



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**ISA Training
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by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About ISA Training

ISA Training was established in 1998 as a privately owned work-based training provider, based in South Wales. The provider specialises in training for the hair and beauty sector. The value of the current contract awarded to ISA Training is approximately £2.1M. The provider delivers foundation apprenticeships at level 2 and apprenticeships at level 3, and has recently started delivering higher apprenticeships at level 4. At the time of the inspection there were approximately 650 learners on Welsh Government funded training programmes.

Sub-contractors:

HB Training
ICON Training
Tommy's Hair Company

The provider and subcontractors deliver training in the following learning areas:

- Hairdressing and Beauty
- Business, Administration and Law
- Customer Service
- Leisure, Travel and Tourism

Summary

Many learners are making at least appropriate progress towards achieving their training frameworks. They acquire strong work-related practical skills and show sound knowledge and understanding of their industry. Most learners engage well with learning and are motivated to succeed. Although many learners do not make enough progress in improving their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills. A few learners, especially those on foundation apprenticeships in hairdressing, either choose to leave the industry early or do not complete their training frameworks in the scheduled timeframe.

In the lead provider and almost all its sub-contractors, the quality of teaching, training and assessment is adequate and needs improvement. Many practitioners and employers have high expectations for their learners. However, in a few cases, practitioners do not challenge learners enough. Vocational practitioners do not plan well enough to ensure that all learners develop their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills at the start of their training programme.

Practitioners provide good support to help learners overcome barriers to learning. However, the provider does not have a robust tracking system to check that learners are on target to progress in a timely manner.

The chief executive officer has recently undertaken significant changes to the structure of the senior and middle management team in order to re-define managers' roles and responsibilities and to address shortcomings in the provider's performance. These recent changes have been positive in re-engaging staff at all levels and improving morale. The provider has a clear vision that supports professional training in the hair and beauty industry.

Although the provider's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are well-established, they have not led to sufficient and sustained improvement in important aspects of their work, most notably securing improvement in learner outcomes across the provider and its subcontractors.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the rates at which learners successfully achieve their training programmes
- R2 Make sure that all learners demonstrate literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills appropriate to their individual needs and abilities
- R3 Make sure that all practitioners promote the benefit of the Welsh language as an employment skill
- R4 Evaluate the tracking of learner progress and learning support to ensure that it enables strategic analysis and planning
- R5 Evaluate the impact of training on learners' understanding of radicalisation and extremism
- R6 Improve the rigour and effectiveness of self-assessment and development planning

What happens next

The provider will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the provider's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Many learners are making at least appropriate progress towards achieving their qualifications. They acquire strong work-related practical skills and show sound knowledge and understanding of vocationally specific concepts and techniques. For example, many hairdressing learners use a range of cutting, colouring and styling techniques skilfully to create styles that match clients' needs and expectations.

Most learners engage well with learning and are enthusiastic and motivated to succeed. Many learners on foundation apprenticeships in hairdressing are keen to develop their practical skills and theory knowledge further and to progress to the next level. A minority of hairdressing apprentices value the opportunity to add qualifications in barbering or undertake higher-level units to complement their existing qualifications. However, a few learners, especially those on foundation apprenticeships in hairdressing, either choose to leave the industry early or do not complete their qualifications in a timely manner.

All learners complete an initial assessment to identify strengths and areas for improvement for skills. However, a majority of learners have limited understanding of what they need to do to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Many learners are not required to complete essential skills qualifications to achieve their framework. In the best cases, a few learners demonstrate secure literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills. Too few learners with entry level skills make use of essential skills delivery sessions or specialist support. As a result, many learners, especially those not entered for essential skills qualifications, do not make sufficient progress in improving their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

The majority of learners achieve their essential skills qualifications at levels appropriate to their qualification framework. Very few learners achieve a level higher than required for their framework.

A few learners are able to demonstrate appropriate numeracy skills in a vocational setting, for example when calculating percentages for hair solution mixes and in reviewing angles when cutting hair.

Many learners demonstrate strong speaking and listening skills. For example, a few foundation apprentices in hair salons interact confidently and professionally with clients to advise on future hair care.

A very few Welsh speaking learners continue to use their Welsh language skills while in learning. Few learners who are not Welsh speaking develop their Welsh language skills sufficiently to use basic greetings with Welsh speaking clients.

The rates at which learners achieve their apprenticeship and foundation apprenticeship frameworks are reasonable. Apprenticeship learners achieve their frameworks slightly above the sector average over the last three years. However, learners on foundation apprenticeship programmes do not perform as well and currently achieve their frameworks below the sector average.

