

# Assessment Report

Heart of England Training Ltd (HOET)

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	
Assessment Type	Review Assessment
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Maureen Deary
Evidence Gathering/Assessment Date/s	5 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2025
Client ID and Assessment Reference	C11482 - PN203273
Accreditation Review to be conducted by	09/12/2028

METHODOLOGY	
Evidence gathering	Remote online interviews and document review
Staff interviews	13
Recipient interviews	11
Partner interviews	3
Document review	<p>Strategic Plan, apprenticeship SAR, QIP, Organisational Chart, Data report, Employer Guide, Inclusion Strategy, Intent for specialist Teaching Assistants and Teaching Assistant, Learner newsletter, Learner Summary, staff qualifications, meeting minutes.</p> <p>Policies include: Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), staff safer recruitment, Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EED&amp;I), GDPR, Safeguarding and prevent, Quality, Staff Safer Recruitment, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)</p>

## About the organisation

Heart of England Training Ltd, (HOET) is a national Independent Training Provider (ITP), established in 1971, operating seven Academy sites across Rugby, Daventry, Peterborough, Birmingham, Leicester, and Warwick. HOET delivers a broad and responsive curriculum offer, including apprenticeships, 16–19 Programmes of Study (PoS) for young people, pre-16 provision delivered in partnership with schools, and full-cost commercial training. HOET also provides niche specialist provision, including a football-focused 16–19 PoS programme delivered from the Daventry Academy, and hairdressing apprenticeships delivered through the Rugby Academy.

HOET works with a wide range of employers and local partners across its delivery areas to secure meaningful work placement opportunities for young people enrolled on Programmes of Study. In addition, HOET offers an apprenticeship recruitment service, supporting employers to identify and appoint apprentices and working with employed apprentices already operating in appropriate sector roles.

HOET works closely with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to support learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), helping ensure a smooth, well-coordinated transition into post-16 education, training, and employment. Training Qualifications UK (TQUK) Awarding Body is very involved in supporting SEND provision in schools, designed by the HOET curriculum team as part of its IAG service to educational establishments.

Programmes of Study for 16–19-year-olds are delivered across hairdressing, barbering, beauty therapy, and sport. A key specialist football national partner is Pro: Direct, which supports the delivery of full-time Sport Coaching, Sport Studies, and Sports Studies programmes. Learners also have access to progression opportunities, including the potential to secure an American soccer football scholarship. Alongside this specialist sports offer, HOET maintains strong employer relationships across priority apprenticeship sectors, including beauty therapy, hairdressing, barbering, teaching assistant, team leading, customer service, and early years.

HOET's apprenticeship portfolio includes a broad range of standards, including Level 3 Teaching Assistant, Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assistant, which is a mandatory qualification demanded in schools and allows a qualified Teaching Assistant to lead teaching a class, Level 2 Business Administration, Level 2 and Level 3 Early Years, and a suite of hairdressing and beauty therapy standards. HOET also delivers full-cost commercial provision, including the Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement (CAVA), Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) qualifications, and a range of management and teacher training programmes. Through strong partnerships with early years settings and primary and secondary schools, HOET supports workforce development across education and childcare, including teaching assistant and wider school-based apprenticeship pathways.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) comprises a Managing Director (MD), who is a joint owner of the business, supported by two Directors: the Director of Training and Development and the Director of Marketing and Recruitment. This leadership structure provides strategic oversight across curriculum, quality, growth, and employer engagement. The SLT is governed and supported by a Board of Governors, including two external members, ensuring independent challenge and robust oversight.

HOET employs 105 staff, including 20 colleagues directly involved in the delivery of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG). Operational teams include seven Academy Managers, safeguarding, compliance and quality, administration, recruitment and human resources, training and development, team leaders, special educational needs (SEN) support, curriculum, internal quality assurance, and the educator delivery team. The quality team includes three Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs), and 46 educators are responsible for delivering apprenticeship standards and Programmes of Study.

