

## Developing Initiatives for Support in the Community

### Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		4–7 March 2014
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Outstanding-1</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is outstanding because:

- Learners develop excellent personal, social and employability skills. They make significant progress towards becoming self-assured, confident and courteous and better prepared for life and work.
- A consistently high proportion of learners gain their intended qualifications. Learners enjoy coming to the centre and are enthusiastic about their learning. Retention and attendance rates are very good.
- Initial assessment is very thorough and helps learners to accurately set a range of challenging individual targets which ensure their success.
- The standard of learners' work is very good and sometimes outstanding. Learners gain very good skills, knowledge and understanding and can apply these well to work placements and further study.
- Tutors are highly effective in raising learners' aspirations and attainment. When they have completed their courses, a very large majority of learners progress to employment or to further learning at a higher level.
- Work placements are of very high quality and ensure learners receive very useful experience in stimulating job roles. They are planned thoroughly to ensure that learners make very good progress.
- Learners receive very effective personal support. It is highly structured and coordinated well; tutors and support staff are committed to helping learners overcome barriers to progress, and enabling them to learn.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Tutors have good levels of experience, are well qualified and have high levels of enthusiasm.
- Tutors provide stimulating lessons where all learners engage and make very good progress.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and managers have improved the quality of the provision very effectively and established a culture of success and ambition.
- There is a clear determination that each learner should achieve his or her best.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that all tutors correct learners' spelling and grammar thoroughly and provide consistently good feedback and challenge so that learners always understand how to improve their work and achieve their full potential.
- Ensure that the current arrangements to improve standards of teaching, learning and assessment are maintained effectively in order to further increase the proportion of outstanding sessions.
- Raise standards even further by identifying where learners could make better progress and taking action to provide additional challenge for learners.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Outstanding
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- A very large majority of learners make exceptional progress, achieve challenging learning goals and gain valuable qualifications. Success rates have increased over the last three years and are now high. A large proportion of learners who complete the programme find employment, commence further training or enter higher-level education. Retention and attendance rates are very high because learners enjoy learning and find their experiences at Developing Initiatives for Support in the Community (DISC) particularly stimulating and very rewarding.
- Learners make outstanding progress developing personal, social and employability skills. They successfully improve their self-confidence and become more effective in the workplace. Learners gain very good levels of knowledge and skills that enable them to undertake increasingly complex tasks and enhance their career prospects. Very thorough and well organised tracking of learners' progress demonstrates that the quality of their work is exceptionally good. Many learners exceed their targets and learn much more than originally expected of them.
- Learners with additional needs, disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups achieve very well and often at a higher rate than others. Female learners perform slightly better than male learners. All learners make very good progress developing their English and mathematics skills. They learn to communicate more effectively and become more confident using numbers. In 2012/13, a large majority of learners gained relevant qualifications in English and mathematics.
- A high proportion of learners gain very useful experience and improve their skills using computers and technology. They become more familiar with the advantages of social media and learn how to stay safe online. Using the internet to search for jobs, contact employers and understand requirements for training courses helps learners to improve their employability skills and job prospects.
- Learners' behaviour is consistently good. Tutors ensure that appropriate and fair ground-rules are understood and agreed by all learners at the beginning of the programme. This ensures that learners engage well in all sessions because they fully understand what is expected of them. Learners understand that staff have high expectations of them and this motivates them to succeed.
- All learners develop very effective personal skills, which result in them becoming more independent, interested and engaged in life and work. They gain valuable experience from the range of high-quality work placements. This boosts their self-confidence and increases their employability skills as they become much more aware of how to behave at work and to consider the impact of their behaviour on others. Learners make very good progress, discovering how to apply their new skills successfully in social settings. For example, in one activity where learners

collaborated to plan a shopping trip, they identified each other's strengths and highlighted areas to improve.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding and lead to excellent outcomes for learners. Tutors are highly motivated and very keen that all learners succeed. They make sure learners' experiences in the classroom and on work placements are of high quality. The vast majority of learners start on the right programme of work and then stay.
- Tutors are highly skilled and very effective at helping learners to overcome personal challenges and social barriers to become more self-confident and successful. For example, overcoming fears of meeting new people and having the confidence to speak to them, travelling independently and learning more effective strategies for self-control. Tutors make very good use of DISC's specialist resources to provide learners with immediate and effective support for problems relating to housing, finance, leaving care and drug and alcohol misuse.
- DISC's highly effective initial assessment helps learners to set a range of challenging individual targets relating to learning, employability and social skills. Staff accurately identify learners' personal, educational and training needs. For example, an appropriate level of functional skills, stimulating vocational experiences and the most suitable qualifications to ensure they progress.
- Tutors skilfully prepare learners to consider changing aspects of their behaviour and attitudes that in the past may have created barriers to success. For example, extreme shyness, very low self-esteem and reluctance to communicate openly and effectively with peers and family. As soon as learners start their courses, tutors use their expertise to help them begin planning what they will do when they leave: such as start an apprenticeship, go to college or gain employment.
- Tutors provide very effective support to help learners to identify potential problems and risks which might delay or prevent their success. They conduct a detailed personal risk assessment, which helps to plan support, progress and achievement goals for each learner. Individual risk-management plans are then used to provide careful and sensitive support to ensure risks are managed very effectively. These are used as an essential component of the learners' progress review and target-setting process, and are instrumental in helping learners overcome significant barriers.
- Tutors are well organised and plan learning sessions thoroughly and very effectively making sure they are stimulating and exciting. They creatively incorporate activities that ensure learners develop greater understanding and more effective use of mathematics and English, such as speaking and listening. As learners gain experience of communicating more effectively, their self-confidence grows and this increases their motivation to succeed. However, feedback to learners on how they can improve wider written English skills in sentence construction and grammar is not consistently good or challenging to enable learners to achieve their full potential and higher-level qualifications.
- DISC works very effectively with employers to ensure learners benefit from highly stimulating work-experience placements. This enables learners to gain valuable skills and understanding of vocational areas and helps them to make better and more informed choices about their individual career aims. For example, learners undertake work placements with organisations such as the Police and Crime Commissioner's department and medical science laboratories. All work placements are thoroughly well planned and learners and employers receive detailed contracts which are clear about learners' job roles, learning aims and prohibited activities. Tutors provide highly effective advice and guidance to ensure learners consider a good range of relevant career opportunities.
- Tutors make very good use of technology in their lessons and make sure all learners develop their understanding of the benefits of using computers in work places. This helps learners to develop skills in presenting their work and to collaborate more effectively in group projects. For example, when planning imaginative use of video and music to learn the rules of fractions. A wide range of enrichment activities broaden learners' social and personal skills by extending

