

Inspection of Nottinghamshire Combined Fire and Rescue Authority

Inspection dates:

6 to 8 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Nottinghamshire Combined Fire and Rescue Authority (NFRA) began to offer the level 3 standards-based operational firefighter apprenticeship in September 2019. There are currently 25 apprentices in learning. Before this, the authority was a subcontracted provider for a local college. Managers have considerable experience in operational firefighter development. Apprentices attend training at a centre in Ollerton before commencing their on-station roles and joining their watch.

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

Trainers and watch managers provide high-quality training that helps apprentices to develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices, who have no experience in firefighting, make rapid progress and become active members of their watch. All apprentices successfully complete their studies and secure permanent roles as firefighters.

Apprentices value their training and feel proud to have the opportunity to become a firefighter. They almost always attend their sessions as they do not want to miss them. On the very few occasions apprentices miss training, it is for understandable reasons, and they receive good support to catch up.

Apprentices have excellent attitudes to their studies and work. They are professional, well motivated and reflective. Apprentices describe working with their watch as being part of a family.

Staff ensure apprentices understand their communities and the risks and vulnerabilities of the public they serve. They simulate and then complete safe and well checks for a range of individuals. As a result, apprentices are competent, confident and respectful in how they engage with their diverse communities. They know how to keep themselves and the public safe.

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

Leaders, trainers and watch managers plan and teach an effective curriculum. Apprentices' training is organised into three logical phases. Phase one is a 15-week course of theory and practical skills development. Apprentices quickly learn core skills such as pump work, how to repair kits and community safety. This prepares apprentices well to start their on-station roles and commence active duty.

Watch managers take responsibility for apprentices' training and development in phases two and three. Working with apprentices, they set effective individual development plans. Initially, plans focus on apprentices' areas for development from their introductory training. These plans adjust frequently in response to apprentices' progress. Apprentices get ample opportunities to apply and practise what they learn. As a result, they quickly become part of their watch and respond well to real-life situations.

In the final phase of training, trainers and watch managers challenge apprentices to use all their core skills and knowledge in more difficult situations. Apprentices must resolve operational incidents and coordinate incident responses. Most apprentices perform very highly in these situations.

Managers are yet to plan the curriculum for the few apprentices who need to study English and mathematics qualifications carefully enough. Apprentices study these

qualifications independently. As a result, managers are not clear enough on the progress apprentices make in these subjects.

Trainers and watch managers have extensive operational and management experience. They hold appropriate teaching and assessment qualifications. Trainers and watch managers use their experience well to provide apprentices with insight into a wide range of incidents. As a result, apprentices understand how to deal with common and rare situations they will encounter in their roles.

Trainers plan creative opportunities for apprentices to apply key concepts to real-life situations. For example, during initial training, trainers turn the base into a fire station for two days. They challenge apprentices' resilience by sending them to the nearby school to deliver a fire safety talk and then calling them back to respond to a burning car. This prepares apprentices well for the demands they face when they join their stations.

Trainers and watch managers provide apprentices with useful spoken feedback. This helps apprentices to improve their ways of working and skills. Trainers allow apprentices to safely make mistakes during practical activities. They discuss these situations in detail with apprentices. This helps them to understand the consequences of these errors in a safe way.

Trainers' and managers' written feedback is less helpful. It does not always identify or correct apprentices' spelling and grammar errors. Apprentices do not get sufficient feedback on how to improve the structure of their assignments. As a result, they do not consistently improve the standard of their written work.

Staff make suitable adjustments to support apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Trainers and watch managers prepare apprentices well for their final assessments. Apprentices know what to expect, and this gives them the confidence to demonstrate what they know and can do. All apprentices complete and pass their studies. Around half achieve distinction grades.

Apprentices receive appropriate careers guidance at suitable points in their studies. They know and understand the progression routes in the service. However, leaders do not provide enough information on other careers outside of the immediate fire service. This means apprentices are not always aware of the broader careers that are available to them.

Managers undertake a range of suitable quality assurance activities. This includes visits to training sessions, surveys and standardisation meetings. Managers and trainers use the outcomes of these activities well to inform improvements. They review and evaluate the curriculum after each cohort and make changes to the curriculum sequencing, resources or assessment approaches. This ensures that the quality of education that apprentices receive remains good.

Oversight of apprenticeship performance takes place through the senior structure of NFRA. Leaders receive a reasonable level of information that allows them to monitor headline performance indicators. Managers have sensible plans for leaders to receive a wider range of information and reports going forward. It is too soon for inspectors to judge the impact this will have.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have suitable safeguarding policies and procedures in place. They undertake appropriate recruitment checks. The designated safeguarding lead and staff complete relevant training. All staff are clear on their safeguarding responsibilities.

Staff have an understandably strong focus on health and safety. Apprentices complete extensive training on how to keep themselves safe. If apprentices are involved in any incidents, appropriate actions are taken.

Staff and apprentices receive frequent and useful updates on risks to vulnerable people in their communities. This is differentiated based on the locality of apprentices' stations. This gives them a good insight into the risks they and the public face.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should improve the curriculum for apprentices who need to study English and mathematics so that apprentices benefit from and achieve these qualifications.
- Leaders and managers should develop trainers' and watch managers' English skills so that they can support apprentices to improve the standard of their work.
- Leaders should provide opportunities for apprentices to access broader careers guidance so they are aware of the full range of careers available to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2625253
Address	Joint Headquarters Sherwood Lodge Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PP
Contact number	0115 838 8731
Website	www.notts-fire.gov.uk
Chief Fire Officer	Craig Parkin
Provider type	Employer
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the learning and development manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report, 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

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