

# Cumbria County Council

Local authority



24–27 May 2016

**Inspection dates****Overall effectiveness****Requires improvement**

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- The service has not taken sufficiently timely action to improve the quality of provision since the previous inspection.
- Attendance is low and has been so for the last three years.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently effective in promoting high-quality learning.
- Learners on non-accredited courses are not given specific enough targets to enable tutors to use assessments and monitor learners' progress accurately.
- Information about learners' destinations or progression on completion of their course is incomplete. Managers are unable to use the data to evaluate the effectiveness of provision in meeting the needs of the local community.
- Learners on non-accredited programmes have insufficient opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Learners' understanding of what they need to do to improve the quality of their work is often weak as tutors' feedback is not sufficiently detailed.
- Performance management of staff is not robust as very few tutors have had recent observations to evaluate and help them improve their teaching, and part-time tutors are not included in the service's appraisal system.
- Not all tutors systematically promote British values or raise their learners' awareness of the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism.

### The provider has the following strengths

- The majority of learners on accredited courses achieve their qualifications.
- Learners who have special educational needs or disability and learners with challenging personal circumstances develop good occupational and personal skills in carefully chosen work placements.
- The majority of learners make progress in developing increased confidence, self-esteem and self-belief.
- The service works successfully and effectively with a wide range of community partners and local groups to provide good learning opportunities for vulnerable groups and meet the priorities of local communities.
- Managers have developed and promoted an inclusive culture. Centres offer inclusive and supportive learning environments which welcome diversity and promote equality.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Cumbria County Council (CCC) manages the Cumbria community learning and skills service within the Environment and Communities Directorate. The service also engages 13 subcontractors to provide programmes throughout the region. The service offered a range of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities, funded by the Skills Funding Agency, to 8,426 adults in 2014/15. Programmes are offered in 30 centres and 150 outreach venues including libraries, community centres, social services centres, children's centres, schools and academies. Programmes are available in 15 subject areas but are predominantly in community learning. The service offers training to five apprentices currently but is withdrawing from apprenticeship provision. The service started offering training to 11 learners with high needs during 2015/16. Approximately one sixth of courses lead to accredited qualifications.
- The unemployment rate across Cumbria is much lower than the rate for the north-west of England and the national average. The proportion of young people not in education or training is slightly lower than the north-west average. The proportion of adults holding level 2 qualifications or above is higher in Cumbria than in the north-west or nationally. The proportion of young people who achieve five or more GCSE grades A\* to C including English and mathematics is in line with the national rate.

