

INSPECTION REPORT

North East Employment and Training Agency Limited

14 June 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. North East Employment and Training Agency Limited (NEETA) is a small private training company in Gateshead. It contracts with Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning in hairdressing. It also has a residual contract with Jobcentre Plus to provide New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults. Since the company was last inspected, in September 2003, there have been some changes to staffing and training. NEETA now has four directors. These are the chair of the board, the managing director, the company secretary and a non-executive director. It has a senior management team comprising the managing director, who manages NEETA and reports to the chair of the board, the training manager, who is responsible for training and health and safety, and the quality assurance manager, who is responsible for quality assurance and equal opportunities. The company has 25 staff and 203 learners. Of the learners, 124 are young people working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) or modern apprenticeships in hairdressing, over 95 per cent of whom are employed. A further 29 learners are young people on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes with another training provider. Fifty learners are on Jobcentre Plus residual contracts for preparation for life and work. These programmes were not inspected. Learners attend NEETA's main training centre in Gateshead or its other training centres in Washington and Newcastle.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** NEETA's provision in hairdressing, its leadership and management, and its arrangements for quality improvement are good. Its arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process follows detailed procedures and is most effective. All staff are actively involved and their views are obtained by a wide range of methods including staff consultation and team meetings. The views of learners, employers and other key partners are obtained using questionnaires. These are carefully analysed to identify areas of concern. Managers use a wide range of other useful performance indicators, including a 'mystery shopper' to judge the standard of NEETA's response to enquiries about its provision. They keep staff well informed of the areas for improvement. There is a critical self-evaluation of NEETA's provision and the experience and achievement of all learners. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in self-assessment report, but some of the areas identified as strengths are no more than normal practice and accepted norms.

4. The detailed development and action plan thoroughly considers all the areas for improvement. Senior managers monitor the plan most effectively every three months, and staff are kept well informed of progress in written reports which are discussed fully at regular team meetings.

5. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. Learners' success rates in hairdressing have remained good for a number of years. NEETA has good quality-improvement practices and procedures that lead to effective and timely action to resolve weaknesses. Where appropriate, NEETA communicates these actions well to its staff. The managing director regularly and carefully monitors progress on all of the actions implemented.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR NORTH EAST EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING AGENCY LIMITED:

- maintain and continue to improve the good success rates
- maintain and continue to improve the good support for learners with additional learning needs
- improve the planning of training
- develop the learner review process and monitoring of learners' progress
- improve learners' ownership of training
- extend and develop the teaching and learning observation system
- raise learners' awareness of equality of opportunity

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Retail and commercial enterprise			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Hairdressing</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	124	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Hairdressing is NEETA's only area of learning with significant numbers of learners, and it was inspected in depth. Preparation for life and work was not reported on or graded separately but evidence on the programme was used to support judgements in the key findings section of the report. All inspection activity took place during one week.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	9
Number of learners interviewed	47
Number of staff interviewed	20
Number of employers interviewed	8
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	16
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	4
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Overall success rates on modern apprenticeship programmes in hairdressing are particularly good** and well above national averages. Learners' key skill achievements are also good.

8. On advanced apprenticeship programmes, the timely success rates were particularly good in 2003-04 but declined in 2004-05. Retention rates are good and improving across all programmes. Currently, most learners are progressing well towards completing their framework. Most achieve ahead of their target completion dates. **Apprentices' timely achievement rates are significantly above national averages for 2003-04 and 2004-05.** Learners with additional learning needs have good achievement rates. Apprentices' progression to advanced apprenticeship programmes is good.

9. **Learners' assignments meet, and in some instances exceed, the awarding body's criteria.** Level 3 assignments show that hairdressing learners have a clear technical understanding of services such as cutting and colouring. Learners give good personalised accounts of the commercial products and practice that would influence the finished results.

10. Learners' level 2 assignments are satisfactory and show an appropriate understanding of the topics. Very few assignments are word processed and few learners use the internet as research tool for assignments. Overall, learners' work is well presented with very few technical errors.