Learners with a disability and learners aged twenty five and over succeed at significantly lower rates than both the provider and sector averages. There is too much variation in standards between vocational routes and between providers. In particular, standards achieved in two of the subcontractors are significantly higher than in the lead provider and another subcontractor.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most learners are positively engaged in their training, enjoy their learning and improve their confidence. Many learners who underperform in school and college settings develop confidence through their training and working environment and thrive through learning a valuable trade. A few learners with barriers to learning such as dyslexia feel more confident after receiving a variety of specialist support.

Nearly all learners feel safe, happy and valued in their workplace. They develop supportive good relationships with their employers and a very good rapport with their practitioners. They are confident in their interactions with customers and work well in a range of settings. Many learners are supportive of other learners, work well in groups and are enthusiastic to share skills through workshops, master classes and training events.

Many learners develop independent learning and thinking skills through naturally occurring problem solving situations in work such as when responding to customer requests for particular styles or processes. A few learners develop their technical skills and expand their personal experience, self-confidence and knowledge through Salon Cymru competitions, showcase events and Oyster project activities, particularly through opportunities to study and work abroad.

Most learners have a strong understanding of health and safety, both personally and in the workplace. Many know how to stay safe online. Nearly all learners feel confident to discuss personal issues and wider concerns with their practitioners and employers but a very few are unclear about how to report bullying or harassment issues at work. Many learners are aware of the need to live a healthy lifestyle and often practise this enthusiastically with colleagues in the workplace.

In salons where the situation arises, learners demonstrate sensitivity towards the needs of customers from other cultures, although generally learners do not have a deep enough understanding of the Prevent agenda regarding wider social issues. A few develop their participation in community activities through fundraising and charity events.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, the quality of teaching, training and assessment is adequate and needs improvement.

Nearly all practitioners have well-established, long standing relationships with a wide range of employers in the hair and beauty sector. Nearly all employers support their learners well and provide positive learning experiences for their learners to gain a wide range of practical hairdressing and beauty therapy skills. For example, learners respond well to modern trends such as multi-colouring techniques, twisted plaits and

nail art. The provider offers a range of learning experiences that are well matched to learners' career choices and employer needs. Many learning experiences stimulate and challenge learners to engage in learning. Most learners, particularly at level 3, are confident and have a professional approach in their working environment.

Practitioners and training staff run a series of suitable creative teaching workshops throughout the year. These workshops offer additional practical learning activities, such as "fun with foils and modern foundation cutting". The majority of learners enjoy these workshops, and are fully engaged and motivated. However, these workshops are not accessible to all learners across Wales.

Nearly all practitioners have suitable up-to-date subject knowledge and industry skills. They apply these skills well to motivate and encourage learners to achieve their qualification aim, particularly at level 3. Many practitioners have high expectations for their learners and give effective support. However, in a few cases, practitioners do not challenge learners enough.

Nearly all practitioners give constructive written feedback to help them improve. However, in a few cases, practitioners do not correct spelling and grammar errors in written work to help learners improve.

All practitioners carry out regular progress reviews with their learners. In the best cases, employers and learners are fully involved in agreeing and setting appropriate targets for practical skills development. However, short-term target setting for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills is underdeveloped.

Nearly all vocational practitioners do not plan well enough to ensure that all learners develop their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills at the start of their training programme. As a result, many learners make slow progress in developing these skills. In a very few cases, practitioners challenge learners to achieve their essential skills at a higher level than required for the qualification framework. Many practitioners lack confidence to take full advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to contextualise literacy and numeracy support. Practitioners have recently received further training on using the full capabilities of the Wales Essential Skills Tool and are beginning to use this tool to track the progress made by learners.

Nearly all practitioners plan assessment activities well. Practitioners use a suitable range of practical assessment tasks and training methods to match the learners' level of skill and the style of the salon. Most practitioners use suitable questioning techniques to help develop learners' knowledge and understanding.

Very few learners undertake learning through the medium of Welsh. Most practitioners are not proactive enough in promoting the benefit of the Welsh language as an employment skill. They do not always give Welsh speaking learners sufficient encouragement to use and develop their language skills in the workplace.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

During learners' initial assessment, practitioners identify learning support needs effectively. Nearly all work closely with their learners to design an individualised learning programme, detailing how learning support will be arranged, including

support for learners with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. This programme is regularly reviewed during assessment visits, to ensure that changes in the needs of a learner are promptly acted upon.

Within this period they also explore learners' and employers' commitment and suitability for apprenticeship training. In nearly all cases, practitioners give learners useful advice and guidance to help them reflect on whether the route they are considering matches their aspirations or abilities. This has helped a few learners to change the focus of their training before committing to a particular apprenticeship route.

Nearly all practitioners provide beneficial support to their learners, helping them to develop skills appropriate to their programme. Many make good use of social media to keep contact with learners and employers.

