

# Education Development Trust

National Careers Service

## Inspection dates

17–20 January 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	
Quality of information, advice and guidance	Good	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	
Outcomes for customers	Good	

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Advisers provide good support to customers; they accurately identify and address their personal, social and vocational needs and barriers to progression.
- Customers make good progress, develop an increased sense of responsibility, and take greater ownership of how to improve their career prospects.
- Advisers make good use of high-quality resources to inspire and motivate customers.
- Senior leaders and managers have overcome significant challenges in the early stages of the contract and established highly effective management systems.
- Leaders have established effective arrangements for managing and quality-assuring the work of the subcontractors.
- Managers analyse and share valuable labour market information across the organisation to help maximise the opportunities for customers.
- Managers have developed a valuable network of partnership organisations, which collaborate well together to add value and address the priorities across the region.
- Governors provide good practical support and a high level of scrutiny of the provision.
- Occasionally advisers do not ensure that the quality and content of skills action plans fully reflect all the goals set during discussions with advisers.
- Occasionally advisers do not consider whether customers could benefit from developing their English, mathematics or information and communication technology (ICT) skills to achieve longer-term employment goals.

## **Full report**

### **Information about the provider**

- The Education Development Trust (EDT) holds the National Careers Service (NCS) contract for the South Central region of England, which covers nine local authorities across Surrey, West Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole, and the Isle of Wight. EDT's main head office is in Reading, with an office in Whiteley near Fareham primarily for the South Central region.
- EDT's contract is delivered by CfBT Advice and Guidance (CfBT), which is a wholly owned subsidiary of EDT. CfBT delivers 77% of the service, and further subcontracts 23% to other organisations in the region. Advisers meet with roughly 38,000 customers each year at around 190 sites across the region. There are approximately 60 advisers working across the region.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve further?**

- Create greater consistency in the quality and content of skills action plans to ensure that they fully reflect all the goals set during discussions with advisers and that they are clear to customers.
- Ensure that all advisers plan sessions effectively to identify customers' expectations, needs and longer-term goals early on in the session, and keep customers actively engaged over the course of the meeting.
- Continue to focus on innovative strategies to reduce non-attendance rates.
- Ensure that advisers consistently consider whether customers could benefit from developing their English, mathematics or information and communication technology (ICT) skills to achieve longer-term employment goals.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since the NCS contract was awarded to EDT in 2014, leaders and managers have successfully overcome a number of initial challenges and now offer a high-quality information, advice and guidance service across the region.
- Senior leaders and managers make good use of a wide range of evidence, including customer surveys, analysis of data, observations of advisers' practice and scrutiny of the skills action plans they produce; they use this effectively to identify strengths and areas for improvement and to produce quality improvement targets.
- Managers and advisers make particularly good use of local labour market information, for example to direct customers to the most suitable community- or college-based courses, and to identify the best opportunities for gaining employment in the area.
- Managers make good use of community and educational venues, in addition to local Jobcentre Plus premises for delivering individual and group sessions. This broad range of community and educational settings, together with strong partnership working, increases the range and diversity of customers using the service.
- Managers and advisers promote and reinforce equality and diversity very well. Advisers adapt their approach to meet the diverse needs of customers, including changing venues when customers have mobility difficulties. Advisers help customers understand the need for tolerance and mutual respect where appropriate.
- The day-to-day management of staff is good. Advisers have the opportunity to work in both community and custodial settings. This initiative has increased workforce flexibility, improved the capacity of EDT to meet the needs of customers and provided more opportunities to share effective practice.
- Actions to improve the quality of advice and guidance given to customers and the completion of skills action plans are generally successful. A very small minority of advisers do not consistently achieve high standards of service in working with customers or completing skills action plans.
- Staff development is well planned and responsive to the needs of staff and customers. For example, when advisers requested training in how to help ex-offenders disclose criminal records, managers commissioned a specialist charity, Nacro, to run a training programme. New advisors benefit from a very effective wide-ranging induction, training and support programme.
- EDT collaborates very effectively with a wide range of organisations, including four local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), community groups, adult learning providers and education business partnerships (EBPs).
- Advisers work effectively with local teachers responsible for careers education and are very active in encouraging employers to work more closely with pre- and post-16 education providers through the 'Inspiration' activities. For example, advisers travelled round the Isle of Wight on a converted double-decker bus, running workshops to raise career aspirations and to promote an understanding of enterprise.
- EDT manages subcontractors very successfully. Communication is very good and

subcontractors have excellent access to professional development activities.

