

Nottinghamshire County Council – Inspire Learning: Supply Chain Arrangements for Community Learning

Mission Statement:

“To provide learners with an outstanding learning experience that enables them to make positive changes to their lives”

Introduction

The Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service has a long and successful tradition of contracting out the delivery of its Education and Skills Funding Agency funded Community and Family Learning provision. The Service was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2017 and was awarded an overall effectiveness Grade 2 (Good). The Ofsted inspectors praised the arrangements that Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service has for managing its subcontractors, and they confirmed that management and leadership of these partnerships is good. Subcontracting allows the Service to work with an extensive number of delivery partners and stakeholders to reach into communities and respond to local needs. The Service’s model allows smaller voluntary and community organisations, whose main purpose may not be the delivery of learning, to access the resources to deliver learning opportunities to their client group. This model of working is a key element of the Service’s successful widening participation strategy which delivers 50% of learning to residents from the 250 most deprived Nottinghamshire super output areas. Opportunities to access funding are available via the Service’s website <https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/skills-learning/policies-and-provider-information/>

Nottinghamshire County Council targets the majority of its resources on those learners with low skills and who have low confidence levels and consequently the Service seeks to work with partners who can deliver high quality learning opportunities that are tailored to meet the needs of these priority groups. The Service arranges regular Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities for all tutors; feedback on these events has been extremely positive. The opportunity to meet people from different organisations but with similar and /or complementary aims is always favourably commented upon.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency’s Funding Rules require providers who subcontract their provision to publish a Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy in the interests of transparency. This document lays out Nottinghamshire County Council’s policy for subcontracting its Community Learning funding allocation.

Support Provided to Subcontractors

Nottinghamshire County Council seeks to ensure that all learners participating in an ESFA Community and Family Learning funded activity receive a high-quality learning experience. To ensure consistency of approach and to continually improve quality Nottinghamshire County Council has put in place a range of measures and support for its providers, including providing:

- All Relevant Paperwork: Standard paperwork, (e.g. enrolment forms, registers, evaluation forms, Individual Learners’ Plans (ILPs)), is provided to all subcontractors.
- Guidance: For new providers a meeting is arranged with a staff member from Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service to clarify processes, procedures and expectations. Handbooks are available for Providers and Tutors. All providers are assigned a named Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service contract officer to resolve any queries they may have.
- Data Analysis: Regular electronic data reports are provided to larger providers so that they may assess their progress as the contract progresses.

- Individual Learners' Record (ILR): Inputting of data, processing of the ILR returns and associated validation reports is undertaken by Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service on behalf of the subcontracted providers.
- Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service Web Site: All our policies, procedures and paperwork are available on the Inspire website: <https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/skills-learning/policies-and-provider-information/>
- Targets: Clear targets are set for each contract confirming: learner numbers to be engaged; and success, attendance and retention rates, so providers know at the outset what quality standards are expected of them.
- Class Visits/Observations: Once a contract is agreed then Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service will arrange a themed class visit and/or observation.
- Curriculum Development: Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service undertakes regular reviews of the subcontractors' curriculum content to ensure that it meets the required quality standards and the Service provides support to providers in developing new ideas and programmes.
- Meetings: Providers and stakeholders benefit from regular locality meetings to review local learning needs and reflect upon the activity that has taken place and identify any gaps in provision. Focused contract meetings with each provider also take place on a termly basis to review progress and offer support.
- CPD: Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service arranges several CPD events for tutors throughout the year to share best practice, address common quality issues that are arising and ensure tutors are aware of key developments in relation to Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service's drive for continual improvement. Events include an annual Tutor conference that is designed to provide subcontractors with access to a forum to share the challenges and targets for the forthcoming year. Tutors are funded to attend identified types of training events throughout the year.
- Resources: Access to resources to support the quality of delivery e.g. Individual Learning Technology (ILT), minor works etc.
- Infrastructure to support provision of AIM awards qualifications: Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service has registered centre status with AIM Awards and provides all the quality assurance mechanisms (as required by AIM) including verification to offer qualifications to learners should this be appropriate. Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service has its own appointed Internal Verifier and Business Support Officer to support this activity.
- News: Regular news for providers and tutors are issued to communicate updates, developments, their contribution towards meeting overall Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service targets and feedback from learners etc.

Tuition Fee Policy

All Providers are required to operate the Nottinghamshire County Council Fees Policy to ensure learners receive an equitable experience in relation to payment for their classes.

List of Subcontractors

This list is provided to the ESFA via the "Subcontractor Declaration Form" in line with the agreed timelines and the aggregated Subcontracting Register is published on the ESFA website. Updates are provided as required. A copy is located at: <https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/skills-learning/policies-and-provider-information/>

Payment Timelines

Nottinghamshire County Council endeavours to pay all invoices within 28 days of their receipt. The Nottinghamshire County Council Funding Agreement outlines what information is required from each delivery partner to enable invoices to be paid promptly. Where a provider may experience a cash flow problem(s) with this timeline, then alternative arrangements are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. The Service's Funding Agreement stipulates that reductions may be made where targets have not been met.

Retained Funding

With the introduction of Community Learning Trusts in 2014-2015, the funding the Service receives from the Education and Skills Funding Agency is deemed to be a "contribution" to the overall costs. The funding retained centrally by Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service supports the services outlined above; in summary:

- Contract Management
- Quality Assurance and Improvement
- Submission of Individualised Learner Records (ILR), provision of all required paperwork and associated inputting of all data (including the Management Information System (MIS) system)
- Community Engagement
- Professional Development (Providers and Tutors)
- Curriculum Development
- Budgets to support quality improvement e.g. ILT equipment and minor works
- Marketing, promotion and celebration events
- Additional Learner Support

These services are provided for all delivery partners. Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service endeavours to establish a level playing field for both learners and providers and as such the retained fee is common to all contracted providers.

Nottinghamshire County Council will retain up to 20% of the annual funding available to cover the costs of the above-mentioned functions.

Policy Review

The Nottinghamshire County Council Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy will be reviewed in January 2019 by the Inspire Learning Director.

Publication

The Nottinghamshire Inspire Learning Service's Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy will be published on the Service's web pages: <https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/skills-learning/policies-and-provider-information/>