The provider does not have a robust overall tracking system in place to monitor and measure learners' progress. Managers and practitioners use a variety of different systems to track learners' progress. As a result, it is difficult to track cohorts of learners and make sure that all learners are on target to complete their framework on time. The provider has recently introduced documentation to track the learning support given throughout a learner's programme. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of this documentation and at present the provider is unable to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of learning support across its provision.

Most practitioners and the majority of employers provide good support to help learners overcome barriers to learning. For example, one employer helped a learner in a deprived area to buy essential equipment. One practitioner supported a learner well when she lost her job. The practitioner found her employment in an alternative salon so that she could continue her apprenticeship training. A few learners, who make use of the support provided by Essential Skills Qualification practitioners, overcome established beliefs that they are unable to develop communication or numeracy skills. This gives them confidence to work towards developing these skills. However it is too early to judge the full potential or impact of these practitioners' roles.

Each year, the provider offers a few learners opportunities to take part in exchanges to European providers, such as in Spain, Finland or Germany. Practitioners help learners, a minority of whom are from areas of deprivation, to learn basic phrases in other languages and to research cultures of the areas they will visit. One learner from a rural environment had not flown before participating in the Oyster Project. Most of these learners develop confidence in taking on new challenges, such as planning overseas visits and schedules. They broaden their awareness of other cultures and industry standards, sharing their insights with other learners when they return.

Nearly all practitioners encourage and motivate learners to progress during regular assessment and review visits. Nearly all discuss wellbeing with learners, routinely checking on learners' welfare and take good account of health and safety.

The provider manages safeguarding matters appropriately and arrangements raise no significant concerns. The provider delivers useful training on safeguarding and

radicalisation to its staff, and offers this to subcontractors' staff. Staff inform learners about these topics during their induction. However, the provider does not evaluate the impact of this aspect of training effectively in order to inform its planning and quality improvement.

The provider has recently introduced arrangements for reviewing the DBS status of subcontractor staff and monitoring their participation in safeguarding and Prevent training. However, these topics are not routinely discussed and challenged during quarterly sub-contractor reviews to assure the provider of the rigour of subcontractor's attention to learners' wellbeing.

Nearly all practitioners are clear about safeguarding procedures. However, in most cases their understanding of radicalisation and extremism lacks depth. Their addressing of this topic when they work with learners is often too superficial and most miss opportunities to develop learners' awareness.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

During the last five months, the provider has undertaken significant changes in its senior and middle management structure. These changes were undertaken as a result of the provider making insufficient progress across key aspects of their work. The chief executive officer has returned to a full-time operational role and has appointed two further board members to support the strategic development of the provider. These recent changes have been positive in re-engaging staff at all levels and improving morale. The provider has a clear vision that underpins its strong role in supporting professional training in the hair and beauty industry.

The provider has revised its middle management structure and redefined their roles and responsibilities. While it is too early to judge the full impact of these changes, these managers are developing their understanding of the priorities and objectives they need to address to move the provider forward. These include securing sustained improvement in the standards of foundation apprenticeship learners, giving a high enough priority to improving aspects of teaching and learning and dealing with issues around underperformance.

The provider undertakes regular meetings with staff at all levels and its subcontractors. However, these meetings pay too much attention to compliance and do not focus enough on learner progress and the quality of training. As a result, managers and practitioners do not have a clear enough understanding of all aspects of the provider's performance to enable them to set clear and appropriate strategic priorities for improvement. Target setting lacks clarity and does not reflect well enough the progress required in key aspects of the provider's work.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are a well-established part of the provider's work. However, this has not led to sufficient and sustained improvement in important aspects, most notably the consistency of learner outcomes across the provider and its subcontractors. The provider's self-assessment report includes a useful analysis of key aspects of learners' performance. However, it is insufficiently robust and does not clearly identify the key areas that are in need of improvement. The judgements within the report are over-generous. The provider has been slow to respond to the recommendations from the previous Estyn inspection. Currently, around half of the recommendations require further action and development.

The provider's performance management process includes all members of staff and involves useful opportunities to review progress against targets. Although recently improved, the use of team and individual targets to manage performance is inconsistent and not always challenging enough.

The provider has recently strengthened the management of professional learning activities. As a result, senior and middle managers have an improved understanding of the priorities and objectives they need to address to inform change. Key training activities, such as on Prevent, essential skills and the Welsh language, have not been actioned quickly enough. As a result, practitioners are not developing learners' knowledge and understanding consistently enough.

The provider manages its resources appropriately. They show a satisfactory understanding of costing training programmes and manage resources well to review costs. Staffing levels are closely monitored to ensure they meet the needs of learners.

The provider has established strong partnerships with a large number of employers. They work particularly well with employers and key stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of training and apprenticeships across the hairdressing and beauty industry.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the provider and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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