

North East Lincolnshire Council

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second re-inspection monitoring visit to North East Lincolnshire Council's community learning service following publication of the inspection report on 5 December 2018 that found the service to be inadequate overall. At the inspection, inspectors judged the service to be inadequate for overall effectiveness and the effectiveness of leadership and management. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for learners and personal development, behaviour and welfare were judged to require improvement. Adult learning programmes and 16 to 19 study programmes were judged to require improvement.

At the time of this monitoring visit, there were 171 learners on adult learning programmes and 62 learners on 16 to 19 study programmes with the main qualification aim of employability.

Council leaders and elected members took the decision in April 2019 to cease delivery of all funded provision at the end of July 2019. They have informed the funding agency of this decision.

Themes

How effective have leaders' actions been in ensuring that the provision will be sustained in the future?

Significant progress

Senior officers at the council and service leaders and managers are highly committed to ensuring that residents in the borough, particularly those from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, will continue to have access to similar learning opportunities from August 2019 to those that the council currently provides. Since the previous monitoring visit in January 2019, they have actively pursued a range of options to sustain the provision.

Service leaders and managers are working very closely with other providers and with the funding agency to ensure that local provision remains in place. Their discussions with other providers have, so far, resulted in the identification of a number of courses that these providers may deliver once the council's provision ceases. Service leaders and managers have also worked closely with providers that are delivering, or will shortly deliver, large funded projects in the Humber region in the next academic year. This is with a view to including learning opportunities for residents in the borough within these projects. The projects include work to support young people and adults to gain the skills that they need for work. Two of the service's current managers are in the process of establishing a social enterprise with a view to providing some of the courses that the council currently provides.

The council convenes and chairs an employability forum that brings together local providers and other agencies. Its purpose is to plan a coherent range of provision in the borough to develop the skills that residents need for work and to address any gaps in provision. The assistant director for skills at the council chairs this group. Council leaders use the group effectively to work with other local providers to ensure that similar provision to the current offer remains available to residents when the council ceases to deliver courses.

Council leaders plan to retain the Skills Hub in Grimsby, the main centre for delivery of community learning, when current courses end. Other council services, including careers advice and guidance, will continue to operate from the centre. In their discussions with other providers about future delivery, council leaders have indicated that the Skills Hub will be available as a venue, thus providing continuity for learners.

Learners who have high needs and special educational needs are receiving effective support to enable them to progress once their course is completed. Managers liaise closely with the council's special educational needs and disability officer to ensure continuity of learning for these groups of learners.

What actions have leaders taken to improve the quality of provision, and what has the impact been? Reasonable progress

The actions that service leaders and managers had begun to take by the previous monitoring visit to enhance the management of staff performance are now having a demonstrable impact on the quality of teaching and learners' achievements, which have improved considerably. Managers carry out regular supervision and appraisal meetings with tutors to evaluate the quality of their work and its impact. They use the findings of lesson observations to determine accurately areas for development and provide support to staff to help improve their practice. Tutors who are unable to meet the expectations of managers are supported to leave the organisation. Managers have delivered a range of successful training activities for staff that have resulted in improvements in the quality of provision.

Leaders and managers have reviewed the provision to ensure that it meets learners' needs fully. The actions that they have taken following this review have contributed to the improvement in outcomes for learners. For example, learners with limited language skills join an initial course in English for speakers of other languages before working towards an English functional skills qualification. These learners successfully develop their language skills and their confidence to use English in their daily lives. This prepares them well for progression and for employment. Learners on study programmes benefit from high-quality work-related learning on a local market stall called 'the curiosity shop'. This enables them to develop their confidence and their enterprise skills in preparing and selling reconditioned furniture.

Most learners benefit from effective teaching that is responsive to their individual needs. They enjoy their learning and speak positively about how their new skills and

knowledge will benefit them, particularly in gaining and sustaining employment. However, pockets of poor practice remain, including on employability provision.

Teachers' assessment of learners' work is largely accurate. Teachers use assessment well to identify targets for learners that help them to make progress and achieve their learning goals. Most teachers provide useful feedback to learners that helps them to improve their work. However, in a few instances teachers do not encourage learners to respond to the feedback, which means that teachers do not know if learners have benefited from it.

Teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' starting points to ensure that all learners follow a course at the right level. This means that, in a few instances, learners make insufficient progress and are advised late in their programme to transfer to a course at a lower level. On a few courses, tutors do not take account of learners' differing abilities to plan and deliver activities to meet learners' individual needs. As a result, learners on these courses often find tasks either too easy or not challenging enough and do not make the progress of which they are capable.

How successfully are leaders and staff supporting current learners to complete their courses before the end of the academic year? Reasonable progress

Service leaders, managers and tutors are providing effective support to enable current learners to complete their courses before the end of the academic year, when the council's provision will cease. They have not recruited any new learners since April 2019. This means that they can focus their attention fully on supporting current learners to complete their courses and achieve.

Most learners are making appropriate progress towards achieving their qualifications and personal learning goals. The proportion of learners who remain on their courses to the end has increased and is now high. A high proportion of those learners who have already completed their courses in the current year have achieved their qualifications or learning aims. Achievement so far in the current year is significantly higher than in the previous year.

Attendance has improved significantly over recent months. Managers recognise, however, that further improvement is needed to reduce the number of absences. Managers and staff provide good support to learners who miss lessons through catch-up sessions and by providing work for learners to complete in their own time.

Tutors monitor learners' progress accurately and regularly. This enables them to take appropriate action to support learners who fall behind. However, managers have insufficient oversight of the progress of learners across all courses. The information that they receive about progress does not enable them to identify quickly enough areas of the provision where learners are progressing less well or to intervene to improve progress.

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