

Inspection of Lincolnshire County Council

Inspection dates: 24 to 27 September 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Leaders offer education and training through three distinct service areas of the council. These are the adult skills and family learning service, the young people's learning service and the employer-provider apprenticeship service.

Leaders work with 24 sub-contractors to provide adult skills and family learning in a wide range of settings. In the previous year, there were 6,368 adult learners, 923 of whom took accredited qualifications. At the time of inspection, there were 404.

Young learners attend one of seven 'InspireU' sites across Lincolnshire. There are 174 current learners, 120 who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), of whom 70 are learners with high needs. Most learners are aged 16 to 18, with 40 aged 19 and over.

Leaders offer apprenticeship training at levels 2 to 5 for their own employees. Apprentices study business administration, customer service, team leading, or leadership and management. There are 66 current apprentices, all of whom are adults.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners and apprentices experience a highly nurturing and learner-centred culture. Adult learners are very positive about the way their learning boosts their confidence and enhances their futures. Young learners, including those with high needs, thrive in the positive and accepting environment. Apprentices benefit from responsive trainers who provide additional help when needed.

Most learners and apprentices successfully gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours ready for their futures. Adult learners on employability courses develop a sound knowledge about job applications, and those who study customer service and catering courses become confident café workers. Young learners, including those with high needs, make good progress with their personal goals in preparation for adulthood and employment. For example, they undertake independent trips to the supermarket and attend work placements. Most apprentices develop a sound understanding of the topics they study. However, too much of this is through their own efforts and research, as opposed to sufficient well-planned learning activities.

Leaders provide an extensive range of meaningful wider development activities. InspireU staff work with a range of employers and partners to provide highly useful work experience for young learners, including those with high needs. For example, they work collaboratively with Whitbread on the 'Thrive' work placement project. This helps learners to gain confidence and improve their communication and customer service skills. Other young learners take smaller steps to build their confidence over time. For example, they independently walk the on-site therapy dog and undertake residential camping trips. Tutors organise volunteering opportunities and mock interviews for adult learners who are not yet work ready. Apprentices undertake an enrichment course that provides a broader insight into wider areas of the council's work, such as trading standards and counterfeit goods.

Learners and apprentices receive suitable training about safeguarding themes and the 'Prevent' duty. InspireU staff speak to their young learners about the risks they might experience outside of college or while on work placement. They highlight any local matters and guide learners well on what they should do if they have concerns. As a result, learners and apprentices feel safe, cared about and understood.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders work very closely with stakeholders to plan a curriculum for adults that raises aspirations and improves chances of future employment effectively. They collaborate with their sub-contractors to provide enough learning opportunities for adults across Lincolnshire, including in some of the most difficult to reach areas. Leaders focus on: widening participation; the needs of the local economy; health and well-being; and adults who are most in need. For example, opportunities include mathematics courses specifically for women in the Traveller community and an array of English language courses for novice-level adult learners.

The curriculum rationale for young learners and apprentices is also well thought through. Leaders liaise with feeder schools, further education providers, local authorities and professionals, such as case workers, to devise suitable courses for young learners. Leaders use high-needs funding effectively to enable small-group learning across all 'InspireU' sites. Most apprenticeship courses provide opportunities for local people to secure entry-level roles within the council, while the management course supports with Lincolnshire County Council's own succession planning.

Leaders and tutors select the specific curriculum content that adult and young learners need well. They work with local schools and other partners to plan content for a wide array of adult courses. For example, they plan courses on healthy eating in areas where schoolchildren's health and diet cause concern, or on British life and culture for adults who are new arrivals in the county as refugees. InspireU leaders provide a very relevant curriculum for young learners who have previously found it challenging to participate in education. The recently redesigned curriculum focuses on three pathways, 'step', 'stride' and 'sprint', which appropriately align to learners' goals of independence, further study or employment.

Tutors plan and organise topics in a logical progression for adult and young learners, including those with high needs. Customer service and catering tutors first teach adult learners basic customer service skills before they move on to food hygiene, and then on to how to deal with challenging customers. InspireU tutors make sensible adjustments to the curriculum when they identify it has been over-ambitious. They sensibly plan opportunities to revisit key topics, such as budgeting, throughout the year.

For the much smaller number of apprentices, the content of the curriculum is less well planned. Managers and trainers do not organise apprentices' off-the-job training time thoroughly enough. They do not make effective use of individual tutorials or progress reviews to develop apprentices' action plans. As a result, apprentices are left to plan too much of their studies with their line managers. Apprentices conduct their own research to fill their knowledge gaps. Taught workshops, which take place every three weeks, are mostly well organised, although trainers do not always consider apprentices' existing knowledge and skills carefully. As a result, they set activities for apprentices that are too easy or for which they lack the prerequisite knowledge to complete.

