

The Voluntary and Community Sector

Learning and Skills Consortium

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates		10–13 December 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- The proportion of learners, other than apprentices, who complete their courses successfully and achieve their qualifications and personal goals, is high.
- Learners enhance significantly their personal, social and economic well-being and extend their employability and practical skills well.
- Teaching and learning are of good quality and help most learners to progress well. Sessions are well planned and include a good range of activities that actively involve the learners.
- Management is effective; it has significantly raised the standard of teaching and learning and improved the learners' experience over the last two years.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Too few apprentices complete their qualifications successfully and within the planned time period.
- Not enough of the teaching and learning sessions are outstanding.
- Many of the recent improvements in the management of the provision have not yet made a full impact.
- Some aspects of the recently introduced quality improvement arrangements have not yet made a full impact on the sub-contractors' practices.

Full report

What does the Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium (Enable) need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve outcomes for learners, particularly for those on apprenticeship programmes, by;
 - ensuring that tutors record learners' starting points well
 - setting learners clear goals
 - recording learners' progress and achievements systematically
 - taking early and effective action to support those learners at risk of non-completion.
- Increase the proportion of sessions which are outstanding by ensuring that tutors use information and learning technology creatively and use other strategies to ensure all learners are engaged.
- Further improve the effectiveness of assessment by providing detailed written feedback to learners especially about ways to improve their English and mathematics.
- Ensure that the action points to address areas for improvement identified through the quality improvement arrangements are implemented more rapidly and monitor the impact through more effective use of data.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Enable's own data indicate that success rates for the learners on courses in Enable's core business of community learning, which constitutes the large majority of the provision, are good. They have improved significantly since the last inspection. In 2012/13 the rates for learners on short courses were particularly high. Learners make good progress.
- The provider's data also indicate that success rates for classroom based learners improved significantly in 2012/13 with a large majority achieving their qualifications.
- Classroom based learners, especially the ones who benefit from work placements, improve their personal, social, and employability skills significantly. Apprentices and workplace learners also develop good vocational and employability skills and employers are very positive about improvements in their work and productivity. Business and administration learners become competent users of computer software such as word processing and databases.
- The success rates for apprentices require improvement. In 2011/12, the first year that Enable offered apprenticeships, the percentage of leavers who completed their frameworks was below national average whereas the percentage of those doing so within the expected time was above the national average. In 2012/13 the percentage of leavers completing their framework still required improvement and the percentage of those doing so within the expected time had declined. This was due in large part to administrative issues from the first year, which although resolved, still affected the data. Current apprentices are making satisfactory progress towards completing their qualifications.
- Enable has recently offered workplace provision for adults; it is too early to judge the level of success rates for these learners. They are progressing towards completing their qualifications at an appropriate rate.
- The standard of most learners' work is good and learners become more confident in applying English and mathematics at home and in a work context. Learners have a good understanding

of equality and diversity issues but their understanding of working safely on the internet and when using mobile phones require improvement.

- Overall, there are no significant differences between the performance of groups of learners on community learning courses. However, different groups of apprentices do not achieve equally well. For example, as a group female learners on level 3 programmes outperform their male counterparts, whereas on level 2 programmes the reverse is true.
- Learners' progression is good. Learners progress from non-accredited to accredited courses within the provision and gather a range of qualifications to help them gain employment by attending a number of short courses. Many move into either paid or voluntary employment. Those apprentices who make rapid progress through their level 2 qualifications move readily onto level 3 courses.
- Apprentices understand progression routes well and many are keen to progress from level 2 to level 3. Employers confirm that learners become more efficient in the work place and gain confidence; consequently, move on to more senior positions or are given more responsibilities in their existing job roles.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This is reflected in the large majority of learners gaining their qualification and a much improved learning experience since the last inspection. Staff have high expectations for their learners. Learners receive a large amount of effective personal support from both staff and employers. As a result, learners remain engaged, are keen to progress despite complex lives, and generally work well. Learners report high levels of satisfaction, are enthusiastic about their courses, proud of their work and say that the provision helps them to be more effective in their workplaces.
- Teaching includes a good range of activities. Tutors and assessors are experienced and use their subject knowledge well to engage their learners during discussions and in reviews of progress. In the majority of sessions, and particularly on health and social care, hospitality, youth work and foundation programmes, where learning is planned effectively, learners' personal experiences and work settings are used well to help ensure that learners participate and reflect fully on their progress. However, in some business administration sessions, learners are not always fully engaged.
- Assessment is well managed and takes place at times and in settings that suit learners' work schedules. Staff monitor individual progress well and keep detailed and up-to-date records of learners' performance. Assessment is frequent and helps learners evaluate what they have learnt and reflect on how their new skills apply to real life and work situations. Learners receive helpful and timely verbal feedback; however, written feedback does not always inform learners clearly enough about how to improve.
- Information and learning technology is used on many courses and learners increasingly use websites or interactive videos to research topics such as health and safety at work, although in a minority of taught sessions, tutors do not use the technology creatively enough to enhance the learning experience.
- The initial assessment of learners' needs accurately places learners on the appropriate level of course. However, the results of initial assessments are not always used well to plan learning or to measure progress. Enable has recognised this and recently run a workshop for delivery staff on improving the use of individual learning plans. It is too early to judge the impact of this training.
- The support in place to develop learners' English language, mathematics, and information and communication technology is satisfactory but needs further development. The additional support

