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Mr Giovanni Iannantuoni
Director (Quality)
Consortia Training Limited
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Dear Mr Iannantuoni

Short inspection of Consortia Training Limited

Following the short inspection on 30 and 31 March 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in November 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, you and your fellow directors, supported by committed senior managers, have continued to focus on high-quality apprenticeships in hairdressing, which constitutes the very large majority of your provision. You provide good opportunities for young people across the East Midlands region, including in some of the most socially deprived areas, thereby raising aspirations and contributing to reducing unemployment.

You and your managers have made good progress in maintaining the high standards of apprenticeship provision found at the last inspection and have successfully tackled the most significant weaknesses. Robust performance management, together with accurate and honest self-assessment, have helped you to manage and support effectively underperforming staff and the few weak subcontractors. As a consequence, teaching, learning and assessment continue to be very effective in helping apprentices to progress and achieve.

Achievement rates are good for all groups of learners. The proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programme has improved since the last inspection and achievement rates have been high for the last three years. The proportion who complete within the planned period is also high. In-year data for 2016/17 indicates that the pattern of high achievement is likely to continue. Functional skills first-time pass rates in English and mathematics are good for the relatively small number of learners who are required to sit them.

Current learners are making good progress. Almost all are on target to achieve

within the planned dates. Learners' individual learning plans record and review progress towards their targets well. Learners have a good understanding of what they have achieved and what they still have to do to complete the framework. However, targets in individual learning plans focus very narrowly on progress towards achieving the apprenticeship framework. They do not focus sufficiently on the development of learners' wider personal and social skills, to enable them to be even more effective in all aspects of their work and studies.

Most of Consortia Training's (CT) provision is in hairdressing, alongside considerably smaller provision in business administration, early years, education and training, and motor vehicle engineering. Senior managers acknowledge that this offer is unusual and that much of it reflects the provision offered by the four companies that came together in 2011 to establish CT. Managers also acknowledge that the company does not have a clear long-term curriculum strategy to meet future labour market priorities. CT's directors have begun work on producing an effective strategy for the development and growth of its apprenticeship programme, but this work is still in its very early stages.

Safeguarding is effective.

Managers responsible for safeguarding are clear about their responsibilities and they have established effective practices for safeguarding learners. Trainers and assessors are confident in referring potential concerns to one of the company's designated safeguarding officers, though they have made no referrals since the previous inspection. Managers at each of CT's six centres have established contacts with relevant agencies to ensure that they have suitable points of referral for those learners who need further help.

Senior leaders and managers have taken effective action to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that learners are safe at their place of work and at the training centre they attend. Learners report that they feel safe and that trainers and assessors value and respect them.

Managers responsible for recruitment apply appropriate selection processes to ensure learners' safety. All new members of staff, including those working for subcontractors, have appropriate background checks where their roles warrant this.

Managers have implemented their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty well, with effective and regularly updated staff training. Trainers and assessors integrate themes promoting British values well during off-the-job learning sessions and reviews, where appropriate. Learners are able to articulate clearly their understanding of 'Prevent' and of British values. They can explain the risks of radicalisation and know how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of extremism.

Inspection findings

- You and your senior leaders have high expectations of the partners who deliver your apprenticeship programme. You have developed an effective framework for monitoring and assessing the quality of delivery across the range of subcontractor partners. Leaders take swift and effective improvement actions where they identify dips in performance.
- Your managers produce regular achievement reports to identify performance differences and trends between different groups and between centres. No significant differences exist between different groups of learners. Managers take swift and effective action to arrest any decline in the performance of individual subcontractors.
- Self-assessment is a rigorous and inclusive process. Each of the six consortium members produce detailed centre-level self-assessment reports that you and the other directors carefully scrutinise. You make good use of a range of evidence to support self-assessment judgements and you clearly identify the strengths and areas for improvement. The self-assessment report is an accurate and evaluative document that reflects the judgements made by inspectors.
- Managers have strengthened the observation of the teaching and learning processes so that it now includes observation of induction and progress reviews. Observation reports are generally of good quality and trainers benefit from the clear and well-monitored post-observation action plans that help them to improve and reflect on their practice.
- Progress monitoring for individual apprentices is thorough. Trainers make good use of the newly revised individual learning plans to record progress and achievement and to flag potential concerns. Apprentices have a very good understanding about the progress they have made and what else they need to do. They have regular reviews with their assessor and employer and they report that the feedback they receive helps them to improve and progress.
- Hairdressing apprentices benefit from good-quality enrichment activities that contribute to the development of their personal and social skills and to their future employability. Apprentices participate in industry competitions and specialist product training that enhance their vocational knowledge and skills. However, the range of enrichment activities available to hairdressing apprentices varies considerably between centres and is almost non-existent for apprentices following programmes in other subject areas. These learners do not receive sufficient opportunities to further enhance their vocational or personal and social skills.
- The management and delivery of functional skills have improved since the last inspection. Assessment of apprentices' starting points in English and mathematics is now considerably more accurate and helps trainers to understand apprentices' specific and individual barriers to learning.
- Hairdressing apprentices receive a good-quality contextually relevant functional skills workbook that they enjoy working through, as well as a range of online resources that help to further promote their functional skills. The company has

also appointed specialist functional skills tutors to provide discrete sessions for those that require them; early indications suggest that this is having a positive impact on learners' development of functional skills.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The company has a clear long-term curriculum strategy to meet labour market priorities and regional needs in each of the areas that it operates.
- Trainers promote apprentices' personal development so that they are even more effective in all aspects of their work and studies. Trainers should do this by:
 - providing opportunities for apprentices to participate in enriching and rewarding personal development activities, such as community activities, participation in skills competitions and charitable fund raising
 - setting targets in individual learning plans that focus on learners' personal growth and development in addition to targets that relate to achieving apprenticeship milestones.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jai Sharda
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors, assisted by your education manager as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of your most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used individual interviews, telephone calls and meetings with subcontractors to gather the views of learners and employers. They reviewed key documents, including those relating to safeguarding, and learners' achievements and progression.