

Springboard Sunderland Trust

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

5–8 March 2019

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have been slow to react to the decline in the proportion of learners on study programmes who complete their courses and achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers do not evaluate the quality of the provision accurately enough. As a result, they have not tackled weaknesses that have emerged since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers do not monitor the progress of learners on study programmes thoroughly enough.
- The arrangements for the management of subcontractors delivering study programmes and apprenticeships are not rigorous enough. They do not enable leaders and managers to identify and address declines in providers' performance quickly enough.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that learners on study programmes consistently receive effective careers advice. Consequently, too few learners progress onto further education or into employment.
- Tutors do not take account of the starting points of learners on study programmes when planning and delivering learning. As a result, too few learners make the progress of which they are capable.
- Tutors' feedback to learners on study programmes does not help them to identify what they need to do to improve.
- Tutors do not develop well enough the English and mathematical skills of learners on study programme and apprentices.

The provider has the following strengths

- Staff provide high levels of support to enable learners, many with poor experiences of prior education, to develop good personal and social skills.
- Leaders and managers have developed highly effective provision for learners who have high needs that prepares these learners well for adulthood.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills and make valuable contributions to their employers' businesses.
- Adult learners develop the skills that they need to gain employment with large employers in the warehousing and logistics sector.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Springboard Sunderland Trust (Springboard) is a registered charity and independent learning provider established in 1975. From its base in Sunderland, Springboard works across the north east of England through its own delivery centres and 14 subcontractors. Two thirds of its learners are on study programmes, with the remaining learners divided equally between adult learning programmes and apprenticeships. In January 2019, Springboard took the decision to no longer place new apprentices with subcontractors.
- Springboard draws its learners from the most disadvantaged communities and groups in the region. The north east has a higher rate of unemployment and a lower proportion of its population with qualifications at level 2 and above than in the rest of England.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should maintain the momentum of the recent changes that they have introduced to the design and delivery of study programmes, so that an increasing proportion of learners remain on programmes and achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers need to be more self-critical in their analysis of the quality of the provision, so that they can identify the causes of emerging weaknesses more quickly and take decisive actions to tackle them.
- Leaders and managers should improve the systems that they use to monitor and report on the progress of learners on study programmes so that they can intervene more swiftly to support those learners whose progress is too slow.
- Managers should intensify their monitoring of subcontractors so that they can intervene more quickly and effectively when their performance starts to decline.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all learners on study programmes receive impartial and timely careers advice that enables them to make informed decisions about their next steps into further education, training or employment.
- Tutors should use the information that they collect on the starting points of learners on study programmes to plan and deliver teaching and learning that consistently challenges learners to reach their potential.
- Tutors should use constructive feedback to learners on study programmes to help them to identify what it is they need to improve to make more rapid progress.
- Tutors and assessors should integrate English and mathematics into their teaching, learning and assessment, so that learners and apprentices can apply these skills to their vocational subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, trustees and senior managers have been too slow to respond to the decline in the proportion of learners on study programmes who remain on programmes and achieve their qualifications. One of the main reasons for this slow response was that trustees and senior managers were not self-critical or evaluative enough when assessing the quality of the provision. The self-assessment report for 2017/18 judges study programme provision as good, at a time when only just over half of learners achieved a qualification and most returned to being not in education, training and employment when they left the programme.
- The current quality assurance framework and resulting quality improvement actions have not enabled leaders and managers to identify or tackle emerging weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment. For example, observations of lessons have not identified the insufficient use of learners' starting points to plan and deliver learning and the lack of helpful feedback.
- More recently, operations and programme managers have analysed the causes for the deterioration in the quality of study programmes. They have redesigned the curriculum so that learners now spend an initial period developing their personal, social and study skills before choosing their main vocational qualification aim. This has resulted in a marked improvement in attendance and in fewer learners leaving programmes early compared to this time last year.
- Although leaders and managers have made noticeable improvements to the range and quality of the management information that they use to oversee performance, this information does not enable them to monitor the progress of learners on study programmes effectively. As a result, managers do not intervene quickly enough to support those learners who do not make the progress expected of them.
- Leaders and managers have not established sufficiently effective arrangements for managing subcontractors. Although they have increased the capacity of the team overseeing subcontractors since the previous inspection, they have not been able to detect swiftly enough declines in the performance of a number of subcontractors. These include Skills 4U, where learners on study programmes make slow progress, and Trade Techs Northern, where not enough apprentices completed their qualifications within the planned timescales.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that learners on study programmes consistently receive effective careers advice to enable them to identify their next steps into further education, training or employment. Impartial and timely careers advice is not routinely planned or available for all learners. Initial information and advice are effective in getting learners onto the right level programme when they start.
- Leaders, managers and staff share a strong mission to provide training and broader community development opportunities for hard-to-reach and vulnerable young people and adult learners. The chief executive officer, appointed since the previous inspection, has overseen a radical restructure of the organisation to provide managers with clearer lines of management accountability and a re-energised purpose.

