
Approval process report

Hidden Hearing Limited, Hearing aid dispenser, 2023-24

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve hearing aid dispenser programmes at Hidden Hearing Limited. This report captures the process we have undertaken to assess the institution and programme(s) against our standards, to ensure those who complete the proposed programme(s) are fit to practice.

We have:

- Reviewed the institution against our institution level standards and found our standards are met in this area. We will need to review several areas through stage 2 of the process.
- Reviewed the programme(s) against our programme level standards and found our standards are met in this area [following exploration of key themes through quality activities]
- Recommended all standards are met, and that the programme(s) should be approved
- Decided that all standards are met, and that the programme(s)] is approved

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The programme(s) meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. The approval process was not referred from another process.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• whether the programme(s) is approved
Next steps	Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The provider's next performance review will be in the 2024-25 academic year

Included within this report

Section 1: About this assessment.....	3
About us	3
Our standards	3
Our regulatory approach.....	3
The approval process	3
How we make our decisions.....	4
The assessment panel for this review.....	4
Section 2: Institution-level assessment.....	4
The education provider context.....	4
Practice areas delivered by the education provider.....	5
Institution performance data	5
The route through stage 1	7
Admissions	7
Management and governance.....	9
Quality, monitoring, and evaluation	11
Learners	12
Outcomes from stage 1	14
Section 3: Programme-level assessment.....	16
Programmes considered through this assessment	16
Stage 2 assessment – provider submission	16
Quality themes identified for further exploration	17
Quality theme 1 – education provider’s reflections on learner satisfaction, learners not continuing, and learners in employment or further study	17
Section 4: Findings.....	18
Conditions	18
Overall findings on how standards are met.....	18
Section 5: Referrals.....	22
Recommendations.....	22
Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes	22
Assessment panel recommendation	22
Education and Training Committee decision	22
Appendix 1 – summary report.....	23
Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution.....	25

Section 1: About this assessment

About us

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

This is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the programme(s) detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the programme(s) approval / ongoing approval.

Our standards

We approve education providers and programmes that meet our education standards. Individuals who complete approved programmes will meet proficiency standards, which set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Our regulatory approach

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of programme clusters and programmes. Through our processes, we:

- enable bespoke, proportionate and effective regulatory engagement with education providers;
- use data and intelligence to enable effective risk-based decision making; and
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards.

Providers and programmes are [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to ongoing monitoring. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

The approval process

Institutions and programmes must be approved by us before they can run. The approval process is formed of two stages:

- Stage 1 – we take assurance that institution level standards are met by the institution delivering the proposed programme(s)
- Stage 2 – we assess to be assured that programme level standards are met by each proposed programme

Through the approval process, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess whether providers and programmes meet standards based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. Our standards are split along institution and programme level lines, and we take assurance at the provider level wherever possible.

This report focuses on the assessment of the self-reflective portfolio and evidence.

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to design quality assurance assessments, and assess evidence and information relevant to the assessment. Visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make the decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee takes decisions through different levels depending on the routines and impact of the decision, and where appropriate meets in public. Their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

The assessment panel for this review

We appointed the following panel members to support this review:

Joanna Lemanska	Lead visitor, hearing aid dispenser
Robert MacKinnon	Lead visitor, hearing aid dispenser, clinical scientist
John Archibald	Education Quality Officer
Tracey Samuel-Smith	Education Manager

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers one HCPC-approved programme across one profession. It is a private provider and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2013. All learners are full-time employees of Hidden Hearing Limited upon joining the programme. The education provider is a wholly owned subsidiary of Demant, a global healthcare provider. The currently approved programme has been fully employer funded for the past 10 years with no plans to

reduce the availability of funding and support. Academic delivery takes place in Buxton, Derbyshire.

The proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme and mirrors the approved programme run at the education provider. The programme will be funded differently to the currently approved programme. The proposed programme, as a degree apprenticeship programme, is funded by the Office for Students (OfS).

The proposed programme prepares learners for their hearing aid dispenser roles within the education provider, once registered. Practice-based learning is located within a branch of the education provider. All practice educators are hearing aid dispensers employed by the education provider within the same management structure as learners.

