

# Cheshire West and Chester Council Employment, Skills and Learning

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 58930

**Name of lead inspector:** Shahram Safavi HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 21 January 2011

**Type of provider:** Local Authority

**Address:** 4 Civic Way  
Ellesmere Port  
Cheshire  
CH65 0BE

**Telephone number:** 0151 356 6767

## **Information about the provider**

1. Cheshire West and Chester Council was formed on 1 April 2009, replacing four previous councils. Cheshire West and Chester Council Employment, Skills and Learning (ESL/the department) offers provision in personal and social development and work-based learning to improve economic and social well-being. The department operates within the council's Regeneration and Culture Directorate and offers around 88% of its provision through subcontracting arrangements.
2. The department secures funds from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The specialist provision inspected represents approximately 54% of provision for all learners which ESL directly delivers. This is the first inspection of the department's provision, although some aspects were previously inspected as part of other councils' provision.
3. The department is managed by a senior manager who is supported by two managers with responsibility for the development and delivery of the adult learning and work-based learning provision. The department employs a further 31 staff, two of whom have management responsibilities, five are tutors, 15 are work-based trainers/assessors and nine have co-ordination and administrative responsibilities. The department also employs a number of part-time tutors and trainers/assessors.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of ESL:
  - Age Concern
  - Barnabas Associates
  - Barrowmore
  - Burton Manor
  - Cheshire Asian and Minority Communities Council
  - Congleton CVS
  - Deeside College
  - Dial House
  - Furniture Finders
  - H Club
  - KC Autos
  - Lache Learning Association
  - Making Space
  - Mid Cheshire College
  - Neston Community Centre

- Neston Cyber Centre
- New Way Training
- South Cheshire College
- Stanlaw Abbey Development Centre
- Vale Royal Disability Services
- Voluntary Action Vale Royal
- West Cheshire College
- West Cheshire Women's Multi-Cultural Group
- Willaston Village Festival Society
- Wolverham Community Computer and Learning Centre
- Youth Federation

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of learners in 2009/10</b>
<b>Young learner provision:</b> 14-16	85 part-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships	393 learners 130 apprentices
<b>Adult learner provision:</b> Learning for social and personal development	7,383 part-time learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2
<b>Learning for qualifications</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Construction crafts	2
<b>Learning for social and personal development</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Information and communication technology	2

## Overall effectiveness

5. The department provides a good standard of education and training and its prospects for further improving the provision are good. Learners enjoy their courses, progress well towards what they wish to achieve, improve their self-esteem and learn a very useful range of skills. Learners on information and communication technology courses develop good skills and confidence, enabling them to use the internet and send emails. Parents and carers on family learning courses enjoy learning together with their children; head teachers report that the children's studies in schools have improved. An acceptable proportion of work-based learners, including a significant number of Train to Gain learners, succeed. However, too many work-based learners do not complete in the time allocated. Apprentices on construction crafts courses achieve particularly well, mostly completing their qualifications within the time agreed. They develop good skills and knowledge which they apply competently.
6. Most teaching sessions are good, but many tutors do not use information and learning technology (ILT) enough to make lessons more interesting. Tutors and trainers have a good knowledge of what learners wish to achieve and monitor

learners' progress at an acceptable level. However, the quality of the recording of learners' achievement of personal goals in social and personal development courses is not consistently useful for planning or monitoring their progress.

7. The department works effectively to meet the needs and interests of the community and employers. ESL has good subcontracting partnerships that allow it to offer a good range of provision at venues and times convenient for learners. Tutors and trainers are very supportive. They help learners overcome personal difficulties and anxieties. The availability of information, advice and guidance during courses is generally good.
8. Management of the department is good. Learners feel safe and are supported by effective arrangements for safeguarding. The department recruits a large number of learners who are vulnerable or who have little experience of success in education or training. A strong ethos of widening participation, respect and support underpins the department's work. ESL has a clear understanding about what it needs to do to improve further and is progressing successfully towards implementing its improvement plans.

