

North East Lincolnshire Council

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Local authority

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) following publication of the inspection report on 5 December 2018 that found the provider to be inadequate overall.

At the November 2018 inspection, inspectors judged NELC to be inadequate for overall effectiveness and the effectiveness of leadership and management. NELC's quality of teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for learners and personal development, behaviour and welfare were judged to require improvement. The 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes were judged to require improvement.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 281 learners enrolled on programmes. This included 24 learners on community learning courses, 217 learners on adult skills funded programmes and 40 learners aged 16 to 18 on study programmes with the main qualification aim of employability. Most learners were following preparation for life and work programmes. NELC has ended its apprenticeship contract.

Themes

What actions have leaders taken to ensure that the provision can be sustained into the future?

Senior leaders at NELC took swift action immediately following the previous inspection to identify options for ensuring the continuation of provision delivered by the service. In December 2018, the senior leadership team and the portfolio holder considered all alternatives and agreed on a preferred option. This option aimed to minimise disruption to current learners and ensure that the learning opportunities provided for adults and young people in the local area will be maintained into the future.

The senior leadership team has established a board, which has begun to meet informally, to oversee the implementation of the preferred option. The first formal meeting of the board is scheduled to take place shortly. Leaders have established several working groups that report to the board and will steer through operational aspects relating to the preferred option.

Leaders are planning to communicate the preferred option to staff within the next few weeks and implement proposed changes as quickly as possible.

Priority for improvement

- Maintain rapid progress in implementing the preferred option, ensuring that current learners' education is not disrupted and that the provision will have long-term sustainability.

How effectively are leaders holding managers and staff to account for improving the quality of provision and outcomes for learners?

Leaders quickly put in place a recovery plan, following the previous inspection. This plan focuses appropriately on the key weaknesses identified during the inspection. Most actions in the plan are relevant and specific, and clearly indicate the intended impact, deadline for completion and manager with responsibility. However, the plan has over 50 specific actions. Leaders and managers have not prioritised the key actions that they need to take to address the most significant weaknesses. In a few instances, the actions do not fully address the related weaknesses. For example, actions relating to improving attendance focus on providing additional sessions for learners who miss lessons rather than tackling the reasons for poor attendance.

Leaders have started to make improvements to the arrangements for managing staff performance, in particular holding teaching staff to account for the quality of teaching and learners' outcomes. Appraisal reviews now take place more frequently and focus more closely on learners' progress and the quality of teaching. However, too many of the improvement targets that managers set for teachers are too general and simply replicate targets for the service. They contain little reference to specific aspects of practice that teachers need to develop in order to improve learners' outcomes.

Very soon after the previous inspection, leaders identified an urgent need for staff development to begin to tackle the identified weaknesses. A one-day event early in January 2019 focused on a range of key issues, including integrating the development of learners' English and mathematics skills into lessons and ensuring that learning meets individual needs. The event also gave staff the opportunity to consider the recovery plan and discuss how they would contribute to its implementation. However, the event focused on a narrow range of areas in the plan, specifically attendance, achievement gaps and learner support. It did not give sufficient opportunity for staff to consider key issues such as insufficiently challenging learners to fulfil their potential and planning and delivering sessions that meet learners' needs.

Leaders now receive improved reports that they use to hold managers and staff to account for learners' performance. They receive detailed monthly reports on attendance and retention. However, they do not receive reports on learners' progress or on in-year and projected achievement. This means that they are unable to identify accurately and address areas where progress is slow, and achievement is low.

A high level of staff absence is having a detrimental impact on leaders' ability to improve the quality of the provision. At the time of the monitoring visit, the service was operating without nearly a third of the staff needed to deliver all courses. Leaders have recognised that they need to tackle this issue quickly and are in the process of appointing sessional teachers.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that all parts of the recovery plan identify accurate and relevant actions to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Prioritise and implement the most urgent actions that need to be carried out.
- Identify specific, relevant and individualised improvement targets for teachers, based on the performance of their learners and the quality of their teaching. Review closely teachers' progress towards achieving their targets.
- Identify where further training for teachers is needed and provide appropriate opportunities to enable them to improve their practice.
- Ensure that leaders receive all the relevant reports that they need to hold managers and staff to account, including reports on learners' progress and in-year achievement.
- Ensure that staffing levels very quickly return to the level needed to deliver all courses.