Most tutors and trainers use their expertise well to help learners and apprentices acquire new knowledge and skills. They use effective teaching approaches and relevant, high-quality resources. For example, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) tutors select and adjust language carefully with adult learners to help their comprehension. Door security tutors introduce topics to adult learners through an array of pertinent scenarios. Tutors and support staff of young learners with high needs skilfully use a range of safe teaching approaches that meet their complex needs. During apprenticeship workshops, trainers provide a wide range of activities that aid understanding. In a very few cases, InspireU tutors introduce too many complex topics to young learners at once, or overload materials with

information. As a result, learners find it difficult to fully grasp the key principles they need to know about.

There are a wide range of highly suitable strategies for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), EHC plans or high needs. Leaders and staff know individual learners' support needs well. They use this information effectively to inform support plans and personalised targets. During classes, InspireU tutors and learning support assistants jointly help learners communicate appropriately and self-manage their behaviours. Well-being coaches support with behaviour interventions and pastoral care outside of classes. In adult classes, teaching assistants support learners to become more independent and to manage their own learning.

Tutors and trainers mostly use assessment successfully to check learners' recall of knowledge and to further develop their understanding. For example, on advanced spreadsheets courses, tutors use assessment skilfully to decide which adult learners are ready to work more independently. InspireU tutors allow appropriate thinking time and pose effective follow-up questions. In apprenticeship workshops, trainers use questioning well to ensure apprentices have understood topics.

In most cases, tutors and trainers plan and implement helpful practice activities. ESOL tutors use repetition well to build adult learners' confidence in the correct pronunciation of spoken English. InspireU tutors develop activities that increase in complexity so learners can practise what they learn, such as interview skills. However, on apprenticeship courses, trainers do not design well-planned practice activities to develop apprentices' knowledge and skills securely. Trainers overly focus on the production of portfolio evidence.

InspireU tutors provide young learners, including those with high needs, with plentiful verbal feedback about how to improve their written work standards. Many tutors also provide helpful written comments, which learners can use as a reference point when they make improvements. However, tutors do not consistently do this.

Many learners make significant progress as a result of their studies. Adult learners are more ready to apply for work, undertake volunteering or study at a higher level. Young learners, including those with high needs, develop new knowledge and skills quickly. For example, those on supported internships develop a good understanding of the skills they need for employment. Work shadowing helps apprentices develop a wider exposure to the council so that they can prepare for their next steps.

Achievement rates vary across curriculums. Most adult learners who take accredited qualifications pass these, and this is particularly high on vocational courses. Only a minority of young learners who undertake accredited qualifications in employability and customer service achieve them. Leaders recognise that this is too low. They have made changes to initial assessment and curriculum pathways. These changes appear to be positive, but it is too soon for inspectors to judge the impact. A large majority of young learners make positive progress in GCSE English, but fewer make the same progress in mathematics. Most apprentices complete their studies

successfully, and a high proportion gain distinction in their end-of-course assessments.

Leaders, and their subcontractors, focus very well on the wider personal development and support for learners. Many sub-contracting partners provide free lunches and interview clothes for adult learners in deprived areas. Tutors take adult ESOL learners on progression visits to help their move from a community-based course to a college-based one. Leaders provide free transport for young learners to activities such as the 'Olympics', where they undertake sport or event management.

There is very good support for learners' and apprentices' health and well-being. Young learners study topics such as sexual health, and drug and alcohol awareness. Leaders ensure that the adult curriculum offer includes a considerable focus on health and well-being. For example, as part of family learning courses, leaders work with a football club to help local men improve their mental and physical health. Apprentices benefit from the range of employee services, such as counselling and running events.

Leaders, tutors and trainers provide highly relevant careers guidance that relates to learners' and apprentices' potential destinations. This includes many purposeful opportunities, such as careers fairs, guest speakers, work experience, job clubs and employer interactions. Young learners rightly value the frequent next-steps conversations they have, including their guidance sessions with impartial advisers.

Leaders mostly use suitable quality assurance activity to identify issues and implement improvements. Oversight of sub-contractors is robust. Leaders and project officers work closely with these providers and know them well. When they identify issues, such as poor achievement, they use intensive monitoring that leads to improvements. However, for the much smaller apprenticeship curriculum, there has not been sufficient focus on the quality of all components of training.

There are appropriate arrangements for governance through the learning operations board that has oversight of all three service areas. Board members have relevant sector expertise, know and understand the organisation and support leaders well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the planning of all components of apprentices' training with a focus on ways to ensure secure development of knowledge and skills.
- Continue to review the effectiveness of initial assessment and curriculum pathways on courses for young learners.
- Make sure all tutors and trainers use clear teaching approaches, explanations and resources.

- Improve the consistency of the written feedback tutors provide to young learners.

Provider details

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Provider type Community Learning and Skills - Local Authority

Date of previous inspection 11 to 14 June 2019

Main subcontractors 3 Counties Accounts Training Service
Abbey Access Centre Ltd
Boston College
Choose ICT Ltd
Community Learning in Partnership (CLIP) CIC
East Lindsey Information Technology Centre
Lincoln College
Lincoln Pelican Trust Ltd
Lincolnshire Community Health NHS Trust
Teach Vocation Group

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the adult learning and skills manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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