HOET currently supports 303 young people enrolled on Programmes of Study, including 54 learners in hairdressing, 32 in beauty, 216 in sport, and one learner in other provision areas. In addition, HOET supports 893 apprentices across a diverse range of standards, including hairdressing, beauty therapy, barbering, project management, operations, business administration and management, schools, early years education, sports coaching, and multi-channel marketing.

HOET's vision is "to be recognised as one of the best training providers in the country whilst responding quickly and efficiently to the emerging needs of local and national businesses, and where learners and staff can be the best they can be." Its mission is "to deliver outstanding training and support." HOET's values underpin its organisational culture and priorities: continually striving for excellence; acting with integrity and respect; being responsive and flexible to learner and employer needs; and encouraging and supporting high aspirations. Collectively, these values align with HOET's strategic intent to respond to sector workforce priorities and deliver a whole-organisation, learner-centred approach to delivering comprehensive IAG and CEIAG for learners, employers, and partners.

## The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

HOET's IAG service is very learner-centric, with a comprehensive learning journey mapped out for each individual based on their starting point. The company adopts a rigorous approach to safeguarding each learner, ensuring that their individual needs are met and that they feel safe when at work and during their studies. The safeguarding team use MyConcern for case reporting when a concern is reported, with swift action taken by the designated safeguarding lead and officers.

HOET adopts a consultative approach to working with employers to provide safe work placements that are relevant and meaningful for each PoS learner. A

consultative and careful approach is taken to engage and include employers in decisions made for the curriculum offer for all learners.

In particular, HOET works closely with schools to meet workforce needs and provide specialist training for Teaching Assistants, including SEND. HOET's curriculum design is further strengthened through a strategic partnership with a large Academy Trust. This partnership supports the effective mapping of HOET's apprenticeship standards to wider progression and referral routes, enabling learners to access a broader range of opportunities through alternative providers, where HOET does not directly deliver provision.

The HOET IAG policy aligns with the Department for Education (DfE) Careers Guidance for Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges (DfE 2018) and the Gatsby Benchmarks, which underpin the HOET approach to IAG and CEIAG as golden threads embedded in all programmes. All HOET staff, including the Educator team who are responsible for the delivery and support for learners and apprentices, adopt a highly inclusive approach to IAG to ensure that each learner and apprentice is placed on the right course/apprenticeship, subject/sector area and level that meets their learning aims, personal goals and career aspirations. CEIAG sits very firmly at the heart of the learner's learning journey and is revisited at key 'pinch-points' throughout.

The IAG policy particularly focuses on equality of opportunity and providing an inclusive learning and working environment and in supporting learners into sustained employment, further or higher education. The policy prioritises providing free impartial advice and guidance to all learners so that they can develop sector, vocational and employability skills, confidence and independence, which helps them to make an informed career choice and their next steps.

Equity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EED&I) sit at the heart of HOET's IAG service to learners, and this is apparent in how the team work with and supports each learner in their learning journey and through to their next steps. Heart of England Training Ltd is an equal opportunity employer and training provider. 'The aim of the EED&I policy is to ensure that no job applicant, employee or learner receives less favourable terms on the grounds of or because of protected characteristics.' Equity is included in the policy to ensure that each learner is treated equally; however, this might not ensure fair outcomes for each individual, so HOET's approach goes above and beyond by embedding an equity-focused approach throughout a learners journey, to gather individual information about each learner, so that additional and or targeted support can be provided to remove barriers and ensure all individuals can succeed.'

The HOET learner selection criteria and procedures are reviewed annually to ensure that, as part of the learners' onboarding process to their programme, each individual is selected and treated based on their relevant merits and abilities. This is clear when speaking with learners that their individual needs are considered during the

recruitment and onboarding stage, informing the individual planning of learning. Learners understand where they can seek “help and know where they can go to receive support. For example, one learner engaged in the L5 Specialist Teaching Assistant in primary education stated that her educator is really helpful, supportive and helps her when working on her assignments to word information correctly.” On speaking to learners, they confirm that their “Educator is very approachable and friendly, they send additional website and information links and signpost to research information.”