- Leaders and managers work highly effectively with a wide range of partners to meet the training and development needs of their clients and users. Recent initiatives include the setting up of Springboard Futures. This provides young adults who have high needs with a challenging curriculum to prepare them for independent living and supported employment. A new partnership with Sunderland City Council has resulted in a community hub being created in Hetton to tackle digital exclusion.
- Operations and programme managers ensure that the very weakest teaching, learning and assessment are identified through effective performance management. A number of underperforming teaching staff who did not respond positively to support have either left the organisation or been removed through capability procedures.

The governance of the provider

- Trustees, many of whom have been with the organisation since its inception, did not recognise quickly enough that the quality of the study programme provision had deteriorated. They did not challenge managers well enough to ensure that actions were taken to tackle the decline.
- Trustees are now fully supportive of the recent positive changes to the delivery of study programmes that have been instigated by the chief executive officer and operational managers.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have effective oversight over Springboard's safeguarding arrangements. Trustees receive reports on safeguarding concerns at every board meeting. They ensure that any lessons learned from concerns are implemented, and that appropriate training is delivered to staff to increase their knowledge and awareness of emerging issues, such as 'county lines'.
- Managers ensure that all subcontractors have relevant and up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures in place when they negotiate new contracts. They check that all staff at subcontractors undergo mandatory safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Contract managers interview learners to assess their knowledge about whom they should report concerns to and their awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Staff are quick to follow up learners who do not attend sessions to ensure that they are safe. They have developed effective relationships with the agencies that support many of the young people who attend courses, such as children's social care. This enables them to alert these agencies quickly if there are any concerns and to call on them for support to keep learners on programmes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Not enough learners on study programmes make good progress and reach their potential as a result of the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment that they receive.
- Tutors on study programmes do not use their knowledge of learners' starting points well

enough to develop learning activities that challenge learners to develop their knowledge and understanding to a higher level. Too often, learners of different abilities work on the same tasks, with no additional activities planned for the most and least able.

- Tutors' feedback is not sufficiently helpful to enable learners on study programmes to know what they need to do to improve. Tutors too often fail to correct mistakes in learners' work. This impedes progress as learners repeat their errors. The very small number of learners who have high needs receive very helpful feedback through challenging improvement targets that speed their progress.
- Tutors' use of questioning to assess study programme learners' understanding of topics relies too heavily on the responses given by the more vocal or confident learners in a group. Tutors fail to challenge quieter or less confident learners sufficiently to demonstrate their level of understanding of a topic. In a minority of cases, learners' answers are superficial, and tutors do not explore the reasoning behind learners' answers.
- Tutors and assessors do not develop well enough the English and mathematical skills of learners on study programmes and apprentices. Assessors do not develop further the skills of those apprentices who have the minimum qualification requirements for the apprenticeship. Tutors on adult programmes support learners well to develop the literacy, communication and numeracy skills that they need for their everyday lives and future employment.
- Tutors and assessors use a variety of activities to make learning practical and interesting. As a result, the great majority of learners and apprentices develop new skills. For example, learners on early years programmes develop creative play activities to support children to develop their motor skills.
- Tutors know their learners' personal circumstances extremely well. This enables them to intervene quickly when the barriers in learners' lives prevent them from attending or learning. The effectiveness of this support ensures that an increasing proportion of current learners stay on their programmes.
- Tutors ensure that adult learners, apprentices and learners on study programmes work well together in lessons. This increases learners' and apprentices' ability to cooperate with a wide range of different people. It develops their confidence and the positive behaviours required to be successful in life and at work.
- Learners benefit from well-resourced learning environments at Springboard's centres and at subcontractors. These resources enable tutors to provide activities that develop practical skills well. For example, learners at the Sunderland Training and Educational Farm learn how to care for domestic pets and farm animals.
- Tutors assess the starting points of learners who have high needs very well. They use this information and the outcomes from health and care plans to set challenging targets that enable learners to make rapid progress in developing the skills that they need for independence and a successful adult life.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners, many with poor previous histories of education, value the safe and nurturing environment provided at Springboard and its subcontractors. They make rapid progress in the development of personal and social skills as a result of the care and support that they

receive. For example, young people at the YMCA who until recently were homeless learn how to negotiate confidently with landlords and to create a budget to manage their rents and other household expenses.

