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Mr Stephen Briganti  
Managing Director  
North East Employment & Training Agency Ltd  
Suite 1, SV Rutter Business Centre  
126 Great Lime Street  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE12 6RU

Dear Mr Briganti

### **Short inspection of North East Employment & Training Agency Ltd (NEETA)**

Following the short inspection on 12 and 13 September 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 June 2014.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

Since the last inspection in 2014, NEETA has carried out a major reorganisation of the management structure and the range of programmes offered. The current organisation is now leaner, enabling managers to monitor and review the quality of training more closely. The smaller management team and staff meet frequently to discuss progress towards achieving their targets.

Apprentices enjoy coming into the training centre in central Newcastle. They develop their skills well and receive good training, guidance and support from NEETA staff. The training centre has very good resources and reflects a high-quality commercial salon environment that enables apprentices to train in a commercial and professional atmosphere.

NEETA has effectively introduced the new standards apprenticeships, and all new apprentices join these programmes. Managers have also changed the awarding body that they use so they are able to incorporate the use of e-portfolios that is proving popular with both apprentices and staff. This enables apprentices and assessors to take a more proactive approach to capturing, storing and reviewing evidence. However, not all staff make full use of all the capabilities of the e-portfolio.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Managers at NEETA have ensured that safeguarding arrangements remain effective. They maintain comprehensive and up-to-date records of staff vetting checks, and a dedicated safeguarding officer oversees all processes related to ensuring apprentices' safety and well-being. Managers and staff possess a good awareness of any potential issues and act swiftly to address them.

Apprentices understand whom they need to talk to if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare in the workplace and elsewhere. They know how to report any concerns through using a confidential helpline provided by the safeguarding officer.

All staff are aware of their responsibilities and have undertaken a range of appropriate training to safeguard apprentices from potential threats posed by radicalisation and extremism. They regularly raise apprentices' awareness through frequent topical discussions around key issues. Consequently, apprentices have a very good understanding of the possible threats posed by all types of extremism.

Appropriately qualified staff carry out rigorous health and safety checks at all employers' premises. Training staff ensure that all apprentices adhere strictly to safe working practices, including working safely online.

The current 'Prevent' duty action plan requires further development so that it records the steps that the provider has taken to assess risks relating to its systems and activities, and describes the strategies used to mitigate the identified risk.

## **Inspection findings**

- NEETA has maintained high overall achievement rates for apprentices since the last inspection. Over the last three years, the rates have improved slightly each year, and data supplied by the provider indicates that they remained at a high level last year. Managers and staff have taken effective action to improve the proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes within the planned timescale. These rates have improved significantly over the three years since the last inspection. However, they declined last year; managers have evaluated the reasons for this decline and are taking effective action to return the rates to the previous high levels.
- Adult apprentices achieve particularly well; they represent over half of all apprentices.
- Since the last inspection, managers have implemented a range of actions to strengthen the quality assurance of training and assessment activities. Managers place a very strong emphasis on the quality of training delivery and apprentices' reviews and assessments. The improved quality assurance arrangements have now been fully established and are integrated into the work programme for all relevant staff.
- Managers use the quality assurance system effectively to monitor all key aspects

of delivery and assessment. The system ensures that relevant managers monitor and support assessors in their activities. Assessors now give prompt verbal feedback on apprentices' practical work, identifying what they have done well and how they can improve.

- The system for the observation of training is now more rigorous and includes several observations of each trainer annually. Managers ensure that staff respond to the resulting action/development plan and check this at the next observation. All staff undergo regular and relevant training and development to support them in their role. This includes improving their knowledge and understanding of issues such as safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.
- A senior manager samples all apprentices' progress reviews to ensure that assessors carry them out in time and that they include relevant targets for apprentices' next steps. In the majority of cases, apprentices have clear and time-bound targets to improve their practical hairdressing skills. However, targets for English and mathematics are less effective; they are too broad and general to be meaningful.
- Staff receive in-house training to develop their knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. They integrate relevant topics, and recognise when they arise naturally in their training sessions. As a result, they are now more confident to explore wider equality and diversity issues and integrate them into apprentices' assessments. For example, they assess well apprentices' work with clients who have a hearing impairment.
- Managers have developed marketing strategies to try to recruit under-represented groups, but this has had limited success so far. However, male recruitment is in line with the sector nationally.
- A comprehensive induction process ensures that apprentices follow appropriate programmes that build on their prior attainment and meet their individual needs. Assessment is rigorous; staff use information from assessment effectively to develop apprentices' vocational, English and mathematical skills.
- Advice and guidance for apprentices are effective. Most staff provide comprehensive information and guidance and regularly provide apprentices with informative and impartial careers guidance, both before and during their apprenticeship programmes. However, a very small number of staff do not consistently provide apprentices with impartial careers guidance to enable them to develop further their understanding of prospective career choices.
- Apprentices benefit from effective and ongoing support that starts at induction. Staff use a range of information to identify apprentices' learning and support requirements. Timely implementation of individualised support ensures that most apprentices, regardless of ability, make good progress and remain in sustained employment. All staff regularly review their apprentices' personal progress and development within the workplace and act promptly to resolve any issues.
  
- Managers and staff have integrated the promotion of British values to apprentices

and employers very effectively into their provision. Managers carried out a good evaluation of how and where they could incorporate British values into their hairdressing, barbering and beauty therapy training and have customised their input accordingly. Apprentices can articulate and explain aspects of these values clearly and describe how they can apply them in their work. They are able to link these values to their professional standards in areas such as data protection laws regarding confidentiality. However, managers have not yet fully developed and incorporated the promotion of British values into their self-assessment process to enable them to evaluate its impact and identify where it is working well and where it needs to improve.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers develop the 'Prevent' duty action plan further to include the identified potential risk areas and the strategies that NEETA will implement to reduce and mitigate these risks for their staff and apprentices
- senior leaders incorporate a review of British values and equality and diversity into the self-assessment, so that managers evaluate and identify where systems are working well and where aspects need further improvement
- staff ensure that the actions being taken to reverse the sudden decline in timely achievements last year are closely monitored to ensure a return to the previous high levels
- all staff make full use of all the capabilities of the e-portfolio so that all apprentices benefit from its full range of uses
- trainers and assessors ensure that targets for the development of English and mathematical skills are more specific so that apprentices are absolutely clear about what they need to do to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Gardner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

One HMI, assisted by two Ofsted Inspectors and the managing director as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors reviewed provider documentation, policies and procedures, observed teaching sessions and met with a range of staff and apprentices to discuss the agreed lines of enquiry.