## **Main findings**

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners on social and personal development courses make good progress towards their personal learning and social goals. Retention rates are high. However, the arrangements for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) are not sufficiently reliable to be able to evaluate achievement rates.
- Success rates are high for apprentices and satisfactory for Train to Gain learners. Overall, however, too many work-based learners do not complete their qualifications within the allocated time. Learners improve their economic well-being considerably.
- Learners feel safe attending the training venues and centres. Most learners have a good awareness of how to protect themselves. However, learners' awareness of safe practices and their responsibility when using the internet or digital communication devices needs improvement. Learners make good contributions to their communities.
- Learners value highly the well-planned teaching sessions and how tutors recognise that they learn in different ways. They participate fully in discussions and activities in the sessions. The clear, specific feedback and target setting following work-based learning progress reviews help learners improve. Individual learning plans for non-accredited learning are appropriately designed but not completed consistently. Tutors do not use ILT sufficiently to enhance learning.
- The very responsive and flexible provision meets individual, community and employer needs and supports the council's priorities commendably. Many courses offer good progression routes. Provision to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is successful. The

department recognises the need to improve and increase its links with employers. Arrangements to monitor learners' progression need further development.

- Local neighbourhood partnerships are highly effective. The wide range of partners, and their particular focus, helps to recruit and support hard-to-reach learners. Strategic-level multi-agency area-partnership boards help to ensure that regional needs are identified and priorities met. However, it is too soon to comment on the impact of joint strategic programme developments to improve targeted groups' health and life chances.
- The department's and partners' wide-ranging and effective support structures, which include effective peer and volunteer support, help learners to complete their courses successfully. Well-structured information, advice and guidance are established in work-based learning and some aspects of adult provision. ESL's arrangements to evaluate the impact of its support and information, advice and guidance are at an early stage of development.
- The strategic direction and development of ESL is good. The department plays an especially important role, through its own strategic priorities, objectives and working practices, in the council's renewal and economic regeneration.
- Operational management is good. Management of subcontractors is very effective. It includes successful collaborative planning of provision, a detailed contract review process, very effective subcontractor capacity building and support. However, delays in staff recruitment have adversely affected progress in the development of health and social care provision and the completion of learners' qualifications within the agreed timescales.
- Arrangements to safeguard learners and staff are appropriate. However, the arrangements for safeguarding learners when working or using the internet and/or digital communication devices need further development. The council recognises that the adult and children safeguarding teams need to acknowledge the referral of safeguarding concerns by the department promptly.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The department's approach to social inclusion is highly effective. A number of tutors and trainers promote equality and diversity in their teaching very effectively through the integration of very relevant activities and discussions but this good practice is not included in all teaching and learning processes.
- The department's self-assessment process is thorough and provides a good basis for improvements. Some aspects of quality arrangements are implemented successfully. However, the pace of identifying and sharing good practice across the department needs further improvement.
- The department offers good value for money. It manages its resources very effectively with strong financial planning. Learner numbers have remained high in a challenging financial climate and during a period of significant change. The quality and availability of resources are generally good and they are well used. However, the availability and use of ILT needs to improve.

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## **What does Cheshire West and Chester Council Employment, Skills and Learning need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that tutors in social and personal development provision have a good understanding of, and confidently use, individual learning plans to plan learning, recognise and record learners' progress and achievement, and to set learning goals that are specific, clear and measurable.
- Increase the availability of, and develop tutors' skills in the use of, ILT to enhance the quality of learning processes.
- Enhance the impetus of strategic partnerships and their jointly developed projects to maximise the impact on priority communities and groups.
- Ensure that the staff recruitment process is effective and efficient so that learners' progress is not adversely affected by the late recruitment of key staff.
- Improve the safeguarding-referral arrangements by ensuring that the council's children and adult safeguarding teams promptly acknowledge the receipt of safeguarding referrals from the department.
- Promote equality and diversity to learners more effectively throughout learning by sharing good practice and ensuring a consistent focus on subject- or learner-relevant examples of equality and diversity topics in sessions and progress reviews.
- Fully implement all aspects of the quality system to complete the quality cycle and generate an improved pace of identifying and sharing good practice. Ensure that the newly developing system to monitor learner progression and support arrangements is implemented.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What learners like:**

- the pleasant and professional learning environment
- being treated as adults
- the staff listening to their views and respecting what they say
- tutors planning sessions to include the different ways they learn
- the sessions which are fun and enjoyable
- small class sizes which help tutors provide more individual attention.

#### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- no improvements were identified.

## **Summary of the views of partners and employers as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What partners and employers like:**

- the accessible and flexible provision that complements the work of other agencies
- the very high level of partnership working
- high-quality, targeted provision that makes a difference to people's lives, their families and the wider community
- the good and responsive information, advice and guidance
- the way in which regular contact with trainers and assessors supports business improvement.

### **What partners and employers would like to see improved:**

- access to informal learning for young disaffected learners aged 14 to 16 years of age
- equity of access to childcare at different centres
- a reduction in the need to travel wherever possible; it is a barrier to some learners and it incurs costs
- monitoring the long-term impact of family learning on families and children
- further development of communication between community partners
- employers' awareness of the long-term benefits of training.



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## Main inspection findings

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

9. The department has good capacity to improve. It has managed a significant period of change successfully, ensuring strong recruitment, good outcomes for learners, good quality provision and good leadership and management. Learners significantly improve their confidence and develop useful skills both for work and for improving their life chances. The department has taken appropriate actions to reduce the proportion of work-based learners who did not complete their qualifications within the allocated time. The progress of the current work-based learners is satisfactory. ESL contributes fully to the council's strategic priorities and regeneration policies. The department manages its subcontractors particularly effectively and works hard to build its subcontractors' capacity, enabling them to meet enrolment targets and improve the quality of provision. Good partnerships support the department's strong ethos of widening participation. However, the active promotion of equality and diversity is not consistent in all aspects of teaching and learning processes.
10. The self-assessment process is very effective and inclusive, accurately acknowledging most strengths and areas for improvement identified during the inspection. Managers and staff are very clear about the actions for improvement which are being implemented successfully. However, some aspects of the quality system are not fully implemented and sharing of good practice needs further development.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

11. Outcomes for learners are good. A high proportion of learners on social and personal development courses successfully achieve their personal learning and social goals. They improve their confidence and self-esteem. Parents and carers on family learning courses build on their existing skills and experiences. They improve their literacy and numeracy skills, gain a better understanding of how their children learn, and are more confident and better able to support their children's education. Learners with physical and/or learning difficulties and/or disabilities improve their confidence in their ability to deal with others. A few learners become active in promoting learning within their communities. There are no significant gaps between the performance of different groups.
12. Retention rates of learners on courses for social and personal development are high. However, RARPA arrangements are not sufficiently reliable to be able to evaluate accurately their achievement rates. Success rates are high for apprentices and satisfactory for Train to Gain learners. However, too many work-based learners do not complete within the agreed timescales.
13. Learners improve their economic well-being considerably. The standard of their work is good. Learners feel safe attending their courses and have a good

awareness of how to protect themselves. However, their awareness of safe practices and their responsibility when using the internet or digital communication devices are insufficient. Work-based learners have a good understanding of safe working practices, reinforced through induction and reviews.

14. Learners make a good contribution to the communities in which they live and work. Parents and carers participate in volunteering in schools to assist teachers. A few learners volunteer to help other learners who are facing personal difficulties.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