- Learners are respectful and tolerant of staff and their peers in learning sessions. The great majority behave well, including those at subcontractors.
- Learners' attendance on study programmes has improved significantly since the beginning of the current academic year. Attendance is now high, particularly for learners on programmes at Springboard and in English and mathematics classes.
- Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning. They gain confidence and develop the skills required for life and work. They enjoy the range of enrichment activities that they organise with their tutors. For example, learners cook healthy meals for the users of community centres and at charity events. They proudly describe the improved teamwork and communication skills that these activities give them.
- Staff use an effective new assessment and recording system to identify and overcome the barriers that learners face when they seek employment. For example, they recognised that dental hygiene was an issue for some learners. As a result, four staff members have been trained to promote improved dental health with their learners.
- Learners feel safe and can confidently discuss the safeguarding topics that they have covered in class. For example, apprentices know how to avoid using unregulated taxi drivers. Most learners and apprentices have a sound understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Initial advice and guidance are thorough for learners and apprentices, ensuring that they understand the requirements of their programmes and that they are on the right level of qualification. However, careers advice and guidance on study programmes are not routinely and systematically provided for all learners. As a result, not enough learners progressed onto further education and employment when they left Springboard in 2017/18.
- Managers recognise that too few learners on study programmes who are eligible participate in external work placements. Staff ensure that learners have access to internal work environments to develop their employability skills. For example, learners work in Springboard's own charity shop, cafe and park.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Not enough learners on study programmes make good progress and achieve their qualifications. Too few progressed into further education, training and employment in the previous year. However, the great majority of current adult learners, apprentices and learners who have high needs make expected or better than expected progress
- Too few study programme learners achieved their qualifications in 2017/18 because too many left their programmes early. Following recent changes made to the curriculum and delivery model for study programmes, a much higher proportion of learners remain on programmes and attend their lessons compared to this time last year.
- Managers have not been successful in improving the achievement of learners and apprentices with learning difficulties and/or difficulties, which remains lower than that of

their peers.

- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has risen steadily over the past two years, taking it to above that of similar providers. However, the proportion who did so within the planned timescales fell slightly last year to below the national rate. This was mainly due to the problems caused by the irregular activities at one subcontractor, Team Wearside, which went into liquidation, and the poor performance of another, Trade Techs Northern. Managers have taken the decision to stop subcontracting their apprenticeship provision.
- The great majority of adult learners achieve their qualifications. A very high proportion gain qualifications in English and mathematics functional skills. New employability courses developed with a group of employers have resulted in more learners gaining interviews and employment in the warehousing and logistics sector.
- The small number of learners who have high needs make very good progress towards challenging targets that prepare them well for a successful transition into adult life.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Springboard has 376 learners on study programmes. There are also six learners following study programmes who are on traineeships. Most learners are on courses leading to qualifications at entry level, level 1 and level 2, with a few studying at level 3. Ten subcontractors deliver half of all study programmes. Learners study programmes in eight vocational areas.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently effective. Too many learners do not make the progress expected of them or leave before the end of the programme.
- Tutors do not use the information that they collect on learners' prior experience, qualifications and abilities at the beginning of programmes sufficiently well to plan and deliver learning. In too many instances, all learners undertake the same activities at the same pace. Consequently, the more confident and most able learners often fail to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Tutors do not provide constructive feedback that enables learners to understand what they need to do to improve. Feedback on written work fails to highlight to learners how to develop their literacy skills or is not specific enough to help learners to develop their knowledge further. In too many instances, tutors do not correct errors in learners' work.
- Tutors do not use questioning in lessons effectively to check learners' understanding and to measure their progress. Too often, tutors allow the more vocal learners to monopolise responses. As a result, tutors do not know if the less confident learners in the group have understood what they are being taught before moving on to the next topic.
- Tutors do not routinely deliver activities to help learners develop the English and mathematical skills that are relevant to the vocational areas in which they are studying. Too few learners taking GCSE or functional skills qualifications achieve them.
- Tutors provide learners with high levels of individual support and attention through small

group sizes and intensive one-to-one coaching. This enables most learners to overcome their initial apprehensions about returning to education and helps them to develop the personal and social skills that they need to engage in formal learning.