provided in group and one-to-one settings, including support for dyslexia, helps learners overcome their fear of reading and writing and complete their assignments. In too many cases, the teaching of functional skills to apprentices starts too late and delays the completion of the framework beyond the planned time. Staff do not systematically correct English errors in learners' written work.

- Individual advice and guidance are effective. Learners receive comprehensive induction and pre-course information but not enough encouragement to use the National Careers Service to help them consider and plan for their post course progression needs.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in sessions is good. For example, on health and social care courses, work ethics such as adhering to confidentiality and securing data protection for clients are fully addressed. On other courses, stereotypes and assumptions are challenged and discussed. Safeguarding and health and safety at work are frequently discussed with learners. Learners say they feel safe and value their friendly learning environment.

Foundation English and mathematics and employability training

Employability Community learning

Good

- Teaching learning and assessment are good and as a result, a large majority of learners successfully achieve their qualifications and develop good levels of confidence and self-belief, and a positive focus on their futures.
- Staff monitor learners' attendance, health needs and the pride taken in their appearance closely and use them well as indicators of whether they may be at risk of leaving the programmes.
- Teaching and learning are good. Staff have high expectations for the learners and use their expertise well to meet their individual needs including their English and mathematics skill development and the means to break down their personal barriers to employment. Tutors plan learning effectively so that it is personalised and inspires and motivates unemployed learners to continue with job search activities beyond their initial programme. They recognise individual learners' worth and take account of their prior learning effectively to establish realistic starting points. The teaching of English and mathematics is made relevant to learners' work aspirations.
- Support for learners is good. A variety of employability qualifications in fire safety, food hygiene and manual handling positively impact on and reinforce employability but also build confidence especially for those who have never had any recognised qualifications. Sub-contractors financially support additional learning from other budgets. For example, warehousing and distribution training for fork-lift-truck drivers was sponsored and resulted in employment. Pastoral support is good and enables learners to become more self-reliant and active in planning their futures.
- Assessment of need is thorough and comprehensive. Initial assessment in particular, identifies the prior learning and skills acquired in work, helping learners to transfer skills and measure their personal progress against their different starting points.
- Individual reviews of progress provide structure and routine and help develop positive work-related habits. Feedback to learners in reviews is good; it is timely and provides support and direction. The focus is, appropriately, on progression and the monitoring of activities that promote independence. As a result, learners sustain their efforts to improve employability and several undertake voluntary work after long periods of unemployment. However, not all the learning targets they are set are sufficiently clear or have a definite time to complete.

- Learners who have vocational skills prior to starting their course maintain levels of practice to sustain currency. For example, one learner with qualifications as a holistic therapist maintained her licence to practice by working as a volunteer in a women’s refuge. This developed aspirations to work as a self-employed person.
- Careers guidance is provided in partnership with the National Careers Service and requires improvement. Where it is introduced at the beginning of a programme it has a positive impact, helping to establish direction early on and providing a focus for personal and vocational development. However, it is often provided too late in the programme and its quality is inconsistent across sub-contractors.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners are valued by staff and in return show respect for each other. Learners’ basic knowledge and awareness of the concept of equality is tested during progress reviews but their understanding of the application of diversity in the work place requires further development.

