

Shropshire Council

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Local Authority

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Information about the provider

1. Shropshire County Council merged with district and borough councils to form The Shropshire Council (the 'Council') in 2009. Adult and community learning and work-based learning provision lie within the Learning, Employment and Training Services (LETS) division of the Council's community services directorate. LETS receives £3.9m from the Skills Funding Agency for the provision of work-based learning and £680,000 for its adult and community learning.
2. LETS directly delivers about 92% of the provision. It also delivers Train to Gain programmes for The Three Counties Consortium. LETS offers provision in 12 subject areas though some of these have very small numbers of learners. It delivers provision from seven learning centres across Shropshire. The training delivery manager has day-to-day management responsibility for the provision. She receives support from an assistant training delivery manager, four quality improvement officers, nine curriculum coordinators, 54 assessors and tutors and 15 internal verifiers. LETS employs 66 part time adult and community learning tutors. Work-based learning accounts for most of LETS' provision. Inspectors sampled, but did not separately grade adult and community learning provision.
3. Approximately 65% of the county's population lives in Shrewsbury and Telford and 11 market towns. Large areas of the county have either low or very dispersed populations. Almost all of the population is of white British heritage and a high proportion is over retirement age. The vast majority of employers employ 10 or fewer people. The proportion of unemployed people under the age of 24 is slightly higher than regional and national averages.
4. The provider provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - The Three Counties Consortium

| Type of provision | Number of learners in 2009/10 (previous year) |
|--|--|
| Provision for young learners: 14 – 16 Further education (16-18) Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment | 153 learners 86 learners 287 learners |
| Provision for adult learners: Learning for social and personal development | 2,932 part-time learners |
| Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships | 568 learners 384 apprentices |

Summary report

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

| Overall effectiveness of provision | | Grade 2 |
|--|--|----------------|
| Capacity to improve | | Grade 2 |
| | | Grade |
| Outcomes for learners | | 2 |
| Quality of provision | | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | 2 |
| Safeguarding | | 2 |
| Equality and diversity | | 2 |
| Learning for qualifications in employment | | Grade |
| Health, public services and care | | 2 |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy | | 2 |
| Preparation for life and work | | 2 |
| Business administration and law | | 2 |

Overall effectiveness

5. LETS is a good provider of adult learning. Success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices aged over 19 are good. Train to Gain success rates have improved and are now good. The performance of apprentices aged 16-18 was lower than national averages in 2009/10. However, current learners are making good progress towards completing their programme within the planned period of study.
6. Learners develop good social and employability skills. They develop vocational skills in customer service, hairdressing, health and social care and hospitality services.
7. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons carefully. They pay good attention to learners' individual needs. Learners participate well and take responsibility for their learning. In a few preparation for life and work sessions,

tutors rely too much on whole class activities and do not sufficiently break down skills into manageable steps.

8. The extent to which provision meets the needs and interests of learners is good. LETS offers a good range of carefully selected courses to appeal to a wide range of learners. Managers work well with schools to provide vocational courses of interest to pupils in Year 10 and 11.
9. Tutors support learners well. They use initial assessment effectively to plan learning and they arrange additional support for those who need it. Assessors quickly establish agreed ways of working to support those with dyslexia or other learning difficulties. Foundation learners receive particularly good support.
10. Leaders and managers provide clear strategic direction. They work hard to ensure that programmes meet learners' individual needs. Managers plan the curriculum well and they focus effectively on recruiting learners from disadvantaged groups. LETS has good arrangements for safeguarding learners. Leaders understand the service's main strengths and weaknesses. They have well-thought out action plans to raise success rates for all learners and to improve further the quality of learning sessions.

Main findings

- Success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices aged over 19 are good. Train to Gain success rates have improved and are now good. Success rates for apprentices aged 16-18 in 2009/10 were lower than national averages. The provider has identified the reasons for this and implemented effective strategies to improve current learners' performance.
- Learners make good progress towards their learning goals. Learning targets are challenging and realistic. Thorough reviews help learners to achieve short term targets and to complete their programme well within timescales. School pupils on foundation NVQ programmes enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Learners develop good social and employability skills. They gain confidence and develop vocational skills in customer service, hairdressing, health and social care and hospitality. Family learning learners take a more active interest in their children's school work and feel confident to help them with homework and projects.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully. They pay good attention to learners' individual needs. Learners participate well and take responsibility for their learning. In a minority of preparation for life and work sessions, tutors over-rely on whole group activities and do not sufficiently break down skills into manageable steps.
- Progress reviews and assessment practice are good. Learners receive regular and thorough reviews of progress. Tutors closely monitor and track learner progress using a 'traffic light' system to identify and support those falling behind. Assessment of learners' performance is accurate and well-planned.