The education provider engaged with the annual monitoring assessment process in the legacy model of quality assurance in 2019. When we considered the education provider's response to the request for further evidence, we were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence that the standards continue to be met and recommend that the programme remains approved.

The education provider engaged with the performance review process in the current model of quality assurance in 2021 as part of the pilot of the quality assurance model. We made the decision the next engagement with the performance review process should be in two years (the 2022-23 academic year). The education provider engaged with the performance review process in the current model of quality assurance in 2022. The outcome of this was the education provider should next engage with monitoring in two years, the 2024-25 academic year.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programme awards can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Hearing Aid Dispenser	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2013

Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks, and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes.

This data is for existing provision at the institution, and does not include the proposed programme(s).

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	40	70	2024	<p>The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision.</p> <p>We were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider and had no questions in this area.</p>
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	N/A	2020-21	<p>There is no data available for this data point.</p> <p>We explored this by through quality theme 1. We were satisfied with the education provider’s response and had no further questions in this area.</p>
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	N/A	2020-21	<p>There is no data available for this data point.</p> <p>We explored this by through quality theme 1. We were satisfied with the education provider’s response and had no further questions in this area.</p>
Learner positivity score	N/A	N/A	2023	<p>There is no data available for this data point. We asked the education provider to consider if they wanted to establish ongoing data reporting for this and other data points through</p>

				<p>this performance review assessment.</p> <p>We explored this by through quality theme 1. We were satisfied with the education provider's response and had no further questions in this area.</p>
--	--	--	--	--

The route through stage 1

Institutions which run HCPC-approved provision have previously demonstrated that they meet institution-level standards. When an existing institution proposes a new programme, we undertake an internal review of whether we need to undertake a full partner-led review against our institution level standards, or whether we can take assurance that the proposed programme(s) aligns with existing provision.

As part of the request to approve the proposed programme(s), the education provider supplied information to show alignment in the following areas.

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Information for applicants –**
 - The education provider provides a brochure to applicants with information about how to apply to the programme, including how the education provider assesses character and health. The brochure explains the structure of the programme, expectations of learners, and the requirements to complete the programme.
 - Initial interviews conducted with the education provider's Human Resources (HR) business partners provide answers to any questions applicants may have.
 - The proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme. Information for applicants will reflect this. We will need to assess this during stage 2 of the process.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health –**
 - The education provider assesses English proficiency by an on-line psychometric profile.
 - Level 2 English is a mandatory institution-level requirement for apprenticeship learners. This is confirmed as part of eligibility checks.
 - The education provider assesses character at interview and via a work style on-line questionnaire. They assess health through self-disclosure as part of the application process.
 - An enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is completed for all learners. This is used to gain information on any previous character concerns which may prevent registration with HCPC.

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L) –**
 - The education provider assesses AP(E)L at a personal one-to-one interview with applicants. They ensure applicants are eligible to apply for registration with HCPC and for apprenticeship funding. A skill scan is also completed to assess the need for any adjustment to learning. This is to meet apprenticeship funding rules and to also ensure learners have maths and English to the required Level 2 standard, for example GCSE grades 4 to 9.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion –**
 - The education provider ensures this through the HR Dignity At Work policy. They are an equal opportunities employer. Recruitment policies are reviewed regularly to ensure individuals are considered based on their merits and abilities. The Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure they are relevant to the job and are not disproportionate.
 - The education provider monitors applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and age as part of recruitment. This is to ensure the HR Dignity At Work policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups who may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in the education provider.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: The proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme. Information for applicants will need to be amended to reflect this. We will need to ensure information for applicants and education provider is accurate.

