

# Inspection of V Learning Network, trading as Step into Learning Ltd

Inspection dates:

16 to 18 November 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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

## **Information about this provider**

V Learning Network is a charity. It was established in 2001 as a consortium of subcontractors. Step into Learning is the public facing name of the company and provides education and training for adult learners.

The provider currently works with three subcontractors. All are charities and community interest groups that offer training in Cornwall to young people and to learners with high needs.

At the time of the inspection, 22 learners with high needs and five 16- to 18-year-old learners studied a range of vocational and employability courses. Eleven adults studied Access to Higher Education courses in health and social care and social science at level 3, and 17 studied counselling courses at level 4.

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

Learners enjoy their learning because staff are committed to helping them to achieve their best. Teachers care deeply about their learners, whom they know well, and develop positive relationships based on trust and respect. As a result, learners develop their confidence and feel valued by staff. Teachers of adults present information skilfully during purposeful online learning sessions. Adults gain substantial new knowledge and skills as a result of studying the curriculum.

Staff support learners with high needs to take part in and make good use of a wide range of learning projects. For example, learners develop links with community members and other partners through projects such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. This helps learners to participate in learning in their communities and secure volunteering and work placements when they complete the course. Learners take part in work-related activities, such as creating crafts for a Christmas fair. This helps to enrich their learning experience and apply and practise their practical skills. However, leaders and managers do not provide young learners and learners with high needs with sufficient opportunities to develop and practise employability skills, such as prioritising tasks and time management.

Most young learners and learners with high needs do not take part in meaningful work-experience activities that relate well to their interests and ambitions for future employment. Consequently, learners do not develop a deep knowledge and understanding of employer expectations or the range of opportunities available to them when they complete their course.

Teachers support adult learners well to develop their career plans. For example, teachers signpost adults to relevant careers fairs and invite external speakers, such as staff from universities, to provide them with helpful information on their next steps. Teachers carefully plan the curriculum to meet individual adults' learning goals. For example, teachers deliver additional biology content to extend the knowledge of adults applying for midwifery university courses. Learners studying counselling take part in supervised counselling work placements, which develop further their skills and knowledge of the workplace. As a result, adults make well-informed choices and are well prepared for their futures.

Young learners and learners with high needs enjoy learning in non-classroom environments, such as farms and an outdoor workshop. Staff teach learners how to take good care of animals; this also has a calming effect on many learners, and their behaviour improves as a result. Learners feel safe and are supported appropriately by staff in the range of learning environments. However, leaders and managers recognise rightly the need to improve the quality of the classrooms and learning spaces for learners studying at Transferable Skills Training Ltd so that they are more conducive to learning.

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

Leaders, managers and trustees focus purposefully on providing learners who are furthest from education with the opportunities they need to return to and take part in education and training, improve their life chances and contribute positively to their communities. Staff share this ethos and are proud to work for the provider and the subcontractors.

Leaders and managers at the subcontractor show a deep and well-informed understanding of the social challenges faced by learners with high needs and other young people. However, trustees, leaders and managers at V Learning Network have not planned sufficiently for or managed well enough the increase in the number of learners with more complex learning needs. They have not focused sufficiently on the content and implementation of the curriculum for these learners. Therefore, they are not aware of the decline in quality of education for these learners.

Most staff are qualified well to teach their subjects. However, leaders have not provided them with consistently useful professional development. For example, staff have received useful training in topics such as mental health awareness and an awareness of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the majority of teachers have not received the specialist training they need to teach effectively learners with increasingly complex learning needs. Staff teaching young learners on the employability programmes often lack the expertise and knowledge required to provide learners with helpful advice on the range of career options and opportunities. As a result, young learners do not have sufficient knowledge to help inform their next steps. Staff teaching adults undertake self-directed research related to their areas of academic study but receive limited development on how to improve their teaching skills.

