

Hartlepool Adult Education Service

Focused monitoring visit report

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Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Hartlepool Adult Education Service (HAES) provides a range of adult learning opportunities, mainly targeted at key local and national priority groups, to raise skill levels and enhance employment opportunities. Core provision is delivered from well-positioned central premises. Other provision is delivered in local community venues. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funds HAES which also delivers programmes funded by other agencies, such as the European Social Fund, in partnership with other local providers.

At the last inspection in 2007, the overall effectiveness of provision offered by HAES was judged to be good, as were capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision, and leadership and management. Equality of opportunity was satisfactory as was the provision inspected in languages, literature and culture, and preparation for life and work. Provision in business, administration and law was judged to be good. This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made to improve the self-assessment process to improve provision for learners?

Reasonable progress

The self-assessment process continues to be inclusive and consultative, covering all aspects of teaching and learning. The process has been effective in improving many aspects of the provision. The self-assessment report is self-critical and focuses appropriately on the service's impact on learners. Since the previous inspection, the service has developed new processes to seek learners' views, including questionnaires and formal and informal discussions which are used when completing self-assessment. The self-assessment report moderation process, which includes staff from other providers, assists HAES to examine and improve its provision effectively. Since the inspection, the use of data in the self-assessment process has improved. Tutors now assess their own teaching practices and use this information when evaluating subject areas. The improvement action plan is detailed, clearly identifying roles and responsibilities; it is an effective tool for further improvements. The service has identified that it needs to develop systematic processes to gather the views of employers and subcontractors, and to improve the quality of the tutors' self-assessments so that they are more evaluative and self-critical and that they clearly identify areas for improvement.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made to improve outcomes for learners since the previous inspection?

Reasonable progress

The service is making reasonable progress to improve outcomes for the majority of its learners in both adult and community learning and work-based learning. Overall, the improvement trend has continued across both accredited and non-accredited provision. Retention and success rates of learners on non-accredited courses have improved and are high. Success rates for learners on accredited courses in health and social care; science and mathematics; retail and commercial enterprises; and arts, media and publishing have continuously improved and in 2010/11 were above the national averages. Success rates on accredited courses in languages, literature and culture; education and training; and business, administration and law have also improved and are at the national averages. Success rates of learners on information and communication technology, and preparation for life and work programmes improved, but then declined in 2010/11 to below the national averages. The service has recognised that learners on these courses left too early. In response to this, the service has introduced a more extensive pre-course advice and guidance system and an initial assessment process to ensure that learners are enrolled on courses which meet their needs and aspirations more accurately.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made to improve the quality of teaching and learning?

Significant progress

At the previous inspection, the sharing of good practice to improve teaching and learning was an area for improvement. HAES has since instigated a wide range of good initiatives to address this. Since the inspection it has developed good partnership working, introduced a peer observation system and implemented extensive staff training and development to ensure a good pace of improvement in many aspects of its work. Peer observation focuses specifically on identifying the use of good practice to engage learners' interests. HAES successfully promotes good practice to tutors through useful staff booklets, guides and extensive training. HAES has encouraged the integration of good practice ideas and approaches in teaching and learning sessions. The service has implemented a new initial assessment process which includes learner interviews, learner self-assessment, literacy, numeracy and language assessment and a relevant vocational assessment. Tutors have received training on using software and the approaches to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Assessment practices have improved with learners using personal diaries very effectively to inform tutors about their learning. The service's observation of teaching and learning record shows a consistent and significant increase in the proportion of teaching sessions which are good or better.

What progress has been made to improve further the good support for learners?**Significant progress**

The last inspection judged support for learners as good. HAES has made significant progress since then to improve this further. The new premises in central Hartlepool have played a significant role in this improvement. Highly accessible and visible, they provide a focal point dedicated to the service's provision as well as being close to key referral agencies such as Jobcentre Plus. Since the last inspection, HAES has provided very good support for staff training. All staff who provide information, advice and guidance have achieved, or are working towards, national vocational qualifications at level 4. Specific training has been included in professional development events for staff. HAES has improved the enrolment process significantly. Many more enrolments now take place face-to-face because of the location of the service. These meetings are highly effective in identifying learner support needs earlier and they generate information that is shared with both the tutor and curriculum manager. HAES provides a detailed enrolment pack which informs applicants about the support available. The proportion of learners progressing from initial assessment to enrolment has improved from 51% last year to 98% this year. Information, advice and guidance sessions have also increased from 380 in 2009/10 to 809 in 2010/11.

Leadership and management**What progress has been made to improve the use of individual learning plans across all areas of the provision to monitor and record the progress being made by learners?****Significant progress**

Since the last inspection in 2007, HAES has made significant progress to improve the use of individual learning plans in all parts of its provision. The last inspection identified that in some areas staff did not use learning plans to record learner progress. HAES now issues all staff with a comprehensive diary that includes guidance on both initial assessment and the completion of individual learning plans. HAES has delivered staff training in how to complete and use learning plans; robust systems are now in place both to audit their use and to monitor their quality. A revised observation of the teaching process now includes direct reference to individual learning plans and it records staff practice. Learners make good use of a learner's diary containing guidance on the completion and use of learning plans. HAES consulted widely with both staff and students on changes to the individual learning plan format and process. The service acknowledges learners' improved success rates relate to the changes it has made which have led to tutors and learners having an increased focus on learning.

What progress has been made to improve the use of data to inform course planning?**Reasonable progress**

The previous inspection in 2007 identified that the analysis of data to inform course planning was insufficient. HAES has made reasonable progress to improve this. Curriculum managers now use a new data system installed in 2010/11, which produces a wide range of reports to help managers make decisions at monthly management meetings. Flags highlight areas of concern and success very effectively. Reports allow managers to compare funding streams, course levels and recruitment of priority target groups. Relevant financial information also shows both the cost and the income for each learner on courses, enabling managers to monitor and assess course viability. Managers used the available data to plan provision for the current year, 2011/12, taking account of successful recruitment of priority groups, success rates and changes in awarding bodies.

HAES provided course tutors with training at the annual staff training events, showing them how data can support them in their role. Tutors receive reports to help them complete course self-assessments; data reports are used more systematically at team and subject area meetings to analyse and monitor performance. Tutors also receive reports each half-term which allow them to monitor attendance and retention more effectively.

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