

Humber Learning Consortium

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates 13–16 October 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Traineeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Trustees and managers have increased progression opportunities for learners through the careful negotiation of a major new contract from another provider.
- Managers support subcontractors effectively to provide learning and training to the most disadvantaged groups and communities.
- Managers' plans to expand the curriculum into new vocational areas address the priorities of the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Learners make good progress from low starting points, with many overcoming significant barriers to move into further education and employment.
- Managers work well with employers to design productive work experience placements for trainees, preparing them effectively for employment.
- Learners benefit from being in safe, secure and supportive learning environments which enable them to develop confidence and make progress into further study, volunteering and employment.
- Tutors manage learning skilfully to ensure that learners are motivated, engaged and enjoy their programmes.
- Learners take a positive approach to learning and they are proud of their achievements.

It is not yet an outstanding provider because

- Managers do not always receive information on learner progress quickly enough from subcontractors.
- Not all learners receive sufficiently detailed feedback on their written work so they are clear what it is they need to do to improve.
- Monitoring learner attendance is underdeveloped in apprenticeship and traineeship provision, and on a minority of functional skills courses attendance is low.
- Target setting for learners is not yet consistently good across all subcontractors.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Humber Learning Consortium (HLC) is a specialist support infrastructure body for the learning and skills sector, with a particular emphasis on voluntary and community organisations. HLC is not a direct provider, but serves as a hub organisation providing leadership and management services to subcontractors. Of these, 19 deliver Skills Funding Agency funded provision in apprenticeships, traineeships, adult classroom-based and community learning. Apart from community learning, all of this provision is new since the last inspection, the majority of it having been transferred to HLC by another provider at the beginning of 2014/15.
- HLC's subcontractors deliver across Hull and the Humber region, North East Lincolnshire and parts of Yorkshire. In the city of Kingston upon Hull 66% of the population are qualified at level 2 and above, compared to 70% in the wider Yorkshire and Humber region, and 73% in Great Britain as a whole. The unemployment rate in Kingston upon Hull is nearly double the rate for the rest of the country.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Speed up the transfer of information on learners' progress from subcontractors to enable managers to intervene more quickly to support learners to achieve their qualifications.
- Ensure tutors across all programme areas provide detailed and helpful feedback to learners on their written work so that they know what to do to improve, and provide additional tasks to challenge more-able learners.
- Strengthen attendance monitoring on apprenticeships and traineeships and improve attendance on functional skills courses.
- Improve the quality and consistency of target setting for learners across all programmes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and managers at HLC continue to energetically deliver the organisation's core mission to build the capacity of voluntary and community groups to provide training and learning to the most disadvantaged groups and communities, while at the same time improving outcomes for learners.
- Managers have diligently negotiated the transfer of a major contract from another provider to deliver an increased number of apprenticeships and traineeships over a short period of time. The new provision adds significantly to the range of progression opportunities open to learners recruited through HLC's subcontractors.
- Contract management of the majority of subcontractors is robust. Extra capacity has been introduced to oversee the expanded provision. However, systems for receiving information on learners' progress in a timely way from all delivery partners are not yet fully in place.
- HLC's provision is responsive to local market and employer demands. New provision is being commissioned to meet the priorities of the Local Enterprise Partnership, for example in engineering and motor vehicle training. Major stakeholders in the area entrust HLC with the role of lead accountable body for pivotal training projects, thereby bringing significant new training resources into the area.
- Managers map community learning provision regularly against local need and the delivery of other providers to ensure that it targets the most disadvantaged wards and groups in Hull and the wider Humber region.
- The self-assessment process is comprehensive and inclusive of all subcontractors, with the result that HLC managers can identify areas for improvement accurately. Managers have instigated a collaborative system where subcontractors moderate each other's self-assessment reports so that they share good practice. The majority of improvement actions in the quality improvement plan have been addressed effectively, such as increasing e-safety for learners and speeding up the transfer of safeguarding information from subcontractors to HLC.
- Managers provide good support to develop the quality of provision of their subcontractors through extensive professional development and a well-organised quality improvement network.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Trustees have a good understanding of the quality of the subcontractors' delivery and are quick to challenge managers to strengthen the contract management of weaker-performing providers.
 - The Board has accurately identified that it needed to increase its expertise to oversee the expanded provision, and has successfully recruited new members with extensive expertise in the management of large contracts.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - HLC has a very rigorous system for assessing the safeguarding policies and procedures of its subcontractors, and supports them extensively to understand their duties through training and support.
 - All staff are recruited and vetted suitably, and the central register is accurate and up to date.
 - Incidents are reported and acted on quickly through well-developed links with local safeguarding boards and other support agencies.
 - All subcontractors have attended training on Prevent, and are starting to plan this into their teaching and learning, but it is still too early to see the impact on learners' awareness of the issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good across all types of provision because HLC's managers ensure that subcontractors have a strong focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment through regular observations of their teaching, access to useful resources and updates, continuous professional development and quality network meetings.
- Tutors across all provision types are well qualified and use their vocational skills very well to model professional practice. This helps learners to develop their vocational and employability skills further, and inspires them to make progress continually. For example, in community arts programmes, highly skilled tutors enable learners to pass on their knowledge and expertise to establish flourishing new community art groups.