11. Apprentices' have satisfactory occupational skills. They communicate well, obtaining clients' personal preferences before they begin, and then working confidently and professionally throughout the service. They have a good understanding of commercial

products and their effects.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Retail and commercial enterprise	0	2	3	1	6
Total	0	2	3	1	6

12. **NEETA offers particularly effective flexible training programmes that meet learners' and employers' specific needs.** Learners are encouraged to negotiate off-the-job training to suit their personal learning needs. Off-the-job training sessions can be weekly or fortnightly, or learners can receive all their training on the job. A reduced level of off-the-job training is particularly effective for learners employed in consistently good training salons, who prefer individual coaching. NEETA effectively risk-assesses salons to determine their capacity to support learners and their training needs.

13. **Learners with additional learning needs receive good support.** Staff use initial assessment and diagnostic testing effectively to guide learners onto appropriate programmes. Specialist literacy and numeracy tutors work effectively with learners, either in the training centres or at their salons, developing their skills and setting weekly training and achievement targets.

14. Of the 76 learners in 2004-05, 41 per cent had additional learning needs and 22 per cent had significant learning needs. Seventy-four per cent of the learners who left during 2004-05 had been retained for the duration of their programmes, and 50 per cent achieved a full framework.

15. Employers and learners value the flexibility of NEETA's tutors, and the availability of additional literacy and numeracy support as part of the on-the-job training.

16. **NEETA has good strategies to support learners' achievement.** Learners who complete parts of the NVQ to NEETA's standards are awarded a bronze, silver or gold award, and receive a voucher for equipment. Their employer receives a cash bonus. Lists of successful learners are displayed in the training centre. The annual awards ceremony is well publicised and raises learners' aspirations.

17. Teaching sessions are satisfactory overall. The better sessions are planned well to include a number of activities that hold learners' interest. In the poorer learning sessions little learning takes place. Tutors fail to challenge learners, and do not include them all in useful activities. Staff do not give enough attention to differentiated learning when planning lessons.

18. Advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners are given clear advice on the programmes, and on the funding available to individual learners. All learners who complete the apprenticeship programme are given comprehensive information and advice on the advanced apprenticeship.

19. **Insufficient attention is paid to the planning of training.** There is no medium- or long-term planning of on- or off-the-job teaching and learning. Training is devised weekly

with learners and employers. They are unable to prepare adequately for learning sessions or to plan salon training to complement NEETA's training. Learners and tutors do not keep a record of the training completed.

20. **The process for learners' progress reviews is poor.** The review is used to plan assessments, and little consideration is given to the learning experience or learners' wider development. Employers are seldom involved in the discussions. Staff do not use reviews to reinforce equal opportunities or health and safety. When targets are set, there is insufficient detail on how they will be achieved. The review documents only contain cursory comments on learners' background knowledge and their practical assessments.

Leadership and management

21. NEETA has **very good, clear strategic direction** to meet the needs of its learners and their employers. The clear policies and business plans are well focused to ensure these needs are met. There is also much emphasis placed on the national skills for life agenda, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Staff are actively involved in the strategic and business planning process.

22. **Good, productive links are in place with local employers, colleges of further education, the Prison Service, local emergency services, various community groups, and specialist support agencies.** NEETA is founder member of a work-based learning consortium in the region. Through these links it is well informed about the current and future training and support needs of its learners, and about local employment opportunities.

23. **NEETA's operational management is good,** and senior managers have an open and supportive style with their staff and learners. Staff understand their individual targets and how these relate to NEETA's main business targets. Staff's performance is carefully monitored by the managing director to make sure individual targets are being met. Learners' performance is linked to the staff review process, which identifies any learners making slow progress. Employers have a clear understanding of their learners' targets.

24. **Staff receive good training in equal opportunities.** They regularly attend good external events and useful in-house courses. Good equality of opportunity training is provided as part of the effective staff induction process. A good collection of equal of opportunity resources are available for staff use.

25. **The standard of resources is good.** Staff are well qualified and experienced for their job role. Trainers demonstrate good vocational skills. The training facilities are of a good commercial standard and are equipped with sufficient good learning materials and teaching aids.

