

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58380

Name of lead inspector: Jai Sharda HMI

Last day of inspection: 15 April 2011

Type of provider: Voluntary organisation

Address: Voluntary Action Centre
7 Mansfield Road
Nottingham
NG1 3FB

Telephone number: 0115 934 9543

Information about the provider

1. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium, trading as Enable, is a charity established in 2003 as a consortium of 292 voluntary and community sector organisations. It receives public funding from a wide range of agencies to promote basic skills and employability for people living in the most disadvantaged communities. At the time of inspection, Enable had a contract with the Skills Funding Agency for the provision of adult safeguarded learning. Inspectors inspected and graded this provision, but they did not report on programmes funded by other public bodies, as these fell outside the scope of the inspection.
2. Enable subcontracts all of its provision to consortium members. In 2009/10, some 31 voluntary and community organisations provided learning programmes, all of which were for Skills for Life and preparation for work. All courses are accredited.
3. Enable employs 32 staff, nine of whom are directly involved in the management of adult safeguarded learning. The chief executive officer has overall responsibility for Enable's performance and for securing funding. He reports to a board of directors. The contract manager and quality improvement lead have operational responsibility for managing the subcontractors.
4. The 2001 census records 14% of Nottingham's population as belonging to a minority ethnic group, which is significantly higher than the national average. The proportion of the population whose highest qualification is at intermediate level is 15%, compared with 19% nationally. The unemployment rate for the city in 2001 was 5.3% compared with 3.4% in the rest of the country. People from black or black British backgrounds have much higher unemployment rates.
5. The following organisations provide training in preparation for life and work programmes on behalf of the provider:
 - Best
 - Co-operative Community Action
 - Ashfield Community Radio and Media Training
 - Hope Services
 - Nottingham Women's Centre
 - Nottingham Mencap
 - UK Mess Ltd

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Adult learner provision: Learning for social and personal development	917 part-time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 4
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject area	Grade
Preparation for life and work	3

Overall effectiveness

6. Enable is a satisfactory provider of adult learning. Learners develop confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Many progress into employment, further training and from one level of learning to the next. Success rates are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors praise and encourage learners well and help them build confidence. In many lessons, however, tutors do not provide activities that encourage learners to work together or to take responsibility for their own learning. In these lessons, tutors talk for too long and fail to involve learners.
7. Enable works well with a wide range of voluntary and community organisations to provide programmes that meet the needs and interests of learners, particularly those suffering from multiple disadvantages. This provision is highly effective in engaging these learners and in supporting them to develop skills to improve their life chances. Enable provides satisfactory pastoral care and support. However, initial assessment of learners' specific needs and abilities is often weak. Tutors do not use initial assessment effectively to guide learners onto appropriate programmes.
8. Enable's leaders, including its board of directors, are effective in directing the charity's work to promote social inclusion and to widen participation for learners from disadvantaged areas. They understand well the diverse needs of the

communities the provision serves. Though the voluntary organisations that provide learning programmes for Enable work very hard to provide a good quality service, Enable's managers do not always do enough to ensure that standards improve over time. For example, Enable does not make sufficient use of management information to identify why learners on some courses do particularly well while those on other programmes under-achieve. Enable has developed an appropriate range of measures to help make improvements, but it does not effectively monitor how well its learning partners support or comply with these measures.