- Well-planned and well-delivered teaching and one-to-one assessments help learners and apprentices to make good progress. Tutors use a wide variety of activities to keep learners interested and motivated, providing regular and encouraging oral feedback to keep them on track. Subcontractors have a good range of appropriate resources and facilities to support learning, which assists learners to achieve their learning goals.
- Learners benefit from a wide range of support arrangements including additional sessions, one-to-one meetings and use of interpreters. Tutors use this additional support skilfully to ensure that individual learning needs are met effectively. However, for some of the more-able learners and apprentices, not enough attention is paid to setting more challenging tasks to encourage independent learning and thinking skills.
- The setting of targets across a small minority of programmes lacks precision and rigour. Learners on these programmes are not always able to judge the progress they are making. On a small number of programmes, tutors do not comment on written work or check for spelling or grammatical errors consistently. The result is that a small number of learners are not always sufficiently clear about how they are doing, and are not challenged to do more. However, this has not impeded the vast majority of learners from achieving their desired aims.
- Most tutors and assessors provide useful opportunities for learners and apprentices to develop their English skills. For a very small number of learners, opportunities to develop their mathematical skills are underdeveloped. For one group of engineering apprentices, opportunities to develop both English and mathematical skills have been delayed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- Across all the types of provision at HLC, tutors and learners develop an inclusive and purposeful atmosphere to support learning. Learners are courteous, interested, enjoy their programmes, and display a good understanding of the diverse communities in which they live and work.
- Learners develop a positive attitude to their studies, often overcoming significant barriers to learning. As a result they take pride in their achievements, which are celebrated extensively by their tutors. The standard of learners' work is high.
- Tutors, particularly on traineeships and apprenticeship programmes, provide a good range of activities to support the development of wider employability skills, including varied work experience, skills scans, volunteering and charity work. Tutors encourage learners to find ways of transferring their vocational and employability skills into other settings.
- Most learners receive timely advice and guidance which helps them make informed decisions about what they want to do next. Learners speak confidently about their next steps and many progress onto other training, employment or volunteering.
- Learners have a thorough understanding of how to keep safe, including online. Managers at HLC ensure that their most vulnerable learners, such as those at a local women's centre, have a very secure environment in which to undertake their programmes.
- Staff monitor attendance effectively for learners on adult learning programmes, who make up the vast majority of learners. However, for learners on traineeships and apprenticeships, the system for monitoring attendance is currently underdeveloped. Attendance is lower for functional skills programmes, and was low for a very small number of sessions observed by inspectors.
- The promotion of British values by tutors is as yet underdeveloped. While staff have had training on the risks of extremism and radicalisation, this has not yet translated into activities with learners and apprentices to raise their awareness and understanding of the issues.