Management and governance

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Ability to deliver provision to expected threshold level of entry to the Register¹ –**
 - The education provider ensures this through the Programme Steering Group process. This group establishes clear standards and expectations for programme delivery, including the minimum requirements for entry to the Register. It monitors programme delivery in meeting the required standards by providing feedback, evaluation, and undertaking quality assurance activities. This involves a review of the programme, assessments, and learner performance data to identify issues.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Sustainability of provision –**
 - The education provider ensures this through its Company Workforce Planning process. Workforce planning is essential to the sustainable success of the education provider. They ensure the sustainability of training provision by retaining learners through personal and professional development, and by having a programme in place to help develop individuals in their careers.
 - Each region of the education provider is subject to detailed annual budgeting. This allows for employee planning and any growth of the workforce. This ensures the education provider delivers new hearing aid dispensers to fit with business needs.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Effective programme delivery –**
 - The education provider ensures this through its Line Management process. This process provides support, guidance, and oversight to the programme team, so they understand their roles and responsibilities. Resources are managed by the Team Lead.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Effective staff management and development –**
 - The education provider ensures this through its Company Performance Development and Development Dialogue processes. These allow the workforce to achieve organisational goals. As part of them, the

¹ This is focused on ensuring providers are able to deliver qualifications at or equivalent to the level(s) in SET 1, as required for the profession(s) proposed

programme team have Regular Quarterly Development Dialogue meetings and Performance Development meetings.

- Regular Quarterly Development Dialogue meetings are used for the programme team to discuss progress, challenges, and goals on a quarterly cycle. The education provider provides feedback and support to address any issues and keep performance on track. During these meetings, the education provider identifies areas which may need support or training to enhance skills and performance. They also recognise and celebrate achievement and provide feedback to support growth. The education provider has regular touchpoints with staff.
- Performance development meetings are held annually and are a result of the quarterly development dialogues. This allows the education provider to review development and achievement over the past year and plan for future career goals and development. It sets the coming years' goals to meet the personal development and organisational needs.
- Both meetings are available via a mobile app called Success Factors. This links through the HR department. It allows the education provider to provide and request feedback.
- An internal online system is used for recording achievement, goals, and development on a quarterly and annual basis.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level –**
 - The education provider does not require any external partnerships for the delivery of the programme.
 - As this proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme, the education provider will work with new stakeholders such as the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), Department for Education (DfE), and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE).
 - These partnerships are new due to the development of the proposed programme. We will need to assess the impact of these during Stage 2 of the process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: As this proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme, the education provider will work with new stakeholders such as Ofsted, Department for Education (DfE), Office for Students (OfS), and IfATE. We will need to ensure the systems for programme delivery, and the processes for establishing and maintaining partnerships are effective.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality –**
 - Level 5 demonstrates knowledge of a subject which goes beyond the level taught at secondary education, such as Foundation degree.
 - The external examiner provides a written report on how the education provider compares to others regarding delivery and assessment.
 - External verification and examination are part of the Programme Steering Group (Exam Board). The quality has been adjusted to reflect the Level 5 apprentice standard for hearing aid dispensers. We will need to assess this during stage 2 of the process.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments –**
 - The education provider ensures this through its Practice Education process. Practice educators supervise and sign-off learners who have completed the Domiciliary Sign-Off process. This process allows learners to practice under indirect supervision for the remainder of the programme.
 - Learners complete a logbook daily. There are weekly case reviews and regular 1-2-1 grading days where learners are observed directly by their practice educators. They are also assessed on progress and development needs. The learner review process allows for regular touch points between the training team, the learner, and the employer.
 - Practice educators are HCPC-registered as a hearing aid dispenser for at least a year and have successfully completed the education provider's practice educator training. This training is delivered by the practice educator supervisor.
 - Practice educators are subject to ongoing training. Work locations are subject to risk assessments.
 - The education provider does not sub-contract any part of practice-based learning.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Learner involvement –**
 - A learner representative is peer elected on each cohort. They are asked to provide formal feedback to the Steering Group Committee. The learner representative also provides informal feedback to the Tutors throughout the programme.
 - All learners are presented with a questionnaire based on the National Student Survey questionnaire. Results and feedback are presented at the Steering Group Committee meeting.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Service user and carer involvement –**
 - The education provider ensures this through its Curriculum Development Group process. Service users and carers are members of the Curriculum Development Group. They ensure their perspectives, experiences, and priorities are integrated into the development of the curriculum.
 - The education provider has one service user, and they are involved as a guest speaker. The education provider has developed a relationship with another service user. Hearing-impaired colleagues at the education provider are involved in delivering a teaching session.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: To ensure academic quality of programmes, external verification and examination are part of the Programme Steering Group (Exam Board). The quality has been adjusted to reflect the level 5 apprentice standard for hearing aid dispensers. The exam board has been aligned to the requirements of the fully integrated End Point Assessment (EPA). This includes the recruitment of a new external examiner who has overall decision on the award. We will need to ensure there is relevant professional input in the external review of the assessment process.

