

The Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates

2–5 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Senior leaders and managers, including trustees, have a very good understanding of the consortium's strengths and weaknesses. They use this effectively to continuously review and improve the quality of provision.
- Leaders manage the performance of subcontractors well. They communicate and monitor subcontractors' performance targets effectively and provide valued support.
- Leaders and managers, supported by trustees, have developed productive links with local stakeholders to devise a curriculum that meets regional priorities in the East Midlands.
- Tutors and assessors effectively use their considerable industry experience to ensure that learners and apprentices improve their knowledge and skills and make progress in their chosen careers.
- Tutors and assessors have high expectations of learners and apprentices and deliver high-quality teaching, training and learning in the classroom and the workplace and through distance learning methods.
- The progress of current learners and apprentices is good, with almost all on target to complete within the planned period.
- Learners and apprentices develop good personal, social and vocational skills and have a good understanding of their career options and what they need to do to achieve them.
- As a result of poor initial advice and guidance, too many learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan withdrew early from the programme.
- Managers do not make sufficient use of teaching observations to help tutors and assessors to improve or to identify differences in the quality of teaching and learning between subcontractors.
- Tutors and assessors do not consistently provide sufficiently detailed feedback on the work of apprentices and learners to ensure that they understand what they must do to improve their work further or achieve higher marks.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium trades as 'Enable' from shared premises in Nottingham. Most learners are apprentices on programmes at levels 2 and 3 in early years, business administration, customer service and supporting teaching and learning. Enable also provides adult learning programmes. These comprise short introductory courses in employability and in English and mathematics and a distance learning level 3 access to higher education course for learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan. Except for the access to higher education course, Enable subcontracts all the provision to other providers.
- Most of Enable's learners and apprentices are based in Nottingham, Derby, Kettering and Northampton and in Lincolnshire. Most apprentices and almost all learners on adult programmes are aged over 19. Very few learners belong to a minority ethnic group.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should monitor carefully the impact of the actions they have taken to improve the quality of initial advice and guidance for learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan. They should take effective steps to ensure that current learners continue to make good progress and achieve.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by increasing the level of detail in tutors' and assessors' feedback so that learners and apprentices are clear about how they can improve their work and achieve higher marks.
- Managers should ensure that tutors and assessors receive helpful and constructive guidance on how they can improve their practice. They should also use the results of observations of teaching to identify and share good practice across the subcontractor network.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Enable's chief executive officer, supported by the senior management team, has established a clear strategic vision and mission for the consortium. Together, senior leaders and managers, including trustees, have a clear focus on building the capacity of the 200 or so member charities and voluntary organisations that belong to the consortium. They have developed a curriculum offer that meets the local and regional needs of the East Midlands. It aligns closely with the charity's mission of promoting social justice and raising the life chances of residents coping with disadvantage and economic hardship.
- Enable's leaders and managers apply rigorous performance management to the subcontractors who deliver learning and skills provision on their behalf. The careful vetting and selection of subcontractors have resulted in a reduction in the number of subcontractors used since the previous inspection, from nine to just four. Enable no longer contracts with subcontractors that do not meet its performance and quality standards. Enable's managers carry out regular and thorough scrutiny and challenge of the current subcontractors to ensure that they continuously improve the quality of their provision.
- Self-assessment is thorough, accurate and critical. Managers make good use of feedback from learners, staff, employers and subcontractors to support judgements. As a result, managers know the organisation well and they understand what they must do to improve the provision further. The detailed quality improvement plan identifies a suitable range of improvement actions, many of which the provider has already achieved.
- Leaders and managers, supported by trustees, have worked collaboratively with employers and partners, including local enterprise partnerships, to ensure that the curriculum offer aligns well with regional priorities. Most of Enable's subcontractors and member organisations are based in areas of regional deprivation. This helps managers to identify and reach groups often excluded from opportunities to improve their life chances.
- Enable's leaders and managers promote successfully the charity's equality and diversity agenda by widening participation in adult learning and promoting the inclusion of marginalised groups. Targeted support from tutors and assessors working for the subcontractors ensures that most learners achieve well, regardless of their previous educational attainment or social background.
- The charity's leaders and managers have successfully implemented a curriculum that prepares learners and apprentices for further and higher education, employment or voluntary and community work. The provision of impartial careers advice and guidance ensures that learners and apprentices have a good understanding of their next steps and how they will achieve their career and educational goals.
- Managers have taken appropriate steps to tackle weaknesses in the quality of advice and guidance provided to learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan, which had resulted in many leaving their programme early. It is too soon to assess the impact of these actions.