their experiences, such as ordering food in a restaurant, staying away from home for the first time and learning more about local history and arts.

- The promotion of equality and diversity through teaching and learning is excellent. Tutors create an inclusive learning environment, which ensures all learners benefit from support and respect from each other. All learners are encouraged to support each other and to establish a cohesive group with a common interest to increase their likelihood of success. Learners thrive in the caring and supportive environment at DISC and make good use of specialist staff to help them understand and appreciate how people are different. Tutors ensure that learners develop a greater understanding of different cultures and diverse communities.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

## Outstanding

- Senior leaders and members of DISC's board of trustees have established a clear mission, 'to help people realise their potential'. The education team has ambitious strategic targets, which reflect local, regional and national needs closely. Leaders and managers ensure staff provide highly effective training experiences to help young people thrive and become successful. Strategic planning is very well developed and effective collaboration with regional partners, such as local authorities, successfully ensures the needs and interests of employers and the wider community are well met and that outcomes for learners are outstanding.
- Over the last three years, leaders and managers have made excellent progress in improving all aspects of performance. The very large majority of learners now achieve their learning aims and make significant progress towards higher-level training and employment. The quality of provision, including teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. The key to DISC's transformation lies in highly effective leadership and collective endeavour of all staff in establishing a culture in which understanding and meeting learners' needs are placed at the centre of all activities.
- Strategic priorities are clearly focused and provide a good template against which progress can be evaluated. The board of trustees receives comprehensive reports from senior managers on key aspects of performance and interprets these reports to ask searching questions of leaders. Trustees monitor all aspects of learners' experience by meeting with them and checking on their progress.
- Arrangements to monitor and continually improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are highly effective. The formal system of observing teaching and learning is exceptionally thorough and tutors are given very good support to help them to improve where appropriate. Joint observations and detailed moderation arrangements assure judgments are accurate and also enable the sharing of good practice. Tutors are highly motivated and are encouraged by managers to reflect on their practice, to share their ideas, and to continually improve.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and learners and these are reflected in the highly effective performance-management procedures. Very well targeted support and continuous professional development ensure staff perform very well. Managers identify poor performance quickly, and offer a range of personal support to help tutors to improve. In circumstances where improvement is not forthcoming, appropriate action is taken by managers to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged.
- Quality assurance arrangements are very thorough and detailed, and involve all staff as well as learners, employers, parents and partner organisations. Managers gather and analyse data thoroughly to inform judgments on the quality of provision. The self-assessment process is particularly thorough and accurate in identifying where the quality of provision needs to be further strengthened.
- DISC has established a positive reputation in the north-east of England for its work to improve the quality of life for those facing disadvantage and difficulties. Learners benefit from the wide range of effective support available, such as housing advice, youth workers, counselling, therapy

and specialist alcohol and drug addiction services. Staff work highly effectively in partnership with the local authority, health services and other key organisations to make sure learners are successful.

- Staff are particularly effective in ensuring that all learners have an equal chance of benefiting from the high-quality provision offered. There are no significant gaps in achievement between different groups; those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with additional learning needs and/or disabilities achieve at least as well as others. In all aspects of learning, tutors skilfully encourage learners' understanding and appreciation of the importance of recognising people's differences, such as race, culture, faith and lifestyle.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. The training centre provides a safe and harmonious environment. Learners are exceptionally well supported and rightly report that their safety and security are given high priority. Where appropriate, very good attention is paid to health and safety. Formal arrangements for safeguarding learners are comprehensive. All staff are trained and experienced in using the common assessment framework process to ensure, where appropriate, that learners receive the care and support required to help them succeed.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Developing Initiatives For Support In The Community Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	1	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Outcomes for learners	1	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Employability training	1

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16–18							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 26							
	Part-time: 49							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mr Mark Weeding							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	October 2011							
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.disc-vol.org.uk">www.disc-vol.org.uk</a>							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	12	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Part-time</b>	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	N/A							

## Contextual information

Developing Initiatives for Support in the Community (DISC) is a registered charity working across Yorkshire, Lancashire, Humberside and the north-east of England to support vulnerable children, young people and families; and people who are affected by substance misuse and housing issues. DISC is an independent training provider based at Newton Aycliffe in County Durham. In September 2013, 14.6% of 16 to 24-year-olds in the county were claiming out of work benefits, which is higher than the national rate of 10.4%. Within County Durham 8.65% of young people are not in education, employment or training, and Newton Aycliffe has a higher rate of 11.98%. The proportion of young people achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including mathematics and English, was 62.7% in 2013, which is above the national average of 58.6%.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Daniel Grant

Three additional inspectors, assisted by the Project Manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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