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support –**
 - The education provider ensures this through its Pastoral Care process. Pastoral care is provided from the House Co-ordinator. They are an employee of the education provider and are not involved in programme delivery.
 - Learners can also use Lifeworks, an anonymous online employee support service.
 - The whistleblowing policy is published on internal intranet site and available to all. The policy allows learners to report concerns.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Ongoing suitability –**
 - The education provider ensures this through the line management of learners through the structure of the business. Regular learner reviews are held as tri-party meetings to discuss ongoing development, character, and health.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.

- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E) –**
 - The education provider ensures IPE is built into the professional practice elements of the curriculum and periods of practice-based learning. The importance of interprofessional relationships is taught throughout the curriculum and practice education. This gives learners first-hand experience of developing these relationships.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion –**
 - The education provider ensures this through its Equality and Diversity policy.
 - The education provider annually collates data from Equality Monitoring forms which are included in the recruitment of all employees. The education provider does not work to any set equality ratios. All employee-based decisions are based on the individual skill, knowledge and experience of the individual concerned regardless of their ethnicity or diversity.
 - Statutory reporting is carried out by the Head of Finance as part of annual reporting processes.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity –**
 - Marking schemes are used with internal quality assurance checks via moderation. The external examiner moderates a random cross section and provides a written report to the Steering Group.
 - The education provider's Examination Protocol ensures objectivity. The examination standards have been amended to accommodate the end point assessment criteria of the Level-5 apprenticeship.
 - To ensure academic quality of programmes, external verification and examination are part of the Programme Steering Group (Exam Board). The quality has been adjusted to reflect the level 5 apprentice standard for hearing aid dispensers. The exam board has been aligned to the requirements of the fully integrated End Point Assessment (EPA). This includes the recruitment of a new external examiner who has overall decision on the award. We will need to ensure the education provider is following existing processes through stage 2 of the approval process.

- **Progression and achievement –**
 - The education provider ensures this through an ongoing process throughout the programme. Expectations are set at the outset of the programme, with a minimum attendance of 90%. Weekly exams are used to monitor learners' retention of learning.
 - Logbooks are completed to monitor progression. Summative exams need to be passed to progress to the next stage of the programme.
 - All learners are aware they must pass the programme to be eligible to apply for HCPC registration.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Appeals –**
 - The education provider ensures this through its Appeals process. If a learner considers their result, either overall or in any one single area, is a result of a failing in the assessment process, they have the right to appeal against the result.
 - Learners are not able to appeal against a specific mark or score unless they consider an unfair or inappropriate examination process caused the result. If a learner makes an appeal, another examiner will second mark the assessment. This is remarked according to the objective-marking scheme or model answers without sight of the original marking.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: The education provider's Examination Protocol ensures objectivity in assessments. The examination standards have been amended to accommodate the end point assessment criteria of the Level-5 apprenticeship. As it has changed to reflect the new programme, we will need to assess it further through stage 2 of the approval process.

Outcomes from stage 1

We decided to progress to stage 2 of the process without further review through stage 1, due to the clear alignment of the new provision within existing institutional structures, as noted through the previous section.

We will need to review the following areas through stage 2 of the process:

SET 2.1 The admissions process must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

The proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme. Information for applicants will need to be amended to reflect this. We will need to ensure information for applicants and education provider is accurate.

SET 3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.

As this proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme, the education provider will work with new stakeholders such as the Ofsted, Department for Education (DfE), Office for Students (OfS), and IfATE. We will need to ensure the processes for establishing and maintaining partnerships are effective.

SET 3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

The proposed programme will incorporate a different funding stream. We will need to ensure there is effective management and clear responsibility for the programme.

