

# Learndirect Ltd

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 55141

**Name of lead inspector:** Charles Searle HMI

**Inspection date(s):** 12–13 June 2018

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Dearing House  
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the third re-inspection monitoring visit to Learndirect Ltd following publication of the inspection report on 17 August 2017, which found the provider to be inadequate overall. Outcomes for learners were also judged inadequate. The effectiveness of leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and personal development, behaviour and welfare required improvement. Of the three provision types inspected, apprenticeships were judged inadequate, and adult learning programmes and traineeships required improvement.

Learndirect Ltd is winding down its contracts to deliver apprenticeships and adult learning. These will finish at the end of July 2018. At the time of this monitoring visit, the provider had 2,892 apprentices and 7,276 adult learners on programmes. Learndirect Ltd no longer delivers traineeships.

### Themes

#### **What plans have senior managers put in place to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and how successful have they been in implementing these plans? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have sustained the improvements to the quality of the provision that were identified at the previous monitoring visit. They have achieved this in the challenging context of winding down their main funding contracts, closing delivery centres and significantly reducing staffing. Staff at all levels of the organisation have demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting learners and apprentices to complete their qualifications.

Managers of the adult learning provision have tackled successfully some of the more intractable areas for improvement from the previous inspection. They have closed the gap in performance between their own direct delivery centres and those of their subcontractors and, as a result, the quality of the provision is better and more consistent across centres. Learners' attendance has increased at the great majority of centres and in most subject areas. As a result of these improvements, the proportion of adult learners achieving their qualifications, including in English and mathematics, is now just below the level found at similar providers. An increasing proportion of learners progress to employment or further education and training, although this remains low.

Managers continue to scrutinise closely and act to improve the performance of assessors despite a significant reduction in staffing levels. They have retained the better-performing assessors through a well-designed incentive scheme. Improved performance management, together with the implementation of a more effective

system for tracking apprentices' progress, has resulted in an increase in the proportion of apprentices achieving their qualifications and a significant reduction in the number of apprentices on breaks in learning. Although the current overall achievement rate for apprentices has improved since the previous inspection, it is still well below that of similar providers.

**How have managers responded to the weaknesses identified in the subcontracting of provision?**

**Reasonable progress**

The improvements to the arrangements for managing the performance of subcontractors that were identified at the previous monitoring visit have been maintained. Managers have reduced further the number of subcontractors in response to concerns about the quality of the provision. Their monitoring of the progress of apprentices at subcontractors has been intensified as they finalise the arrangements for the transfer of apprentices to new providers. Contract managers of the 39 adult learning subcontractors have overseen continuing improvements in learner achievement rates, levels of attendance and the proportion of learners progressing to employment, education and training.

**How are leaders and managers ensuring the smooth transition for apprentices transferring to other providers?**

**Insufficient progress**

Leaders' negotiations to transfer all apprentices on directly delivered programmes to one large provider ended unsuccessfully in March 2018. Leaders are now approaching the final stages of the process to transfer these apprentices to five other providers and have allocated the large majority. However, most apprentices are still waiting to be re-enrolled with the new providers so they can continue their programmes.

Leaders' and managers' lack of clarity in their communications about the transfer process has caused confusion and uncertainty among employers and apprentices. Too many employers are dissatisfied by the lack of information that they have received and have concerns that their apprentices will not achieve their qualifications. Some employers were informed that Learndirect Ltd would continue to work with their apprentices until the end of July 2018 to complete their programmes, but were told subsequently that the apprentices were transferring to a new provider. As a result, a few employers have approached other providers independently to ask them to complete their apprentices' programmes, thereby compounding the confusion about the transfer arrangements.

The process for transferring those apprentices whose programmes are delivered by Learndirect Ltd's existing subcontractors has been much more effective. Leaders and managers have worked successfully to transfer the great majority of these

apprentices to three providers that have existing relationships with the subcontractors and hold their own funding contracts. This process is working much more smoothly as there is no disruption to the apprentices' programmes.

Across both types of transfer, there have been minor discrepancies between the number of apprentices that leaders and managers are planning to transfer and the number that the new providers believe they are going to receive. A small proportion of apprentices have not yet been allocated to a provider, although there is an agreement with the new providers that they will take on any remaining apprentices before the end of the contract year. There is, however, a risk that a very small number of apprentices will not be able to complete their programmes if they are not accepted by a new provider before the end of July 2018.

**What have managers done to improve the systems and processes for identifying apprentices' starting points and the monitoring and reporting of progress?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have continued to improve their use of the apprentice tracking system that they developed after the last inspection to enable them to monitor effectively the progress of the remaining apprentices. In the remaining months of the contract year, they are using the information on apprentices' progress to identify those who will achieve before the end of the year and those who need to be transferred to other providers. As the number of apprentices declines due to the completion of their programmes or their transfer to new providers, assessors have been able to provide more intensive support to most apprentices who remain on programmes. As a result, an increasing proportion of apprentices have achieved their qualifications since the previous inspection.

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