15. Learners benefit from much good teaching. Tutors plan and pace their sessions very thoughtfully using a wide range of teaching and learning activities to involve learners fully. Tutors' recognition of differing learning preferences supports effective planning of teaching and learning. Whole-group and small-group teaching, together with individual coaching, are used effectively. Reference to learners' personal experience helps them relate to learning activities successfully. Tutors ensure that learning is enjoyable and they make effective use of questioning to check understanding and extend learners' knowledge. Work-based learning assessment is thorough. The use of regular, well-paced and structured progress reviews helps monitor progress thoroughly and effectively involves supervisors and employers. Feedback and targets for learners following assessment and review are clear, linking specific tasks to learners' targets for completion and ensuring that they know what to do.
16. Arrangements for initial and diagnostic assessment and the provision of additional learning support are effective. However, in non-accredited learning, although individual learning plans potentially provide a useful record of progress and achievement, they are not used consistently. Tutors do not always ensure that these documents are completed. Despite much tutor encouragement, getting learners to set personal targets can be slow; learners record activities rather than their learning. The simplified learning plan for First Steps learning is fit for purpose.
17. The observation of teaching and learning is thorough and leads to appropriate judgements and actions for development. The actions help identify staff training needs but their follow-up is sometimes slow. The full range of learning processes is not yet systematically observed. The use of ILT to enhance teaching is underdeveloped. Tutors tend to use the department's few interactive whiteboards primarily for computerised presentations rather than fully exploiting their potential.
18. The department offers a broad programme through its own and subcontractors' provision, developing employment, personal and social skills. Much provision, available in urban and rural locations, responds well to the council's priority areas. Some courses are specially designed to meet the very specific needs of

marginalised people, such as substance misusers and women living in a refuge. Negotiations with schools, communities and other groups underpin developments. The community-based delivery of many courses helps make them easily accessible. For example, the recently developed English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision is based where the target community lives. Clear progression routes are developed and identified for many courses within the department and within partners' provision.

19. Curriculum developments, following involvement in pilot initiatives, functional skills, the foundation learning tier and the introduction of new qualification frameworks, are progressing successfully. Work to reduce the number of young people in the NEET category is particularly effective. However, too few employers offer work placements and apprenticeships. In one apprenticeship group, most had not found placements after being on the programme for three to four months, although trainers had worked hard to place the learners with suitable employers. While a wide range of case studies and data from family learning impact-funded provision illustrate the progress and progression of learners, systematic arrangements to monitor learners' progress are underdeveloped.
20. Highly effective partnership arrangements at local neighbourhood level support recruitment, the identification of learning need, programme development, the provision of shared accommodation and support particularly effectively. A wide range of partners for the delivery of provision includes schools, colleges, and voluntary and community groups, some with a highly specific focus, for instance people with disabilities or from minority ethnic groups. The work of multi-agency area partnership boards and area partnership managers helps to ensure that regional needs are identified and priorities met against the three key themes of children and young people, worklessness, and adult health and well-being. Strategic partnership work builds on well-established working relationships with, for example, the Connexions service where information-sharing protocols are in place. Aspects of strategic partnership work have proved highly effective in maintaining the involvement of young learners in the NEET category, but it is too soon to judge other aspects of work at strategic level. For example, the 'Five to Strive' project, developed jointly with the Primary Care Trust, will involve health and other professionals in promoting healthy lifestyles and increased community volunteering, targeting communities identified as poor-health hotspots through surveys. Connexions data show that nearly a third of the young people in the NEET category are young mothers. Although the department has previously worked with this group of young people, further specific work is required to tackle this challenge.
21. The department offers a wide range of effective support for learners that helps retain them in learning and enables them to progress. Personal support is very good. Highly personalised and effective support from ESL, partners' staff, subcontractors and volunteers, contributes to a wide range of personal and learning gains and progression. In one notable example, a young girl suffered extreme anxiety following bullying at school. Sensitive support helped her to

integrate with the main group, participate, complete her course and obtain work. Childcare is always provided for family learning courses and can be applied for in other cases. Learners report feeling very well supported. The availability of structured information, advice and guidance, offered by well-qualified staff or Connexions staff, is a particularly strong aspect in work-based learning, family learning and Skills for Life. Information, advice and guidance for other adult courses are offered, but the uptake varies, being highly established at some centres and relatively new in others. Effective peer and volunteer support, such as that provided by community learning volunteers, is noteworthy. Outreach support to maintain attendance at newly developed ESOL provision is unclear; attendance fell significantly after the Christmas break. The department is beginning to evaluate the impact of its support and information, advice and guidance, but this currently takes the form of case studies; insufficient data are available to judge long-term trends.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

