

Bristol City Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

22–25 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Effective leadership has resulted in a very strong focus on community improvement and raised aspirations for all learners.
- Bristol City Council (BCC) has developed programmes to attract and engage learners with significant barriers to learning from the most deprived areas. These courses respond to the needs of the community and to individual learners particularly well.
- Support for the most vulnerable learners is highly effective in enabling them to succeed and progress into further education, training and employment.
- Partnership working is excellent with a strong focus on meeting the employability needs of learners and employers.
- The use of data is very effective in monitoring learners' progress across the whole provision and identifying areas of relative underperformance.
- The success rates for the adult learning programmes and for apprenticeship programmes are good.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Leaders and managers have not yet ensured that the quality of delivery of provision is consistently high across subcontractors.
- The use of information and communications technology (ICT), including the use of e-portfolios, is not sufficiently well developed to support the needs of learners and tutors.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Bristol City Council (BCC) is the lead partner and contract holder in a consortium, also known as Community Learning West (CLW), which includes North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and a number of smaller subcontractors. The inspection also included On Site Bristol, which is part of Bristol City Council and provides apprenticeships in construction and engineering. The consortium was established in 2011 and provides adult education across these areas for approximately 3,500 learners in about 150 venues.
- This inspection was of adult learning programmes designed to attract and engage learners with little prior experience of learning, many of whom have significant barriers to learning. The courses offered are carefully researched to meet community needs and are aimed to provide a conduit to encourage learners to progress into further learning or employment. The inspection also included the apprenticeship programmes, which are a relatively small proportion of the provision.
- In 2014, BCC created a single employment, skills and learning service, which brought together community learning, adult learning, apprenticeships and employment support. This has enabled a better, more coordinated focus to strengthen local communities and to build greater cohesion across Bristol's diverse communities.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Identify differences in the quality of delivery of the provision between subcontractors and implement a common set of procedures which reflect best practice.
- Develop further the promotion of the use of ICT in the classroom to support teaching and learning, including the development of systems to enable staff to share ideas, learning materials and resources.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leadership is effective. BCC has restructured its senior management significantly over the last year, with major changes to staffing, resulting in better integration of the departments. It has managed these changes very well. Council members have high expectations of the BCC consortium, with a very strong focus on community improvement through adult education. Senior staff are ambitious to reach the most disadvantaged learners in the most deprived areas and promote these ambitions to all staff. As a result, all staff have high expectations for all learners, irrespective of their starting points.
- BCC has responded well to the recommendations in the previous inspection report. The procedures for the observation of teaching and learning are robust. Clear action points are identified for tutors being supported and these are subsequently checked for improvement. The observations are accurate and have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Tutors have developed a wider variety of activities in classes to support learners with different abilities and needs. However, the use of ICT to support teaching and learning is not sufficiently developed to meet the needs of tutors and learners.
- Self-assessment is very thorough and includes the views of employers, partners and learners. The self-assessment report is accurate, contributing to a quality improvement plan that has driven improvements in the quality of the BCC's provision. This has resulted in an expansion of the provision to meet the needs of learners and the community more closely. It has also led to improvements in the management of subcontractors' performance. However, inconsistencies remain in the management of the provision within the subcontractors, which have resulted in a decline in performance in some areas.
- Managers place great emphasis on the provision of English and mathematics, ensuring that all learners are encouraged to develop their skills. BCC has established conversation clubs to encourage learners to develop their language and social skills. These clubs are open to non-learners with the expectation that they may be encouraged to engage in learning.
- Partnership working is excellent. The range and content of the courses offered matches the needs of the community and, more specifically, the needs of the learners extremely well. The provision is precisely what is needed, and is being delivered in exactly the right locations.
- Managers use data very effectively to monitor performance overall and also to identify any differences in performance between subcontractors or learner groups. Any differences are explored and action taken to address any issues identified. Managers monitor the progression of learners on completion of their programmes, but do not have sufficient information to know precisely where learners have progressed to.
- Managers ensure that learners receive a range of advice and guidance during their course to help them make decisions on further progression. The information provided to learners, however, is not always fully impartial.
- All staff promote a culture of inclusion and create a positive ethos of mutual respect within the training venues. In teaching and learning, staff celebrate individual differences with regard to gender, ethnicity and disability. All staff and learners actively guard against any harassment, bullying or discrimination.
- BCC provides excellent support for learners who have disability to enable them to cope with day-to-day living skills. It also works hard to engage with learners with problems of substance abuse, domestic violence and other significant lifestyle issues, enabling them to make life changes and become more independent.