26. **Communications are good.** Staff are kept fully informed of NEETA's strategic objectives, procedures, standards and proposed changes through a wide range of communications methods. They have good opportunities to discuss issues and to share ideas.

27. NEETA has a strong commitment to widening participation which it achieves by offering training to a diverse range of learners. Staff provide good learning and pastoral support for all learners.

28. Good use is made of feedback from learners, employers and other key partners to help judge the standard of training and learner support. Managers use consultative working groups well to supplement the feedback process and help to identify the provision's strengths and areas for improvement. These groups provide useful candid comments including suggestions to improve areas of concern.

29. **NEETA's good quality-improvement policies and procedures** form an essential part of its strategic and business planning requirements. Thorough internal audits ensure NEETA is improving its good standard of training.

30. NEETA's internal verification processes and procedures are appropriate and comply with awarding body standards. Internal verification records are detailed and well maintained. Senior managers monitor the records effectively to ensure they are consistent and meet the required standard.

31. **Learners have little awareness of equality of opportunity** and demonstrate a poor understanding of the issues involved. There is little reinforcement of the subject during the training programme. Equality of opportunity is not discussed or adequately monitored at learners' progress reviews. Employers also have a poor knowledge of equal opportunities. Too few employers display equality of opportunity policies at their premises, and few discuss the subject with NEETA's staff.

32. **NEETA's system and procedures for observing training are insufficiently detailed** and do not clearly identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning, and learners' attainment, especially in hairdressing. Too little evidence is provided in the observation documents to support the comments and grades awarded by observers. The feedback given to trainers is inadequate to identify further areas for improvement and training requirements.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good, purposeful strategic direction
- particularly effective links with other organisations
- good operational management
- good staff development in equality of opportunity
- good quality-improvement procedures

Weaknesses

- little awareness of equality of opportunity by learners
- insufficiently developed teaching and learning observation system

Retail and commercial enterprise

Hairdressing

Strengths

- good success rates
- flexible learning to meet learners' and employers' needs
- good support for learners with additional learning needs
- good strategies to support achievement

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning of training
- poor learner review process

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT NORTH EAST EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING AGENCY LIMITED:

- the tutors set parameters 'but treat you like adults'
- the good mix of 'practical and theory'
- being visited regularly at the salons
- gaining 'a better understanding of the science of hairdressing'
- the bronze and silver awards for learner achievements
- the good individual support
- the supportive and friendly tutors
- 'they make mathematics interesting'
- 'we are treated with respect'
- 'I enjoy the social side'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK NORTH EAST EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING AGENCY LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of practical sessions
- the attendance of learners at hairdressing competitions and shows
- the number of assessments in the salon
- the number of hairdressing products at the training centre
- the amount of time individual learners spend with the tutors
- the amount of training for level 3 learners at the training centre
- the standard of the Washington training centre - it is 'a bit drab and uninteresting'
- the availability of tea and coffee for clients

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good, purposeful strategic direction
- particularly effective links with other organisations
- good operational management
- good staff development in equality of opportunity
- good quality-improvement procedures

Weaknesses

- little awareness of equality of opportunity by learners
- insufficiently developed teaching and learning observation system

33. NEETA's senior managers and directors set a very good, clear strategic direction to meet learners', and their employers' needs. NEETA's clear policies and business planning are well focused to ensure these needs are met. Much emphasis is also placed on the national skills for life agenda. All staff are actively involved in the organisation's strategic and business planning, and all have a copy of the three-year strategic development plan and use it at team meetings.

34. NEETA has good, productive links with local employers, colleges of further education, the Prison Service, local emergency services, various community groups, and specialist support agencies, and is a leading member of a work-based learning consortium in the region. Through these links, NEETA is well informed about the current and future training and support needs of its learners, and about employment opportunities.

