

# National Farrier Training Agency

## Independent learning provider

|  |                         |                            |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Inspection dates</b>                      |                         | <b>18–22 February 2013</b> |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>This inspection:</b> | <b>Inadequate-4</b>        |
|  | Previous inspection:    | Good-2                     |
| Outcomes for learners                        |                         | Requires improvement-3     |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment |                         | Inadequate-4               |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   |                         | Inadequate-4               |

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is inadequate because:

- Progress is too slow for just over half the apprentices and they fail to complete within the planned timescale. Apprentices aged 19 to 24 do poorly compared to the younger apprentices.
- Whilst apprentices training with caring and interested approved training farriers (ATFs) enjoy their training those working with poor ATFs often have a difficult and poor experience of the training programme.
- Assessment of apprentices' practical skills and coursework does not happen often enough and the feedback apprentices receive on their work is often late and unhelpful.
- College trainers make too many apprentices repeat the six monthly blocks of college training and the reasons are not always fair or in the apprentices' best interests.
- Apprentices report significant examples of bullying, abuse and humiliation by ATFs, and in a very small minority of cases by college trainers, which have not been identified or dealt with appropriately by the NFTA. Apprentices' interests and needs are not at the heart of the training and in too many cases they are anxious to speak out against poor treatment since they do not think they will be believed or that the NFTA will support them.
- NFTA has not estimated current and future needs for qualified farriers and it is not clear whether the country is under or over producing farriers, or the extent of employment and business opportunities for farriers when they complete their training.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Introduce robust and thorough monitoring of both on- and off-the-job training in order to ensure a consistently high standard of teaching, learning and assessment for all apprentices.
- Ensure that all apprentices receive suitably detailed, constructive and developmental feedback on work completed during on-the-job training and in college blocks. Ensure managers put a system in place so that when apprentices send work to college trainers outside of college blocks it receives prompt attention and they receive comprehensive and helpful feedback.
- Ensure sufficient learning support is available for all apprentices during both on- and off-the-job training. Ensure sufficient information is available for learning support coordinators so that they can make the best use of their time with apprentices during individual meetings.
- Carry out a full strategic review to evaluate the number of farriers needed to meet local and national needs in order to plan recruitment effectively and help to ensure viable employment for all apprentices at the end of their programme.
- Conduct a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the programme structure and content to modernise it. Ensure the programme provides apprentices with relevant training, which meets industry needs and reflects current farriery practice.
- Improve the recruitment and training of ATFs to ensure that they have the attributes and skills to provide high quality training and effective guidance and support for all apprentices. Develop a programme of training and standard setting activities to support their development as trainers.
- Consider carefully and consult stakeholders, including apprentices, on the value, appropriateness and purpose of 'back-blocking': a process by which apprentices have to wait six-months to repeat a block of college training. Ensure strict guidelines for the use of back-blocking to prevent it being used in a punitive and subjective way.
- Introduce an effective and robust system to monitor and protect the welfare of apprentices. Stamp out bullying and exploitation of apprentices by taking immediate and strong action. Ensure all parties involved in the programme recognise and respect their individual rights and responsibilities.

### Inspection judgements

|                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Outcomes for learners</b> | Requires improvement |
|------------------------------|----------------------|

- The overall success rate for apprentices of all ages is good and above average, however this success rate has been declining over the last three years. Apprentices aged 19 to 24, do not achieve as well as younger apprentices. In 2011/12, their success rate was just below the average for this age group.
- Progress is too slow for just over half the apprentices and they fail to complete their training within the planned timescale of four years and two months. Although numbers of female apprentices are low, the proportion who complete within the planned timescale has been consistently lower than for male apprentices over the past three years.
- Whilst apprentices working with caring and interested ATFs enjoy their training, those with poor ATFs often have a difficult and poor experience of the training programme. These apprentices make slower progress and become less confident and anxious about their ability to succeed. Attendance at college for too many apprentices is a worrying prospect, particularly those not

well prepared by their ATF. Some apprentices report that a very small minority of college trainers show them little respect and humiliate them.