## What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Review adult education provision across Cumbria to ensure that it fits with the revised strategic direction of the council in order to raise standards.
- Improve attendance by closer monitoring, recording and timely reporting of attendance issues to senior managers in order to trigger appropriate levels of learners' support and action.
- Revise the staff performance management process to ensure that tutors are more accountable for their learners' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that the outcomes of lesson observations of all tutors result in clear measurable targets for improvement in the quality of their teaching, inform staff development and enable tutors to share good practice.
- Ensure that learners on non-accredited courses are provided with clear and measurable targets that are then used by tutors to plan, track and evaluate learning.
- Improve the quality of feedback that tutors provide to their learners so that learners know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Ensure that senior managers have access to timely and reliable data on learners' destinations and progression to inform planning and underpin evaluation of the extent to which provision meets the needs of the local community.
- Increase the emphasis on improving learners' English and mathematical skills as an integrated aspect of the delivery of non-accredited programmes.
- Increase the priority given to the promotion of fundamental British values to all learners.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching and assessment are not consistently effective in promoting high-quality learning. For example, learners' targets are not specific enough to enable tutors to use assessments to monitor learners' progress. Attendance is low and actions taken by managers to improve attendance have not yet had any noticeable impact.
- Since the last inspection, leaders in the local authority recognised the need to change the service to better fit with the council and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) priorities including significantly more targeted work with unemployed and economically inactive adults across Cumbria. A commissioned review of the service recommended a complete restructure to ensure less duplication of provision and courses that better fit the local community priorities.
- A new senior management team is carefully negotiating with other local providers to reduce duplication and ensure good local access to highly targeted provision: for example, by offering free GCSE English and mathematics courses to adults across Cumbria who do not have a C grade or above at GCSE level and offering provision for learners with high needs. While the strategic direction is agreed, it has not yet fully translated into delivery within all the centres or with subcontractors. Staff are not yet fully aware of the revised vision of Cumbria's community learning and skills service and the part they need to play in ensuring that the revised objectives of the service are fully met.
- The performance management of staff requires improvement. The new senior management team has introduced a new appraisal process in line with the council's procedures. All managers and directly employed centre staff have recently completed their appraisals. However, the system does not include the 200 sessional tutors. Only a small number of tutors have had their teaching observed this academic year. Consequently, most tutors have not had the opportunity to discuss the quality of their teaching with a manager and do not have any targets on how to improve their practice. A new more rigorous observation system has been introduced recently but has not yet had sufficient coverage of staff to have any impact.
- The use of data to support improvements and provide accurate information for managers to measure progress against targets is weak. Managers recognise the need to improve their collection, evaluation and use of data to inform planning and improvements. A new data management system has very recently been purchased to better inform managers about performance and systematically monitor learners' progress, but is not yet implemented fully.
- Leaders have implemented a more rigorous approach to managing subcontractors, including improved commissioning arrangements, with specific success criteria, clear targets and very close monitoring by the contract manager through regular quality meetings. As a result, the culture is gradually moving from one of compliance to one of quality improvement, but the impact of the new process has not had any significant impact on securing greater levels of consistency in the quality of provision between different subcontractors.
- As at the last inspection, the service works successfully and effectively with a wide range of community partners and local groups to ensure that all learners across Cumbria have good local access to community provision. This results in the vast majority of learners having easy local access, particularly in very rural and isolated communities.
- A new English and mathematics strategy in targeted centres is attempting to increase the number of learners who have access to relevant courses that improve their English and mathematics skills. Currently, only a small number of learners are enrolled on GCSE English or mathematics or functional skills courses. Despite tutors benefiting from useful training to develop their own English and mathematics skills, they are not yet embedding the development of these skills with their learners.
- Managers place a strong emphasis on providing effective advice and guidance for their learners. They have recently set out a clear action plan to support good-quality advice and guidance across the service. Useful and clear pre-course information helps most learners make informed choices about their programmes and clearly sets out expectations. However, not all tutors have the expected end-of-course discussion with their learners to ascertain their next steps and ensure that they are fully aware of progression opportunities. As a result, destination data is incomplete and very few learners progress onto other courses offered by the service or go to other providers.