Outcomes for learners are good

- High numbers of learners progress well from very low starting points. Learners are drawn from the most disadvantaged wards and social groups, and are furthest away from the labour market. The majority of learners on HLC's adult learning provision start with qualifications at level 1 and below.
- In the short space of time that HLC managers have been responsible for the transferred class-based learning, apprenticeship and traineeship provision, the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications has improved significantly. For class-based adult learners, success rates are now on a par with national averages. While success rates on traineeships are still just below the national average, current learners on these programmes are making better progress.

- The development of practical English and mathematical skills on work placements and in workplaces is good, with learners being able to apply them in practical ways, such as costing products and calculating change for customers.
- The majority of learners at most of the subcontractors achieve their functional skills qualifications. However, one major subcontractor failed to deliver the functional skills qualifications as part of the traineeship programme. Managers at HLC were quick to identify this, with the result that learners with this subcontractor now see the value of getting their English and mathematics qualifications and are progressing well.
- The outcomes for community learners are very good. Learners from vulnerable groups gain life-enhancing benefits from participating in courses that develop their self-confidence, provide them with new skills to help them overcome barriers, and provide them with valuable volunteering opportunities. For example, young homeless people learnt how to devise a basic budget and open a bank account, and vulnerable women learnt strategies to deal with domestic violence.
- There are no significant gaps between the achievements of different learner groups. Where these have arisen, they have been identified by managers and addressed successfully.
- The majority of learners progress onto positive destinations. Nearly half of 16–19-year-olds on traineeships enter employment, many of them with the employers where they were on work experience. The majority of community learners, for whom this was often their first taste of formal learning since leaving school, go on to further courses or into volunteering.
- Progression for adults on class-based learning, however, is less positive. Over half return straight back to unemployment after they complete their course.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes are good

- Adult learners make up 90% of HLC's provision with the large majority undertaking community learning, and the rest on class-based courses. Many adult learners have significant barriers to entering voluntary and paid work, including learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Subcontractors meet local needs for skills successfully by working closely with employers, voluntary sector bodies and Jobcentres. Well-established contract management relationships between HLC and its subcontractors bring a strong focus on improving programmes, maintaining the high achievements of all learners and safeguarding their well-being.
- Learners' achievement on community learning courses is very high overall, although a small number of subcontractors are less successful. On classroom-based provision, learners' success rates vary between programmes and learners' achievements are in line with those of similar learners nationally. The great majority of adult learners progress onto further education, employment or as volunteers for community projects, except for those on class-based courses who too often return to being unemployed.
- Tutors expect and set high expectations for all learners at all levels, to which they respond eagerly. Learners make good progress in learning sessions because tutors plan carefully to meet their different abilities through thought-provoking discussions and stimulating group activities. Tutors use paid and volunteer teaching assistants to support individual learners very effectively.
- Learners develop an essential range of skills and behaviours relevant to their personal lives, volunteering and paid work. One group of learners improved their online research skills by investigating local landmarks, while another developed good communication skills by working as a team to produce a community newsletter. Tutors help learners to become more confident in speaking by allowing them to share their experiences and technical knowledge.
- Learners improve their English reading and writing during teaching sessions where they produce display work or write reflective accounts in their workbooks. Learners are not practising mathematical skills sufficiently in sessions where they are not an essential part of the main subject.
- Tutors initially assess learners' starting points very effectively and involve them in setting personal goals. Many of the targets do not show precisely enough the skills and behaviours that learners need to develop. For example, when learners want to improve their social skills, tutors are not breaking them down into specific and measurable skills they could acquire.