Main findings

- Learners develop confidence, self-esteem and social skills. They enjoy their learning and the wider social and economic opportunities their enhanced confidence gives them. Many learners progress into employment, further training and from one level of learning to the next. However, attendance is poor on many programmes.
- Success rates are satisfactory at around 70% for the previous three years. Provisional data for 2010/11 suggest an in-year success rate of 75%. However, success rates on longer courses are low. The proportion of learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability is high at 33%. No significant differences exist in the performance of different groups of learners.
- Tutors praise and encourage learners to help build their confidence and keep them well-focused on tasks and learning goals. In many lessons tutors do not provide sufficiently interactive learning activities. Learners are not encouraged to work with each other. The pace is slow and tasks insufficiently challenging or individualised. Teachers of literacy, language and numeracy do not always have a specialist teaching qualification in these subjects.
- Enable works well with its subcontractors to provide a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs and interests of users, many of whom suffer from multiple disadvantages. The provision is highly effective in engaging hard-to-reach learners and supporting them to develop skills to improve their life chances.
- Well established and highly productive partnerships with a wide range of consortium members are in place to provide specialist support for disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. The provision is successful in attracting new learners who have not been engaged in learning for many years. Partnerships with employers, however, are less well developed.
- Enable and its subcontractors provide a satisfactory level of pastoral care and support. However, initial and diagnostic assessment of specific learning needs is often weak and not always used effectively to place learners on appropriate programmes. Tutors do not always use progress reviews and target setting well to meet individual learning needs.
- Enable has a clear strategic direction. Leaders use Enable's extensive network of links across the voluntary sector to create new learning opportunities for those facing severe barriers to learning. Enable's board of directors is

committed to supporting the charity's work with the voluntary sector. Enable recognises that it could further develop the directors' role in monitoring the quality of provision.

- Enable has appropriate systems in place for managing the performance of subcontractors. It recognises, however, that its arrangements for the quality monitoring and improvement of learning programmes need strengthening. Enable acknowledges that managers do not always use data on learner outcomes effectively to support management actions or to improve the performance of all learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Enable is successful in engaging hard-to-reach and disadvantaged learners and in promoting social inclusion. Promotion of equality and diversity is effective. Enable has an appropriate equality and diversity action plan but progress towards achieving planned targets is slow.
- Enable's self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The report is critical and correctly identifies the most significant improvements required. However, the self-assessment process is insufficiently inclusive. Some subcontractors do not participate fully in self-assessment. Enable requires subcontractors to gain learners' feedback but they do not always do this consistently or effectively.
- Enable's quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory but managers do not review them regularly or rigorously enough. The charity has improved its observation of teaching and learning scheme, but observers continue to over-grade lessons. Enable staff do not always follow up improvement actions following observation. Insufficient use is made of subject specialist observations.
- Managers and staff make insufficient use of data to target specific areas for improvement within learning programmes. Although the provider has a detailed quality improvement plan, the range of actions within the plan remains insufficiently focused. The monitoring of progress against improvement targets within the plan is inadequate.

What does Enable need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on longer courses by identifying the reasons for poor performance and taking corrective actions.
- Improve learners' attendance by better monitoring and follow-up of unauthorised absence.
- Improve the quality of learning sessions by ensuring that tutors make better use of learner-centred activities that challenge and enthuse learners; and by strengthening the observation of the teaching and learning process to ensure that lessons are realistically graded and that tutors receive clear, subject-specific advice about how they can improve.
- Support subcontractors to implement more robust initial assessment processes so that learners are better matched to courses that meet their needs and abilities.

- Improve the effectiveness of current quality improvement arrangements and action plans by ensuring that they are regularly and rigorously reviewed.
- Promote better participation of subcontractors in contributing to improvements by ensuring that they comply fully with Enable's quality standards.
- Implement improvements in management information systems so that data are accurate and accessible to managers.
- Develop a strategy to improve the proportion of teachers of literacy, language and numeracy who have a specialist teaching qualification in these subjects.

Summary of the views of learners as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the caring teachers
- the supportive atmosphere
- the small groups and one-to-one attention
- learning new things.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the amount of speaking and listening practice for ESOL learners
- the number of working headphones for practice tests on literacy and numeracy courses
- the opportunity to be able to continue studying in the same place.

Summary of the views of stakeholders as confirmed by inspectors

What stakeholders like:

- the supportive, responsive and accessible staff
- opportunities to network at meetings and conferences
- the good communication, particularly updates on funding and new qualifications
- opportunities to focus on quality
- being able to access funding for projects
- the good access to resources.

