

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Local authority

Summary of key findings for learners

Inspection dates		3–6 June 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

This provider is good because:

- Learners in non-accredited provision have good rates of attendance, retention and achievement.
- The large majority of teaching, learning and assessment is good or better.
- Support provided by the service and its partners is particularly effective in developing personal, social and independent skills and enabling learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve well.
- The range of provision and unique learning environments are closely aligned to the acquisition of vocational skills to improve employability and progression.
- The ambitious vision for community learning is linked carefully to the strategy of the wider objectives of the local authority of improved health, well-being and sustainable communities.
- The arrangements for governance are good.
- The much improved quality improvement arrangements identify and improve provision quickly through strong partnership working.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The monitoring of learners' progress on accredited programmes is insufficient.
- The strategies to engage under-represented groups and increase enrolments require improvement.
- Too many subcontractors are not applying initial assessment, recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) well enough nor including a sufficient focus on developing English and mathematics in their courses.
- The service is not following up identified tutor development needs from quality improvement visits to ensure that the development actually takes place.
- The implementation of performance management procedures of subcontractors whose provision requires improvement and who do not respond to improvement requirements is not strong enough.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- To help improve success rates on accredited courses, more carefully monitor and record the progress of learners on accredited programmes so that learners understand how well they are doing. Use the information from frequent monitoring to help identify where intervention is necessary to help those learners who are at risk of not achieving.
- Enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - improving the quality and consistency of initial assessment, RARPA and the promotion and contextualisation of English and mathematics across all of the provision but particularly in courses delivered by subcontractors
 - monitoring the attendance at and impact of staff development initiatives
 - applying procedures to remove contracts more quickly from subcontractors who do not improve.
- Review learner engagement strategies to reverse the decline in enrolments so that more Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's residents, especially those from under-represented groups, benefit from the courses on offer.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current learners are making good progress despite many having low educational achievement when they commence their course. Since the last inspection the service has significantly improved the retention rates of learners and rates overall are now good. However, rates are lower for most entry-level crafts programmes and mathematics courses in family learning. ▪ The number of learners taking accredited courses has increased significantly. In-year data indicate that retention on these courses is good and much improved since the previous inspection. However, it is too soon to judge whether all learners will achieve successfully because systems for monitoring learners' progress are not sufficiently developed. ▪ The service has put in place a much improved procedure to identify if learners progress to further learning, employment or volunteering opportunities when they complete their course. As a result, more reliable data are available. Early indications are that many learners have already progressed to positive destinations in the current year. The provider equips learners well, through good information and guidance, to progress and make a successful transition to the next stages of their development. ▪ Achievement rates in non-accredited programmes have improved and are now good across all the subject areas that the provider offers. The vast majority of learners who have completed their course in the current year have achieved their learning aims. The RARPA procedures are much improved since the last inspection and enable the service to accurately judge levels of achievement across the provision. ▪ Learners have a wide range of social and economic needs and learners from areas of most disadvantage are targeted to participate in the service's programmes. Learners develop much improved self-esteem, confidence levels and, through good support and guidance, develop the ability to learn and work independently. ▪ Family learning courses are well devised in order that parents can better support their children and prepare them for school. All family learning courses have a strong emphasis on developing English, mathematics, information and communication technology and English for speakers of 	

other languages skills within the main course programme. For instance the 'Eat wisely, save money' course also includes calculation of unit costs, percentages and budgeting skills.

- The majority of the different groups of learners achieve as well as each other. Learners with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities attend and achieve as well as those without. Minority ethnic learners achieve well. However males do not achieve as well as females. In the current year fewer female learners have enrolled. The service has identified this as a target area for improvement.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good; current learners are making good progress with much improved retention and achievement rates. The service provides strong support for disadvantaged and hard to help learners or individuals with severe learning difficulties. It helps them to learn more about their community, improve the quality of their work skills, well-being and daily lives. For example, learners engage in activities to improve their basic cooking, digital literacy, painting and carpentry skills. Good individual support and guidance aid the development of higher confidence levels. The result is that individuals undertake more complex learning tasks and work-related activities.
- The vast majority of tutors have appropriate qualifications and good work-related technical and professional subject-specific skills. They use these skills and knowledge effectively to plan sessions well. However, a small minority of tutors do not always use their skills and experience to effectively plan individual learning, or cater for English and mathematics skill development or additional learning needs.
- The use of the results of initial and subsequent assessment of English, mathematics and vocational skills is inconsistent across the service. This results in variable practice and insufficient provision of additional learning support to help each individual attain their learning and personal goals.
- Subcontractors are not yet effectively embedding English and mathematics in their classes to ensure that all learners have opportunities to improve their skill level beyond their starting points. Learners' written work is not always checked for poor spelling and sentence construction. However, where focused English and mathematics sessions take place, learners receive good levels of support and feedback to help them acquire new skills and knowledge.
- Learners attending vocational courses appreciate and enjoy using the good range of work-related and unique learning environments, often building on their existing technical and professional practice, employability skills and previous qualifications. For example, an excellent rural small holding, animal care facilities and bespoke jewellery design workshops allow learners to develop a good range of work-related and technical skills. However, not all learners are provided with the same opportunity to engage in developing employability skills which will help them gain work.
- Many of the non-accredited courses focus on personal and social skill development and do not require specific pieces of written work to be completed. In the digital literacy courses, students develop very good creative and computer-related skills, all contributing to their work-related skill development. Learners attending the beauty therapy accredited course develop very good technical skills quickly through good instruction and teaching provided by a current industry practitioner.
- The vast majority of tutors are good role models who care passionately about inspiring and helping each individual achieve their goals. With good learner-tutor relationships established and effective supportive opportunities for positive group and peer work, learners work collectively together, complete specific tasks and develop new skills. The service and subcontracting partnership provides very good support transport and crèche services so that learners are able to attend their course choice.