- Apprentices' understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work are poorly developed since in too many cases their anxiety at speaking out against poor treatment compounds their view that they have few rights.
- Successful apprentices develop good farriery skills and progress into employment and often self-employment, but it is unclear whether this progression meets the industry's national and local priorities for qualified farriers since the NFTA has a poor understanding of what these might be.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate and do not enable enough apprentices to achieve within the planned time. The apprenticeship programme is inflexible and all apprentices follow the same programme, regardless of their capability. There is no facility for able apprentices to make faster progress. Too many apprentices repeat blocks of college training and have to wait six months to do so. The reasons for this back-blocking are not always fair nor in the best interests of the apprentices. A significant minority of apprentices repeat blocks several times or repeat more than one block.
- Apprentices training with the better ATFs experience high quality training and support in the workplace developing good practical and employability skills. These ATFs support apprentices well; they provide a good learning environment and are enthusiastic trainers. They provide out-of-work-hours activities such as shoe-making workshops and encourage participation in shoeing competitions. However, too many ATFs do not meet these standards and fail to train apprentices or provide the resources they need to develop their farriery skills to the required standard.
- The quality of teaching by college trainers is too variable, within and between colleges, and does not meet apprentices' individual needs. Apprentices that are more able do not receive sufficient challenge to progress more quickly or develop higher-level skills. The college trainers leave these apprentices with little to do while focusing on weaker members of their group. Surveys show that apprentices are less satisfied with one college and the reasons for this have not been investigated by the NFTA.
- Assessors do not carry out sufficiently frequent assessments of apprentices' practical skills and course work since assessment only occurs during the six-monthly college blocks. The feedback apprentices receive on work produced between blocks is delayed until the next college attendance, even if apprentices send work in during the six-month gap. The feedback college trainers provide lacks detail and does not contain specific guidance to help apprentices improve.
- In too many cases the reasons for the grade awarded by college trainers are unclear and both apprentices and ATFs are confused about how to achieve better grades. College trainers/assessors, ATFs and field officers do not always share the same expectations for the standard of work produced by apprentices, and this disadvantages a very small minority of apprentices. For example, work an ATF finds good might only be just satisfactory at college. College trainers do not use information learning technology sufficiently to support learning. E-learning or online learning is not available to all apprentices during the six-month gap between college attendances.
- Action planning and target setting are ineffective and do not help apprentices to make good progress. College action plans are simply a generic list of tasks apprentices should complete before the next block rather than specific actions they need to take. Targets set by field officers during progress reviews are unhelpful since they are too broad, for example advising

apprentices to revise or carry on making more shoes. These broad targets do not help apprentices and ATFs to focus on the specific skill or knowledge that needs to be developed.