- The extent to which provision meets the needs and interests of learners is good. LETS offers a good range of carefully selected courses to promote social inclusion. Managers work well with schools to provide vocational courses for potentially disaffected pupils. Employers report high levels of satisfaction with LETS' management of the apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes.
- Tutors use initial assessment well to plan learning and they arrange additional support for those who need it. Assessors quickly establish agreed ways of working to support those with dyslexia or other learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Foundation learners receive a particularly wide range of support to overcome barriers to learning.
- LETS has a clear strategic direction. Business planning is highly effective. The training delivery plan is comprehensive and detailed with challenging, quantifiable targets. Recent restructuring provides a greater focus on quality improvement. Performance management is strong. Curriculum management is good and staff morale is high.
- LETS has good safeguarding arrangements. Criminal record bureau (CRB) checks are extremely comprehensive covering all staff, volunteers and employers. The service has strengthened its e-safety procedures to protect learners. Learners feel safe and are clear about what to do or who to contact if a safeguarding issue arises.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers carry out equality impact assessments for key functions and services. They analyse the experience of different groups well. Actions to reduce gaps in performance have been successful. Teaching and learning reflects equality and diversity well and learners' understanding is good.
- The service has a number of mechanisms for gauging learner feedback. LETS holds learner forums at each centre twice a year and managers use these well to draw up centre actions. The service also carries out regular learner evaluations throughout the year. However, LETS does not formally involve learners or stakeholders in quality improvement processes.
- The self-assessment process is inclusive and accurate. The quality improvement plan contains clear actions to tackle weaknesses. Managers closely monitor performance in quarterly meetings. The observation of teaching scheme is good but does not sufficiently focus on how well learners' acquire vocational and technical skills.

What does LETS need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention for young apprentices by continuing to carefully monitor and support their progress and achievement on programme.
- Strengthen the observation of teaching and learning scheme so that it focuses more sharply on how well learners acquire vocational and technical skills.
- Further involve learners and stakeholders in quality improvement processes so that their views inform decision making.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the supportive and flexible assessors
- the motivation that the course provides
- the good off-the-job training modules
- practical lessons and working in salons
- being treated as adults
- the challenge and direction provided by assessors
- receiving useful feedback
- the very good support from training advisors.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the speed of the computers
- the delay in finding a substitute assessor when one of them is off work
- the range of small equipment in salons such as hair straighteners
- the repetitive paperwork during the too-frequent reviews.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- LETS' flexibility and responsiveness in meeting employer needs
- that options are well-matched to workplace requirements
- the good communication with LETS
- that LETS staff are always ready to provide additional information
- the regular assessor visits and external assessments because it helps learners to progress
- the good standard of training which meets industry requirements
- opportunities for learners to take additional units to enhance their employability
- always being included in planning and monitoring learners' progress.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the networking arrangements for apprentices working within the Council.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

11. LETS has a good capacity to improve. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes have improved and are now above national averages. Advanced apprenticeship success rates are also good. Intermediate level apprenticeship success rates were slightly below national rates in 2009/10 but are improving in 2010/11. Current learners make good progress and achieve well. The service sets ambitious targets and has highly effective business planning and performance management arrangements to ensure that they meet them. The self-assessment process is inclusive and accurate. Managers monitor quality improvement plans well and ensure that staff at all levels contribute to improving the provision. The service effectively links the outcomes of the observation of teaching and learning process and the monitoring of the learners' journey to targeted staff development. This provides a powerful driver for improving the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. LETS has managed changes in its remit and budget well and the recent re-structuring of staffing and resources has provided a greater focus on improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices aged over 19 are good. Apprentices on business administration programmes do particularly well. Train to Gain success rates were in line with national rates in 2009/10, but in-year data for 2010/11 indicate success rates well above national averages. Success rates for apprentices aged 16-18 in 2009/10 were lower than national averages by five percentage points. The provider has accurately identified a decline in retention among this cohort as the principal reason for the fall in success rates. Managers have implemented a range of successful strategies to improve retention in 2010/11.
13. Learners make good progress towards achieving their learning goals. Learning targets are challenging and realistic. Thorough and regular reviews help learners to achieve short term targets and to complete key skills and technical certificates well within timescales. Many learners progress through different courses and levels. School pupils on NVQ programmes at foundation level enjoy their learning and make very good progress.
14. Learners develop good social and employability skills. They gain confidence and develop vocational skills in customer service, hairdressing, health and social care and hospitality. Business administration learners work in a professional manner carrying out tasks and projects in the workplace. Learners on hairdressing programmes work confidently in the salons and show a good awareness of customers' needs. Employers comment very positively on the skills and confidence that learners develop. Family learning learners take a

more active interest in their children's school work and feel confident to help them with homework and projects.