- Despite gaps in data, the self-assessment process is systematic and rigorous. Senior managers, supported by an external consultant, carefully review evidence to ensure that judgements are accurate and based on data available. As a result, the self-assessment report is evaluative and accurate. The quality improvement plan, which flows from the self-assessment report, systematically sets out the targets and timescales for improvement to raise the quality of the service, but the actions taken so far have not yet had sufficient impact on raising the quality of the service's provision.
- Staff ensure that centres offer inclusive and supportive learning environments. Many centres have colourful and positive displays showing people of different faiths and cultures. Tutors have all completed online training to reinforce their understanding of equality and diversity, and they have good access to useful online resources to support the promotion of equality and diversity in their sessions. Increasingly, tutors are more confidently exposing learners to a range of views. For example, in a life-drawing class, the tutor used transgender models to challenge learners' preconceived perceptions of gender identity and to enable them to explore their views in a safe learning environment.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Since the last inspection, managers have made significant improvements to governance and have recently established a community learning programme board to improve the scrutiny and challenge of the service.
  - The terms of reference of the community learning programme board are appropriate and membership is more representative with the experience and knowledge of members reflecting the vision of the service: 'strengthening and sustaining the people and communities of Cumbria through the power of learning'.
  - As the new board had only met once prior to the time of the inspection, evidence was not available to show how successful it might be in holding leaders and managers to account, particularly in ensuring that learners' experiences are positive and they achieve their individual learning goals.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Safeguarding practice is secure and in line with wider safeguarding practice across the council. The newly appointed, well-trained and experienced designated officer is revising the approach to safeguarding practice. All sessional staff working with children and vulnerable adults, or in centres where these groups are present, have enhanced clearance. Centre staff have reported very few safeguarding concerns. They dealt with a recent incident promptly and took appropriate actions.
  - The designated officer has well-established links with the local safeguarding board including opportunities for training. All directly employed staff are recruited and vetted suitably, and the central register is accurate and up to date. All staff have completed safeguarding training and all learners are provided with an induction on e-safety. In a small number of instances in subcontracted provision, a few tutors were not fully aware of the contact details of their local safeguarding designated officer. All learners spoken to by inspectors said they felt safe and would raise any concerns if needed.
  - While all staff have completed training on the 'Prevent' duty, and an action plan is in place, this has not yet translated into improving learners' awareness of the dangers posed by extremism and radicalisation. In spite of some examples of good practice, in art for example, not all tutors are consistently effective in identifying opportunities to promote British values through their curriculum and teaching. As a result, not all learners have a sufficiently well-developed understanding of what it is like to live in a diverse modern Britain.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- The service comprises adult skills courses, predominantly non-accredited provision including creative arts, English, mathematics, literacy and numeracy, construction, languages, catering, horticulture, fashion design and textiles, business administration and information technology (IT). A small number of accredited courses lead to qualifications such as GCSE English and mathematics. The service provides community and family learning across 150 outreach community venues throughout Cumbria. At the time of the inspection, 1,689 learners were enrolled on programmes leading to qualifications, and a total of 5,337 learners were enrolled on community learning programmes which did not lead to qualifications.
- Monitoring, tracking and recording learners' progress and achievement require improvement. Tutors do not use the information they have on learners' prior knowledge, skills and experience to inform the planning and delivery of their sessions.
- Tutors do not use the information they have on what their learners can already do, or the personal goals they want to achieve from the course, to set specific targets against which learners' progress can be monitored. Consequently, learners do not know how well they are doing.

- Tutors' feedback on the quality of learners' work is not sufficiently detailed to help learners understand what they need to do to improve and make rapid progress.
- Tutors do not place a sufficiently high emphasis on the development of learners' English and mathematics skills. Learners attending vocational and creative community courses have insufficient opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy skills in sessions. In contrast, learners attending family learning in local primary schools and children's centres quickly improve their English and mathematics skills and develop effective strategies to work with their children to help them do their homework.
- The service does not currently provide clear progression routes to encourage learners to progress onto higher-level courses. For instance, learners produce industry-standard, high-quality clothes and acquire a good working knowledge of the retail sector but do not achieve a formal accredited qualification. Advice and guidance to learners on potential progression opportunities are weak. Consequently, few learners progress into higher-level learning and too many continue to do the same course for several years.
- Tutors are supportive and help learners in building their confidence, self-belief and self-esteem to develop their vocational, study and creative skills. However, tutors do not always use the information they know about what their learners already know and can do to ensure that learners make good progress. Frequently, learners spend too much time repeating activities that do not extend their skills to more complex tasks.
- Vulnerable learners, such as those who have experienced domestic violence or have a mental health issue, are carefully and sensitively coached and helped by their tutors to develop the confidence to work in a new environment with a diverse range of other learners. Vulnerable learners improve their communication, social and work-related occupational skills. In outreach centres or in centre workshops, learners who have special educational needs or disability develop good skills in art, money management and independent living. Learners overcome significant barriers to learning through the supportive teaching, care and guidance provided by their tutors and learning support workers.
- Older learners, in a supported residential living environment, have developed very good levels of IT skills during community learning sessions. For example, they use a wide range of technology to search for holidays online, visit retail websites to buy and sell items, or use mobile phones to upload photographs for their family to see. The wider use of technology to support learning for learners in more rural locations is hampered by poor internet access in outreach centres.
- Tutors regularly check the quality of learners' practical skills and the products they make during sessions, and provide feedback on learners' progress and achievement of skills. For example, tutors use good modelling techniques to demonstrate making clothes: they coach each learner on the finer detail of measuring sections of sleeves, inserting zips or the exact cutting of cloth against grain. In creative writing, learners receive good and comprehensive feedback.
- The service embraces all learners and cultures, cultivating a wholly inclusive learning environment and positive atmosphere. Learners respect each other and their tutors, are courteous and kind, supporting their peers during group work and discussions. Tutors and learners provide a welcoming environment for new learners joining an existing group, who are then swiftly included in learning and activities during sessions. Tutors do not place sufficient priority on raising learners' awareness of fundamental British values during sessions to help learners understand what this term means to them as individuals and their lives.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** require improvement

