

Nottinghamshire Training Group

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	54810
Name of lead inspector:	Emma Woods, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Interim visit

Context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the provider.

Information about the provider

Nottinghamshire Training Group Limited (NTG) was founded in 1987 as The Bassetlaw Training Agency. In 2018, it acquired a training company that specialises in hairdressing and beauty therapy and rebranded as NTG. It operates from two sites in Worksop and Retford.

NTG has 37 students on study programmes. Vocational qualifications are in hairdressing, beauty therapy, childcare, teaching support and business administration. NTG has recently started delivering apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing, business administration and customer service. There are currently 14 apprentices, 12 of whom are aged 16 to 18.

What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?

Prior to the first COVID-19 restrictions, leaders and managers recognised the need to shift to remote teaching. Leaders, working with teachers, devised an action plan to move learning online. They adapted curriculum plans to focus on theory topics and delivered training to teachers. Leaders said learning was not disrupted as they put the plans in place quickly.

Once the initial restrictions were lifted, managers and teachers planned the return to face-to-face classes based on individual student and apprentices' needs. For example, hairdressing and vulnerable students returned to class first for practical sessions. An introduction to childcare course that started during the restrictions was

extended. These students needed more in-class time to become more confident with certain topics.

Leaders put plans in place to allow all students and apprentices to return to campus in September. They increased the number of places available for study programme courses. The demand from employers for apprentices had declined and students were looking for alternatives.

Leaders and managers highlight that the recent national COVID-19 restrictions impact heavily on hairdressing apprentices who are furloughed again. They say that external arrangements for them to complete their interim and final assessments are not confirmed. As a result, they are considering pausing their courses so that they can catch up more effectively when they return to work and assessments can be planned.

Employers are complimentary about communications from managers and teachers. When apprentices are furloughed, they receive bi-weekly updates on their progress. This makes it easy for employers to keep up to date when apprentices are not in work.

Leaders and managers changed how they review the quality of teaching and learning. They record online sessions and give staff feedback on these. Weekly staff meetings focus on staff development and well-being. Staff value these meetings where they catch up with each other and share practice.

What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?

Teachers quickly received training from managers on video conferencing and practised how to teach online with each other. Once more confident, teachers supported students and apprentices to use the online platforms. Teachers said that a few students lacked confidence learning online. They switched to a paper-based approach to mitigate this. Leaders provided students and apprentices with resources to practise their practical skills at home. For example, hairdressing students were provided with professional training heads to work on.

Teachers say that students and apprentices engaged well with learning online. Since face-to-face classes have resumed, attendance has improved and students have been motivated to complete their courses. A small number of students did not return to their courses after securing full-time employment.

Teachers continue to adapt approaches to assessment due to COVID-19. For example, reviews of early years students are virtual professional discussions and employer evidence rather than observations. Apprentices' managers in care settings undertake observations in agreement with awarding organisations.

Teachers identify any gaps in practical skills that students or apprentices may develop as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. They work with employers and other partners to address them. For example, childcare students require work experience but cannot go into settings. Teachers provide virtual support to parents who are home-schooling children. Apprentices temporarily move to telesales roles so that they speak to customers on the telephone.

Leaders prioritise providing careers advice and guidance. A few apprentices have lost their job due to COVID-19, but they are supported to find a new one. For example, some apprentices now work in care instead of hairdressing as there are more opportunities. Leaders and managers plan for all teachers to complete a qualification in advice and guidance to continue to improve support for students and apprentices.

How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

Leaders and managers recognised they needed to prioritise the promotion of online safety as classes became virtual. They give guidance on how to work and study safely to staff, students and apprentices. This includes what to wear and the position of the camera for video calls.

The 'Think' slogan is promoted to students. This reminds them to 'think' and to ask is what they see online true, helpful, inspiring, necessary or kind? Most students and apprentices can recall this and say they feel safe learning online.

Teachers prioritise promoting well-being. Mental health awareness and the importance of exercise is a current priority due to national COVID-19 restrictions. Teachers provide information to students and apprentices about support services if they are self-isolating.

Students and apprentices are confident they know who to speak to if they have any concerns. They feel comfortable to talk to their teacher or managers and value the support they receive.

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