15. Learners feel safe in class and are familiar with LETS' health and safety policy and procedures. Learner induction covers all aspects of health and safety. Staff apply safe working practices during learning sessions. The provider maintains an up-to-date accident log.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

16. Teaching and learning are good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Teachers plan lessons carefully. They pay good attention to learners' individual needs. Learners participate well and are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. The best lessons are lively and interactive. In a minority of preparation for life and work sessions, tutors over-rely on whole group activities and do not sufficiently break down skills into manageable steps for learners to gain confidence and achieve early success.
17. Progress reviews and assessment practice are good. Learners receive regular and thorough reviews of progress. Tutors ensure that learners and employers are involved in setting and negotiating targets during reviews. Tutors closely monitor and track learner progress using a 'traffic light' system to identify and support those falling behind. Assessment of learners' performance is accurate and well-planned. Assessors use diagnostic assessments effectively to plan individual learning agreements. Monitoring and target setting of individuals' progress in reviews and practical lessons is good.
18. The extent to which provision meets the needs and interests of learners is good. LETS offers a good range of carefully selected courses to widen participation and promote social inclusion. Managers work particularly well with schools to provide vocational courses for potentially disaffected pupils aged 14-16. The provider has good links with local further education colleges and with learning partnerships which help to avoid duplication and to ensure that the curriculum offer meets local needs. Learners comment very favourably on how well the provision meets their needs. LETS offers provision at a good range of accessible community venues throughout the county.
19. LETS' partnerships with a wide range of employers, training providers and schools are good. In 2009/10, some 153 school pupils aged 14-16 from 25 schools successfully completed a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or diploma in either hairdressing, administration or hospitality. Employers report high levels of satisfaction with LETS' management of the apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. LETS has provided successful apprenticeship and NVQ programmes for 254 Council employees over the last 18 months. In adult and community learning, LETS has worked with Connexions to provide opportunities for vulnerable young mothers to enter further education, training or employment.

20. Support for learners is good. Tutors use initial assessment well to plan learning and they arrange additional support for those who need it. LETS provides learners who require adaptive technology with appropriate equipment. Assessors quickly establish agreed ways of working to support those with dyslexia or other learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Foundation learners receive a particularly wide range of support to overcome barriers to learning and to develop social and employability skills. Learners say that they feel well-supported throughout their programme. Learners receive good information, advice and guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

21. LETS has a clear strategic direction and rationale for its service based on the Council's values and aims. Business planning is highly effective. The training delivery plan is comprehensive and detailed with challenging, quantifiable targets. The service uses its unique links with the Council, local communities and other training providers to forge partnerships that have a strong focus on meeting the needs of disadvantaged learners. Recent restructuring provides a greater focus on quality improvement, making managers more accountable for all aspects of quality improvement. Performance management is particularly strong. The service sets challenging targets across the organisation through its improvement plans, and for each individual through the appraisal process. Managers closely monitor targets and staff are very aware of their contribution to the service's performance. Curriculum management is good and staff morale is high.
22. LETS has good safeguarding arrangements and prioritises it well. It has a comprehensive policy, which reflects the Council's detailed policy. The service has very close working relationships with the local safeguarding board. All staff have received appropriate training and the designated officer and two other staff members have received enhanced training. LETS has a steering group which provides effective oversight and risk assessment of safeguarding policies and procedures. CRB checks are extremely comprehensive covering all staff, volunteers and employers where necessary. Health and safety and safeguarding checks of employer premises are thorough. The service has strengthened its e-safety procedures and has a separate e-policy and acceptable user policy. Recent changes to the network and protocols have ensured a safer environment for learners and staff. Learners feel safe and are clear about what to do or who to contact if an issue arises. The service takes swift action in response to any issue affecting learners' welfare. The service records, analyses and reports on safeguarding concerns well.
23. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers carry out equality impact assessments for all policies and for key functions and services. LETS has an equality and diversity steering group which includes a learner representative, to monitor equalities issues. It analyses the experience of different groups well. Subject areas are required to produce a regular report with analysis of the recruitment and achievement of different groups and surveys are analysed by