35. NEETA's management of training was a strength when it was inspected in December 2003 and continues to be good. Senior managers adopt an open and supportive style that helps staff and learners to resolve problems collectively and quickly. All staff are well aware of their individual targets and how these relate to NEETA's overall business targets. The targets, which are challenging and realistic, cover the essential areas of the business including recruitment, employment, and learners' retention and achievement rates. Staff have good access to data to allow them to check their performance against their targets. Each month, the staff's performance is carefully monitored by the managing director to ensure their individual targets are being met. Learners' performance and development is also tied to this staff review process to identify any learners making slow progress. Employers have a clear understanding of their learners' targets.

36. NEETA has good processes and procedures for learner support. Staff accurately identify learners' additional support needs thorough initial and diagnostic assessment. Very effective support is provided by specialist staff and by specialist support agencies including one for learners with dyslexia. In the past two and a half years, NEETA has improved its procedure for checking new learners' hearing and eyesight, and three tutors are being trained to provide support to learners with dyslexia. The recording of literacy

and numeracy support sessions has also been improved, and records now show what has been done and how learners are progressing. This information is shared with other trainers to help them successfully support and train learners with additional learning needs.

37. The standard of resources, including staff and training facilities, is good. Staff are well qualified and experienced for their job role. NEETA's trainers demonstrate good vocational skills. The training facilities are of a good commercial standard and are equipped with sufficient good learning materials and teaching aids. NEETA provides suitable access to most accommodation for learners with mobility impairment.

38. All staff have effective annual appraisals and regular progress reviews throughout the year to measure their progress against personal and business targets, and identify any further training or development needs. Staff development is particularly effective. It is given a high priority and forms an essential part of the organisation's strategic planning. It is focused on improving the learners' experience and the staff's ability to meet their learning and personal support needs. Induction for new staff is effective.

39. Internal and external communications are both good. Staff are kept fully informed of NEETA's strategic objectives, procedures, standards and proposed changes. Managers use a wide range of communications methods to inform staff, including regular staff meetings, extraordinary meetings, internal training and consultation meetings, memoranda and informal meetings. Staff have good opportunities to discuss issues and to share ideas. In the records of meetings, lucid action points and staff responsibilities are appropriately identified. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and how these relate to NEETA's strategic and business needs. NEETA ensures it is effective in its dealings with external organisations.

40. NEETA provides value for money. It manages and deploys its staff, accommodation, and support arrangements efficiently to meet learners' needs. Appropriate financial management procedures are in place to support the business.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

41. Staff receive good equal opportunities training. They often attend good external courses, and most staff attend a useful in-house course in September 2005, organised through Equality North East. Good equality of opportunity training is an essential part of NEETA's staff induction. A good collection of equal of opportunity resources is available for staff use, although there is no evidence to show that these resources have been used with learners.

42. NEETA has good equal opportunities policies both for staff and learners. The policies are discussed during the induction process, and all learners receive a comprehensive handbook which clearly defines them. Learners' induction packs contain a training agreement which defines their rights and responsibilities. Learners' also receive a useful booklet on equality and diversity as part of the induction paperwork.

43. NEETA has a strong commitment to widening participation and has been involved in a number of local equal opportunities projects. It provides good learning and pastoral support for all its learners. Learners are very appreciative of the opportunity to discuss their concerns with their named tutor. There are good learner to tutor ratios and useful

additional support staff to cover specialist areas. Left-handed learners are offered individual training in hairdressing techniques by left-handed staff, and a member of staff has been trained in British Sign Language in order to aid learners with hearing impairment.

44. NEETA has gained an award for its flexible working arrangements for staff. The company has an effective policy to enable best working practices which includes phased working hours. This has allowed members of staff to meet their childcare commitments, work from home during an extended period of convalescence, and reduce their working time to gain extra qualifications and experience.

45. Some groups of learners are underrepresented. Currently there are only two male learners and one learner from a minority ethnic group. NEETA has identified this problem and taken a number of actions to encourage men to enrol on programmes. Recognising the importance of successful local male hairdressers to this campaign, NEETA has established a group of ambassadors who can carry out informative practical demonstrations, attend award presentations and support male learners who are new or are considering entering the industry. Currently, six ambassadors are available in the area. NEETA has recently been awarded finance from the local LSC to sponsor male learners. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnicity groups is very small, so NEETA has concentrated its efforts on recruiting more men into hairdressing rather than more members of minority ethnic groups.