What stakeholders would like to see improved:

- the number of requests by Enable staff for information that has already been supplied
- the sharing of information and good practice for discrete learner groups, such as for those with disabilities
- the number of evaluation forms that learners on short courses have to complete.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

9. Enable has an inadequate capacity to improve. Leaders, managers and staff within Enable recognise that quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently established. Supported by the board of directors, they are committed to delivering improvements which benefit learners. Enable has clearly identified many individual areas for improvement, and it has begun to take appropriate actions to tackle them. For example, it has strengthened learner feedback processes and has implemented a revised system for the observation of teaching and learning. It is also introducing a revised management information system and plans to review its existing management structures to strengthen quality improvement arrangements. However, most of these actions are too recent to have resulted in sustained improvements for learners.
10. The self-assessment process is broadly accurate though it is not a sufficiently inclusive process. The accompanying quality improvement plan does not set sufficiently clear targets that focus on achieving improvements for learners. Subcontractors do not receive clear targets for quality improvement, and some subcontractors do not actively participate in the quality improvement process. The quality of initial assessment, information, advice and guidance given by subcontractors is inconsistent. Managers do not always use data effectively to identify areas for improvement within individual learning programmes. Enable does not yet have sufficiently robust quality monitoring arrangements in place to determine the impact of any actions taken in raising standards or improving the quality of provision. Although Enable is introducing many changes, it is too soon to judge the impact of these changes on subcontractors or learners.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

11. Learners develop confidence, self-esteem and social skills. They enjoy their learning and the wider social and economic opportunities their enhanced confidence gives them. Many learners progress into employment, further training and from one level of learning to the next. Some learners contribute well to their local community through volunteering and others through progression into employment in the third sector or in local schools. However, attendance is poor on many programmes.
12. Success rates are satisfactory at around 70% for the previous three years. Provisional data for 2010/11 suggest an improving in-year success rate of 75%. However, success rates on longer courses are low. The proportion of learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability is high at 33%. Learners make satisfactory progress during learning sessions. No significant differences exist in the performance of different groups of learners.

13. Learners develop improved communication and money management skills. They report that they feel safe and they know who to speak to if they feel vulnerable. Staff apply safe working practices during learning sessions.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

14. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. In the best lessons, tutors engage learners well and provide timely and positive feedback on their work, with clear advice for improvements. Learners are keen to participate in lessons and to complete tasks that tutors set for them. Tutors praise and encourage learners well, help them build confidence, motivate them and keep them well-focused on tasks and learning goals. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.
15. In many lessons, however, tutors do not provide sufficiently interactive learning activities. Learners are not encouraged to work with each other. The pace is slow and tasks insufficiently challenging or individualised. In these lessons, tutors talk for too long and fail to involve learners. Although most tutors have a teaching qualification, few have an appropriate literacy, language or numeracy qualification.
16. Enable works well with its subcontractors to provide a satisfactory approach to meeting the needs and interests of users, many of whom suffer from multiple disadvantages. The provision is highly effective in engaging hard-to-reach learners and supporting them to develop skills to improve their life chances.
17. Enable has well established and highly productive partnerships with a wide range of consortium members that provide specialist support for disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. The provision is successful in attracting new learners who have not been engaged in learning for many years. Smaller subcontractors, in particular, value Enable's role in providing funding which they could not otherwise access and in providing an accreditation service for learner qualifications. Enable effectively promotes networking among consortium members who often refer learners to one another for specialist support. Enable provides a collective voice for consortium members and promotes their interests locally, regionally and nationally. Partnerships with employers, however, are less well developed.
18. Enable and its subcontractors provide satisfactory pastoral care and support. However, initial and diagnostic assessment of specific learning needs is often weak and not always used effectively to place learners on appropriate programmes. Tutors do not always use progress reviews and target setting well to meet individual learning needs.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

