

Skills Bootcamps will help plug skills gaps, but improvements are needed

Ofsted's survey found that, while learners value the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge on Skills Bootcamps, there are a number of areas that need to improve.

Skills Bootcamp courses run for up to 16 weeks and form part of the government's commitment to helping adults learn the necessary knowledge and skills for new jobs in expanding sectors, such as digital, engineering, construction, manufacturing and green technologies.

Ofsted's report finds that, overall, leaders have developed a wide range of digital and technical Skills Bootcamps to help people move into sectors where there are skills shortages. In most cases, they are responsive to meeting employers' skill needs.

Most providers organised the curriculum appropriately and used learning resources and materials of a high quality. They included opportunities for learners to develop their personal and professional behaviours and gain a range of skills, in addition to learning the vocational content of the course.

However, we found that the quality of teaching was not consistently high and assessment practice was often weak. Too many providers did not carry out rigorous initial assessments, meaning leaders and managers cannot fully or accurately measure learners' progress.

Among the other concerns identified, there were a minority of providers that were planning courses that do not allow learners enough time or opportunity to master skills or develop their understanding to a suitable level. Some leaders had not made sure that each learner was guaranteed a job interview. At a few providers, the overall purpose of the programmes was unclear.

Today's report was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to help understand how well Skills Bootcamps are delivering a good-quality education. The report draws on findings from visits to 14 providers that were delivering the accelerated skills programme. The survey visits took place between January 2022 and March 2022.

We have agreed with the DfE to inspect Skills Bootcamps as part of our regular inspection of further education and skills providers, from April 2023.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, said:

These courses provide good opportunities for adults to learn new skills in sectors vital to our economy, but it is important that all courses are of high quality and that they lead to jobs.

I welcome the DfE's agreement for Ofsted to inspect Skills Bootcamps as part of our regular inspections. This will support the government's approach to tackling skills shortages in England by ensuring that learners and employers benefit from well-planned and effective programmes.