46. Learners have little awareness of equality of opportunity. Those interviewed by inspectors demonstrated poor understanding of the issues involved. Although equality of opportunity is discussed at induction, it is rarely reinforced during the training programme. It is not discussed or adequately monitored at learners' progress reviews, and employers have little knowledge of the subject. Few employers display their equality of opportunity policies, and few discuss the topic with NEETA. Managers are aware of this weakness, and discussions are currently taking place to resolve it.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

47. Managers make good use of feedback from learners, employers and other key partners in judging the standard of training and learner support. They use consultative working groups to aid the feedback process, and these provide useful suggestions on ways to improve areas of concern. Analysis of the feedback is good and detailed. One improvement has led to tutors being set more demanding targets to improve learners' timely success rates. Others include more frequent assessments to ensure better learner progression, the use of a designated tutor to support and monitor individual learners, learners completing a technical certificate to aid their progress onto advanced apprenticeships, and the production of an employers' guide to work-based training.

48. NEETA has useful, detailed quality improvement policies and procedures that form an essential part of its strategic and business planning requirements. Good-quality internal audits ensure that the company is meeting its contractual requirements and providing a good standard of training. A useful quality calendar clearly and effectively identifies when processes and procedures should be carried out and which member of staff is responsible for them. As the previous inspection report noted, NEETA checks the standard of employers' salons before accepting their staff as learners. This is to ensure that learners will be able to adequately practise the vocational skills they need for their qualifications. Benchmarking arrangements are in place for teaching and learning, and retention and

achievement rates, and NEETA generally compares well to other providers. Teaching and learning have been improved by making attendance more flexible, identifying individual learning styles including self-learning, offering a more diverse range of learning materials and aids, and training staff to differentiate learning to suit the learners' identified needs.

49. NEETA's collection and use of data was a key weakness at the previous inspection. This has improved with the installation of a computerised management information system and is now satisfactory. Managers now make sufficient use of data to plan and manage training. The system is helping to identify trends in learners' performance at different stages in their training. However, NEETA has identified that it needs more detailed analysis of learners' performance to aid the management of training. Currently, staff are still using a time-consuming paper-based system to complement the computerised system.

50. NEETA's internal verification processes and procedures are appropriate and comply with awarding body standards. Internal verification records are detailed and well maintained. Senior managers monitor the records effectively to ensure they are consistent and meet the required standard. Staff plan and monitor assessment arrangements, observing assessments as well as carefully examining learners' work and their portfolios. Assessors are provided with useful feedback by internal verifiers, and managers carefully check that the necessary improvements have been carried out successfully. External verifiers report that NEETA's internal verification procedures and practice are most effective.

51. NEETA's procedures for observing training are insufficiently detailed and do not clearly identify strengths and weaknesses for various aspects of training, especially in hairdressing. There is too little evidence in the observation documents to support the comments and grades awarded by observers. The standard of feedback to trainers is inadequate to identify further areas for improvement or training requirements.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hairdressing</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	124	2

52. There are 124 learners on hairdressing programmes, comprising 38 advanced apprentices, 85 apprentices, and one learner following an NVQ at level 3. Seven learners are following a recently introduced beauty therapy apprenticeship. NEETA provides E2E training for 29 learners as a subcontractor for Rathbone Training. Twelve of these learners are following hairdressing programmes. NEETA also has contracts with local schools to provide life skills training for 69 key stage 4 pupils. Apprentices are recruited mainly through careers conventions, Connexions, and employer referral, or they progress from E2E and the school programmes. All learners complete an initial six-week period of training as a taster before they start the programme. Advanced apprentices' training lasts for 18 months. All advanced apprentices have completed the 18-month apprenticeship programme before recruitment. Most apprentices are employed in salons in Sunderland, Newcastle upon Tyne and surrounding areas. All learners' literacy or numeracy support needs are identified through initial and diagnostic assessment at the start of the programme. Sixty per cent of learners attend the training centres in Washington or Newcastle for off-the-job training in background knowledge, key skills and practical work, either weekly or fortnightly. The remaining 40 per cent complete all their training on-the-job. Assessment occurs off- and on-the-job, either on request or during tutors' fortnightly or monthly visits to salons. Quarterly progress reviews are carried out in the salon, and employers check and sign all the agreed actions. Each training centre has two tutors and an external liaison officer. A hairdressing support tutor and two literacy and numeracy tutors divide their time between the two training centres.

