

Humber Learning Consortium

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	58700
Name of lead inspector:	Jonny Wright, Her Majesty's Inspector
Visit dates:	18 to 19 November 2020
Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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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 in this period, including those 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.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the provider.

Information about the provider

Humber Learning Consortium is an independent learning provider that provides leadership and management services to subcontractor partners that deliver on its behalf. It has a particular emphasis on supporting voluntary and community organisations. Subcontractors deliver traineeships and adult learning programmes across the Yorkshire and the Humber region. At the time of the visit, there were 52 trainees and learners on programme.

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 consider that their biggest challenge during the pandemic has been to set up online learning for learners. They explained that some of their delivery partners had limited capability to provide online learning at the beginning of the period of COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders enabled learners at these providers to access online learning using learning platforms provided by some of the other delivery partners. Managers provided some learners with laptops and dongles to enable them to access online learning.

Leaders believe that the most significant impact of the COVID-19 restrictions has been learners' deteriorating mental health and the increase in incidents of domestic violence across the Yorkshire and the Humber region. They have worked with relevant support agencies to provide support for learners and have provided staff

with training on how to identify signs of mental health concerns and domestic violence.

Leaders sought advice from partners in other geographical areas with similar COVID-19 infection rates to share good practice in carrying out risk assessments. They have shared this information with their delivery partners that, in turn, have carried out risk assessments at their premises to ensure that learners stay safe.

Leaders described how they have worked closely with their delivery partners to identify learners' individual needs. They increased their contact with partners to weekly meetings in which they discussed the progress of individual learners. Leaders also joined online reviews to monitor learners' progress and well-being. Managers at delivery partners increased their contact with learners to check on their progress and welfare.

Leaders described how they plan the curriculum in response to changing local skills needs resulting from the current pandemic. They liaised with regional partners, including the local enterprise partnership, worked with employers in the health and social care sector, and used labour market information to identify current needs and to develop their curriculum in response. Some learners have gained employment in the health and social care sector in response to local demand.

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 believe that the partnership delivery model has been a significant strength during the pandemic. They used the partnership network to share good practice and facilitate staff development. All teachers received training in online teaching methods prior to working with learners. Less experienced teachers shadowed experienced colleagues to improve their online teaching skills. Staff said that their digital skills have improved as a result of training.

Managers keep up to date with changing labour market information and use this to advise learners about the direction that their careers could take. Managers said that they work closely with employers, so they quickly become aware of opportunities for work placements and employment. Staff have helped learners to apply for roles in the local authority to support the track and trace system.

Managers and teachers described how they have adapted curriculum content to meet new challenges during the pandemic. They have placed an emphasis on enabling all learners to acquire digital and customer-service skills. They have supported learners in hairdressing and beauty and in health and social care to develop their understanding of how to keep customers and clients safe.

During the initial period of COVID-19 restrictions, managers and teachers provided learners in practical subjects with equipment to enable them to develop their skills at

home. Learners in hairdressing used kits containing mannequin heads, scissors and personal protective equipment to practise their skills. They filmed themselves demonstrating their knowledge and skills so that teachers could see how they were progressing.

Staff said that learners experienced barriers to learning during the period of COVID-19 restrictions, including a lack of privacy and limited space to study at home. Staff attempted to overcome these barriers by meeting learners in open spaces such as parks to support learning. After restrictions were eased, staff encouraged learners to access the internet in libraries to overcome some of the difficulties of working from home.

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

Leaders have worked with the local police and other partners, including the regional 'Prevent' duty coordinator, to identify safeguarding risks arising from the pandemic. They have provided staff with training and information about risks, including online grooming, sexual exploitation, knife crime and county lines.

Staff described how they have used the information from the training to help learners identify online risks and to increase their awareness of the rise in right-wing extremism. Learners understand the risks and know how to report any safeguarding concerns.

Leaders identified learners at risk prior to the period of COVID-19 restrictions. They work with local agencies to provide support for these learners and keep in regular contact with them to check on their well-being.

Leaders told us that they have joined online learning sessions to check that learners are kept safe. Learners reported that all online learning is secure and that they are able to contact teachers in sessions privately if they have any concerns.

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