- Leaders and managers have ambitious targets to reduce the percentage of customers failing to attend. The range of strategies used, such as phoning, texting or using social media to remind group members about workshops or other relevant events, has been increasingly successful in improving attendance. However, in a small minority of areas the progress in reducing 'fail to attend' rates is too slow.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Senior leaders and the board provide good practical support and a high level of scrutiny of the NCS provision. Board members have an active involvement in the work of South Central team, visiting areas when possible and acting on suggestions and comments from managers and advisors. For example, when area managers expressed frustration at the slow implementation of proposed improvement actions, board members challenged senior managers and a procedure to speed up the analysis and implementation of improvement ideas was put in place.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Advisers have a good understanding of safeguarding and take appropriate and sensitive action if they have concerns or if a customer makes a disclosure. Since the start of the contract, advisers have identified an increase in incidents relating to self-harm and the number of customers at risk of taking their own life. Advisers have also recorded a general increase in customers with poor mental health, in particular from customers moving from an Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to a Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). Advisers record incidents or concerns with sufficient information and detail to enable managers to analyse any trends or identify where additional training might be required.
- The health and safety team review reported incidents and concerns about working practice very effectively, making recommendations where necessary. For example, managers organised mental health awareness training for front-line staff following concerns raised by advisers. Support for staff who work with particularly challenging or difficult customers is good; all staff have access to an independent counselling service.
- Managers and advisers have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the 'Prevent' duty, although no referrals or raising of concerns have taken place since the start of the contract. 'Prevent' training continues to be reinforced through staff development, team meetings and one-to-one discussions.

### **Quality of information, advice and guidance**

**Good**

- Customers receive good support from advisers who show respect and empathy, and adopt a non-judgmental approach. Advisers challenge negative attitudes well, and motivate customers to maintain a positive perspective on the future. For example, in one session, a customer with a history of drug misuse recognised the need to change their lifestyle, and agreed to take specific actions to become more job-ready.
- Advisers deal sympathetically with ex-offenders to help boost their self-worth and sense of direction during their probation period. Advisers recognise and respect the confidential

nature of the information and discussions that customers share with them.

- Customers receive very effective assessment of their personal, social and vocational needs from advisers who help identifying any barriers to their progression. Advisers take into account customers' personal circumstances such as childcare, transport or financial constraints.
- Most advisers skilfully identify customers' key longer-term goals, using good listening and questioning techniques. Advisers are generally adept at evaluating customers' previous job history, education and training to date, to highlight any potential further learning that might improve their employment chances.
- Advisers are suitably qualified and experienced in providing careers advice. Accommodation and resources are fit for purpose, with advisers able to undertake confidential discussions where necessary in a suitably private environment.
- Advisers offer a variety of flexible modes of delivery, including scheduled one-to-one meetings, drop-in sessions and group workshops.
- Skilled advisers use coaching and mentoring skills well to engage and support customers. Advisers skilfully help customers identify and understand the nature of their transferable skills to enable them to consider alternative job and career opportunities. For example, a knowledgeable adviser carefully guided a research scientist who had been made redundant to identify his transferable skills and signposted him to a wider range of suitable job opportunities in the locality.
- Advisers have particularly good access to local labour market information on courses and training, and on job opportunities in the area. They use this well to promote opportunities to customers. For example, customers attending a group session benefited from up-to-date statistics on local employment trends, as well as information on local major employers job vacancies online. The group also improved their understanding of how to use social media in their job search and networking.
- Advisers use their local knowledge well to signpost customers to specific appropriate agencies, where they can access additional support such as for housing, mental health, substance and alcohol abuse, and information on learning loans. Advisers promote apprenticeships and the benefits of voluntary work effectively to broaden customers' range of progression options.
- Advisers make effective use of both paper-based and online resources. For example, they provide customers with useful information on topics such as universal job match registration, CV templates and interview skills. They also advise customers of websites where they can gather further information or research employment opportunities.
- In a very small minority of less effective sessions, advisers do not plan well enough. Discussions are too rushed and advisers do not always identify and confirm customers' expectations of the service, or secure agreement on what is achievable within the time available. Less-experienced advisers lack the skills to keep customers engaged in constructive activities while they complete the necessary electronic records.
- Actions and goals recorded on skills action plans do not always fully reflect those discussed in sessions. In a very small minority of instances, the recording is too generic and does not focus enough on training and learning needs. Actions do not consistently meet individual needs as they are occasionally too brief, insufficiently challenging or not