Hairdressing

Strengths

- good success rates
- flexible learning to meet learners' and employers' needs
- good support for learners with additional learning needs
- good strategies to support achievement

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning of training
- poor learner review process

Achievement and standards

53. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are particularly good and significantly

above national averages. Key skills achievements are also good. The provider has exceeded the target success rate set as part of its quality improvement strategy. In 2005-06 to date, the success rate is 54 per cent for advanced apprentices and 48 per cent for apprentices.

54. Learners with additional learning needs achieve well. Of the 16 learners with additional learning needs who left the programme in 2004-05, eight completed a full framework and five progressed onto the advanced apprenticeship programme. Seven of the learners completed the framework ahead of the planned end date.

55. Apprentices' rate of progress to the advanced apprenticeship programmes is good. Fifty-seven per cent of the learners completing apprenticeship programmes in 2004-05 progressed onto the advanced programme. Forty-six per cent progressed in 2005-06 and 74 per cent of the learners due to finish this year have asked to be considered for next year's advanced apprenticeship programme. Retention rates are good and improving across all programmes. They currently stand at 83 per cent.

56. Apprentices are progressing well towards completing their frameworks. Most achieve ahead of their target completion dates. Timely achievement is significantly above national averages for 2003-04 and 2004-05. On advanced apprenticeship programmes, timely success rates were particularly good in 2003-04 but declined in 2004-05. Current learners are progressing well but some are behind target for achieving particular units. NEETA monitors learners' achievement of full NVQ units but does not take account of the individual elements they complete. Senior managers are aware of the restrictions of the monitoring system and a more detailed and refined system is being developed.

57. Learners' assignments meet, and in some instances exceed, the awarding body criteria. Learners' level 3 hairdressing assignments show that they have a clear technical understanding of services such as cutting and colouring. They include good personalised accounts of the products and practice that would influence the finished results. Level 2 assignments include a number of direct quotes from textbooks. However, when learners are asked to explain hairdressing practice, they show at least a satisfactory understanding of the topic. Very few assignments are word-processed and few learners use the internet as a research tool for assignments. However, all assignments are well presented, and there are very few technical errors.

58. Learners' occupational skills are satisfactory. They communicate effectively, gaining clients' personal preferences before beginning a service. They work confidently through the services maintaining a professional approach during conversations with their client. They have a good understanding of commercial products and their effects. Their hairdressing skills are appropriate for the stage of training. Many apprentices develop their own clients in their salon as they near completion of their apprenticeship.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	25	48	43	48	32
		timely	27	37	27	37	20
	2004-05	overall	20	50	40	50	29
		timely	21	19	28	19	20
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	30	83	62	77	49
		timely	33	55	38	48	30
	2004-05	overall	59	69	48	68	41
		timely	60	47	32	45	28
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	28	18	46	0	0
		timely	27	15	31	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

The quality of provision

59. NEETA is particularly effective in developing flexible programmes that meet learners' and employers' specific needs. Learners are encouraged to negotiate off-the-job training to suit their personal learning needs. Learners can attend off-the-job training once a week or once a fortnight or can decide to have all their training on the job. Reduced off-the-job training is particularly effective for learners employed in salons that provide consistently good training and who prefer and respond well to individual coaching. NEETA effectively risk-assesses salons to monitor their capacity to support learners. Tutors work effectively with employers to negotiate visits that suit them and their learners. The tutors are very adaptable and arrange visits around salon activities such as training, or quiet periods. Although the advanced apprenticeship programme comprises mainly on-the-job training, many of the advanced learners attend the training centre on one day a week for extra support and help with the assignment work. Employers and learners value the flexibility of NEETA's tutors and the added facility for additional literacy and numeracy support to be available as part of the on-the-job training.