Leaders and managers have not ensured the appropriate selection and sequencing of the curriculum content for learners with high needs. Although teachers monitor well the progress learners make towards achieving their qualifications, they do not assess how well learners develop new knowledge and skills from their starting point and in relation to the targets identified in their education health and care (EHC) plans. Teachers do not use this information well enough to plan the teaching of knowledge that enables learners to build on what they already know and can do. For example, staff have not provided learners who would like to work in retail with the opportunity to learn how to use public transport independently or to take part in learning activities within a commercial setting, such as a shop. As a result, learners with high needs are not consistently well prepared for adult life.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that learners are taught key subjects early enough in the curriculum. For example, learners with high needs' understanding of topics such as healthy relationships and sex education is underdeveloped. Teachers of adults teach safeguarding topics that relate well to their intended professional careers, such as counselling and health and social care. However, they do not teach

these early enough in the course or revisit them to ensure that adults build on this knowledge over time.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that staff who teach learners with high needs check sufficiently each learners' understanding of safeguarding topics, such as the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. For example, a few teachers do not personalise the teaching of staying safe online to take account of the range of online platforms that learners use. Consequently, learners do not develop an in-depth understanding of how to stay safe online.

Teachers and staff support young learners and learners with high needs well to communicate effectively with peers and staff. Most teachers use the support strategies identified in EHC plans effectively to help learners to recognise when their behaviour is changing and when and how to use helpful self-management techniques. However, leaders and managers have not ensured that a few staff are suitably trained in the use of these techniques. Teachers use their relevant vocational experience well to teach adults the appropriate and professional behaviours expected of them in the workplace. For example, teachers of adults studying on counselling courses demonstrate how they would talk to their clients in a range of situations. As a result, learners develop important skills in listening and how to be non-judgemental.

Staff monitor rigorously the progress learners make towards achieving their accredited qualifications, such as in English and mathematics. This enables them to identify quickly and provide helpful support to prevent learners from falling behind in their studies. Teachers provide learners with many useful opportunities to practise the skills required when undertaking formal examinations. Learners receive useful feedback on how to improve their skills. As a result, learners are prepared well, and most achieve their qualifications.

The attendance rate of most learners is high. The majority of learners produce work at the expected standard. In a minority of cases, young learners who have low attendance rates are not supported effectively by staff to catch up on missed learning and to fill their gaps in knowledge. As a result, these learners do not take pride in their work and are not prepared well for their next steps.

Most learners achieve their planned and aspirational learning goals. At the end of studying their course, many learners with high needs secure paid and unpaid employment and a few take part in supported internships in the community and at work. Most adults progress on to higher education courses or begin their careers working in professions such as nursing, allied health care, social work and psychology.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders follow their appropriate systems and procedures for recruiting and inducting new staff. Leaders have clear policies and procedures in place for reporting safeguarding incidents. Leaders and staff take suitable and timely actions when concerns relating to learners are raised. However, leaders recognise rightly the need to improve the administration of this process so that they can monitor more closely the actions taken and take additional remedial actions as required.

Leaders and trustees recognise rightly the need to strengthen their oversight of the safeguarding arrangements for learners who study with the subcontractors. For example, helping to improve learner and location risk assessments by providing more detail to help staff to know when and how to recognise and respond to a range of behaviours presented by learners with high needs. At the time of the inspection, trustees and leaders produced a detailed action plan to address rapidly these issues.

### What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and trustees must ensure that they undertake the actions identified within their improvement action plan swiftly so that they have a strengthened oversight of the safeguarding arrangements for learners studying with the subcontractors.
- Leaders and managers must improve the quality of the content, planning, sequencing and teaching of the curriculum for learners with high needs so that they are prepared better for adulthood.
- Leaders must ensure that young learners who study on employability courses and learners with high needs take part in meaningful work experience and work-related activities that relate well to their career ambitions.
- Leaders must ensure that teachers and support staff working with learners with high needs are trained in and understand how to meet the specific needs of their learners.
- Teachers of learners with high needs must teach topics such as staying safe online, sex and healthy relationships and the dangers of radicalisation earlier in the curriculum and in a way that considers what learners know revisiting the topics frequently to ensure they develop a deep and secure knowledge.
- Leaders and trustees must improve their oversight of the quality of education across each of the provision types and provide managers with robust challenge and effective support so that they take appropriate remedial actions.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	52983
<b>Address</b>	The Orchard Centre Blind Hole, Market Street Launceston PL15 8AU
<b>Contact number</b>	01566 770729
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stepintolearning.org.uk">www.stepintolearning.org.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Jan Kelly
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent Learning Provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 October 2019
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Transferable Skills Training Ltd (TST) Cornwall Neighbourhood for Change Ltd (CN4C) The Outdoor Place

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Executive Director for Curriculum and Quality, 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

Lowenna Bradley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Russell Shobbrook	His Majesty's Inspector
Esther Williams	Ofsted Inspector
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