SET 3.4 The programme must have regular and effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

As this proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme, the education provider will work with new stakeholders such as Ofsted, Department for Education (DfE), Office for Students (OfS), and IfATE. They will also be subject to new measures and regulations. We will need to ensure the systems for programme delivery are effective.

SET 6.5 The assessment methods used must be appropriate to, and effective at, measuring the learning outcomes.

The proposed programme will incorporate an end point assessment into the assessments. We will need to ensure the methods used to assess learners helps the education provider to decide whether the learning outcomes of the programme have been met.

SET 6.7 The education provider must ensure that at least one external examiner for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register

To ensure academic quality of programmes, external verification and examination are part of the Programme Steering Group (Exam Board). The quality has been adjusted to reflect the level 5 apprentice standard for hearing aid dispensers. The exam board has been aligned to the requirements of the fully integrated End Point Assessment (EPA). This includes the recruitment of a new external examiner who has overall decision on the award. We will need to ensure the education provider is following existing processes. If not, we will need to ensure the external examiner on the proposed programmes is suitably qualified and experienced.

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:

- Seven members of the education provider's training team, including two managers and programme lead are involved with delivery and management of the programme.

- Training takes place at the education provider’s residential training centre, or at another company location. All equipment is purchased and owned by the education provider.
- The education provider has an internal stock provision process which ensures all equipment and other resources will be in place before the start of each cohort.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Section 3: Programme-level assessment

Programmes considered through this assessment

Programme name	Mode of study	Profession (including modality) / entitlement	Proposed learner number, and frequency	Proposed start date
Award in Hearing Aid Dispensing Competence (Apprenticeship)	WBL (Work based learning)	Hearing aid dispenser	20 learners, 2 cohorts	29 June 2024

Stage 2 assessment – provider submission

We asked the education provider to provide a bespoke response to the Stage 2 assessment. This was to include the Stage 1 (institution level) standards outlined earlier in the report. This also included specific questions relating to the Stage 2 (programme level) standards below:

SET 2.6 There must be an appropriate and effective process for assessing applicants’ prior learning and experience.

Learners are being moved onto the proposed programme once it is approved by using the education provider’s AP(E)L process. We will need to review the AP(E)L process, so we can ensure these learners are able to transfer onto the apprenticeship programme once approved. We will also need to know about the education provider’s plans for dealing with the apprenticeship learners.

SET 3.12 The resources to support learning in all settings must be effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme, and must be accessible to all learners and educators.

The proposed programme has a learner cohort of 15 and will run twice a year. The currently approved programme has 40 learners and runs once a year. If both

programmes run at the same time, there will be an increase in learner numbers. We will need to ensure there are an appropriate number of:

1. staff with the necessary knowledge and expertise;
2. practice educators who are appropriately qualified and experienced;
3. service users and carers; and
4. resources for the proposed programme to be delivered effectively.

In addition, we received a full response to the programme level standards.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their submission. Based on our understanding, we defined and undertook the following quality assurance activities linked to the quality themes referenced below. This allowed us to consider whether the education provider met our standards.

We have reported on how the provider meets standards, including the areas below, through the [Findings section](#).

Quality theme 1 – education provider’s reflections on learner satisfaction, learners not continuing, and learners in employment or further study

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the education provider had carried out an internal survey in terms of learner satisfaction. They understood the survey was designed to be the equivalent of the NSS about learner satisfaction. The visitors noted the education provider had not provided any data regarding the percentage of learners not completing the existing programme, and those in employment and / or training. The visitors were unsure how the education provider had performed within these areas. They were also unsure of the education provider’s reflections on their performance. The visitors therefore sought more information about these areas.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider informed us the two latest cohorts had completed surveys. They also stated the aggregate completion rate is 76%. We were informed 98% of learners who completed, remained in employment with the education provider. They reflected that the reason those who did not complete the programme was due to a learner decision, that the programme was not right for them. This was predominately due to repeated formative assessment failures, or a summative assessment failure post any re-sit opportunity. We understood the education provider selects learners they consider will be successful on the programme. There is a multi-stage selection and admissions process and are supportive of their employees and learners. The education provider outlined they are

'delighted' 98% of all graduates remain in employment with them. They considered this reflected their drive to become the employer of choice within the profession.