- The NTFA identifies a high number of apprentices as having additional learning needs. The colleges use different criteria to identify when apprentices receive support, so that apprentices with the same needs may not always be offered comparable support. The NTFA does not plan effectively to meet apprentices' individual needs at college or in the workplace. The learning support coordinators in the colleges provide good support both at college and in the workplace. However, the coordinators' visits are too infrequent and they do not have all the information they need to make the best use of their time with apprentices.
- Progress reviews carried out by the field officers in the workplace do not support apprentices to achieve on time. For many apprentices, particularly those who are not making good progress, the six monthly reviews in the workplace are not frequent enough and do not help them to stay on track or ensure they are ready for their next college block.
- Trainers and field officers' understanding and promotion of equality and diversity are poor. A significant minority of ATFs are poor role models since their own conduct shows little understanding of equality or appreciation of the broader aspects of diversity, such as showing respect for others.
- Examples of bullying and exploitation of apprentices in the workplace are not identified or resolved adequately by the care, support and guidance provided by the NFTA. In the worst cases, apprentices receive verbal abuse and are required to carry out tasks that are humiliating or are not in any way related to the requirements of the apprenticeship. In other cases, ATFs use the apprentices' fear of losing their employment to make unreasonable demands about their working conditions. The NFTA does not tackle these practices and the use of back-blocking disadvantages apprentices whose ATFs fail to provide them with adequate training or resources.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Strategic leadership is ineffective in raising standards, modernising provision and protecting the interests of apprentices. The recent strategic review of apprenticeship provision has not resulted in modernised training or ensured the training meets the current farriery industry's needs.
- The NFTA uses overly negative or punitive language in much of its documentation and this fails to raise apprentices' aspirations or set high enough expectations for those involved in providing the on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices' welfare and needs do not appear to be at the heart of the provision. The Board, the management of the NFTA, and the Farriers Registration Council (FRC) have not prioritised apprentices' rights, welfare and enjoyment of the programme sufficiently. Programme documentation fails to promote these aspects of provision adequately.
- Course guides and publicity are out of date, inaccurate and unwelcoming. Website content does not encourage women and people with minority ethnic heritage to apply for apprenticeships, despite their very poor representation in enrolments across the past six years. Many apprentices feel they are blamed for problems in programme design and management. For example, significant numbers of apprentices are back-blocked for six-months for weaknesses in training that are not in their control, or are back-blocked for reasons that appear to them to be unfair and subjective.
- Training, direction, oversight and performance management of ATFs is inadequate. The NTFA does not hold ATFs sufficiently accountable for their conduct, or for the standards of training provided for apprentices. Field officers' six-monthly visits to apprentices at ATFs' premises are ineffective in identifying those ATFs who provide little or no training, too little forge time, or who consistently bully and abuse apprentices. A significant number of apprentices feel that field officers are unobservant or uncaring about matters pertaining to their welfare and the quality of

their training. ATFs receive too little on-going training or development to help them to develop their training skills.

- The NFTA has not identified that progress review processes fail to promote learning, secure progress and protect apprentices' welfare. No effective system is in place to assure the quality of field officers' work, which varies from inadequate in most cases to excellent in a few.
- The NFTA's quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment during college blocks is inadequate and fails to secure good progress, or apprentices' welfare and security. The FRC Board's 'visitation panel' does not provide adequate critical oversight of college provision. Their visits to colleges do not focus sufficiently on the quality of training, learning and assessment for apprentices. Visitation panel reports are largely descriptive, insufficiently judgemental and are overly concerned with resources and activities. The panel does not evaluate the quality of training observed effectively in order to ensure accountability of trainers or improve the experience of apprentices. For a minority of apprentices, their experience of college blocks is characterised by anxiety both about the standards required at assessment and the poor transparency around the application of 'back-blocking'.
- The NFTA's self-assessment is unrealistic and ineffective. Most of the problems identified during inspection had been brought to the attention of managers and Board, but no effective or concerted action was taken to review programme structure, delivery or purpose. Sub-contracted colleges are not required to conduct self-assessment of college block provision, and college staff do not contribute text to the annual self-assessment report. Apprentices' views are gathered in surveys and the responses are collated and subject to comparative analysis by an external agency. However, the trends in apprentices' comments and the areas for improvement identified in surveys receive inadequate analysis or response within the NFTA.
- The current apprenticeship programme is ineffective in meeting apprentices' and national needs. Enrolment onto the programme is governed entirely by ATFs' requests for apprentices, rather than any accountable strategy driven by the needs of the industry for the future provision of qualified farriers or the maintenance of a viable farriery industry. The Board and the FRC have been ineffective in applying a coherent strategy which will rationalise the numbers of farriers trained in future years, despite the calls for such work from many registered farriers and a number of stakeholder bodies
- College trainers, field officers and ATFs inadequately promote and reinforce equality and diversity. Women make up only between three and four per cent of each cohort of apprentices, and across the past two years no apprentices from minority ethnic groups have successfully completed the apprenticeship. No strategy exists to increase diversity of enrolments, and course materials are weak in their presentation of under-represented groups. Female apprentices are less likely to succeed on the programme, and a high proportion of the few female apprentices have experienced poor treatment from ATFs. The promotion of equality and diversity during reviews by field officers and by college trainers during teaching sessions is poor.
- Safeguarding of apprentices is weak, with examples of abuse, humiliation and harassment of apprentices by ATFs. Serious allegations of physical and verbal bullying and harassment by ATFs are not investigated effectively. Too often the outcome of such complaints penalises the apprentice. Many apprentices are afraid to raise concerns because they have no confidence in the NFTA's grievance and complaints procedures.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