- The service has successfully re-introduced RARPA for more effective tracking, recording and monitoring of learners' progress and achievement. However, not all sub-contracting partners have yet fully implemented RARPA to the standard expected by the service.
- The vast majority of learners receive good verbal feedback on the standard of their work, but do not always receive detailed written feedback against targets. Not all tutors set challenging short-term targets that are sufficiently broken down into small pieces of learning. Individual learning plans and assessment and feedback records are ineffective in helping learners understand how much progress they are making or identify gaps in their learning. Where learners' written work is of a poor standard, tutors do not always provide sufficient feedback or targets to help them improve.
- Learners receive good information, advice and guidance to help them progress into full-time employment, further and higher education. Learners in vocational settings are not always provided with sufficient opportunities to make informed choices about employment pathways or workplace learning, such as apprenticeships.
- The service partnership succeeds in promoting equality for all learners and caters for cultural and religious preferences to ensure that needs and personal goals are met. Subcontractors are particularly good at promoting social inclusion, supporting learners with specific learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities and ensuring a culture of respect and consideration for all learner needs.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and managers have an ambitious vision to improve health and well-being, and build strong and sustainable communities. Through their vigorous interventions, thorough analysis of local and regional data and strong support from council leaders, they have restructured the service so that it is more strategically placed to meet the learning needs of families and communities in the most disadvantaged areas of Rotherham.
- The service works well with local voluntary, private and public sector organisations to design learning programmes that help residents in deprived communities overcome barriers to learning. However, fewer learners have taken courses this year. Service leaders and managers recognise the need to review recruitment strategies so that more Rotherham residents, especially from under-represented groups, benefit from well-structured and interesting courses. For example, courses to develop readiness for work, English, mathematics and digital skills.
- Managers and tutors have high aspirations for learner achievement. Tutors are enthusiastic about improving their own practice and value the good communication, frequent individual reviews and the challenging monitoring provided by managers. Leaders have extended the management and leadership skills of their tutors through well-defined development work to improve practice across the network. For example, family learning tutors have begun work in primary schools with parents and carers to raise their own and their children's level of attainment in English and mathematics.
- Governance arrangements have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. The service benefits from the support of experienced and knowledgeable councillors and council officers who monitor and evaluate how well leaders and managers fulfil council priorities to improve the lives of its residents. The lead councillor is highly active in the work of the service and provides strong levels of challenge and support.
- Strategies to improve the quality of the provision are particularly effective. Through good self-assessment and improvement work, managers and staff have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Managers have improved the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
- The observation process of teaching, learning and assessment effectively and accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Observers' use of a development plan ensures that tutors benefit from a well-designed professional development programme and coaching

support that focus clearly on relevant subject development and improving teaching strategies. However, managers do not monitor sufficiently well whether or not tutors attend the training sessions recommended to them.

- Managers have evaluated their provision thoroughly, analysing data and information from key improvement processes. They clearly identify strengths and areas for development. They set, monitor and evaluate targets for rapid improvement. Staff, providers and learners are increasingly involved in assessing the impact of what they do.
- The management of subcontractors is good. An improved bidding process ensures that subcontracted provision meets the priorities of the service. A wide range of initiatives is improving the quality of subcontracted delivery. These include joint workshops, shared training and specific support from experienced practitioners. The majority of these partner organisations engage well with the thorough and challenging support and monitoring that leaders and managers use to raise quality. However, procedures are not used effectively to remove contracts from providers who do not improve the quality of teaching and learning despite receiving support.
- Managers promote equality and diversity well. This means that learners understand how the issues they encounter affect their lives. Service managers have developed an extensive and well-devised equality and diversity toolkit. This supports tutors and providers to plan more effectively how to meet the varied needs of the learners they teach. Incidents of bullying and harassment are rare and learners treat each other with respect.
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's community learning service and its partner providers meet their statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. All staff and learners know how to keep themselves safe and promote safe working practices. Where learners raise concerns, staff deal with issues quickly, sensitively and appropriately; they understand and apply set procedures very well. Staff and managers place a high priority on health and safety and carry out detailed risk assessments for rooms and activities.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council**

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Community learning	2

Type of provider	Local authority								
Age range of learners	19+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,587								
Strategic Director Children and Young Peoples Services	Joyce Thacker								
Date of previous inspection	March 2013								
Website address	www.rotherham.gov.uk								
Provider information at the time of the inspection									
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
	N/A	171	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	N/A		N/A		N/A				
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A								
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	N/A								
Number of community learners	1,131								
Number of employability learners	57								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autism Plus Brinsworth Academy of Engineering The High Street Centre JMLB Northern College Serenity (South Yorkshire) Swinton Lock Tassibee UMCC 								

Contextual information

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's community learning service operates throughout the borough and is delivered both by the service and a range of subcontractors. The large majority of the provision is targeted at entry and foundation levels in the most deprived areas. Rotherham has high levels of unemployment, particularly among the male population, which are well above the average rates for Yorkshire and Humberside and those nationally. The proportion of the population who do not have a qualification is three percentage points above national rates and the percentage of the population who have caring responsibilities is also high. The area is mainly composed of White British residents with a growing population of minority ethnic groups and Eastern Europeans.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Maxine Mayer HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the commissioning, policy and performance manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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