The business development and marketing team works closely with each employer through a formalised sales process, which includes stringent key performance indicators (KPIs). As a result, employers are fully informed about the apprenticeship programme for their employees and their responsibilities as employers to support on-the-job training and the development of the training plan. Hairdressing and beauty therapy apprentices attend the Leicester and Rugby. In addition, business and school educators work with apprentices across a wide range of employers in various sectors, with schools as the main employer-led demand sector for their business workforce development. Employers are very much part of the onboarding programme and the curriculum development for each learner, including work placement opportunities for study programme learners based across the Birmingham, Daventry, Warwick and Quorn football academies.

Employers are rigorously checked through contact with the HOET business development employer engagement team, who contact each employer, and arrange a discussion to focusing on their responsibilities, policies, and procedures to be followed, and share the relevant apprentice/learner handbook. Employers in the hairdressing and beauty therapy sectors have two flexible options to choose from for their employees, either their learner can attend the HOET academy on a one day per week day-release option, or work full-time in their workplace with two/three week visits arranged by their educator to deliver sessions and organise progress reviews with the learner and employer line manager.

Learner handbooks include all information relevant to the learner's learning journey, including an overview of an apprenticeship, the relevant funding rules overview, details of the learner enrolment, induction, recognising prior learning (RPL), maths and English functional skills, safeguarding and prevent, British values (BV), EED&I, health and safety (H&S), and use of Artificial Intelligence which includes plagiarism guidance, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), employment law, academy behaviour, support, extras and feedback mechanisms are all covered during employer discussions and a member of the BDM team.

Initial assessment of each learner's prior knowledge, skills, and school or employment background is assessed in granular detail, using the Basic Key Skills Builder (BKSB) online platform. Initial and diagnostic tests are completed so that the BKSB scorecard can be used to identify where a learner's individual development needs are, with a clear focus on acknowledging prior learning and experiences.



Learners are taken through their onboarding process with an embedded approach to a learner-centred enrolment and delivery process and induction welcome meetings take place.

Results from the BKSb assessments, including a knowledge, skills and behaviours assessment, are then used to inform a learner's learning journey on their PoS or Training Plan for an apprenticeship with targeted IAG and CEIAG completely embedded into all activities. The learners' enrolment and induction follow on from the initial assessment process, and the application is then confirmed. Apprentices will also attend a workplace induction relating to their job role and employment responsibilities. Once an HOET educator is allocated to a learner, the learning journey is confirmed with clear objectives set and welfare checks completed. On and off-the-job training is set with time-bound progress reviews, assessments, and any actions for the learner to work on. Learners are taken through their e-portfolio platform and how to access learning resources, including functional skills English and maths, via the BKSb platform.

HOET place a high priority on identifying a learner's additional learning needs (ALN). Individual needs may require additional sessions for a learner, or a more targeted and specialist approach to support a learner who has been identified with SEND needs or has an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) with a relevant and experienced member of the team assigned to each individual, where a need has been identified. HOET has designed a learner's 'Discovery Programme' that identifies an individual learner's needs through initial assessment processes, skill scans, and discussions. The Discovery programme involves employers, parents, guardians and the educator to ensure that a learner identified with a SEND need is provided with a bespoke learning programme that will successfully support them in their studies.

Learners make good use of the HOET website to find prior information about their intended course or apprenticeship standard. The website provides a Skills Boost section as an added-value resource for learners. Learners report that the website is 'very informative and helpful' to support their programme decision choice and that it is user-friendly, with positive learner feedback on the content and accessibility. Learners have a wide range of online resources to use during their learning journey as well as access to external visits, speakers, visits and the football academy careers progression programme. Learners are introduced to the online careers tool, Explore Your Options, which features tiles and information on career options across various sectors. Learners are provided with academy-specific Instagram accounts which showcase live job vacancies and learner success stories.