The visitors were satisfied the evidence assured them the education provider had processes to reflect on learner satisfaction, the percentage of learners not completing the existing programme, and those in employment and / or training.

Section 4: Findings

This section details the visitors' findings from their review through stage 2, including any requirements set, and a summary of their overall findings.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before providers or programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is an issue with the education provider's approach to meeting a standard. This may mean that we have evidence that standards are not met at this time, or the education provider's planned approach is not suitable.

The visitors were satisfied that no conditions were required to satisfy them that all standards are met. The visitors' findings, including why no conditions were required, are presented below.

Overall findings on how standards are met

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings against the programme-level standards. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register** – this standard is covered through institution-level assessment.

- **SET 2: Programme admissions** –
 - All information is provided for applicants to make an informed decision on their suitability and commitment to undertake the programme and for the education provider to be satisfied of their eligibility. A recruitment brochure gives an overview of the programme, including a timeline, accommodation, and subsistence allowances. Applicants undertake a structured 1-2-1 interview. An online presentation is carried out with successful applicants by the programme team. This allows learners to ask any outstanding questions and meet trainers and other learners. Applicants are invited to an open day held at the education provider. This includes a sample lecture, the opportunity for applicants to see accommodation and facilities, and get to know other learners and programme team before any offer is made.

- Applicants are required to have 4 GCSEs at grade A* - C, two of which must be Maths and English. This meets the apprenticeship requirement of Maths and English at Level 2 minimum.
 - An AP(E)L policy is in place and is used to consider any adjustment to individual learning required to meet funding rules. All AP(E)L will have been delivered on the education provider's currently approved programme.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership –**
 - The education provider has new stakeholder partnerships in place to deliver the proposed programme. For example, the Department for Education, with whom they meet monthly. The education provider will work with Ofsted and had produced an Ofsted visit and inspection policy.
 - External examiners provide verification as part of the internal quality assurance process. Learners can feedback through methods such as the learner survey based on the NSS. The proposed programme will have the additional requirement of individual learner reviews. These are meetings which take place every six to eight weeks, between the learner, programme team and the learner's local employer. These review the progress of learners.
 - All practice-based learning is provided by the education provider. None are outsourced or sub-contracted. All learners are employed to satisfy a strategic business need for sustainability and growth as identified in the education provider's five-year business plan. Learners are recruited when the education provider has a business need.
 - The programme has five FTE tutors and two FTE of management. Four tutors are HCPC registered hearing aid dispensers. One holds a teaching qualification and has prior experience of delivering an apprenticeship programme. The managers are HCPC registered hearing aid dispensers. All practice educators are HCPC registered hearing aid dispensers. Any visiting lecturers are employed on the strength of their knowledge. The apprenticeship lead has experience of apprenticeship administration within healthcare.
 - The proposed programme will incorporate a different funding stream. They will integrate the new responsibilities of apprenticeship lead role and funding management with the programme administration and management. This plan incorporated several strands. For example, the education provider have outlined the roles and responsibilities of the apprenticeship lead within the overall programme management structure, to ensure clarity and accountability in managing the apprenticeship programme.
 - The Programme Lead is qualified and registered on the relevant part of the Register. The Head of Professional Services is the person with overall responsibility for the programme. They are also qualified and on the relevant part of the Register. They are an elected board member of

British Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists (BSHAA) and sits on the National Community Hearing Association (NCHA) Clinical Advice and Guidance committee.