Apprenticeships

are good

- A total of 134 apprentices are currently enrolled and continuing their programme of study, a marked increase on the five apprentices on the programme in 2013/14. The vast majority of apprentices are 19–23-year-olds. Seventy apprentices are enrolled on intermediate apprenticeships, 59 are studying at advanced level, and a few are on higher apprenticeships. The main vocational areas are engineering, business, childcare and food manufacturing.
- A large majority of apprentices have achieved their overall qualifications in 2014/15, although timely success rates were still below national averages. The timely completion of current apprentices is improving due to more effective planning of off-the-job training by employers and assessors and greater involvement by employers in reviews.
- Employers value the skills that apprentices develop and the impact that they have on their businesses. Examples of these skills include using specialist software to produce technical drawings for electrical installations; additional welding and operations crafts developed during work experience workshops; and the marketing and coordination of school events.
- Managers develop productive partnerships with employers to identify new vocational areas into which they can grow the apprenticeship provision and meet the priorities of local development agencies.
- All apprentices benefit from an inclusive learning environment that fosters mutual respect and pride. Female apprentices in engineering feel valued and respected by their peers.
- All apprentices are safe and demonstrate safe working practices which have developed over time and mirror industry good practice.
- Apprentices' development of mathematical skills during their on-the-job and off-the-job training sessions is good. Assessors encourage apprentices to problem solve using conversion charts, measurement tasks, analysis of technical drawings, and the development of team rotas, all of which increase their understanding of subject-specific terminology.
- Assessment in the workplace is thorough and regular, with effective involvement of employers. However, assessors' comments only confirm progress and do not give enough detail on the specific actions apprentices should take to ensure that they are clear about what they need to do to improve further.
- For a large majority of apprentices the setting of aspirational targets is insufficient, particularly for apprentices who should be stretched to work at a higher level.
- A minority of apprentices do not benefit from directed and probing questioning to promote deeper learning and check understanding. Questions confirm assessment and do not always allow apprentices to build on ideas and experience.

Traineeships

are good

- Four main subcontractors deliver traineeships for HLC. There are 73 current trainees, the majority aged from 16 to 18, with the rest aged from 19 to 23. The majority of trainee placements are in business administration, hospitality, construction and engineering.
- Managers successfully implement all aspects of the traineeship programme, with the result that employers who provide placements find that trainees progress well in their roles, increase their responsibilities and soon become an asset to their businesses. This positive recognition by employers significantly supports trainees to widen their progression opportunities and to be more self-assured at work and in their personal lives.
- Tutors develop positive relationships with trainees and create a productive learning environment in which trainees feel able to ask questions freely to clarify anything they do not understand. As a consequence, trainees increase their confidence and self-esteem swiftly from their initial starting point.
- The majority of trainees progress from a traineeship to a higher level of study or into employment.
- The large majority of trainees benefit from high-quality placements. Managers and tutors match work placements to trainees' needs, interests and aspirations very effectively. This provides trainees with motivating, relevant work-related activities which rapidly improve trainees' practical skills and develop their use of English and mathematics. For example, trainees in a busy shop now know how to prioritise customers' orders and use their mathematical skills to work out prices and VAT.
- Vocationally experienced tutors develop trainees' employability skills effectively. Tutors act as good role models for trainees in the way they mirror the core values and behaviours an employer expects. Trainees have absorbed this thoroughly, and are punctual, attend and behave well in their sessions and work placements.
- Managers carry out rigorous risk assessments on all work experience placements to ensure that they are

safe, while tutors and employers induct learners effectively to adopt safe working practices.

- Written feedback on assignments lacks detail. Tutors do not give trainees developmental feedback that tells them what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.
- Insufficient individual planning for learning by some tutors does not embed the results of initial and diagnostic assessment effectively in order to inform target setting or teaching to meet each trainee's needs. As a result, tutors do not routinely challenge all trainees to achieve their full potential.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,079
Principal/CEO	Mr Andy Crossland
Website address	www.hlc-vol.org

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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	38	91	10	9	0	13	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	27	43	8	51	0	5		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	61		24		85			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Activ8Learning ■ Artlink ■ Cert Limited ■ Christchurch Community ■ Community Linx ■ Construction Works ■ Crosby Employment Bureau ■ Densholme Care Farm ■ Engage ■ Foresight ■ Get Ahead ■ Harrogate Skills4Living ■ HETA ■ In House Training ■ Pet-Xi ■ Preston Road Women's Centre ■ Remit Food ■ TJ Training ■ The Clock (Yorkshire) 							

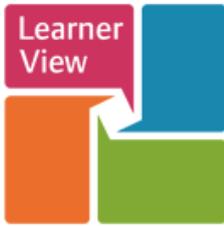
Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Charles Searle, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dr Pamela Blackman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Hartmann	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Mace-Akroyd	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Sharpe	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Quality Director, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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