- Leaders and managers ensure that subcontractor staff receive regular and frequent professional development to help them with curriculum design and quality improvement. They have also supported partners to help them understand and prepare for the changes brought about by the introduction of the levy-funded apprenticeship.
- Managers do not use the results of teaching observations sufficiently effectively to help tutors and assessors to improve or to identify any differences between the performance of the different subcontractors. As a result, tutors and assessors do not receive detailed action planning to help them improve their professional practice further. Enable's managers are unable to identify and share good practice so that all consortium partners can benefit.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is very effective. Members of Enable's board of trustees are well qualified and experienced in adult learning, community engagement and regeneration. They use their skills and knowledge well to ensure that Enable offers provision that meets its core objectives.
- Trustees receive regular detailed reports on all aspects of the charity's performance, which they scrutinise carefully, holding leaders and managers to account for any dips in performance or quality. Trustees have a suitably detailed awareness and understanding of the progress that learners and apprentices are making and are quick to ask challenging questions of senior leaders if they have any concerns.
- Trustees play an active role in ensuring that the self-assessment process is accurate and that robust evidence supports key judgements. They carefully monitor progress against targets in the quality improvement plan. As a result, Enable's leaders and managers have been largely successful in raising the overall standards of provision since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Learners know how to raise a concern if they feel unsafe. The chief executive officer is the appointed safeguarding officer. He has received suitable training to enable him to discharge this role effectively. All staff, including subcontractors, receive mandatory safeguarding training. Enable's staff maintain a suitable single central register of checks.
- Enable staff, as well as subcontractor staff, have received basic training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and they know to whom they should report any concerns. Since the previous inspection, no learner or apprentice has been referred because of a safeguarding concern.
- Managers have introduced awareness-raising activities that effectively support learners' and apprentices' understanding of British values and the threats posed to these values by extremist ideologies. As a result, most can articulate a basic understanding of these topics.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Tutors and assessors have high expectations of what their learners and apprentices can achieve through hard work and a desire to improve their life chances. They understand the range of challenging personal and home circumstances that many learners and apprentices bring with them, and they are passionate about helping them to surmount these barriers. As a result, most learners and apprentices make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.
- Tutors and assessors are very well qualified and experienced. Learners, apprentices and employers hold them in high regard because of the experience and passion they demonstrate. Tutors and assessors use their experience and enthusiasm to motivate learners and apprentices and expect them to achieve suitably challenging learning and career goals and objectives.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, whether delivered in the classroom, through distance learning technology or during one-to-one sessions in the workplace. Tutors and assessors use a suitably wide range of learning methods and resources, including information and learning technology, to make learning interesting and relevant. As a result, learners and apprentices are motivated to learn, progress and achieve.
- Tutors and assessors provide good support for learners and apprentices with their studies and with personal issues so that learners and apprentices can quickly resolve any problems they experience. This support helps learners and apprentices to stay on their programme, catch up if needed and achieve their qualifications.
- Learners and apprentices have a good awareness of the career options available to them, which helps them to make the right choices. Tutors and assessors regularly provide suitable careers advice and guidance during their studies. Topics such as equality, diversity, safeguarding, British values and the risks of extremism and radicalisation are well covered during learning sessions and reviews. Consequently, learners and apprentices demonstrate an appropriate understanding of these issues.
- Tutors and assessors promote learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills well during classroom sessions, in one-to-one distance learning sessions and in the workplace for apprentices. As a result, most learners and apprentices have suitably well-developed skills in these subjects.
- Apprenticeship programmes meet all the requirements of an apprenticeship. Managers ensure that programmes support learners in their aspirations and ambitions to become established employees or acquire positions with additional responsibilities. Apprentices receive good-quality off-the-job training, which assessors discuss with them at each visit.
- Staff make good use of the results of assessment to ensure that learners and apprentices study at an appropriate level and that they have the necessary aptitude and prior attainment, especially in English and mathematics, to achieve and progress. As a result, few learners or apprentices leave the programme early and most make good progress from their starting points.
- Poor initial advice and guidance for learners on courses supported by an advanced learner loan resulted in low retention during the first two years. It is too soon to assess the full

impact of the range of improvement measures that managers have taken in recent months to tackle this issue.

- Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of the progress they are making and what they need to do to achieve. However, the quality and depth of feedback on work for learners and apprentices are often insufficiently detailed and fail to provide them with clearly identified action points for future assignment work. As a result, many learners and apprentices do not know how they can improve their work further or achieve higher marks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Enable's subcontractors provide a supportive environment that encourages learners and apprentices to take pride in their learning and achievements.
- Learners on adult programmes, most of whom have been out of formal education for many years, develop basic employability, reading, writing, personal and social skills. This brings them closer to the job market and to becoming productive members of their communities. Apprentices develop new skills, knowledge and behaviour as childcare practitioners, teaching assistants and office administrators, and become valuable members of their employers' businesses.
- Learners and apprentices are polite and courteous to their tutors, their assessors and their peers. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are commendable, as demonstrated in their punctual attendance to learning sessions. They take responsibility for their own learning, attend lessons and reviews in the workplace and have a genuine commitment to improving their career prospects and life chances.
- Tutors and assessors provide impartial advice and guidance that ensure that most learners and apprentices have a good understanding of their career options and what they need to do to achieve them. As a result, most learners can articulate the steps they will take to realise their goals after completion of their studies.
- Enable's subcontractors place a suitably high priority on helping learners and apprentices to keep themselves safe when using social media and from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Learners and apprentices can explain what they would do if they had a concern about their own welfare or safety and to whom they would report a concern if they felt vulnerable or at risk.
- Tutors and assessors make appropriate use of learning resources and materials on topical subjects to promote a better awareness of British values. Most learners and apprentices can articulate an appropriate understanding of British values and can explain how these values relate to their lives outside of the learning environment.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Outcomes for learners and apprentices are good. Overall, results on apprenticeship programmes have been rising steadily for the last three years and were high in 2016/17. Provisional data for 2017/18 indicates that these success rates have continued to rise.

The proportion of apprentices who complete within the planned period has also been rising and is now good.

- Achievement rates for learners on most adult learning programmes are good, particularly for the large number of unemployed adults following employability courses at level 1 and English and mathematics at entry level and level 1. However, achievement rates for the small number of learners following English and mathematics courses at level 2 require improvement.
- The proportion of adult learners on employability and English and mathematics courses who go on to participate in voluntary or community work or on to further courses is relatively high and supports Enable's aim of bringing learners closer to the labour market.
- Learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan who completed their access to higher education course were generally successful in securing a university place, although Enable's managers have little accurate data on whether learners take up their university place at the end of their studies.
- Progression into sustained employment for apprentices is good, with almost all remaining with their employer after the completion of their studies, and a few gaining a promotion or progressing on to another apprenticeship at a higher level.
- Current learners and apprentices are making good progress, with almost all on target to complete within the planned period. Apprentices apply the skills and knowledge they learn in their studies to their workplace. Employers comment very favourably on the contribution that apprentices make to the success of their businesses.
- Learners on adult programmes develop significantly in their confidence to apply for jobs or voluntary work or to continue their studies at a higher level. They learn how to write a good-quality curriculum vitae, present themselves at interview and write letters of application. Learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan develop good academic writing skills and are suitably prepared for undergraduate-level study.
- The proportion of learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan who enrolled in 2016 and 2017 and who completed their studies was low. However, almost all of those who remained on the programme achieved the qualification.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- Enable provides a distance learning access to higher education course at level 3 for learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan. It currently has 45 learners on this course, almost all of whom are unemployed. Enable also contracts with four subcontractors to provide short courses from entry level to level 2 in English and mathematics and in employability skills for unemployed adults. However, none of these courses were running at the time of the inspection.
- Tutors have suitably high expectations of what all learners can achieve, regardless of their background and prior experience of formal education. They are well qualified and passionate about the benefit of education for those returning to formal study as adults. They plan and provide learning sessions well and set challenging targets and completion dates that develop learners' employability and study skills and boost their confidence.