■ The governance of the provider is good

- Council leaders provide very effective, strategic direction for BCC. They place great emphasis on the role of adult education in community development, and maintain a clear focus on creating opportunities for learners to gain employability skills. They are very receptive to innovative ideas to attract and engage learners. They support these initiatives well, while still providing appropriate challenge to leaders and managers. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of BCC and what needs to be improved.
- BCC takes its responsibilities for corporate parenting very seriously and provides very effective support for children leaving care to enable them to progress into further education, training and employment.
- BCC has a very clear vision of the future and has developed excellent working relationships with the local enterprise partnership and other partnerships.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- The policies and procedures for safeguarding are robust. BCC has completed all necessary checks for its staff, including subcontractors' staff, to ensure their suitability. The council provides good quality

training in safeguarding for the whole consortium, which is reinforced by update training from the local authorities.

- Learners and apprentices feel safe. They know what to do if they have a concern and who to contact. The promotion of health and safety procedures in the workplace for apprentices is very robust. Learners understand how to keep themselves safe physically. While BCC and the other local authorities within the consortium give clear information about online safety to learners, they do not promote e-safety sufficiently well within teaching and learning.
- BCC fulfils its responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. Reasonable progress has been made in the ongoing training of staff and in promoting learners' awareness of the risks of extremism and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good for apprentices and for those on adult learning programmes. Teaching is highly effective in meeting the needs of learners who are newly arrived with their families in the west of England, those with little or no previous educational experience and those who are recovering from major life events. The good teaching enables them to participate effectively in learning, develop confidence and employability skills, and become active members of their communities.
- Tutors and trainers are knowledgeable and experienced. They motivate learners through carefully planned lessons and training sessions, of which the large majority are lively and encourage learners to participate enthusiastically. Adult learners make good progress, frequently exceeding their own expectations.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from BCC's highly effective partnership working with employers, local groups, children's centres and community organisations. Adult learners attend courses that they recognise as being important to them and their families. Apprentices gain valuable experiences with major construction companies.
- Tutors create positive and inclusive learning environments where learners from a range of diverse backgrounds, abilities and ages feel safe, and where there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. Learners listen carefully to their peers, are respectful of each other's cultures, abilities and beliefs, and work together very productively.
- Initial and diagnostic assessment is thorough and ensures that tutors have a good understanding of learners' starting points and interests. The large majority of adult learners and apprentices subsequently enjoy an interesting range of well-resourced activities at appropriately challenging levels to meet their individual skills needs and the personal targets they have set for themselves. In a small minority of off-the-job training sessions, most-able apprentices are not sufficiently challenged or stretched to reach their full potential.
- Apprentices receive excellent support from their training officers who coordinate their programmes very effectively. Employers fully participate in improving their apprentices' technical and employability skills, enabling them to undertake more complex work and progress into permanent employment or further education.
- Learners and apprentices make good progress. The careful monitoring of learners' understanding and skills development and frequent assessment throughout their course support learners to make good progress and succeed. However, assessments for apprentices in the workplace are not always frequent enough to enable them to complete their qualifications earlier than the planned timescale.
- In the large majority of adult learning classes, learners acquire skills which help them in their daily lives and which support their future aspirations. For example, in a functional mathematics class, learners learned how to create both monthly and annual family budgets effectively while also practising the reading and comprehension skills needed to pass the functional skills exams.
- Constructive oral feedback helps learners develop their skills further in most lessons. Learners and apprentices are clear about how well they are progressing. They receive regular written feedback on their work and on their recorded progress in their individual learning plans and reviews.
- Tutors set homework very effectively to extend and consolidate learning. They set high expectations for learners' regular completion of challenging homework, and provide a range of interesting activities for learners to complete independently. For example, tutors loan books with CDs to help ESOL learners practise their reading or set additional tasks in functional mathematics. Learners enjoy completing their homework tasks and find the feedback they receive when it is marked very helpful.
- Apprentices demonstrate good safe working practices in busy work sites. Learning resources for apprentices are good and they use industry standard equipment in well-equipped spacious workshops.