age and gender. The achievements of most learners are similar. However, for the past two years, learners from areas of deprivation have achieved significantly worse than other learners. Management action to put appropriate support in place has resulted in a significant reduction in the gap in the current year. Teaching staff have had training on integrating equality and diversity within the curriculum. Teaching and learning generally reflects equality and diversity well and learners' understanding is good.

24. LETS has a learner involvement strategy, which has a clear statement of intent, but it does not show how the service will implement it. The service has a number of mechanisms for gaining learner feedback. Learner forum 'Listening to you' sessions take place in each centre twice a year and LETS uses these well to draw up centre actions. Learner evaluations are carried out at the beginning, middle and end of learners' programmes, with good responses at the start, but fewer responses at the mid and end points. Curriculum managers use the evaluative statements to make improvements to provision. Managers use learner and employer views to support self-assessment judgements, but they are not formally engaged in the process. The service is in the early stages of exploring the use of social networking to facilitate better communication with its dispersed learners.
25. The self-assessment process engages all staff and is thorough, critical and accurate. A self-assessment review event allows subject teams to benefit from the constructive criticism of their peers. LETS shares the draft self-assessment with a group of three work-based learning providers who form part of a review and development group. The quality improvement plan contains clear actions to address weaknesses identified in the report. Managers closely monitor the plan in quarterly performance meetings. The observation of teaching and learning scheme has effectively contributed to improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, observers do not comment in sufficient detail on how well learners' acquire vocational and technical skills.
26. LETS manages and uses its resources well. It provides good value for money. The service has seven centres in accessible venues across the county, which are well equipped and serve local communities well.

Learning for qualifications in employment

Other learning for qualifications in employment provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded:

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Context

27. LETS provides apprenticeship training for 145 learners in health and social care, 45 in early years and seven in play work. Most follow an advanced apprenticeship. LETS also has 102 Train to Gain learners on health and care programmes as well as a further 81 on behalf of a consortium led by Worcester College of Technology. Most learners are over 19 and female. Progression opportunities are available up to NVQ level 4 in management programmes in health and social care.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. LETS' overall success rates for advanced apprentices in 2009/10 were satisfactory, but they have improved significantly in 2010/11. The proportion who complete within the planned period has also improved. Success rates for Train to Gain learners are good. Success rates for the small number of apprentices on intermediate programmes are satisfactory.
- Learners' attainment and progress are good. Learners are motivated to succeed in developing sound understanding of the needs of others. All gain in self-confidence and acquire appropriate values and attitudes. Train to Gain learners aspiring to higher education are encouraged to complete appropriate key skills that will help them at higher levels. Many apprentices successfully complete key skills at a higher level than required by their programme.
- Progression to further study and employment are good. Learners receive support from their employer in progressing from intermediate level to advanced. Many learners gain permanent employment, additional responsibilities or a pay increase on completion of their award. Learners have the opportunity to study at undergraduate level through progression agreements with Staffordshire University.
- Teaching, training and assessment are good. Tutors use diagnostic tests well to plan individual learning agreements. They use workshops effectively to provide background theory and to help learners achieve key skills and the technical certificate early in the programme. However, learners who have been on programme for some time are occasionally frustrated when they have to wait for new learners to catch up.
- Prompt and constructive feedback on progress motivates learners well. Regular reviews and assessment ensures learners are clear about expectations. Learners take ownership of negotiated short and long term targets to achieve

within the expected timescale. Active involvement of employers ensures that option units taken meet individual career aspirations and employer needs.