22. The strategic direction and development of ESL are good. Following the formation of the council, the council has successfully structured the department to manage, develop and offer the provision from predecessor councils to meet its strategic priorities. The department plays an especially significant role, through its own strategic priorities and partnerships, in the council's renewal and economic regeneration. The management of change and the establishment of the new management structure have progressed sensitively and successfully, with managers and staff from the predecessor organisations working closely together to create a unified department.
23. Operational management is good. The management team is very experienced, focused and increasingly more effective in making further improvements. Management of subcontractors is good with some very strong features which include highly effective collaborative planning of provision, good subcontractor capacity-building activities, a detailed contract review process and targeted support. The subcontracting arrangements with the colleges are particularly strong, successfully implemented and effective. Communication between subcontractors and ESL is open and constructive. A comprehensive management information system provides a good range of information and analysis and is used effectively to plan the provision. However, as the department acknowledges, the pace of recruitment of trainers/assessors for health and social care provision has been too slow which has adversely affected the learners' timely completion. The staff and the subcontractors' staff attend a wide range of staff development events. However, as the department recognises, its staff development systems, including the budgeting processes for staff development, are not fully developed.
24. The council's supervisory arrangements for overseeing the development of the department are satisfactory. Its arrangements, which include close monitoring of ESL performance by a portfolio holder, are appropriate.

25. Arrangements to safeguard learners and staff are appropriate. Policies and procedures are comprehensive. All staff, including subcontractors' staff, have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks and they have received appropriate training about how to safeguard learners and themselves. Six designated officers, two men and four women, allow for learners' preference and ease of reporting, and they liaise with the council's children and adult safeguarding teams. Tutors and trainers are suitably confident in reporting and referring safeguarding issues to the designated officers. However, the council's children and adult safeguarding teams do not acknowledge the receipt of the safeguarding referral cases from the department's designated officers promptly. The department, through its subcontractors, provides training for vulnerable adults. However, ESL recognises that arrangements for safeguarding learners and informing them about their responsibilities when using the internet or digital communication equipment need further development and promotion.
26. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The department and its subcontractors are fully aware of the challenges which many learners experience, and they use their expertise appropriately to increase participation, ensure that learners stay on their courses and progress. Subcontractors actively promote social inclusivity and remove barriers to participation and economic well-being. The department examines changes to its policies, procedures and provision in relation to any possible impact on different groups of learners, and takes appropriate action to redress this. The department makes good use of data to monitor the performance of different groups of learners and takes effective actions to investigate and close any performance gaps. A number of tutors promote equality and diversity skilfully through carefully planned and very relevant activities, discussions and examples in teaching and learning, but this level of promotion is not consistent throughout the provision.
27. The department makes good use of learners', employers' and partners' views to improve many aspects of its direct delivery and subcontracted provision. Learners use their regular contact with tutors and trainers advantageously to discuss any concerns. Employers, partners and subcontractors highly value their collaboration with ESL and the support they receive to improve their provision.
28. The department's self-assessment process is thorough. It includes the views of partners, staff and subcontractors and it provides a good basis for improvements. The subcontractors' self-assessments contribute fully to the department's self-assessment report. The development plan, which is based on the self-assessment report, is detailed and ESL is making good progress towards its full implementation.
29. ESL has extensive quality policies and procedures and, when appropriate, uses the subcontractors' quality systems to monitor the quality of subcontracted provision. However, only some aspects of the quality arrangements are fully implemented. A number of planned observations of teaching and learning have not taken place. Overall, the records of observations of teaching and learning do not always inform effective staff development activities and prompt follow-

up of action points. The department provides a range of events and activities for tutors to share good practice. However, it acknowledges that the pace of identifying and sharing of good practice within ESL needs to improve further.

30. The department offers good value for money. It manages its resources very effectively with strong financial planning. The use of funds to widen participation and to meet the needs of priority groups is particularly good. The department has exceeded its learner numbers during a period of significant organisational and financial change. The quality and availability of resources, including refurbished and previously unused buildings, are generally good. However, the availability and use of ILT needs further improvement.

## Learning for qualifications

**Other learning for qualifications provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded:** Health and social care; science and mathematics; motor vehicle; retail and wholesaling; call centre operations; social sciences; teaching and lecturing; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages; and business, administration and law.