What actions have leaders taken to improve programmes and what has been the impact?

Following the previous inspection, leaders undertook a further review and restructure of the curriculum. For example, the vocational pathway options now include horticulture and construction, both of which meet local employment opportunities. Leaders and managers have developed local relationships that provide a small number of enterprise and work experience opportunities for learners to develop their work skills. In addition, new flexible delivery arrangements with a local school and community centre provide adult learners with the opportunity to study English, English for speakers of other languages, and information and communication technology (ICT) programmes at an appropriate level and venue to meet their individual needs. Managers have introduced additional entry level mathematics programmes in response to learners' early assessment results and to meet demand from Jobcentre Plus. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these actions as they are still in the very early stages of implementation.

Managers have swiftly implemented new arrangements designed to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all programme areas. Teachers monitor the progress learners make towards their qualification more frequently and

now learners are making better progress in developing their ICT and mathematics skills. For example, they use excel spreadsheets competently to complete budgeting and stock management tasks and use formulae to calculate service area and perimeters of work stations. Learners make progress in developing their social skills and communicate more effectively with peers and the wider community. However, managers recognise that the new arrangements are not improving the quality of provision in all programme areas.

Managers' actions to encourage teachers to provide learners with demanding tasks and activities in lessons are not having sufficient impact. Teachers and staff focus on the tasks learners need to complete to achieve their qualification, but do not focus sufficiently on the skills that they need to develop in preparation for employment and adult life. Too often, teachers do not use information about learners' prior achievements to plan their next steps. As a result, some learners do not receive the support they require, and others do not benefit from sufficiently challenging work. Learners do not clearly understand the progress they make towards achieving their qualifications or in developing the skills that they require for work. Leaders and managers have begun to implement training for staff to help them plan and deliver high-quality learning to meet individual needs. However, the impact of these actions is not yet evident.

Priorities for improvement

- Further develop the new curriculum, particularly to ensure that learners benefit from opportunities that help them to develop the personal and practical work skills they need to progress to appropriate employment.
- Ensure that teachers and staff focus on the skills, knowledge and behaviours that learners need to develop to prepare for adult life and employment.
- Ensure that teachers collect and use the information about learners' achievements to plan their next steps and to deliver activities in lessons that provide sufficient support and challenge to enable learners to achieve their potential.
- Ensure that learners understand the progress they are making towards their qualifications and the skills required for work.

What actions have leaders taken to ensure that learners attend well, are punctual, and that learners understand the likely impact of these behaviours on their prospects for sustained employment?

Leaders and managers have strengthened the attendance and behaviour procedures for learners, and staff consistently apply the new arrangements. Managers and staff have developed effective links with local agencies and are quick to provide support for vulnerable learners and families when required. Staff use a range of approaches with learners and develop useful strategies with families to help improve the

attendance of their dependant. For example, staff make frequent home visits to families, they make regular morning contact with learners, and learners access breakfast and lunch clubs at the centre. During the inspection, learners articulated that staff remind them they need to attend regularly to be able to pass their qualification. However, staff do not ensure that learners understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality in demonstrating the work skills needed for employment. Learners' attendance has improved slightly but remains too low.

Leaders and managers have developed a reporting system to record attendance that enables them to analyse attendance patterns by individual learner, programme, staff member and for examinations. Managers now have a more accurate view of learners' attendance patterns. However, the new reporting system was just installed prior to the monitoring visit and it is too early to see the impact this will have on improving learners' attendance or the reporting of specific concerns to leaders.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that staff set high expectations for attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that learners understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality, not just to achieve their qualification but to demonstrate the work skills needed to gain and sustain appropriate employment.
- Quickly implement actions to strengthen the procedures for attendance monitoring and reporting to improve learners' attendance.

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