- Both programmes will run in parallel with a mixed cohort of 20 learners and will run twice a year. The education provider does not plan to increase the number of learners from the already approved numbers.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery –**
 - The apprenticeship programme is based on the existing approved programme. There are no changes to how learners will need to meet the learning outcomes of the programme, and so graduates can meet the standards of proficiency.
 - The education provider has mapped the curriculum against the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours required of the apprenticeship standard ST0600.
 - The Steering Committee sits after each cohort, so annually as a minimum.
 - The curriculum development group reviews the curriculum in line with trends and developments. The Head of Professional Services is a member of BSHAA and the NCHA clinical guidance committee. Any changes to best practice and developments within the profession are passed on first hand to the programme team.
 - Service users complete consent and feedback forms. These allow the programme team to review and adapt training based on trends. It also allows learners to reflect on their practice because of service user feedback. The learner reflections are recorded in their personal development portfolios.
 - Professional behaviour and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics are taught and assessed within the professional practice module and assessed. Learners' logbooks also contain a section where practice educators record observations related to professional behaviour.
 - A blended approach is taken to the delivery of theory and practical throughout the programme.
 - Learners compile a personal development portfolio where reflective essays, personal development plans and case studies are recorded.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
 - **SET 5: Practice-based learning –**
 - After academic delivery of 20 weeks, the remainder of the programme is spent in practice-based learning. Learners carry out duties under the supervision of their practice educator. Learners completed a logbook during this time. Learners need to successfully complete the logbook as a requirement of the award.

- The learning outcomes are in line with meeting the standards of proficiency for Hearing Aid Dispensers. The structure, duration, and range of practice-based learning mirrors the existing approved programme.
 - Each learner is assigned an individual practice educator. All practice educators are HCPC registered hearing aid dispensers. Training is in place to support practice educator's development and success in the role. This training ensures practice educators are informed about the programme. Practice educators are taken from a national pool of 240 registered hearing aid dispensers. The education provider pairs up learners and practice educators to limit the distance and travel time for each. Practice educators are identified by the learner's local management team. They will typically work within 30 minutes to an hour of learners. If that is not the case, the education provider attempts to facilitate meetings, training, and observation at somewhere equidistant. Where any travel is two hours or more, overnight accommodation is provided by the education provider.
 - Training and refresher training is in place to support practice educator's development and success in the role. The training and refresher training is designed by the Practice Educator Supervisors (PES). Training is reviewed before each cohort, and updated following feedback received from the previous learner cohort and / or changes to processes. Changes are signed off by the Programme Lead.
 - Information about the programme is provided to practice educators. For example, an overview of the programme, and its requirements.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 6: Assessment –**
 - The apprenticeship standard (ST0600) is fully integrated into the programme. The end point assessment is the final HCPC exam process. This mirrors that used in the existing approved programme.
 - The external examiner makes the final decision on the award. They will sit with the exam board and review each candidate's papers, logbook, and personal development portfolio to give a final Pass or Fail. Workplace learning, implementation and assessment of professional practice is completed via practice-based learning. Professional standards are graded throughout by the practice educator.
 - The assessment methods mirror the approved programme. These methods include coursework, presentations, logbook completion, and practical examinations.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Section 5: Referrals

This section summarises any areas which require further follow-up through a separate quality assurance process (the approval, focused review, or performance review process).

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process.

Recommendations

We include recommendations when standards are met at or just above threshold level, and where there is a risk to that standard being met in the future. They do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:

- All standards are met, and therefore the programme should be approved

Education and Training Committee decision

Education and Training Committee considered the assessment panel's recommendations and the findings which support these. The education provider was also provided with the opportunity to submit any observation they had on the conclusions reached.

Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that:

- The programme is approved

Reason for this decision: The Panel accepted the visitor's recommendation that the programme should receive approval.

Appendix 1 – summary report

If the education provider does not provide observations, only this summary report (rather than the whole report) will be provided to the Education and Training Committee (Panel) to enable their decision on approval. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation, and the nature, quality and facilities of the provision.

Education provider	Case reference	Lead visitors	Quality of provision	Facilities provided
Hidden Hearing Limited	CAS-01491-G0R6G7	Joanna Lemanska and Robert MacKinnon	The programme meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.	<p>Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven members of the education provider’s training team, including two managers and programme lead are involved with delivery and management of the programme. • Training takes place at the education provider’s residential training centre, or other company location. All equipment is purchased and owned by the education provider. • The education provider has an internal stock provision process which ensures all equipment and other resources will be in place before the start of each cohort.
Programmes				
Programme name			Mode of study	Nature of provision

Award in Hearing Aid Dispensing Competence (Apprenticeship)	WBL (Work based learning)	Apprenticeship
---	---------------------------	----------------

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
Award in Hearing Aid Dispensing Competence	WBL (Work based learning)	Hearing aid dispenser			01/10/2013