60. Learners with additional learning needs receive good support. Initial assessment and diagnostic testing are used effectively to guide learners onto appropriate programmes. Learners with literacy and numeracy needs follow E2E hairdressing programmes or apprenticeships supplemented by planned additional support. Specialist peripatetic literacy and numeracy tutors work with learners, either in the training centres or the salons, developing their skills and setting effective weekly training and achievement targets. Of the 76 learners in 2004-05, 41 per cent had additional learning needs and 22 per cent had significant learning needs. Seventy-four per cent were retained on programme and 50 per cent achieved a full framework. A learner with poor achievements and experience of school commented on how interesting she now found mathematics and realised how useful it was in her work.

61. The good resources at the training centres adequately meet the needs of learners and

the qualification requirements. The Newcastle training salon is in a commercial centre and is easily accessible by learners with limited mobility. The Washington training centre is on the first floor and there is restricted access for clients and learners with mobility impairments. Each centre has adequate space for background knowledge teaching and reflective learning, with access to 10 computers, six of which are laptop computers. Learners are employed in very good, well-appointed, commercial salons, all of which provide good training within work time. Many learners speak well of their employers' expertise and that of the stylists where they work, and they look to these people as good role models.

62. The teaching sessions observed during the inspection ranged from good to inadequate. The better sessions were planned well to include a number of activities that maintained learners' interest. Tutors asked challenging questions and the information given to learners was at the appropriate level and took full advantage of occupational practice and scenarios. Poorer sessions did not sufficiently challenge learners or include them all in useful activities and little learning occurred. Staff do not pay enough attention to differentiation in lesson planning.

63. Advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners are given clear advice on the programmes available together with the funding they may be entitled to. NEETA offers E2E provision to all unemployed learners, with the opportunity to progress to employed status apprenticeships. On completion of the apprenticeship programme, all learners receive comprehensive information on advanced apprenticeships. Before they start a programme interested learners have individual guidance discussions with their tutors on the advantages and the work involved.

64. Insufficient attention is paid to the planning of training. There is no medium- or long-term planning of on- or off-the-job teaching and learning. Training is decided weekly, and learners and employers are unable to prepare adequately for learning sessions or plan salon training to complement NEETA's training. Learners and tutors have no record of the training carried out.

65. The 12-week progress review process is poor. The review is used as an opportunity for assessment planning, and little consideration is given to the learning experience or learners' wider development. Employers do not usually take part in the discussion, and equal opportunities and health and safety are not reinforced. Most targets set do not include details of how they will be achieved, and there are only cursory comments in the review documents on background knowledge and practical assessments as a measured outcome. During a recent quality audit, managers identified progress reviews as a weakness and they have introduced an additional assessment plan to include employers' comments, equal opportunities and health and safety. There is insufficient clarity on how the two documents are to be used.

Leadership and management

66. NEETA has good strategies to support achievement. When learners achieve various parts of the NVQ to NEETA's standards, they receive bronze, silver or gold awards, and a voucher for equipment. Their employer receives a cash bonus. Lists of successful learners are displayed in the training centre. The annual awards ceremony raises learners' aspirations and is well publicised. Constant and effective assessment planning and frequent salon visits widen the opportunities for assessment. Monthly meetings between

tutors and the managing director very effectively evaluate learners' progress. Learners in danger of slow progress have more salon visits or attend extra assessment sessions at the training centre. All tutors have challenging achievement targets and these are carefully monitored.

67. Communication is good, with regular team meetings, e-mail facilities, written information and discussions to keep staff well informed. Quality improvement strategies have been effective in identifying weaknesses in review practice and the monitoring of learners' unit achievements. All staff have taken an active part in the self-assessment of the provision. Staff development is good as is the staff appraisal process. Staff are all experienced and all tutors have, or are working towards, key skills qualifications at levels 2 and 3. Some staff have a teaching qualification.