- LETS has effective and productive partnerships with employers. It works with the local Primary Care Trust, schools, nurseries, Children's Workforce Development, Skills for Health, Connexions, the Benefits Agency and the local authority. Employers are very positive about the flexible and professional relationship they have with LETS. They comment favourably on the support that assessors provide for their learners.
- LETS provides very good support for learners, which they value. Assessors quickly identify individual issues that may affect a learner's ability to succeed. They provide appropriate support which helps learners to develop self-confidence. Assessors quickly establish agreed ways of working to support those with dyslexia or specific learning need. Information, advice and guidance arrangements are good.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers provide effective leadership through a series of regular meetings. Assessor teams are stable and work well to monitor regularly all aspects of provision. A 'traffic light' system identifies any learners falling behind with appropriate remedial actions put in place. Quality improvement officers observe assessors four times a year, leading to improved assessment practice.
- LETS' assessors are well qualified and vocationally experienced. Assessors have graduate level qualifications to support learning up to and beyond advanced level. All hold appropriate assessor or verifier awards and all have or are working towards a teaching qualification. All assessors complete safeguarding and equality and diversity training. LETS ensures that staff appraisals are allied to each assessor's professional development needs.
- Learners develop a very good understanding of equality and diversity. All recognise the importance of respecting individual differences. Learners work to respect themselves and others adopting safe practices within the workplace and in their personal lives. Those on domiciliary care programmes clearly understand how to ensure clients' personal safety. Learners have a good recognition of their responsibilities to safeguard others within the workplace.
- The self-assessment process is inclusive and critical. Managers regularly monitor all aspects of the programmes and they understand the provision well. However, the self-assessment report concentrates too much on overall success rates rather than on the wider development of each learner. The quality improvement plan accurately identifies strategies for tackling areas for improvement.

What does LETS need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes by closely monitoring and reviewing each learner's progress throughout the period of study.

- Review the strategy to support new and existing learners during workshop sessions by using joint sessions for specific topics with existing learners and providing peer support for new learners.
- Provide greater depth in the self-assessment report on outcomes for learners by focusing more closely on learners' skills, knowledge and attainment rather than solely on success rates.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 2

Context

28. Currently, 86 learners are on employed apprenticeships working towards an NVQ at level 2 or 3 in hairdressing and barbering. Most learners are aged 16-18, female and of White British heritage. Seven have received a diagnosis of additional learning needs and/or difficulty. LETS also provides NVQ level 1 hairdressing courses for 117 Year 10 and 11 school pupils from 21 schools.

Key findings

- Overall apprenticeship success rates exceeded national averages in 2007/08 and 2008/09, but declined to around the national rate in 2009/10. Current indications suggest considerable improvement in 2010/11. Some 94% of apprentices recruited in the current year are still on programme. Learners are making good progress. Most are on target to achieve well within the planned period of study.
- Standards of learners' work are good and meet or exceed the requirements of the qualification. Learners at all levels develop good standards of professional and commercial skills and improve their employability. Learners work with confidence and competence and are able to relate theory to practical activity well.
- Learners' adherence to health and safety requirements and their attitude to study is good. Learners say they feel safe. Emphasis on health and safety in theory and practical lessons is good. Inductions and reviews include questioning and reinforcement of health and safety awareness. Salon placements have an appropriate annual safety audit and risk assessment.
- Tutors use their commercial experience to illustrate key points and set knowledge in the context of the modern workplace. Tutors make effective use of information learning technology to support and promote learning. They plan lessons well and focus activities on learning. Tutors skilfully use their knowledge of learners' needs and abilities to provide interesting lessons that promote learning.
- Assessment of learners' performance is accurate and reliable. Monitoring and target setting of individuals' progress in reviews and practical lessons is good. Tutors closely monitor and track learner progress using a 'traffic light' system to measure progress. Apprentices receive assessment in the workplace and off-the-job. However, too few salons have workplace assessors to increase assessment opportunities.
- Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. The range and content of courses is flexible with opportunities to study additional units towards the end of the programme. Learners and employers comment positively about the programmes offered. All learners progress into

employment. However, few progress on to NVQ level 3 courses after their apprenticeship.

- Partnerships with schools and employers are particularly effective in further developing the provision to meet learners' needs. In-salon training delivered by employers complements the off-the-job training and promotes the development of workplace skills. Many pupils from local schools on NVQ level 1 hairdressing programmes progress onto apprenticeships.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Information, advice and guidance are good in helping learners make informed choices about their programme. Learners receive good individualised support. Use of initial assessment to plan support and further develop learners in lessons and reviews is good. Learners comment positively on the very supportive, caring and interested tutors.
- Managers have a good understanding of the curriculum area. Tutors and managers are actively involved in target setting and action planning. Teamwork is good. Staff development opportunities are good. Managers are committed to continuous improvement. Progress in tackling poor success rates has been effective. A number of well thought out improvement processes are now in place.
- The development, promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity are good. Tutors cover equalities topics in their lessons and integrate it well with the curriculum. Learners' awareness of equality is good. They are able to explain how to adapt treatments when dealing with different client groups.

