

Inspection of North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

Inspection dates:

29 to 31 March 2022

Overall effectiveness**Good**

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 East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (NEAS) began to provide apprenticeships funded through the apprenticeship levy in November 2018 to support its workforce development strategy. It is based in a purpose-built centre in Gateshead. At the time of the inspection, there were 151 apprentices studying the level 3 ambulance support worker standard. NEAS works with one main subcontractor, Derwentside College, that provides courses leading to functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics for apprentices who have not yet gained level 2 qualifications in these subjects.

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

Apprentices benefit from working and learning in a calm and orderly environment in which staff promote, model and reinforce professional behaviour and conduct. This enables apprentices to develop and enhance their professional behaviours and standards. Apprentices understand very well the high standards set by the organisation, and they apply these consistently and effectively in their job roles. For example, they use their newly learned conflict management skills effectively to diffuse volatile situations during medical emergencies.

Apprentices understand the importance of being punctual and having excellent time-management skills, especially when working in emergency situations. They apply themselves well to their studies, show unwavering commitment and enthusiasm, and most have high attendance. A high proportion of apprentices achieve high grades in their end-point assessments.

Apprentices benefit from the strong focus that NEAS places on emotional and physical well-being. They feel safe at work and know who to contact if they have concerns, including concerns for patients and colleagues. Apprentices undertake a range of safeguarding training and demonstrate an informed understanding of safeguarding procedures. They are able to make referrals and alert the safeguarding team when issues arise in patients' homes to ensure that the correct services can provide support.

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

Leaders and managers have invested heavily in a bespoke training facility that has spacious classrooms and well-equipped simulation suites. They show a strong commitment to developing their own staff through the provision of high-quality apprenticeship programmes. The ambulance support worker apprenticeship provides training that equips staff well to progress to higher-level roles in the organisation, such as paramedic and patient transport drivers.

The curriculum selected by leaders and managers develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need, in order to carry out their operational roles as ambulance support workers. Apprentices learn new skills and knowledge in dealing with airway management and they develop the skills that they need to deal with medical trauma. They quickly become established members of the workforce and carry out their work with a high level of competence and confidence.

Leaders and managers have planned and sequenced the curriculum well to enable apprentices to learn new essential knowledge, skills and behaviours rapidly. Staff build on apprentices' skills and knowledge through intensive initial theoretical input and simulations, followed by opportunities to shadow experienced colleagues in a supernumerary role before taking up the role of ambulance support worker.

Apprentices are well prepared for their roles through practising in a range of scenarios that familiarise them with tasks that they may encounter in their job roles.

Leaders and managers have recruited educators who are well-qualified operational front-line ambulance staff with substantial experience as paramedics or patient transport drivers. Educators maintain their practice and pedagogical skills by completing a range of training and qualifications, such as the postgraduate certificate in education and courses covering conflict management. Apprentices benefit from educators' extensive real-life experience, including attending major incidents such as the Manchester Arena bombing.

Educators successfully use repetition and frequent recall to embed key concepts and help apprentices transfer knowledge and skills to their long-term memory. As a result, apprentices progressively develop their theoretical knowledge with useful reference to previous learning. They identify accurately which kit to use for different purposes, such as measuring blood pressure. Educators help apprentices to reinforce previous learning and gain competence in the rapid procedures that they need to follow at major incidents.

The useful feedback that educators provide in training sessions helps to develop apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours. Educators are aware of apprentices' individual needs and ensure that those with no previous clinical experience are given more time to gain a full understanding of physiological and biological functions. However, the feedback that educators provide on apprentices' written work is, in a few instances, not specific enough to enable apprentices to know what they need to do to improve.

Educators use simulated assessment sessions well to provide opportunities for apprentices to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Apprentices complete detailed and accurate evaluative commentaries of their actions as they attend simulated casualties. They can describe how they assess the scene safety, how to carry out examinations for injuries, and how to survey airways, breathing, and circulation. Educators use questioning well to assess apprentices' understanding of key processes and procedures, such as how to undertake a manual blood pressure reading on a patient. They use informative and detailed explanations to fill gaps in apprentices' knowledge.

In a few instances, educators do not identify key knowledge and skills that individual apprentices need to improve further, in particular the development of English and mathematical skills. This means that the progress of a few apprentices is not as rapid as it could be. A few apprentices continue to make the same spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in their written work.

Apprentices participate actively in a wide range of initiatives, including professional development activities, that go beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. They complete 'terrorist attack' training with the specialist response team, provide support in local schools so that pupils can gain an understanding of the role of the service, and are currently participating in a national BBC documentary highlighting

the work that ambulance staff undertake and the challenges that they face. These initiatives encourage active citizenship in apprentices, who begin to see themselves as valuable public servants with a strong sense of duty. Apprentices are proud that they save lives and provide care and support for sick and injured people.

A wide range of highly effective activities are provided by educators to help apprentices develop increased levels of self-confidence and resilience. These include well-planned sessions that encourage apprentices to push themselves further to perform tasks quickly and efficiently in readiness for working in emergency situations, such as at the scene of a road traffic accident. This helps apprentices to experience and prepare for the time pressure of operational work and to remain mentally ready for new challenges.

Educators provide apprentices with well-targeted careers information about further training opportunities and the options for progression and promotion, including working in other emergency service organisations. Staff take great care to ensure that they prepare apprentices well for future success in learning and at work.

Board members and senior leaders are suitably skilled and experienced to carry out their roles. They hold leaders and managers to account, and they are accountable to scrutiny by the council of governors. Board members have good oversight of the apprenticeship provision, including elements provided by the subcontractor. They are regularly informed of issues, both positive and negative through frequent meetings and reports.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a highly effective culture of safeguarding within NEAS. Leaders ensure that comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and that they meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. The named lead professional (NLP) with responsibility for safeguarding adults has an appropriate qualification and substantial experience in the role. The NLP works with a range of agencies, including Northumbria and Cleveland police services, fire services, the special branch national referrals team and several local authorities, to report and monitor safeguarding issues.

All apprentices receive level 3 safeguarding training to enable them to carry out their roles safely and effectively. Leaders have put in place a designated staff member to assure the safeguarding and well-being of apprentices. Apprentices can access a range of frequently updated training on safeguarding issues. All NEAS staff are required to update their statutory and mandatory training within the specified timescales.

Leaders and managers have appropriate safe recruitment policies and procedures in place. They collect references, and disclosure and barring checks are carried out prior to new employees taking up employment.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that feedback provided to apprentices is consistently specific, so that apprentices are aware of how to improve their work.
- Ensure that all apprentices successfully develop their English and mathematics skills and that they are made aware of any errors in their written work so that they can make improvements.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278640
Address	NEAS Dukesway Court Team Valley Gateshead NE11 0PJ
Contact number	07930 831223
Website	https://www.neas.nhs.uk
Principal/CEO	Helen Ray
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Derwentside College

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of workforce development 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 visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff, and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Joanne Stork, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Toni Rhodes	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Grant	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Clark	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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