Customer service

Apprenticeships 19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because whilst some aspects are strong, there are also weaknesses, particularly in target setting and the development of learners’ functional skills. This reflects the outcomes for learners in this subject area, where learners develop skills and knowledge well but many make slow progress and do not achieve their apprenticeship in the expected time.
- Support for learners is good. Assessors visit their learners very frequently in the workplace and are accessible by email or telephone between visits. Learners benefit from high levels of encouragement from their assessors who motivate them to progress. Employers support learners well by taking a keen interest in their learning and providing job tasks that match the requirements of their programme well.
- Assessment planning is thorough and most learners benefit from effective coaching by their assessors, which engages them in purposeful discussions. These learners are encouraged to reflect and identify how they will improve their practice and respond well. However, in a small minority of sessions, learners are too passive and don’t contribute enough. Verbal feedback to learners following assessment is, in most cases, detailed and helpful. However, written feedback is not always provided or is too brief to help the learner to reflect on their progress at a later date.
- Learners are set interim targets regularly however many of these are too generic and are not sufficiently challenging. One target, for example, asked a learner to practise touch-typing before the next visit and another to continue working on a programme unit. These targets do not provide specific small milestones that help learners to progress. Not all assessors’ correct learners’ English sufficiently in order to help them improve their spelling, punctuation and handwriting and broaden their sector specific vocabulary.
- Employers make a good contribution to the progress review process identifying how the learner is developing in their work role and how they can improve. Learners receive high quality on-the-job training by employers, which is matched well to the requirements of their learning programme. One employer, for example, expanded the job role of a learner by providing experiences in credit control and another provided specific tasks relating to timetables enabling the learner to develop their skills in using spreadsheets. Learners receive useful and ongoing

advice and guidance from their assessors about career planning and further training as part of review discussions.

- Learners following functional skills' programmes often do not start their English or mathematics courses until the latter part of their apprenticeship. This means they are not able to practise and apply these skills as they progress through their learning programme and, as a result, do not have sufficient time to develop their skills to the required level, often delaying the completion of their framework.
- The initial assessment process is adequate in identifying learners' starting points and which programme to join. Employers usually participate in discussions with the assessor and learner to ensure that programme units meet the needs of the learner's job role. A small minority of learners has insufficient understanding of what is required of them to achieve their framework.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity issues developed through regular and appropriate discussions. For example, one learner articulated an in-depth knowledge of the issues relating to age and gender within the workplace setting of a retirement village. Another learner discussed ideas for improving signage in a reception area with the use of different languages to better meet the needs of visitors. There is a strong emphasis on health and safety in the workplace for example, being reminded about good posture whilst sitting at a computer desk, however, not all learners are routinely reminded about the importance of e-safety when using computers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. Enable has an ambitious vision to support the voluntary sector in a widening geographical area through capacity building and through support for small training providers in the sector. The organisation has high expectations for what its learners can achieve especially those with low previous achievement or aspirations. It introduced work-based learning provision in 2011-12 to increase capacity within the voluntary sector and the employment prospects for its learners within this sector, which is a major employer in the region.
- The management of sub-contractors is now good. Enable does not deliver any of the training directly. Management actions have improved the provision by ending or amending the nature or value of the contracts for its sub-contractors. Early in 2013, managers recognised that this approach was insufficiently focused on the learners. Enable has now improved the frequency of contact with its sub-contractors and sets them targets that are more challenging to improve performance. Sub-contractors value the effective support provide by managers and other staff at Enable.
- Enable works well with partners both within the consortium and with other organisations at both local and national levels. Within the consortium, Enable encourages its members to share good practice and expertise with each other. It works effectively in wider partnerships with other similar organisations to identify and promote successful strategies to further their joint objectives to improve the life chances of people living in the most deprived areas.
- The provision meets the needs of both learners and employers well. Employers are enthusiastic about the provision and are engaging well in the new work place learning programmes. They value the increased capacity that better trained employees are adding to their organisations. The programmes are preparing long term unemployed learners well for initial employment or their return to work or are improving the skills of those in work. Mature learners with no previous qualifications value an apprenticeship as a route to employment and to gaining a valuable vocational qualification.

