

Inspection of Skills North East

Inspection dates: 22–24 October 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Adult learning programmes **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Skills North East is based in Northumberland and provides courses for adult learners. At the time of inspection, 78 adults were taking a range of level 3 courses in nail technology, nail services, beauty therapy and sports and fitness training. A further 13 adults were following a short level 2 course in health and care. Learners on level 3 programmes fund their courses through advanced learner loans. Skills North East delivers health care and sport and fitness courses in the north east, and nail technology, nail services and beauty therapy courses at salons in Lichfield and Doncaster.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners enjoy working with their very experienced, skilled and knowledgeable tutors, most of whom have their own salons or practices. They develop their professional skills and knowledge in the nail, beauty and sports and fitness industries very well. As a result, they achieve their qualifications and gain employment or set up their own businesses. Learners who take mental health courses learn about dealing with dementia and challenging behaviour. This improves their knowledge and skills in their roles as support workers.

Learners value the professional salon and gym environments in which they learn. They hone their practical skills in these environments by working on each other and on paying clients.

Learners successfully extend and use their skills. For example, learners on nail services courses strive for excellence when they enter industry competitions on themes such as Halloween and Superheroes.

Learners understand and appreciate the experiences of life and work that each of them brings to their classrooms and workshops. As a result, they accept and respect difference, support each other very effectively, and are respectful towards and supportive of their clients when carrying out treatments.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of local and regional employment trends. They use this knowledge to provide courses that enable adults to enhance their employment prospects. For example, learners who work in a gym as fitness trainers are able to offer sports massage to clients after achieving the necessary qualification. Leaders work well with local employers to provide courses in mental health and dementia to meet the training needs of employees. As a result, employers' ability to provide appropriate care for clients in the community has improved.

Tutors use their industry experience and subject expertise effectively when planning training. Most tutors sequence the content of courses well, so that learners master the basics before attempting more advanced techniques. Sessions provide opportunities for learners to recall learning and practise their skills to build their expertise. For example, beauty therapists learn about muscle groups and anatomy and gain the skills that they need to perform a Swedish massage confidently, before moving on to more advanced techniques such as hot stone massage. However, tutors do not sufficiently adapt the nail technology programme to meet the needs of the few learners who already have significant practical experience in nail techniques. As a result, a small number of learners spend the early part of the course repeating what they can already do.

Tutors support learners with additional needs very well. They provide extra sessions

and individual coaching for those who fall behind or need additional support due, for example, to mental health difficulties.

Tutors provide high-quality practical demonstrations for learners. They use quizzes and questions effectively to check and extend learners' underpinning knowledge. As a result, learners acquire good practical skills in, for example, 3D nail art techniques and acrylics. Learners demonstrate a thorough understanding of vital aspects of theory, such as functions of muscle groups and how to handle chemicals safely in the salon.

Tutors successfully encourage learners to acquire and use the technical vocabulary that they will need in their industry. Learners studying nail technology use terms such as onychomycosis and tinea pedis confidently. In sports fitness programmes, learners talk assuredly about percentages when performing fitness tests. In health and care, learners explore theoretical models of dementia and use key terminology such as dysphasia, dysarthria and visual agnosia appropriately.

Learners produce work of a high standard. Tutors assess learners' work promptly and provide constructive feedback and guidance on how to improve. This ensures that learners who do not meet the standard on their first attempt improve their work. As a result, the large majority of learners make good progress and successfully complete their courses.

Staff provide effective initial careers advice to learners. Subject tutors provide helpful information and advice on career development in their sector. For example, tutors advise learners about opportunities to set up their own business and to work in salons or spas. However, learners who are coming towards the end of their programmes do not benefit from wider, impartial careers guidance to enhance the advice offered by their tutors.

Learners value their courses, attend well and are punctual. Tutors promote professional standards and have high expectations of learners. Consequently, learners present themselves well, work to industry timings and develop behaviours that prepare them to work in the beauty and sports industries. Tutors ensure that learners underpin their working practices with values of mutual respect, rule of law and personal integrity. For example, learners in salons know how to ensure that their client records meet confidentiality requirements. They also show appropriate respect when carrying out massages on clients of a different gender.

Tutors act as good role models through their own behaviour and passion for fitness, and physical and mental well-being. For example, they stress the importance of health and hygiene in the workplace, so that learners understand fundamental issues such as the importance of therapists' posture to avoid injury and the need to clean massage benches thoroughly after use. As a result, learners taking courses in sport and fitness can support others in their pursuit of fitness and healthy living goals.

Leaders benefit from effective guidance and support from independent external

consultants. Consequently, they manage the education and training that they provide well. They use surveys well to gauge learners' levels of satisfaction with their studies. They evaluate the impact of learning on learners' lives and make appropriate changes to courses based upon what the surveys tell them. Leaders ensure that most learners attend regularly, achieve their qualifications and move on to positive destinations, including employment and self-employment.

Leaders consider the well-being of their staff and ensure that their workloads are reasonable and fair. As a result, staff feel well supported, and they develop their skills and knowledge to provide high-quality education for their learners.

Most resources and learning accommodation are of good quality. For a small number of learners, the lack of curtains for screening means that learners and their clients do not have the necessary privacy when carrying out sports massages.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff ensure that learners are safe. Learners and staff know who to contact and what to do in the event of any safeguarding or safety concerns. Learners feel safe. Staff work with learners to promote and reinforce a safe, inclusive and egalitarian learning environment.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Provide learners with access to impartial and high-quality careers advice towards the end of their programmes.
- Ensure that tutors take account of learners' prior theoretical knowledge and experience when planning and delivering courses, so all learners can build on this, rather than a small number repeating what they already know and can do.
- Ensure that all premises and resources are of a high standard and provide appropriate levels of privacy.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1237128
Address	Skills House Unit 6, Apex Business Village, Annitsford Cramlington NE23 7BF
Contact number	0191 250 4590
Website	www.skillsnortheast.org.uk
Principal/CEO	Michael Winship
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	1–3 November 2017
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality director as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

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