| National Farriery Training Agency  |                              |                           |                           |                         |                 |                           |               |                     |                    |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b><br><br>1: Outstanding<br>2: Good<br>3: Requires improvement<br>4: Inadequate | <b>Overall</b>               | 14-16 Learning programmes | 16-18 Learning programmes | 19+ Learning programmes | Apprenticeships | Other work-based learning | Employability | Foundation Learning | Community learning |
|  | <b>Overall effectiveness</b> | 4                         |                           |                         |                 | 4                         |               |                     |                    |
| Outcomes for learners  | 3                            |                           |                           |                         | 3               |                           |               |                     |                    |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment   | 4                            |                           |                           |                         | 4               |                           |               |                     |                    |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management   | 4                            |                           |                           |                         | 4               |                           |               |                     |                    |

| Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Grade |
|---|-------|
| Equine studies  | 4     |

## Provider details

| <b>National Farriery Training Agency</b>                                       |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Type of provider</b>  | Independent learning provider |
| <b>Age range of learners</b>   | 16+                           |
| <b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b> | Full-time: 537                |
|  | Part-time:                    |
| <b>Principal/CEO</b>   | Neville Higgins               |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>   | April 2011                    |
| <b>Website address</b>   | www.farrierytraining.co.uk    |

| <b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>                                       |   |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
|---|---|-----|-----------------|-----|----------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| <b>Main course or learning programme level</b>  | <b>Level 1 or below</b>   |     | <b>Level 2</b>  |     | <b>Level 3</b> |     | <b>Level 4 and above</b> |     |
| <b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>                                     | 16-18   | 19+ | 16-18           | 19+ | 16-18          | 19+ | 16-18                    | 19+ |
| <b>Full-time</b>  | N/A   | N/A | N/A             | N/A | N/A            | N/A | N/A                      | N/A |
| <b>Part-time</b>  | N/A   | N/A | N/A             | N/A | N/A            | N/A | N/A                      | N/A |
| <b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>                                    | <b>Intermediate</b>   |     | <b>Advanced</b> |     | <b>Higher</b>  |     |                          |     |
|   | 16-18   | 19+ | 16-18           | 19+ | 16-18          | 19+ |                          |     |
|   | N/A   | N/A | 232             | 165 | N/A            | N/A |                          |     |
| <b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>  | N/A   |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Number of community learners</b>   | N/A   |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Number of employability learners</b>   | N/A   |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Funding received from</b>  | Skills Funding Agency (SFA)   |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Herefordshire College of Technology</li> <li>■ Myerscough College</li> <li>■ Warwickshire College</li> </ul> |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |

## Additional socio-economic information

The NFTA is based in Peterborough where it has an operations manager and some 30 support staff, including three college administrators. The NFTA is a division of the FRC. The FRC receives funding from the Skills Funding Agency for apprentices training throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The NFTA manages the provision of the advanced apprenticeship in farriery and is the sole provider of this qualification. By law, all practising farriers must be registered with the FRC and the apprenticeship qualification is a requirement of this registration. All apprentices are employed by ATFs who provide the on-the-job training. No assessment takes place in the workplace. Off-the-job training and assessment is carried out by three specialist colleges during block release periods of between two and four weeks, every six months throughout the apprenticeship. A field officer visits the apprentice in the workplace between college blocks.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Jo Parkman HMI

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the operations manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area in the report above.



## What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement            |
|---------|----------------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          |
| Grade 2 | Good                 |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           |

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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