They apply correct health and safety practice and demonstrate good risk awareness of hazards in the workplace.

- The use of ICT to support teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. The recent introduction of e-portfolios is enabling apprentices to track their own progress more effectively. Few apprentices access classroom materials electronically if they are unable to attend classes. Too few adult learners in English and mathematics lessons acquire or improve their ICT skills as an integral part of their learning. Tutors do not remind learners sufficiently of e-safety and how to stay safe while using the internet.
- Occasionally, poorly presented materials and out-of-date information hinder learners' understanding and progress. For example, learners who do not speak English as their first language were shown incorrectly sequenced sentences, which confused their understanding of English sentence structures.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- A very large majority of learners at BCC participate in non-accredited classes designed to improve their personal development and support community cohesion. The success rates on these courses are very high.
- Many learners start their learning with very few academic qualifications, have had poor experiences at school or have other significant barriers to learning.
- Learners on community learning programmes improve their confidence and self-esteem through their learning. Many use their new skills to encourage and support their children in completing homework. Success in their learning motivates the learners well, and many progress to other forms of education or training.
- Learners on employability courses develop effective job search skills and are supported in producing a useful curriculum vitae. Many learners improve their independent learning skills and use these to explore topics of personal interest or research career development opportunities.
- Apprentices quickly develop relevant vocational skills which make them more effective workers and valued employees.
- Retention and attendance rates across the provision have improved and are very high. The vast majority of learners and apprentices combine their family responsibilities with learning well and attend their sessions regularly and promptly. Learners on functional skills mathematics courses become more confident in helping their children with school homework.
- The large majority of learners and apprentices are aware of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Construction apprentices demonstrate safe working practices in busy workplaces, and acquire many job-relevant skills, including the safe and efficient installation of heating systems.
- Learners and apprentices demonstrate a clear understanding of people's differences and are respectful of each other and staff. For example, community learning tutors come to know their learners very well and skilfully challenge them to consider how their behaviours affect their family lives and employability. This leads learners to develop new ways of dealing with conflict and other aspects of their personal lives.
- Learners and apprentices demonstrate a reasonable awareness of how to stay safe when using the internet. Aspects of learners' awareness require further reinforcement, for example protecting their identity, protecting themselves from radicalisation, and the safe use of social networks.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- A large majority of learners at BCC make good progress relative to their starting points and many, particularly those with low prior academic attainment and severe barriers to learning, exceed their own expectations.
- For the very large majority of learners who attend non-accredited provision, the success rates are excellent. Learners develop a wide range of personal, social and communication skills that result in improved self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Success rates for the small number of apprentices remain very good and well above the most recently published national averages. Apprentices on construction-related programmes achieve particularly well. Apprentices quickly develop a good range of job-related skills.
- Success rates on a range of short, accredited courses, such as emergency first aid and food safety, are high. Success rates on longer accredited courses such as child care and adult social care require

improvement.

- Success rates for the small number of learners on English and mathematics functional skills courses fell in 2014/15; however, in the first six months of the current academic year, retention and attendance rates have significantly improved and current learners are now making good progress from their starting points.
- Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning and become increasingly confident and motivated throughout their training. The achievement of personal learning goals in community learning programmes is very high. A significant minority of learners progress from entry-level qualifications to higher levels and often become volunteers in the training centres and other community venues. Apprentices' progression into permanent jobs is excellent.
- Managers analyse data thoroughly to monitor the performance of different groups of learners. All groups of learners perform equally well across most courses.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+,19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,391
CEO	Nicola Yates
Website address	www.bristolesl.org

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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	1861	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+		
	123	14	85	41	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							
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"> ■ South Gloucestershire Council ■ North Somerset Council ■ City of Bristol College 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Dr Charles Clark, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gerard McGrath	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patricia Collis	Ofsted Inspector
Darrell Bate	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Clary	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the community learning manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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