What does LETS need to do to improve further?

- Continue to integrate the more focused quality improvements introduced this year to raise further apprenticeship success rates.
- Increase the number of learners progressing from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships and NVQ level 3 programmes.
- Encourage more salons to employ stylists who are also assessors to increase opportunities for apprentices to receive workplace assessments.

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Context

29. LETS provides training for 94 learners on Train to Gain programmes in literacy and numeracy at foundation and intermediate level in workplaces across Shropshire. Some 152 young adults attend foundation learning programmes delivered at five training centres across the county. Both programmes aim to enhance learners' employability skills. A team of skills for life tutors and work-based learning specialists manage the provision.

Key findings

- Success rates for Train to Gain learners in 2009/10 were outstanding. Current Train to Gain learners are making very good progress. Many have already achieved. Foundation learners make good progress towards achieving qualifications in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. Learners gain a great sense of success in receiving formal recognition of their achievement and progress.
- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills. They increase their confidence in working as part of a team and relating to others. They enjoy the challenge of learning new skills. Many gain a greater sense of direction and learn to take responsibility for their own learning. Learners develop new interests and gain considerable benefits from work experience placements.
- Learners feel safe and enjoy attending training. They feel protected from bullying and harassment. They learn about their rights and responsibilities. Learners develop a good understanding of stereotyping and discrimination. They increase their knowledge of healthy eating and safe health and safety practices. They develop fitness through participation in outdoor activities. Learners behave well and treat others with respect.
- Teaching and learning are good. In the better sessions, learners actively participate in challenging and relevant learning activities. Tutors use a good range of resources to develop literacy and numeracy skills alongside employability and interpersonal skills. Tutors plan in detail to meet the individual needs of all learners as they practise and develop new skills.
- In a small minority of sessions, tutors do not sufficiently break down skills into manageable steps for learners to gain confidence and achieve early success. They rely too heavily on whole group activities and use a limited range of learning activities that do not fully engage all learners.
- Learners receive regular and thorough reviews of progress. Assessors play a key role in supporting learners' progress and developing their self-confidence. Learners have good opportunities to negotiate issues for detailed discussion and to evaluate their progress against specific short term targets. However, learners are not encouraged sufficiently to develop personalised targets to help them make even better progress.

- The service places great emphasis and care on designing individual programmes to meet the personal needs of young people and of adults in the workplace. LETS plans the Train to Gain programmes flexibly to accommodate learning around workplace constraints. Staff ensure that work experience placements for foundation learners match their individual needs and aspirations.
- The service makes good use of a range of partnerships with schools, colleges, other training providers and employers. This provides opportunities for young adults to widen their horizons, enabling them to take small steps into the world of work. The good links also provide learners with exciting enrichment activity opportunities.
- The service provides outstanding support for learners. Adults receive very good individual coaching and advice and guidance to develop their basic skills in a work context. Foundation learners receive a wide range of support to help overcome barriers to learning. Staff accompany learners on visits to potential work placements or college interviews. They arrange financial support for travel to interviews and for providing appropriate work clothing.
- Managers provide clear direction for staff in implementing successfully changes to the curriculum offer for young people. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The quality improvement process for teaching and learning is robust and supports tutors well. A similar process for training advisers is not yet fully in place. The self-assessment process is inclusive and critical.
- Staff receive very good training to help them understand and promote equality and diversity and safeguarding issues. They use this training well to integrate learning opportunities into lessons and reviews with learners to increase their awareness and understanding effectively. Staff respond promptly and sensitively to concerns raised by learners and they work well as a team to protect vulnerable learners.

What does LETS need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all staff receive training in planning learners' development of skills into small, manageable steps so that they gain greater confidence and control of their learning.
- Place a greater emphasis in review sessions on developing learners' independent skills in target setting by encouraging them to take greater responsibility for ensuring that they meet their targets.

Business, administration and law

Grade 2

Context

30. LETS offers programmes in administration, customer service and management. Some 112 learners follow an intermediate level apprenticeship programme and 66 an advanced apprenticeship. Twenty-one learners are on Train to Gain programmes. A senior coordinator, supported by two sector managers, five full-time assessors and six part-time assessors, manages the programmes. Two of the team are responsible for quality improvement and five carry out internal verification.

