learner progress and achievement, increase the number of salon-based assessors and effectively use naturally occurring assessment opportunities in the workplace.
- Explore a broader range of equality and diversity case studies to help learners and employers gain a greater understanding of a range of relevant ways that they relate to commercial salon activities, including customer relations, the marketing of treatments and staff cohesion.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- very helpful staff at NHTA who make learners feel comfortable at the academy
- good helpful support from staff when it is needed
- good numbers of clients that ensure a lot of training
- clear explanations that help understanding
- staff visiting workplace salons to assess for the NVQ
- the good training.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the quality of theory lessons
- communication between staff to ensure consistency of information
- better course organisation including the availability of hairdressing kits and equipment.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the availability of NHTA staff who deal with problems promptly
- the immediate reporting of learner absence at the academy
- NHTA staff visiting workplace salons for learners reviews and NVQ assessments
- the assessor standardisation meetings for work-based assessors
- the knowledgeable NHTA staff, their help and frequent salon visits

- good new employer group with opportunities to network and share ideas
- the very informative newsletter and hot topics information to help employers keep up-to-date with changes, including legislation
- the support NHTA provides to learners.

What employers would like to see improved:

- a more professional response to negative feedback from learners
- more information on how to use the 'hot topic' information
- assessors remaining at the learners' workplace until the full client treatment is finished.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. NHTA's capacity to improve its hairdressing programmes is satisfactory. NHTA is strongly focusing its efforts to improve its own provision; it no longer provides training for other providers. Retention of learners improved in 2010/11 from the previous year when 44% left without completing their programme. The number of learners successfully completing their programmes in 2010/2011 remains slightly below national rates. The pace of on-programme NVQ unit achievement is much improved compared to last year, but it is too early to anticipate the final outcome.
10. In 2011, a new quality assurance manager was appointed and NHTA revised its staffing structure. Much staff support is now in place. A good range of staff development activities have successfully focused on improving the previously inadequate quality of teaching and learning and safeguarding arrangements. Care, guidance and support have improved and are now good. NHTA staff meetings are now frequent and focused. Quality improvements are effective and a good annual quality calendar is now in place. The improvements have already resulted in satisfactory or better grades awarded at this inspection.
11. Self-assessment is thorough and the process includes feedback from learners, employers and staff. The resulting 2011 report is evaluative and concise. It includes a good level of detail to support staff, many of whom are new to the process, to understand the amount of change needed. The self-assessment report matches many of the inspection findings. It shows a high level of self-awareness. The quality improvement plan is detailed and contains clear measurable targets to support improvements. NHTA now has a good awareness of the impact of its actions on learners. Progress against the action points is good. The company recognises that there are still many improvements to complete to realise its high aspirations and provide high quality hairdressing learning programmes.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

12. The proportion of intermediate learners successfully completing their apprenticeships in 2010/2011 is 7.5 percentage points higher, at 61.4%, than in 2009/2010. The proportion of successful advanced apprentices is similar in both years at about 68%. Both remain slightly below national rates. Learners' on-programme progress shows improvement with 54 NVQ hairdressing units already completed, which is double the number compared to the same period in 2009/10. Progression from level 2 to level 3 programmes is good at 93%, compared to 44% at the previous inspection.

13. Learners' success is celebrated well. Learners are rewarded for meeting or exceeding their targets. The 'learner of the month', receives a certificate, prize and their photograph displayed in the winners' gallery and NHTA newsletter. The bronze, silver and gold scissor badges are popular and awarded to intermediate learners when they reach critical stages of their programme. Successful apprenticeship completion by advanced learners is celebrated at an annual cap and gown style graduation ceremony.
14. Standards of learners' practical hairdressing are generally satisfactory for the stage reached on their programmes. Employers speak highly of the way that intermediate apprentices quickly improve their interpersonal and communication skills through regular interaction with clients. Apprentices speak of varying amounts of employer-based training. Additional skill sessions at the academy for intermediate apprentices, such as barbering and gel-nail techniques enhance their skills and increase their employability. In-house hairdressing competitions provide learners with opportunities to extend their creative skills, and some produce results much above their qualification levels.
15. Learners feel safe. Attendance at NHTA is good. Learners use safe salon working practices at the academy. The academy is brighter, more welcoming and generally provides a much safer and improved learning environment than found at the previous inspection. Safeguarding and health and safety are introduced effectively in the induction programme and routinely reinforced at the academy. Suitably qualified staff complete health and safety risk assessments. NHTA has a zero bullying policy and learners are confidently using the support available across a range of safeguarding issues.
16. Learners are encouraged to make informed choices about their own health and safety as part of the induction programme. Fresh fruit is provided for learners and the academy's vending machine and unhealthy snacks have been removed.
17. NHTA has a nominated charity and fund-raising events include the advanced apprentices' annual gala dinner and the intermediate apprentices' hair show. The self-assessment report notes that 73% of learners raise funds for local and national charities in their salons.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

18. Teaching and learning sessions are satisfactory or better. All hairdressing sessions are now well planned. The hairdressing theory sessions, highly criticised at the previous inspection, are much improved, and now use a wide variety of stimulating activities and learning aids, aimed at maintaining learners' interest. Key skills sessions frequently lack a hairdressing context and remain less popular. Greatly increased numbers of clients at the academy provide much improved learning and assessment opportunities.