A number of staff on the sports coaching and educator team were former learners on the Pro Direct football progression programme at HOET and have now progressed into coaching roles within one of the academies. The Pro Direct programme is a national academy-standard pathway that provides opportunities for learners to also play for the Pro Direct team as part of their PoS. The HOET Pro Direct soccer

academy curriculum offers full-time education and football programmes for ambitious 16-19 year olds, combining the Union of European football Academy (UEFA) coaching, professional training, and awarding body academic qualifications, to create pathways into university, United States scholarships, semi-professional contracts, or careers in sport. Key features include experienced coaches, top facilities, brand engagement, and holistic player development focused on success on and off the pitch, including playing for the Pro Direct football team at a representational level.

HOET is very mindful of and extremely careful about online safety, fully complies with the GDPR and safeguarding legislation, and provides learners with detailed information about the safe use of AI and other online platforms. HOET ensures the safety of learners attending an academy, including during sports, by restricting public use from 9am-4.30 pm. Designated Safeguarding Leads are assigned to each academy and are on hand to advise and support learners and staff.

Staff are appropriately qualified for their roles within HOET. Three staff hold specific L3/L4 SEND qualifications. Two staff are trained in safeguarding training with Warwickshire County Council, two have achieved the L4 Society for Education and training (ETF) Certificate in Education and Training, two assessors hold their assessor qualification, one staff member is qualified as a L3 apprenticeship learning manager with more CPD qualifications planned in for the team during 2026. All staff are taken through an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and the HOET Safer Recruitment Policy procedures.

HOET provides a wide range of staff CPD opportunities for both sector-specific upskilling and wider training as part of their annual CPD plan, with staff development weeks and bi-monthly sessions organised. All staff are involved in IAG as part of their learner support responsibilities within the very appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) programme. Staff are provided with a personal development approach to their own training. Staff are provided with opportunities to engage in professional qualifications, including Team Leader L3 and L5 management apprenticeships. The L3 IAG qualification is offered to staff with the intention for the L4 and L6 qualifications to be available during the 2026 CPD planning.

The HOET delivery team includes two L4 SEND-qualified staff who provide individual IAG for SEND. ALN, EHCP, autism, attention, deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The wide CPD programme embeds IAG for staff, including training on EED&I, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) plus sessions, prevent, county lines delivered by the regional prevent coordinator and Ideologies training, the National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN) four-day training as well as a wide range of support delivery resources. HOET organises a national summer conference that covers a wide range of quality and curriculum aspects, engaging all staff in activities such as working in breakout groups to gather and judge the evidence base to contribute to the self-assessment report and quality improvement planning.



## The difference the IAG makes to recipients and the overall impact

All staff interviewed discussed examples of how IAG and CEIAG contribute to learners' experiences and to positive outcomes for all learners. Learners report that they improve their confidence, self-esteem, motivation, communication, and sector-specific employability skills, which help them in both life and in pursuing their career goals. This is through the helpful and supportive IAG and CEIAG that they receive from staff, who have an 'open door policy to support.

The HOET Quality Policy 'sets out Heart of England Training Ltd's commitment to delivering high-quality education and training across apprenticeships and full-time study programmes. It integrates strategic quality objectives and operational IQA processes to ensure compliance with DfE, Ofsted, and awarding body standards.' It is the intention of Heart of England Training Ltd.'s strategic plan to continue to deliver a high standard and quality of education and training to all its learners and to the satisfaction of major stakeholders.' This is evident in everything that HOET do to support all learners through to achieving their qualifications, scholarships where appropriate, and moving forward into a positive career destination. The policy states that it will 'ensure effective governance, the leadership and management of quality assurance include high expectations and measures of the curriculum content and sequencing and how it supports the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours.

