

West Sussex County Council

Second re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second follow up re-inspection monitoring visit to West Sussex County Council (WSCC) following publication of the inspection report on 16 December 2015 which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Themes

Ensure that the appropriate safeguarding checks are made and recorded for all teachers, volunteers and learning support assistants needing them. Provide all staff with appropriate safeguarding training including on the 'Prevent' duty. **Reasonable progress**

A closer relationship between WSCC's senior managers and Aspire, the main subcontractor, since the previous monitoring visit has resulted in better communication of safeguarding concerns. Aspire's current designated safeguarding manager has been in place since January 2016 and sits on the local adult safeguarding board and the council's training group. This has raised the profile of safeguarding within the organisation and enabled a greater understanding of safeguarding procedures by managers and tutors. WSCC senior leaders and managers have improved the oversight of safeguarding by more rigorous monitoring of incidents and concerns through the Aspire board and WSCC contract meetings. These arrangements include checking the adherence to safeguarding procedures of Albion in the Community, a subcontractor of Aspire. Staff refer issues of concern to WSCC and the local adult safeguarding board. Guidelines on the roles which need to be checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) are clear. Every member of staff involved in regulated activity has had a DBS check. All new recruits are checked at the point of recruitment and do not teach until all checks are clear.

'Prevent' duty training has been made available to Aspire staff and although running in the council for the past three years, not all Aspire staff have undertaken training in the 'Prevent' duty; plans are in place to ensure this takes place shortly.

Aspire uses online training as part of the induction of new staff. This includes two units on the 'Prevent duty' and health and safety. Both of these units are required to be completed prior to the tutor taking a class. At the time of the visit the vast majority of staff had completed the training.

Aspire's staff collect a wide range of information about prospective learners at the point of enrolment and through assessment of their starting points. Class profiles include helpful information about learners' assessment results and their barriers to learning, however not all the information collected is routinely shared with tutors to enable them to acknowledge and record any changes in learners' circumstances.

Ensure that comprehensive records of safeguarding incidents, including actions and outcomes, are maintained, scrutinised by senior managers and escalated to relevant authorities where appropriate.

Reasonable progress

Lines of accountability for the recording and monitoring of safeguarding incidents are now well established. The WSCC senior safeguarding manager has implemented clear processes for dealing with incidents and, where appropriate, referring them to the WSCC safeguarding board. Aspire has integrated these processes fully into their own safeguarding arrangements.

The Aspire safeguarding manager has clear roles and responsibilities and maintains a comprehensive record of all incidents. The vast majority of the records show sufficient detail with the manager monitoring progress and carefully scrutinising outcomes. Aspire's safeguarding manager attends the WSCC safeguarding board meetings where members discuss and review individual incidents. Links with the local multi-agency safeguarding hub are well established and very effective. Senior members of the hub refer cases quickly to support agencies. In a small minority of incidents, records do not indicate fully when the cases have been resolved. Senior managers do not formally collect feedback from external referral agencies to inform future training and development needs.

WSCC senior managers have introduced recently a county-wide safeguarding support framework that identifies levels of need and relevant interventions. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this framework.

Senior WSCC and Aspire managers should ensure that thorough risk assessments of community venues are carried out and that they provide a safe environment for learners.

Reasonable progress

WSCC, in partnership with Aspire, has improved the procedures for ensuring venues are safe and accessible for learners, including vulnerable learners. Full risk assessments on all premises used for adult and community learning and young learners have been completed. The records are much improved since the previous monitoring visit and give a clearer picture of the issues across the sites and their compliance with the council's expectations. Grades are awarded against set criteria to ensure further clarity on the status of the venue. Senior leaders and managers are clear about the planned improvements needed at each site, but the risk assessments do not always result in clearly recorded action plans to enable better monitoring of the progress of improvements.

Ensure a more thorough monitoring of contracts and performance, and analyse data more incisively, to measure the impact of actions being

Reasonable progress

taken to improve the provision.

WSSCC trustees, governors and managers have taken greater responsibility for the provision of adult learning since the previous monitoring visit. Relationships between WSSCC and Aspire managers have greatly improved and the culture of WSSCC is now strongly focused on its strategic aim to reach out to the community and help people to achieve. Managers focus clearly on key performance indicators and maintain a constant overview of performance through a variety of well-documented formal and informal meetings. The indicators show that managers have made at least reasonable progress in most aspects of provision. Trustees, managers and staff have a clear understanding of the progress made to date and what still needs to be done.

The effective use and analysis of data by trustees, managers and staff are now well established. They use data well to track learners' progress and identify and plan further improvement. However, the process for collecting data is clumsy and time consuming. Plans are well advanced to implement a more effective process.

Managers use self-assessment and improvement plans well to set targets to address weaknesses and priorities identified at the previous inspection and monitoring visit. Improvement targets are realistic and challenging but at the time of this visit it was too early to judge the full impact on performance, particularly learners' achievement of English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualifications.

Improve learners' achievements in English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Insufficient progress

Aspire's data shows that GCSE English retention rates have improved from 72% last year to 81% and current achievement rates are slightly above learners' achievements for last year.

GCSE mathematics results show a slight drop in retention rates this year, although learners' achievements have improved to 79%.

Results for the achievement of functional skills English and mathematics full qualifications at the time of the visit were low. However, retention rates are broadly in line with the previous year and are good. Aspire's data at the time of the monitoring visit was incomplete and not all of the learners' achievement results had been received.

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses had very high retention rates this year but only about two thirds of learners achieved their qualification. There is an expectation that this could rise to 70%, when further results are received. However this is still too low.

For the small number of learners aged 16 to 18, achievement rates have been low this year. Only nine learners were on programme; two of these withdrew early and only two achieved their qualification.

Aspire managers have oversight of learners who withdraw from classes, their learning support needs, success and progression to further learning or work. Informal action has been taken to meet the immediate needs of those learners requiring additional support, however managers have yet to analyse the data to see whether these actions have resulted in improved achievement rates. A more formalised approach is planned for the forthcoming academic year. Further work is planned to embed English, mathematics and ESOL skills development into vocational and leisure learning courses. It is too early at this time to measure the impact

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