broken down into simple steps to ensure that customers understand how to make progress towards their longer-term goals.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Customers demonstrate particularly good standards of behaviour and respect towards advisers and engage well in advice sessions. Advisers deal respectfully but clearly with customers if they express derogatory views towards others, or use inappropriate language.
- As a result of attending advice sessions, customers normally develop a sense of responsibility and take greater ownership of their development and future prospects.
- Customers with particularly complex personal and social issues engage well over time, and become increasingly willing to participate in the sessions due to the supportive, nurturing and caring approach shown by advisers.
- Customers indicate that they feel safe at advice and guidance sessions. Where appropriate, advisers help develop customers' understanding of a variety of health and safety issues, in particular how to stay safe online.
- In the significant majority of sessions, advisers explore and accurately identify the potential needs of each customer to prioritise the development of their English, mathematics or ICT skills where appropriate. They advise customers where they might find out more information about suitable courses, or where to gain further support and access to computers in the local area. In a very small minority of instances advisers do not focus sufficiently on the importance of customers developing these skills as part of the actions to take forwards from the sessions.
- Managers are working hard to reduce non-attendance rates at advice and guidance sessions. They are setting ambitious and aspirational targets to reduce non-attendance across the provision. While managers are successfully achieving these targets in many centres, managers recognise the need to maintain the focus on continuing to reduce non-attendance rates more widely across the provision.
- In a few instances advisers do not empower customers sufficiently to take the initiative and develop their independence. For example, on occasions advisers complete curriculum vitae on behalf of the customer, rather than empowering the customer to produce it.

## Outcomes for customers

**Good**

- Customers make good progress during their one-to-one or group sessions with advisers. They generally develop an increased sense of responsibility and take greater ownership of how to develop their career prospects. Customers develop increased confidence and self-esteem as a result of the activities they undertake with advisers, and improve their understanding of how to establish their short- and longer-term goals.
- Advisers assist customers well in evaluating their existing skills and support them in developing and presenting the additional information they require to increase their employment prospects. In particular, customers develop a greater understanding of how to identify any skills gaps they might have, and prepare and present their employment

history on a curriculum vitae. Advisers also support customers to learn where and how to search for suitable employment opportunities, and how to apply for courses or jobs.

- The significant majority of customers appreciate the information, advice and guidance they receive. They recognise the value that their new-found knowledge and skills have to enhance their employment prospects.
- A high proportion of customers achieve the organisational business targets. These outcomes are in line with, and at times exceeding, the targets set by managers within the organisation.
- Managers usefully evaluate the performance of different groups of customers; for example, by gender, for customers with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for ex-offenders. They have successfully reduced any significant variation in the outcomes and performance of these groups.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	1236930
Type of provider	National Careers Service
CEO	Laura Bell
Telephone number	0191 334 9955
Website	<a href="http://www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com">www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com</a>

At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<p>Abilities, Weymouth</p> <p>Ansbury, Poole</p> <p>City College, Brighton and Hove</p> <p>CfBT Advice and Guidance Ltd</p> <p>Community Systems Ltd, Southampton</p> <p>East Surrey College</p> <p>Friends Centre, Brighton</p> <p>Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Rehabilitation Company</p> <p>Learning Links, Portsmouth</p> <p>Portsmouth City Council</p> <p>Stone Maiden Ltd, Poole</p> <p>Weymouth College</p> <p>Wheatsheaf Trust, Southampton</p> <p>Whitehawk Inn, Brighton</p>
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## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the programme director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of customers and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed one-to-one adviser sessions, telephone interviews and group sessions. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Peter Nelson	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Gary Adkins	Ofsted Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Ofsted Inspector
Margaret Garai	Ofsted Inspector

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