HOET's quality measures also include the impact of the curriculum on learning outcomes, learner progression, and learner performance, measured against the DfE national qualification achievement rates (NAR), the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework (AAF), peer benchmarking, and sector expectations. The QAR data currently sits at 71% against the HOET KPI target of 71% and is good, with pass rates for PoS at 97% overall. PoS learners achieved 74% overall and an 88% pass rate. Learner feedback is strong, with the IAG service reported by apprentice learners at a 98% positive outcome, and 100% of learners feeling safe and 98% by PoS learners and 100% feel safe

Learners report that the HOET team are 'really nice and welcoming, with supportive tutors and help them to learn by modelling how to work with a client in a hairdressing salon environment.' Learners can discuss the wider skills development they appreciate, including IAG, focusing on what a good diet is, health and exercise, working in salon environments, and staying healthy and considering their diet as an active sports coach. Apprentices on the Teaching Assistant apprenticeship talk about the support, guidance, and help their educators provide on classroom management, tackling assignments, and researching teaching methodology.

When speaking with employers, they are highly pleased with the IAG service and support that their learners receive, including the information provided about the course/apprenticeship structure and content. The work that HOET undertakes to provide an Academy Trust is vital in their workforce development planning for

teaching assistant capacity in their academies, and they have high praise for the IAG service received. They report high apprentice achievement rates, with their apprentices securing permanent positions. Other employers interviewed confirm that HOET is a preferred provider for their workforce, supporting staff capacity and upskilling in their sector.

Since the last matrix review, HOET has continued to make significant changes, further developing its already well-established IAG and CEIAG services and provision for all learners, and its CPD for staff to ensure competence and the high levels of professionalism demonstrated. This is evident in the HOET approach to self-assessment and quality improvement planning that includes IAG and CEIAG content development as a high priority.

## What is working particularly well

A number of strengths/areas that are working particularly well were identified during the assessment, which are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- HOET have a highly experienced SLT, who have developed a strong strategic business direction, plan and priorities for IAG and CEIAG and which are fully embedded into the main apprenticeship and PoS provision. Decisions are made through a collaborative approach that involves employers and aligns with the LSIP and regional workforce development priorities to inform curriculum design and delivery, also informed by local market intelligence (LMI) and demographic data. HOET has developed strong, sustained employer partnerships to help shape the curriculum, meet learner goals and career aspirations and employer workforce development. (1.1)
- The SLT and management team have created a very welcoming and inclusive learning and working environment with an effectively designed Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, which has established a culture of equality of opportunity across the organisation. Staff demonstrate a high priority for the duty of care to their learners and provide an equitable learning and working environment that fosters a warm, community-focused atmosphere where everyone has an opportunity to succeed in their chosen career pathway. SEND and ALN needs are a high priority, with a clear emphasis on including learners who are neurodivergent and a wide variety of learner needs. (1.2)
- All learners and staff spoken to during this review accreditation process feel safe at HOET. Learners know who to contact in the event of a concern and what to do if they do not feel safe and they report that they appreciate the wraparound care provided by the SLT, who ensure a safe and inclusive learning and working environment, including when working in the academies and online.(1.3)

- Learner and staff health and well-being are a strategic priority at HOET. Learners report that their individual well-being needs are carefully considered during their programme and appropriate adjustments are made to support them where needed. All staff members report that they are exceptionally well looked after, with their individual needs considered and catered for at work. (1.4)
- Staff are provided with a wide range of bespoke CPD opportunities to enhance their already strong sector knowledge, expertise and industry qualifications that they use well to give effective IAG and CEIAG services to learners and employers. The SLT have committed to providing a significant investment in workforce development at HOET. Staff skills, competencies, and expertise shine through their work with learners. This includes sharing their sector-specific IAG to help a learner develop new, higher-level hairdressing and beauty therapy skills. sports coaching and teaching assistant skills and behaviours that they can use in their job roles and future career pathways. (2.3)
- The SLT are committed to providing the best possible IAG and CEIAG resources to support a learner through their programme. Learners and employers confirm that the IAG services provided by HOET staff are of high quality and provide the workforce with the expertise the industry needs. Learners understand the career opportunities open to them in their sector and the excellent progression pathways, particularly for sports football academy PoS learners and the opportunity for being successful in securing an American soccer scholarship (2.2-2.4)
- HOET have developed strong, long-lasting employer engagement partnerships within the sector and is a provider of choice for the majority of learners and employers, with a comprehensive business development and employer engagement approach to meet future specialist technical engineering workforce development needs. (2.7)
- Employers are very engaged in helping to shape the design of the curriculum and programme content, with direct input to structure a curriculum that provides learners with the latest vocational sector and professional skills and helps them acquire appropriate professional behaviours that employers demand in the workplace. (4.1)
- HOET provides a well-structured and robust curriculum and learning journey for each apprenticeship standard, with clear career progression pathways into a positive destination of their choice. The HOET offer for learners interested in progressing into an educator or support role demonstrates the SLT's strong commitment to its own workforce development. (4.3)
- Intended outcomes for learners are clearly defined in the Strategic Plan and IAG Policy, with targeted career pathways for learners to progress through to future job roles in their sector of choice. Learner achievement rates are high, as is

