

# Free to Learn Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Lynda Brown, Her Majesty's Inspector

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly funded to deliver adult learning provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Free to Learn (F2L) provides short vocational courses, including nail technology, security and construction at level 2 and level 3 and courses in customer service and retail knowledge at level 1 and level 2. They also offer functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics from entry level to level 2. F2L are based in the London borough of Hackney, with centres in Doncaster and Oldham. Currently, there are 111 learners; 96 learners are funded through the adult education budget and 15 through adult learner loans. Most learners are referred to F2L by Jobcentre Plus staff.

### Themes

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose?**      **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers at F2L have established a curriculum that meets the needs of learners and employers in the geographical regions in which they operate. Leaders' main rationale for the curriculum is to provide learners with qualifications and skills so that they are well prepared to enter the labour market and develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Leaders and managers work effectively with Jobcentre Plus staff. They use their knowledge of the local areas well to adapt the curriculum swiftly. For example, they have recently developed logistics courses in the Doncaster region and health and social care courses in London to meet the demands of local employers.

Leaders ensure that teachers are well qualified at appropriate levels and in appropriate subjects. Managers monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively through frequent lesson observations and learning walks. Teachers who are new to the organisation or who require additional support benefit from activities such as mentoring or team teaching.

Leaders and managers have put in place effective procedures to evaluate the quality of the provision. As a result, they have a good understanding of the main strengths

and weaknesses of the organisation. Leaders focus relentlessly on improving quality. They have used external experts and newly appointed managers to establish quality processes within the organisation and secure further improvements. However, it is too early to see the impact of changes that have been put in place.

Managers have taken appropriate actions to secure improvements identified in their own assessment of performance. However, they do not evaluate effectively the impact of their actions. For example, they do not gather data frequently enough to know whether attendance is improving swiftly or whether it is consistent across all sites and courses. Managers do not analyse information on learners' destinations once they have completed their training sufficiently well.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals?**      **Significant progress**

Staff provide effective initial advice and guidance to learners to ensure that they understand the choice of courses and the commitment they are required to have to their learning. As a result, the vast majority of learners complete their courses and achieve their qualifications.

Staff assess the skills and knowledge that learners have at the beginning of their course, including in English and mathematics, well. Staff use this information effectively to support learners to develop their skills and prepare them for employment. Learners benefit from the development of employability skills, such as in customer service and marketing skills, that help them to gain employment within their chosen career. For example, learners on a level 2 nail technology course can discuss relevant industry legislation and the importance of promoting products and services to clients in salons.

Staff provide a supportive and caring learning environment in which learners develop their confidence and self-esteem. Teachers use a broad range of learning activities during lessons, such as role play and group discussions related to learners' chosen career paths. For example, learners in nail technology use role play to practise communicating effectively with clients in a salon. As a result, learners enjoy their lessons, are motivated to learn and develop their vocational and employability skills well.

Most students produce work that is appropriate to the level of their study. Teachers check learners' work frequently and provide learners with helpful and detailed feedback. As a result, learners make good progress in developing skills that prepare them to gain employment.

Managers check the quality of learners' written work often to ensure that learners are on track to complete their courses. Where learners are at risk of not achieving,

teachers intervene swiftly to help them catch up. A small minority of teachers do not correct spelling and grammar routinely, so learners do not know how to improve.

Managers and teachers have established very good relationships with employers through an employability team within F2L. Teachers use these links well to secure employment opportunities for learners. Employers visit F2L to speak about the skills that they require their employees to have and they help learners to practise their interview skills. In construction and in nail technology employers hold job interviews for learners on-site. This often results in learners receiving full- or part-time job offers.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?      Significant progress**

Leaders and managers give a high priority to safeguarding within the organisation. They have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures, including for online safety and lone working. They implement these effectively to keep learners and staff safe.

Managers check thoroughly that staff are safe to work with vulnerable learners. They update checks frequently and keep accurate and up-to-date records. Managers have put in place an effective staff induction programme and all staff have frequent training on safeguarding.

The safeguarding team, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL have received training relevant to their roles. Managers ensure that all staff carry out a broad range of training associated with safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty. Staff have a good understanding of potential risks to learners in the local area. However, not all teachers feel confident to discuss aspects of radicalisation and extremism in classroom activities. As a result, learners do not have enough opportunities to explore these issues in relation to their future job roles.

Learners feel safe and are safe within the learning environment and in the local area. Staff support learners very well to overcome issues that may negatively impact on their learning. For example, staff provide good support for students who are homeless or have mental health issues. Staff have very good links with external agencies and, when appropriate, refer learners well.

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