

# North Lincolnshire Council

## Interim visit report

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	53589
<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Steve Hunsley, Her Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Local authority
<b>Address:</b>	Adult Education Centre The Link Scunthorpe DN16 2UT

## 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.

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

North Lincolnshire Council provides adult learning courses in dedicated education centres, community venues and children's centres across the area that it serves. The provision consists of courses in English, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), mathematics, information and communication technology, and a number of vocational areas, including business administration and supporting teaching and learning in schools. There are currently 309 learners on vocational programmes, 156 on English and mathematics courses, and 122 on community learning 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 confirmed that their learners were unable to attend learning centres when these closed at the start of the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to and during the closures, leaders worked with tutors to review the delivery of their provision before reopening their learning centres.

Tutors have created online and paper-based learning resources to complement or replace face-to-face learning where necessary, including resources for English and mathematics. Courses in English at entry level and in ESOL remain classroom-based as managers feel that this is the best way for learners on these courses to develop their English skills.

Leaders and tutors understand the difficulties that some learners have in accessing online learning, either through their lack of confidence in using the technology or a lack of access to suitable equipment. Managers and tutors address this by delivering paper-based resources to learners' homes and holding weekly telephone tutorials to support learners.

Leaders and managers work with internal and external stakeholders to support vulnerable learners in the community. Leaders are members of the council's COVID-19 response team. They identify vulnerable learners and help them to access their education, medication or essential supplies when they are isolating as a result of local restrictions.

Managers described how they developed additional provision as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, tutors devised online sessions for new parents and for parents wishing to support their children's mental health during the months of isolation.

Managers have worked with tutors to sequence the curriculum so that learners are able to complete any group work or assessments that they need, in order to achieve their qualifications. Tutors made sure that, on English courses, the speaking and listening assessments were finished prior to the second period of national restrictions.

**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?**

Managers and tutors spoke positively about the training that they received in developing and using online learning resources. Tutors who felt less confident in using technology said that managers supported them to develop their skills, through the introduction of virtual learning champions. Tutors described how they use online teaching confidently to train teaching assistants and to cover topics such as safeguarding and managing challenging behaviour on family learning courses.

Tutors concentrate on helping learners to improve their skills in using information technology. They have found that adults who live in the rural areas of the authority are often reluctant to use public transport during the pandemic in order to attend their lessons. These learners benefit from developing their skills in using information technology, so they can access and use online learning resources from their homes.

Managers described how they monitor the content and quality of the curriculum. They visit online lessons and review how well tutors track their learners' progress. Tutors told us that they communicate regularly with their learners to review the progress that learners are making and to encourage them to stay engaged in their learning.

Managers described how tutors use assessment and discussion to identify gaps in learners' knowledge. Staff realised that many learners on courses in ESOL had gaps in their understanding of the use of grammar as a consequence of missing lessons in the summer. In response, tutors are now focusing closely on developing learners' grammatical understanding. They told us that they can see improvements in their learners' communication skills.

Staff continue to provide careers advice and guidance for their learners in conjunction with local career agencies. Managers recognise that a significant number of adults have become unemployed because of the pandemic. They work with local agencies to identify training in areas where there are more likely to be jobs available.

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

Managers explained how they take an active role in the authority's COVID-19 response team. They described how they implement a range of measures to ensure the safety and well-being of their learners. For example, they ensure that the learning centres are COVID-secure and provide additional support for learners when studying from home.

Leaders identified a priority group of vulnerable learners who were either shielding or had other medical concerns. They provide these learners with extra support to ensure that they are safe and coping with the isolation that they face during the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic.

Managers inform learners about the risks that they may face when working online and when using the internet, and about how to stay safe online. Learners spoke confidently about their understanding of phishing emails and the need to protect their identity when working online.

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