19. Weaker learning sessions fail to deliver the full potential of the session plans. Trainers' abilities in using learning technologies, in time-keeping, clarity of explanations and confidence in managing some planned activities varies. Not all trainers are aware of learners' literacy and numeracy abilities. The small theory room restricts group activities. Trainers have insufficient awareness of how best to support individual learners' specific learning needs, in their classes.
20. Five NHTA assessors work well as a team to offer flexible assessment visit times 'on-demand' at learners' salons. There are good examples of the assessment of several NVQ units being undertaken during a single visit. Following monitoring, the varied visit numbers are under review to ensure all assessors are working efficiently. The ten salon assessors are included in the NHTA internal verification support and moderation meetings.
21. Apprenticeship programmes at NHTA are satisfactory in meeting the needs and interests of learners. The new interview process and phased induction introduced in August 2011 are good. Learners have flexible start dates and attendance patterns. Good planning, using learners' prior learning and experience, now enables staff to set appropriate and challenging individualised targets. This has effectively reduced programme completion targets. Previously, all learners were on two-year programmes; for 60% of the learners this has reduced and is now 12 to 18 months. Progress reviews are now recorded using the new, weekly 'graded' academy reports that are shared with learners and employers to monitor learners' progress and increase the involvement of employers.
22. Partnership working by NHTA staff benefits learners. Relationships with employers now include contracts to specify their roles in delivering the apprenticeship programmes. The new employer group provides good input into developments. Employers use of NHTA information, including the monthly 'hot topics' is inconsistent. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is an ongoing development. Partnership with a local college successfully supported a level 3 gala event; the developing schools links aim to increase male recruitment.
23. Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Pre-programme, at interview and induction, on-programme and for progression, learners receive good information, advice and guidance. Specialist support staff are knowledgeable, approachable and supportive and learners confidently approach them with their concerns. This is particularly important as around half of learners have additional support needs for health and other difficulties. Co-ordination of specific additional learning support, including that for dyslexia is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

24. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Business aspirations remain high but the growth planned for 2010/11 has not been achieved. The November 2010 annual plan targets did not focus sufficiently on the much needed post-inspection quality improvement. Despite this, since early 2011, the energetic,

knowledgeable and focused approach in driving quality improvement has been impressive. New staff structures provide improved channels of communication and support. Staff development has been extensive. Teamwork with staff in managing change is good. Highly successful marketing strategies have greatly increasing client numbers at the academy.

25. Safeguarding arrangements are now good and meet government requirements. NHTA's new designated safeguarding officer has good external links with LSIS and the local childrens' safeguarding board. A safeguarding policy, good staff training, strong promotion to learners and information to employers, have increased awareness of safeguarding issues across the provision. Confidential, detailed learner records are stored securely at head office.
26. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily during induction and reinforced during reviews. Employers receive monthly 'hot topics' to display in staff rooms and to encourage discussions with learners, with varying success. NHTA staff have completed equality and diversity training. Equality and diversity, while identified in session planning, frequently lacks relevance to hairdressing in learning sessions. The wide range of diversity issues related to hairdressing is not fully used. Data are used effectively to monitor the achievements of different learners and cohorts. Learners recorded as having additional learning needs achieve slightly better than other learners at NHTA. New school links aim to increase the low male recruitment. NHTA clearly displays in its ground floor foyer that it can make alternative access arrangements for learners and/or clients who cannot use the stairs and/or want to have treatments using specialist Afro hair products.
27. Quality improvement arrangements are good. An annual quality calendar is in place now. The self-assessment report and quality improvement plan are good and driving improvements. Self-assessment is an inclusive process, effectively using learner, employer and staff feedback. The self-assessment report is evaluative and mostly reflects the inspection findings.
28. Value for money is now satisfactory. Outcomes for learners are improving, particularly on-programme achievement. The quality of provision has improved. Leaders and managers are now focusing fully on quality improvement.

Information about the inspection

29. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by NHTA's quality assurance manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the NHTA's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the reinspection monitoring visit report and previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
30. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from the hairdressing programmes NHTA offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency (NHTA) Ltd
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 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Part-time learners | 117 | 0 | 117 |
| Overall effectiveness | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Capacity to improve | 3 | | |
| Outcomes for learners | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning? | 3 | | |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals? | 3 | | |
| How well do learners progress? | 3 | | |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development? | 3 | | |
| How safe do learners feel? | 2 | | |
| <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> | 3 | | |
| Quality of provision | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development? | 3 | | |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users? | 3 | | |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners? | 3 | | |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve? | 2 | | |
| Leadership and management | 3 | | |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation? | 3 | | |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i> | n/a | | |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? | 2 | | |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 3 | | |
| How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement? | 3 | | |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners? | 2 | | |
| How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money? | 3 | | |

*where applicable to the type of provision

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