## Construction crafts

## Grade 2

### Context

31. The department directly offers apprenticeships in brickwork and subcontracts apprenticeship training mainly in heating and ventilation. Most of the 33 apprentices attend level 2 programmes. A small number of learners are completing Train to Gain qualifications. Twenty-eight 14 to 16 year-old learners from local schools are completing a level 1 qualification. The department also offers non-accredited provision for 30 learners. The proportion of female learners and learners from minority ethnic groups is low.

### Key findings

- Learners achieve well. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are high. Overall success rates for apprenticeships are significantly above national rates, with rates for learners completing within their planned end date also significantly above the national rate. Success rates for the low number of learners on Train to Gain programmes are outstanding. Learners on construction provision at level 1 also achieve high success rates. Key skill success rates are high.
- Learners make good progress while on programme. They enjoy their courses, speak very positively about their experiences and increase in self-confidence. Learners' development of practical skills is good; they produce work of a high standard in the training centre. Employers speak positively about the skills learners bring into the workplace.
- Learners confirm they feel safe. A comprehensive induction programme covers all health and safety legislation including safeguarding and safety issues when using the internet. Learners are quickly introduced to safe working practices and procedures; trainers discuss safe working practices within specific units of learners' programmes. Safe working is continually reinforced throughout the training, in the workplace and through reviews.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners benefit from carefully planned learning programmes with detailed lesson plans and clear learning objectives. Use of ILT is satisfactory. Lessons are focused and appropriately paced. Learners make good progress in theory and practical lessons. Trainers make very effective links between theory and practice, reinforcing understanding through site visits where appropriate. However, trainers do not always give

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learners enough opportunity to respond to questions in theory lessons. Good coaching by trainers helps learners to develop or enhance their practical skills.

- Initial assessment is satisfactory. Assessment in the workplace and at the subcontractor college is frequent and flexible to suit learners' needs and to collect good evidence of learners' competencies. The internal verification process is satisfactory. Progress reviews are frequent with previously agreed targets fully evaluated, and clear and precise targets set for the next review. However, trainers do not sufficiently check and develop learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity during reviews.
- Data are used effectively to monitor learners' progress towards completing all aspects of the apprenticeship framework and activities are planned to ensure learners complete on time. Observation of teaching and learning takes place for theory sessions, but progress-review sessions are not systematically observed.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of users very successfully. Pathways are available from entry level and level 1 for young people at school or learners who are currently unemployed, enabling them to progress onto apprenticeship programmes in various construction areas. Many learners have progressed from provision in schools. Employers confirm they are kept fully informed about apprentices' progress and comment positively about the contributions which apprentices make to their businesses.
- ESL works effectively with a range of partners to offer provision towards meeting local priorities. Many local companies are very satisfied with the training offered and have used the provision for many years. ESL is also working with partners to develop new provision and is offering a placement service, matching unemployed learners to local companies with an apprenticeship need.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners with identified learning needs are promptly referred to a specialist tutor who plans a programme with the learner to tackle any areas of difficulty, mainly within numeracy. This support is very effective and success rates for these learners are high with a significant majority completing their apprenticeship programmes by the planned date.
- Leadership and management are good. Communication between staff, employers and subcontractors is very effective. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Much informal monitoring of progress takes place through frequent contact with employers. Trainers have a strong focus on learners' performance. They discuss any concerns and agree appropriate action plans to ensure completion by the planned end date.
- Approximately half of the apprenticeship provision is subcontracted to local providers. Quality arrangements are appropriate for monitoring the quality of



delivery, which includes weekly visits to subcontractors. The self-assessment report is thorough and includes the views of all staff and subcontractors.

### **What does Cheshire West and Chester Council Employment, Skills and Learning need to do to improve further?**

- Tutors should improve theory lessons by allowing learners to answer challenging questions fully so that their problem-solving skills are enhanced further.
- Further improve learners' understanding of equality and diversity by devising a broad range of relevant topics for discussion within teaching and learning sessions and during progress review meetings.

## Learning for social and personal development

**Other learning for social and personal development considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded:** Horticulture and forestry; manufacturing technologies; building services; hospitality and catering; sports, leisure and recreation; arts, media and publishing; humanities; classical and modern foreign languages; preparation for life and work; and family learning.