- Attendance is consistently low and has not shown signs of improvement in the last three years. Attendance was affected by severe flooding in Cumbria during 2015/16 and managers acknowledge strategies to raise attendance have not yet been effective. Those learners who attend sessions regularly develop appropriate attitudes to learning. They arrive at class ready to learn and show high levels of mutual respect for teachers and their peers. Learners are positive about their experiences in lessons.
- Many learners develop new skills and knowledge and overcome significant personal challenges in their lives. For example, tutors help learners exiting the criminal justice system to learn new skills in art, building their confidence to return to public life and working with others.
- Most learners grow in confidence, self-belief and self-awareness. They take great pride in their work and value their improved skills. Many learners recognise how to apply their new skills at home, for example in building very effective learning relationships with their children when working with them to improve their English and mathematics skills.
- Learners appreciate the safe, inclusive learning environment promoted by the service. They feel safe and support each other well. Learners understand the arrangements in place to protect them.

- Learners with high needs are well supported in carefully chosen work placements where the high levels of supervision help them develop good skills in cooking, food hygiene and customer service, but too few of these lead to qualifications to motivate learners and formally recognise their improved skills and abilities. Learners take great pride in their achievements and their improved communication and attitudes are recognised and welcomed by their parents.

## **Outcomes for learners**

## **require improvement**

- Data on learners' progression is incomplete. In 2014/15 the destinations of too many learners was unknown. Of the known learner destinations, many learners do not progress to a higher-level course or gain employment, and a high proportion follow the same programme of study for several years and are not challenged to develop higher-level skills.
- In 2014/15, the proportion of learners studying on accredited courses and achieving their qualifications was in line with the national rate. The proportion of current learners who remain on their course is high and an improvement when compared with last year. Most learners are making at least the progress expected of them. The small number of learners with high needs and those who have declared a special educational need or disability are well supported and make good progress.
- The few learners on accredited English and mathematics courses make good progress. Learners on non-accredited courses have insufficient opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Mathematics and English skills are not well integrated or promoted in many programmes.
- The service's data for learners following non-accredited programmes shows consistently high achievement rates but this data is not reliable. The process to assess learners' achievements is not applied consistently. For example, the success criteria that a learner needs to achieve 80% of the learning aims is not adhered to or understood by all tutors.
- Learners mainly produce work that is of the expected standard. Learners enjoy their courses, are positive about their experiences and how they apply their learning at home, for example in helping their children with homework. Learners on creative writing courses make excellent progress and achieve their aspirations to write high-quality poetry and short prose. They have recently released their third collection of published poems for sale, with all proceeds allocated to the learning centre.

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Local authority
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	8,426
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Amanda Towers
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.cumbriaadulteducation.org">www.cumbriaadulteducation.org</a>

### Provider information at the time of the inspection

<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	1	5,723	0	650	0	75	0	3
<b>Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	1	0	3	3	0	1		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	NA		NA		NA			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	NA							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lakes College West Cumbria</li> <li>■ West Cumbria Tradeshall</li> <li>■ Trinity (Adult Education Carlisle)</li> <li>■ Millom AEC</li> <li>■ West Lakes Academy AEC</li> <li>■ Whitehaven AEC</li> <li>■ Appleby Heritage Centre</li> <li>■ Barrow &amp; District Disability Association (BDDA)</li> <li>■ Brewery Arts Centre</li> <li>■ Dallam</li> </ul>							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Bob Busby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Pamela Blackman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maureen Deary	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Clayton	Ofsted Inspector
Dilys Taylor	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the senior manager learning and skills, 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.



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk)



Employer View is a new website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too.

To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2016

