

Inspection of North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Inspection dates: 12–15 November 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust (NWAS) is an employer provider based in Bolton. It started to deliver apprenticeships in May 2017. At the time of the inspection, 251 apprentices were on standards-based apprenticeships: of these, 244 were following the associate ambulance practitioner (AAP) standard-based apprenticeship at level 4, and seven apprentices were following the emergency services contact handler (ESCH) standards-based apprenticeship at level 3.

Apprentices are based in ambulance stations across the north-west region and in the emergency contact centre in Manchester. Apprentices attend off-the-job training at centres in Preston, Bolton, Liverpool and Manchester.

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

Apprentices at NWAS want to come to work and make a difference. They say that 'when you put on the uniform, it changes you, and you feel a sense of pride'. Apprentices want to be the best they can be to provide the best possible care for their patients and service users.

Apprentices learn to expect the unexpected and to deal with it. They benefit from working alongside highly experienced paramedics who provide excellent mentoring and support. For example, paramedics and apprentices discuss traumatic incidents and their response immediately after they happen. As a result, apprentices rapidly develop their resilience and the knowledge and skills they need to become highly effective emergency medical technicians.

Apprentices benefit from effective off-the-job training at the start of the programme. This provides them with the solid foundations they need to deal with traumatic incidents such as heart attacks and road traffic accidents, as well as attending births and patients towards the end of life, both in the ambulance and the call centre.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe in the challenging emergency environments they work in. They carry out thorough risk assessments at emergency scenes to ensure that they are safe to perform their duties. Apprentices understand clearly how to address any safeguarding concerns about themselves and their patients.

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

Leaders have implemented an effective training programme that responds to the identified local and regional shortages of emergency medical technicians and paramedics. They place the apprenticeship provision at the heart of their workforce development strategy. Leaders view the apprenticeship curriculum as a key part in raising the clinical standards of ambulance technicians in the region. For example, over the last two years, they have recruited almost 400 AAP and ESCH apprentices to their workforce.

Tutors plan the order of off-the-job training in a logical way. This helps apprentices to link their theoretical knowledge to the practical skills they need in their work. For example, tutors plan important theoretical knowledge such as human anatomy and physiology early in the programme. This helps apprentices to respond effectively to specific conditions such as heart attacks and strokes when on a call. ESCH apprentices use industry-standard computer simulation to practise their skills in answering emergency calls. This helps them to know exactly how to respond professionally and compassionately to emergency calls when working alongside experienced staff.

AAP apprentices receive good support from practice-based educators (PBEs) and paramedic mentors. Mentors accurately assess the knowledge, skills and behaviours

that AAP apprentices develop. They provide helpful feedback on how well apprentices work with patients and how they could improve the quality of their care. Mentors give apprentices an excellent insight into working in the ambulance and response services. For example, apprentices benefit from extra workshops delivered by senior paramedics covering the safe removal of a motorbike helmet following an accident.

A high proportion of apprentices complete their qualifications. They achieve high grades in their apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPAs). Consequently, almost all apprentices gain jobs in the work they love. However, managers recognise that they need to communicate the support available for apprentices early in the programme to allay apprentices' concerns about their EPA.

Apprentices use very effectively the knowledge and skills they gain to support patients receiving emergency medical care. For example, they know how ambulance patients are triaged for treatment to complete rapid assessment and treatment plans for their patients on arrival at hospital. Apprentices use their communication skills to help and reassure patients about what will happen to them when they arrive at the hospital and when liaising with paramedics and hospital staff.

Apprentices benefit from high-quality careers advice and guidance. They are very well informed about how they can develop their careers and how they can progress to becoming a paramedic. For example, apprentices are able to enter the paramedic degree apprenticeship programme at year 2, on completion of their apprenticeship and gaining experience in practice.

Apprentices are highly motivated. Their consistently positive approach to learning and work means they develop a wealth of new behaviours and attitudes vital to the healthcare environment. They develop a deep understanding of the importance of compassion, respect and dignity when supporting their patients. Apprentices do this particularly well when working with elderly patients and patients with mental health difficulties.

Managers have not resolved staffing issues in the Greater Manchester area quickly enough. Apprentices have not benefited from having frequent enough support from PBEs to help complete written work. The actions taken have not resulted in a suitable solution. Apprentices in this region have not been able to collect evidence quickly enough to demonstrate that they have gained the knowledge and applied the skills from initial off-the-job training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority. Leaders and staff are extremely vigilant about the safety and well-being of their apprentices. Apprentices keep themselves safe in their job role. They carry out thorough risk assessments when attending incidents to identify and minimise potential risks to their or patients' well-being and safety.

Apprentices can apply knowledge of radicalisation and extremism to the workplace effectively. They are aware of signs to pick up on in patients' home environments that may cause concern, such as leaflets and photographs related to extremism.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers need to resolve the staffing issues in the Greater Manchester area as a high priority to ensure AAP apprentices receive the support they need from PBEs to collect evidence and complete their written work to demonstrate the knowledge and skills gained from the initial off-the-job training.
- Managers need to ensure that apprentices are aware of the support available to prepare for the EPA early in their programme.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276402
Address	NWAS NHS Trust Headquarters, 399 Chorley New Road Bolton BL1 5DD
Contact number	
Website	www.nwas.nhs.uk
CEO	Daren Mochrie
Provider type	Employer
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of education, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the monitoring visit 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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