## Information and communication technology

## Grade 2

### Context

32. Currently the department offers this provision to 659 learners. The majority of learners are women and a significant number are aged over 50. Courses vary in length and range from basic taster courses to accredited courses at level 3. Courses include an internet and email taster, digital photography, and basic introduction to computing. Most provision is non-accredited and subcontracted to colleges and community learning organisations.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Most learners complete their course and achieve their personal learning goals. Learners produce a good standard of work that is relevant to their personal interests and goals. They are highly motivated and thoroughly enjoy learning. Learners feel safe and adopt safe working practices during sessions.
- Learners, particularly those with no previous experience of using computers, quickly gain confidence to use a range of computer applications. They develop knowledge and skills which they apply effectively in their personal lives. For example, some learners use emails regularly to communicate with family members or use the internet to search for information. Other learners use the knowledge and skills they acquire to enhance their employability.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors effectively negotiate and plan for taught and workshop sessions with learners to ensure their individual needs and interests are met. Tutors are very sensitive to the needs of learners who are apprehensive about technology and skilfully and quickly build up their confidence to use computers. Independent learning during sessions is good and learners are skilfully coached and supported.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory. Tutors use short question and answer assessments, skills audits and discussions to establish learners' starting points. However, records of initial assessments are not always complete. Individual learning plans vary in quality and detail with some learning objectives too broad for evaluating learning or achievement. Completed tasks are often recorded rather than comments about the quality of learning.

- The provision is very successfully matched to the needs and interests of learners and to local communities. ESL offers good opportunities for learners to become competent in using computers for a range of purposes. Partnership work is very effective. The department works collaboratively with a wide range of partners, including voluntary and private sector organisations, to provide courses that develop or extend the skills of learners in the community or at work.
- Care, support and guidance are good. Learners receive effective guidance and help during sessions. They also receive appropriate information and guidance about progression routes. Learners with literacy and numeracy needs receive good support.
- Leadership and management are good. Strategic development of the provision is good through partnership working and setting clear performance targets which are achieved. Managers complete regular performance reports which monitor progress against targets. The system for observing teaching and learning is thorough and evaluative and it generates action plans for improvement.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Thorough and regular risk assessments of sessions and venues are carried out. Although some sessions include discussions about the safe use of internet, the active promotion of safe and responsible practices when using or working in a digital environment is insufficient. Social inclusion of learners from disadvantaged communities is good but tutors do not always sufficiently plan to incorporate equality and diversity in sessions.
- The self-assessment process is good. Learner evaluations and feedback inform the development and improvement of provision. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. However, it is insufficiently detailed and does not cover all aspects of teaching and learning.

### **What does Cheshire West and Chester Council Employment, Skills and Learning need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of recording on individual learning plans to ensure they clearly include learners' progress, achievements and what they need to do to improve.
- Implement effective strategies to ensure tutors discuss and inform learners about safe and responsible use of the internet and digital communication equipment across the entire curriculum.

- Develop effective strategies to promote equality and diversity within teaching and learning, for example by exploring how technology can be adapted and used to increase accessibility for learners with different needs.

## **Information about the inspection**

33. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors, assisted by the department's adult learning manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body and data on learners and their achievements over the period of the contract.
34. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed about the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

<p><b>Record of Main Findings (RMF)</b></p> <p><b>Cheshire West and Chester Council Employment, Skills and Learning</b></p> <p><b>Learning types: 14-16:</b> Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; <b>16-18 Learner responsive:</b> FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; <b>19+ responsive:</b> FE full- and part-time courses; <b>Employer responsive:</b> Train to Gain, apprenticeships.</p>
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Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	<b>14-16</b>	<b>Employer responsive</b>	<b>Social and personal development</b>
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>				
Full-time learners	0	0	0	0
Part-time learners	4,262	28	317	3,917
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>A. Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2			
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2			
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2			
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2			
A3. Do learners feel safe?	3			
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2			
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2			
<b>B. Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2			
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2			
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
<b>C. Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2			
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3			
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3			
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2			
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2			
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2			

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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