- Tutors provide learners with very effective individual support to help them progress well in their studies. Learners value tutors' availability and quick responses to their requests. Most learners are unemployed and often have to combine family responsibilities with learning. Tutors provide them with effective pastoral and emotional support that helps them overcome their personal barriers to learning.
- For most learners, participating in adult learning has changed their lives for the better. Several learners who successfully completed the employability course went to work as volunteers at the subcontractor where they were studying. A few progressed into employment. Almost all learners report the positive benefits to their personal and social well-being of their participation in adult learning programmes.
- Leaders work effectively with community groups and employers to increase the volume of adult learners taking up courses. A rising proportion of learners are unemployed and referred by Jobcentre Plus. The curriculum offer is well designed to enable learners to build careers and find purposeful employment. Many go on to carry out voluntary or community work in their neighbourhoods, which further raises their self-esteem and aspirations.
- Tutors support the development of learners' English and mathematics well. Subcontractors offer drop-in sessions and individual teaching sessions at varying times to accommodate learners' needs. The promotion of skills in academic writing and presentation for learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan is good.
- The quality of written feedback is not consistently good across all the subcontractors. Tutors teaching on the distance learning course provide detailed and constructive feedback that tells learners clearly how they can improve. However, too many tutors working for the subcontractors fail to provide sufficiently detailed feedback to help learners improve their work and achieve the highest marks.
- Tutors make good use of the results of assessment of starting points to plan learning that meets the needs and abilities of learners on employability and English and mathematics courses.
- Learners in receipt of an advanced learner loan received poor-quality initial advice and guidance about their suitability for study at level 3. As a result, over half of the learners recruited in 2016 and 2017 withdrew from the programme early because the course did not match their needs, abilities or aspirations. Managers have implemented improvement actions and current learners are making good progress. However, it is too soon to assess the full impact of managers' actions.

Apprenticeships

Good

- Enable contracts with four training providers for the delivery of apprenticeship provision across the East Midlands. All learners are on an apprenticeship framework and work in a range of small- and medium-sized organisations, mostly in the voluntary and community sector. Most follow apprenticeship programmes in business administration, customer service, early years and childcare and supporting teaching and learning in schools. At the time of inspection, Enable had 39 apprentices aged 16 to 18 and 63 aged 19 and over.

Sixty apprentices were studying at advanced level and 40 at intermediate level. One learner was studying at level 4.

- Enable's apprenticeship provision meets the requirements of an apprenticeship framework. Assessors work well with regional employers in the voluntary and community sector to promote the apprenticeship programme to adults with few formal academic qualifications.
- Assessors expect apprentices to make a valuable contribution to their employer and to take responsibility for their own learning. As a result, employers express satisfaction with apprentices' conduct and skills development and they comment favourably on the flexibility and support provided by assessors.
- Assessors are well qualified in their subject and apprentices and employers value their experience and expertise. They provide high-quality off-the-job training that equips apprentices with the knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary in their work role.
- Apprentices are articulate and can describe their on-the-job training in detail using the correct terminology. Learners on the early years apprenticeship can explain how to devise and implement learning activities for young children according to their stage of development. Many go on to assume positions of responsibility in early years settings, with some demonstrating an aspiration to run their own nursery.
- Most apprentices remain with their employer after they complete their studies, with a minority going on to study at a higher level. They have a clear grasp of the benefits of apprenticeship training and most are committed to applying what they have learned so that they can progress further in their career.
- Assessors make good use of the available information on learners' previous qualifications and experience to place them on to a suitable apprenticeship programme that meets their abilities and career aspirations well. As a result, qualification achievement rates are high, and most apprentices complete within the planned period.
- Assessors make good use of an electronic portfolio to monitor apprentices' progress. Target dates for completion of assignment work are clear and manageable and apprentices know the progress they have made and what they must do to achieve by the planned end date. Employers take a keen interest in how well apprentices are doing and assessors provide them with regular updates on learners' progress.
- Apprentices following functional skills courses in English and mathematics make good progress and most achieve at the first attempt. Assessors support well the further development of apprentices' English and mathematics during individual learning sessions and progress reviews.
- Apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and the dangers of radicalisation. Assessors often hold discussions on these topics to raise awareness during learning sessions and progress reviews. Learners on childcare and teaching and learning support apprenticeships have a suitably sophisticated understanding of British values, although apprentices in other job roles demonstrate only a rudimentary awareness.
- A small number of business administration apprentices receive insufficient time from their employer to work on their apprenticeship assignments during the working week. Enable's managers are aware of this issue and have taken appropriate action to ensure that these

employers provide learners with sufficient time to complete their studies during their normal working hours.

- Assessors' feedback on apprentices' portfolio work is insufficiently helpful and does not provide enough detail to help them improve. A few assignments have no feedback at all. This results in apprentices not developing their knowledge and skills beyond the level at which they are already working.

Provider details

Unique reference number	10004788
Type of provider	Not for profit
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,137
Principal/CEO	Ian Newton
Telephone number	01157 100 200
Website	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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	-	-	-	-	-	39	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	15	26	24	36	0	1		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Riverside Training Scintilla AGandI DHA Riverside							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive officer, as nominee. 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 learners 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.

Inspection team

Jai Sharda, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Hamp	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maureen Deary	Ofsted Inspector
Stefan Fusenich	Ofsted Inspector

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