19. Enable has a very clear strategic direction and rationale for its role in leading and supporting a consortium of voluntary and community organisations across the East Midlands. Leaders make good use of their extensive expertise within the sector to inform consortium members of local and national developments that affect their work. They also ensure that member organisations receive appropriate support to enable them to participate in new initiatives which benefit local communities, employers and learners. Leaders and managers use Enable's extensive network of links across the voluntary sector to create new learning opportunities, especially for those facing severe barriers to learning.
20. Enable has appropriate systems in place for managing the performance of subcontractors against contractual targets. It recognises, however, that its arrangements for the quality monitoring and improvement of learning programmes need strengthening. Enable acknowledges that managers do not always use data on learner outcomes effectively to support management actions or to improve the performance of all learners. Enable is now introducing a more appropriate management information system to track learners' progress.
21. Enable's board of directors is very committed to supporting the charity's work with the voluntary sector. Directors meet regularly and contribute their considerable expertise in the voluntary sector to monitor performance. Directors also act effectively as champions for particular groups and communities. Though the board sets an appropriate level of challenge on strategic matters and key operational aspects such as finance, directors recognise that further consideration is now required to improve the consistency and quality of learners' experience across the consortium.
22. Enable's safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements. The provider has prioritised and strengthened safeguarding arrangements in recent months. It has implemented a suitable safeguarding policy and procedures. Enable has produced a safeguarding handbook for new staff and an enhanced section of its website provides information on safeguarding for staff, subcontractors and learners. Enable staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. All have completed a one-day training course and those with additional safeguarding responsibilities have attended more advanced training. Enable holds a central record of Criminal Records Bureau checks that it has carried out for all delivery staff.
23. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Enable is successful in engaging hard-to-reach and disadvantaged learners and in promoting social inclusion. Promotion of equality and diversity through conferences, cultural diversity days and promotional materials, is effective. Staff training in equality and diversity is satisfactory. All staff have attended basic awareness training as well as additional training in mental health issues, visual impairment, cultural diversity and learning disability.

24. Enable has an appropriate equality and diversity action plan but progress towards achieving planned targets is slow. Enable satisfactorily monitors subcontractors' promotion of equality and diversity by regularly checking their learning resources, marketing materials, lesson plans and assessment methods. Observations of teaching and learning carried out by Enable also evaluate the extent to which tutors promote equality and diversity.
25. Enable has a satisfactory user engagement strategy. It regularly seeks feedback from learners by means of an end of course questionnaire. However, subcontractors are not always diligent in ensuring that learners respond. Enable holds regular meetings with subcontractor staff to seek their views about the quality of provision. However, attendance at these meetings is often low.
26. Enable's self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The report is critical and correctly identifies most of the areas for improvement identified by the inspection team. However, the self-assessment process is insufficiently inclusive. Enable seeks the views of learners and subcontractors but it does not always use these views to support self-assessment decisions. Some subcontractors do not participate fully in self-assessment. Enable requires subcontractors to gain learner feedback but not all subcontractors carry this out consistently or effectively.
27. In its self-assessment report, Enable recognises that its systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of learning programmes provided by subcontractors are not sufficiently developed. It has made reasonable progress in improving its system of observation of teaching and learning. However, observers continue to over-grade too many lessons. Enable staff do not always follow up improvement actions following observation. Insufficient use is made of subject specialist observations.
28. Managers and staff make insufficient use of data to target specific areas for improvement within learning programmes. Although the provider has a detailed quality improvement plan, the range of actions within the plan remains insufficiently focused to drive improvement. The monitoring of progress against improvement targets within the plan is inadequate. Managers do not routinely assess the impact of improvement actions taken by subcontractors.
29. The provider is committed to managing its available resources effectively, and provides satisfactory value for money. It works hard to bid for available funding to support voluntary and community groups, and allocates resources carefully to those subcontractors and programmes which it believes most closely meet the needs of learners in disadvantaged communities.

Information about the inspection

30. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's chief executive as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of Enable's most recent self-assessment report and development plans and data on learners and their achievement.

31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

**Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Voluntary and Communication Sector
Learning and Skills Consortium**

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners	0	0
Full-time learners	337	337
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	4	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	3	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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