- Learners grow in confidence and in their ability to work together and communicate clearly through a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, learners on the initial 12-week 'Take the Leap' programme plan collectively a residential at Springboard's outdoor centre at Allenheads.
- The great majority of learners develop new knowledge and skills that help them to pursue their career goals. For example, on programmes run by Sporting Chance North East, tutors ensure that learners understand the dietary and hydration requirements needed to sustain high levels of performance. In warehousing, learners learn how to operate forklift trucks safely in a simulated work environment.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- The great majority of Springboard's 108 adult learners are on courses at entry level and level 1, studying employability training, vocational courses, and English and mathematics. Four subcontractors deliver a third of the adult learning provision.
- Managers work highly effectively with partner organisations to match learning programmes to learners' needs. Employability courses have been developed with employers in the logistics industry who are short of labour in their warehouses. Courses on developing digital skills are targeted at communities that the local council has identified where residents lack confidence in the use of computers and tablets.
- Tutors integrate adult learners well into vocational study programmes, ensuring that they receive the same level of exposure to work-related and enrichment activities as younger learners. Adult learners on these programmes develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours that they will need for employment. For example, learners on a construction course acquire knowledge about health and safety practices that they will need for employment on building sites.
- Tutors use the wide range of learning environments and resources available to them to develop their learners' technical and broader employability skills effectively. For example, learners are responsible for maintaining the grounds and managing the recreational facilities in a country park open to the public that they run on behalf of the local council.
- Tutors know their learners very well. This enables them to provide high levels of individual support in a safe learning environment where learners grow in confidence and develop their skills and knowledge. Many learners benefit from one-to-one coaching, particularly in the development of their English and mathematical skills.
- Specialist staff provide effective initial information and advice to ensure that learners are placed on the right level of course that matches their personal or career goals. They deliver information and advice sessions in local community settings and at times to suit the needs of learners. Learners benefit from additional advice on issues such as debt and money management that contributes to enabling them to complete their courses and achieve their qualifications.
- The great majority of adult learners make expected or better than expected progress in the development of their skills and towards the achievement of their qualifications.

However, a minority of tutors do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able learners. They do not deepen the knowledge or understanding of these learners beyond the requirements of the qualification. As a result, these learners do not progress onto the higher levels of study of which they are capable.

Apprenticeships

Good

- Springboard has 156 apprentices. Level 2 programmes account for 54 apprentices, with 81 apprentices on level 3 and 21 on level 4 programmes; 117 apprentices are on frameworks and 39 on new standards-based programmes. The great majority of apprentices are on programmes in health and social care, business administration and management. Four remaining subcontractors are not taking on any new apprentices as Springboard is no longer subcontracting its apprenticeship provision.
- Managers and assessors work effectively with employers to ensure that apprenticeship programmes meet the needs of the individual apprentice and the requirements of the business. Most employers support their apprentices well and take an active part in planning programmes and reviewing their apprentices' progress.
- Assessors ensure that apprentices develop new technical skills and theoretical knowledge based on an accurate identification of their initial starting points. For example, new recruits to the gas industry, with little or no prior experience, learn how to inspect and test gas appliances while observing health and safety requirements.
- Apprentices produce work to a good standard for their level of study. Apprentices at level 3 in early years childcare devise imaginative play activities to stimulate the development of fine motor skills. Customer service apprentices produce well-written and mature responses to complaints.
- Apprentices benefit from learning in well-resourced workshops and employer premises that enable them to develop up-to-date industry-standard skills. For example, early years childcare apprentices work in Springboard's on-site nursery. Gas engineers are trained in a large employer's inspection and testing facility.
- Assessors ensure that apprentices understand the next steps available to them through higher-level programmes, promotion within their industries, or by following the self-employment route. Many apprentices decide to become self-employed as plumbing and heating engineers.
- Assessors are skilled at developing apprentices' broad understanding of how to keep safe. In addition to ensuring that apprentices understand the health and safety practices of their particular industries, assessors also reinforce the need for apprentices to keep themselves and those they are responsible for at work safe online. For example, early years childcare apprentices know how to check websites for unsuitable materials and where to report any issues. Apprentices' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism is well developed.
- The great majority of apprentices receive high-quality off-the-job training. However, a small minority do not receive their entitlement, with employers not releasing them from work to attend training sessions. This impedes the progress of these apprentices.
- Assessors do not support the further development of apprentices' English and mathematical skills. When apprentices have already achieved the appropriate level of

qualification in English and mathematics for their apprenticeship, assessors do not routinely continue to develop these skills through reviews and assignments.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50199
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,900
Principal/CEO	David Barker MBE
Telephone number	0191 515 5300
Website	www.springboard-ne.org.uk

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)	254	67	100	20	22	5	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	30	24	18	63	–		21	
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	6		–		6			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	11							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Boldon School Community First North East Foundation of Light Lomax Training NECC Training and Assessment Centre Skills 4U Sporting Chance North East Sunderland Training and Educational Farm Trade Tech Northern YMCA Foyer							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations manager, 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

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