Key findings

- Overall success rates are significantly above national averages for advanced apprentices aged over 19. Success rates for 16-18 years old apprentices are slightly below. Train to Gain success rates are good. Current learners are making good progress. Most are ahead of their targets. Many apprentices achieve key skills at a higher level than required by their framework.
- Learners demonstrate a particularly good range of business, customer service and management skills. Learners work in a professional manner carrying out tasks and projects in the workplace in a confident and mature way. They perform workplace audits, carry out customer satisfaction surveys, lead small teams and, in one case, plan and organise meetings and take minutes for company executives and directors.
- Many learners achieve additional intermediate level qualifications or progress onto an advanced award. In the last two years, 20 learners have progressed from foundation programmes on to administration or customer service apprenticeships. Progression from intermediate level apprenticeships to advanced level apprenticeships is also good. Many learners have gained promotion or additional responsibilities at work.
- Learners pay good attention to health and safety in the workplace. They have a very good understanding of employment rights and responsibilities and they have the confidence to report any problems to their assessor or workplace supervisor.
- The planning, monitoring and assessment of learning are good. Assessors plan assessment activity well and use a wide range of assessment methods. They use digitally taped professional discussions effectively to make optimum use of time and to accelerate learners' progress. Assessors promptly record assessment decisions and give constructive feedback to learners.
- Tutors use the results of initial assessment effectively to plan and coordinate learning. However, they do not always record the results of initial assessment on Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). Some ILPs do not identify the results of initial assessment which, for example, indicate that learners would benefit from extra help with fractions or percentages.

- LETS offers a good range of off-the-job training modules to learners. Learners report that LETS tutors deliver these modules in a professional way and to industry standard at their centres. Topics include individual information and communication technology units, managing change, presenting information, and project management. Learners can attend any or all of the sessions according to their choice. Learners and managers value this training.
- LETS staff have good relationships with employers. Assessors work well with learners and employers to plan and coordinate each learner's programme. LETS staff work in a professional yet friendly manner and have built high levels of trust with employers. Employers value assessors' knowledge and expertise. Some employers now use LETS as their preferred provider for business skills training.
- Support for learners is good. Employers are very supportive of learners' needs and are fully involved in planning and review of learning and assessment. Staff carry out effective progress reviews frequently. They include information, advice and guidance discussions, particularly about future career and training options.
- For some younger learners, review visits are more frequent and, in some cases, weekly. This has helped to accelerate their progress. However, when staff carry out reviews at every visit, learners do not always see the value of this and complain that they find the paperwork repetitive.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good. Internal verification is robust. Assessment and verification standards are consistent. Team work is very good. Staff are highly motivated and committed to quality improvement. Staff attend frequent and productive team meetings that support staff development, training and the sharing of good practice. Self-assessment is inclusive and accurate.
- Learners have a very good understanding of equality and diversity. Equality and diversity, safeguarding and sustainability topics are included in discussions at every assessment visit. Assessors check and reinforce learners' knowledge and understanding at every review.

What does LETS need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff record in detail on ILPs all results of skills for life initial assessment to enable assessors to meet learners' specific learning needs.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of carrying out reviews at every visit for 16-18 year olds or at-risk learners by moderating the frequency of progress reviews to establish their usefulness in monitoring and measuring progress.

Information about the inspection

31. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's training delivery manager as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Skills Funding Agency, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
32. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the provider. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

The Shropshire Council

Learning types: 14-16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships. **Social and personal development:** all adult safeguarded provision

| Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate | Overall | 14-16 | 16-18 Learner responsive | Employer responsive | Social and personal development |
|--|----------|----------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Approximate number of enrolled learners | | | | | |
| Full-time learners | 1097 | 0 | 152 | 945 | 0 |
| Part-time learners | 410 | 213 | 0 | 0 | 197 |
| Overall effectiveness | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Capacity to improve | 2 | | | | |
| Outcomes for learners | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning? | 2 | | | | |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals? | 2 | | | | |
| How well do learners progress? | 2 | | | | |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development? | 2 | | | | |
| Do learners feel safe? | 2 | | | | |
| <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i> | n/a | | | | |
| <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i> | n/a | | | | |
| Quality of provision | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development? | 2 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users? | 2 | | | | |
| How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners? | 2 | | | | |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve? | 2 | | | | |
| Leadership and management | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation? | 2 | | | | |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i> | n/a | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? | 2 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 2 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement? | 3 | | | | |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners? | 2 | | | | |
| 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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