learner attendance, with few breaks in learning during an apprenticeship and a low number of withdrawals. Learners report that they develop improved confidence, resilience and personal skills, along with their employability skills. (7.1)

- A comprehensive quality policy for assurance and a continuous development framework and processes have been developed to ensure that learner and employer needs and aspirations are placed at the heart of the provision, and the best possible learning and work experience for learners takes place.

Learner progress, achievement and progression pathways are rigorously recorded, analysed, and reported on throughout the organisation, so that all staff, learners themselves, and employers know where a learner is and at which stage of their learning journey. Data is investigated and routinely analysed to inform continuous development and improvement processes, and decisions are made to determine the future direction of the curriculum offer, including rich opportunities to enhance a learner's experience and career progression at HOET. (7.1/7.2)

## Development suggestions

Development suggestions are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement and a way for an Assessor to add value e.g. where the service is of a high quality, development areas are offered to help the service be even better than it already is, or to give insight into practices seen elsewhere. There is no correlation between the number of strengths and development suggestions. Where development areas are greater in number this is not intended to indicate that the information, advice and guidance service is in any way lacking. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- Whilst HOET have strong and detailed SLT plans in place, the team might find it helpful if a Strategic Curriculum Plan were developed that included the three educational and skills I's of Intent, Implementation, and Impact at high/senior level and was linked to and informed by the HOET's approach to business and planning and the matrix Standard element 1-Purpose. (E1.1)
- The HOET policy and approach to Safeguarding and prevent is extremely robust. The team, however, might wish to consider moving to monthly team meetings for intervention, analysis reporting and support, as learner personal safety, mental health and welfare needs may be increasing within the sector. (1.3/4).
- HOET's CPD programme is extensive for staff and well supported and resourced by the SLT. However, the SLT may consider facilitating the L4 and L6 IAG-

specific qualification opportunities for staff who are specialising in CEIAG support for learners during their learning journey. (2.2)

- Whilst the apprenticeship provision is strong and learners report their satisfaction with their apprenticeship and delivery from their educators, the team might wish to consider developing an apprentice peer apprenticeship support network and forum, so that they can discuss common themes, career aspirations and opportunities and enjoy peers' similar experiences in their apprenticeship and at work. (4.3)
- The HOET Discovery Programme for learners is a really positive and supportive strategy as part of the learner onboarding process. However, the team might find it useful to complete half-year or annual data impact reports to inform updates to the SEND strategic and operational approach and to inform SAR and QIP processes. (7.1)



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2. During the period of accreditation satisfy The Growth Company that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the **matrix** Standard via the annual continuous improvement checks and the three-year accreditation review.
3. Complete annual continuous improvement checks in a timely way, it is expected these will be carried out annually by the accreditation anniversary date.
4. Inform The Growth Company or their Assessor if the key contact name/contact details change.
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6. Inform The Growth Company of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation; email: [matrixStandard@growthco.uk](mailto:matrixStandard@growthco.uk).
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