- Governance is strong. The organisation's board members are drawn from the consortium's member organisations and other interested local groups. Board members have a wide range of relevant knowledge and experience. The board monitors all aspects of Enable's activities through reports from the chief executive and other managers and provides appropriate challenge to decision making. Enable is also answerable to its wider membership through its annual general meeting.
- Actions to improve the provision are effective. Since the last inspection, Enable has facilitated a series of workshops to address the identified development requirements. This has had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and in the number of learners in the provider's core business area gaining qualifications. Workshops in 2013 have included effective initial assessment, engaging learners, progression through literacy, interactive teaching methods, and individual learning plans and smart targets.
- Stakeholders engage well in the self-assessment process. New contracts stress the requirement for sub-contractors to produce their own self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans in order to inform Enable's own overarching processes and supplement the input from Enable managers and staff. The provider has instigated periodic position statements to demonstrate progress since its last self-assessment.
- Enable has devised and introduced improved quality assurance visits incorporating reviews of all aspects of the sub-contractors' delivery including observations of teaching and learning and reviews of learner progress. The frequency of visits is based appropriately on perceived risk and the number and degree of areas for improvement identified. However, the teams have not yet visited all the sub-contractors and not all the plans established to address areas for improvement identified through Enable's quality arrangements are being implemented sufficiently rapidly.
- Enable commissions delivery through a robust commissioning process. It has not required the training providers to produce data on the progress of cohorts of learners and relies on checks of individual learning plans during quality assurance visits to assess learners' progress. Consequently, managers' information on the progress being made by learners overall and by cohort is not always up to date. A recently introduced on-line recording system is now producing up-to-date learner attendance data. Enable is tackling the issues delaying a small minority of sub-contractors from using the system. The collection and use of performance data at the end of courses is much improved since the last inspection. However, systems to gather data during longer courses such as apprenticeships are still under developed.
- Equality and diversity are central to the ethos of the organisation. All groups of learners in the core business of community learning achieve as well as each other. In the apprenticeship programmes the provider is aware of the differences in achievement between groups of learners and is currently attempting to identify the reasons in order to close the gaps. The equality and diversity working group at Enable promotes equality and diversity through the provider's frequently produced colourful and informative e-magazines and bulletins and keeps the organisation and its member informed of useful websites and other resources. Promotion of these issues is reviewed during quality assurance visits.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Safeguarding of learners is a contractual requirement for sub-contractors. Providers are required to demonstrate their arrangements during quality assurance visits. Enable's safeguarding working group, drawn from across departments, promotes safeguarding through e-bulletins and newsletters.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

The Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	3	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	3	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	3	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	3	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Foundation English and Mathematics	2
Employability Training	2
Customer service	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Not for profit organisation							
Age range of learners	19+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time:0							
	Part-time:3,241							
CEO	Don Hayes							
Date of previous inspection	15 April 2011							
Website address	www.enable.uk.net							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	50	N/A	227	N/A	7	N/A	N/A
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	25	49	8	77	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	None in inspection week							
Number of employability learners	18							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vernon Community College ▪ The Vocational Learning Centre ▪ Loughborough College ▪ Whitwick Enterprises ▪ Apex Works ▪ Community Access Group Midland ▪ Right Track Social Enterprise ▪ Health Link Services 							

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- Third Star
 - Community Action Derby Ltd.

Contextual information

The Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium dropped Nottingham and Nottinghamshire from its official title in 2013 to reflect its growing geographical area of operations. Trading as 'Enable' from shared premises in Nottingham the organisation provides basic skills and employability for people living in the most deprived communities in its region. All the provision is sub-contracted. Since 2011 Enable has been funded to run apprenticeship programmes in addition to its core business of community learning programmes. In 2013 it has also begun to provide work place training for those without a level 2 qualification but it was too early to make judgements on this programme which was not graded at this inspection. From the start of the current academic year Enable's community learning provision has changed from being all accredited to all non-accredited to reflect changes in the Skills Funding Agency's requirements.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Cliff Rose HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the chief executive as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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