

# Springboard Sunderland Trust

Interim visit report

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	50199
<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Jacque Brown, HMI
<b>Visit dates:</b>	21 to 22 October 2020
<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Address:</b>	Unit 1–2 East Way Rivergreen Industrial Estate Pallion Sunderland SR4 6AD

## Interim visit

### Context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

### Information about the provider

Springboard Sunderland Trust is a registered charity and independent learning provider that provides study programmes for 16- to 19-year-old learners, adult learning programmes and apprenticeships. It operates across the north east of England through its own delivery centres and through subcontractors. There are 270 learners on study programmes, of whom 100 are on programmes delivered by subcontractors. Adult learning programmes account for 42 learners, and the provider receives high-needs funding for 32 learners. There are 33 apprentices aged 16 to 18, and 33 apprentices aged 19 and above. The vast majority of apprentices are enrolled on standard-based programmes.

### **What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?**

Leaders and managers explained the adjustments that they have made to the curriculum due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following lockdown, they moved most of the curriculum online for learners and apprentices. They are continuing to develop their ability to deliver programmes online in the event of a further lockdown.

Leaders and managers explained that, during lockdown, teachers used a range of media to deliver remote learning, including online lessons, social media, chat facilities, telephone support and paper-based work packs. Since returning to on-site delivery, teachers have delivered programmes through a blended approach, with a mixture of face-to-face and online tuition. Learners on study programmes and adult learners now receive most of their sessions face to face.

Leaders and managers acknowledge the challenges of delivering online and have appointed a virtual learning environment coordinator to support staff and learners to

adapt to the change. They were unable to provide a laptop to all learners who needed one, so they are now refurbishing old laptops and tablets for learners to use in the event of another lockdown.

Leaders and managers appointed additional pastoral staff to deal with the increased number of difficulties and challenges that learners were experiencing as a result of the pandemic. They also recruited additional teachers to manage the reduced class sizes on the return to on-site learning.

Leaders explained how they have continued to develop their external partnerships during the pandemic. They are delivering a joint project with a large local employer which involves the employer's staff delivering construction sessions to learners in the provider's workshops. Leaders believe that this will contribute well to skills development in construction and may open up job opportunities for learners and apprentices.

**What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?**

Leaders and managers explained how teachers adapted to online learning with varying degrees of success. Teachers stated that apprentices adapted to this approach well, but many adults and young people struggled with it. Vulnerable adults and learners who have high needs found studying online difficult, so teachers delivered paper-based work packs to them. Leaders and managers work with teachers to evaluate whether the curriculum is meeting the needs of learners and apprentices.

Leaders and managers have ensured that staff have support to develop their confidence with online learning. This support is provided by the new coordinator and through ensuring that more experienced staff share their expertise with less confident colleagues.

Teachers described how they have adopted new approaches to teaching that have helped to engage learners. For example, in warehousing, learners worked on the knowledge-based element of their course by using videos, websites and online toolkits. Teachers in beauty therapy described how they planned opportunities for learners to practise their skills during the pandemic, including how they created videos on how to conduct a facial using household products such as honey and oats.

Teachers have had to change the work placement element of the curriculum for some learners on study programmes. This is because, following lockdown, some employers have found it difficult to offer work placements. Instead, they deliver careers talks for learners.

Teachers recognise that learners may have gaps in their knowledge and skills as a result of disruption to their learning caused by the pandemic. They have

implemented a 'recovery curriculum' for learners on study programmes to refresh their skills. Apprentices completed mock end-point assessment tests, and teachers used the results of these to deliver recap sessions.

Teachers worked with learners who have high needs to provide a phased return to learning using one-to-one and small-group settings to enable learners to settle into the centre. Teachers have planned a focused careers education programme for learners, including learners who have high needs, to help them progress to their next steps.

### **How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?**

Leaders and managers explained how they have ensured that learners and staff are kept safe during the pandemic. They have put a range of measures in place to keep learners and staff safe online. For example, they have encouraged learners and staff to access remote learning in a way that enables activities to be monitored.

Leaders and managers have seen an increase in safeguarding concerns, with an increased number of learners experiencing homelessness, suicidal thoughts and depression. Staff confirmed that they have had extensive training on how to protect learners both online and with a range of potential well-being and safeguarding issues.

Learners explained how they have completed an induction including topics such as staying safe online, the risks of radicalisation and extremism, and mental health. These topics are then discussed further throughout the programme. However, a few learners could not recall having received this training.

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