

# West Sussex County Council

Final re-inspection monitoring visit report

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) continues to subcontract adult learning to Aspire. This is the third and final follow-up re-inspection monitoring visit to 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**

WSCC and Aspire managers have maintained a constant and relentless activity to improve safeguarding arrangements, including consolidating awareness of 'Prevent' among staff and learners. Senior managers have made good progress in many aspects, for example in providing staff training in 'Prevent' and in increasing learners' awareness of extremism and radicalisation. The Aspire safeguarding manager has undertaken safeguarding enquiry officer training. This, alongside the close liaison with the WSCC adult safeguarding team, ensures that safeguarding continues to be a high priority and well coordinated across the county and boroughs.

The oversight of safeguarding continues to be effective. Managers rigorously monitor incidents and concerns through the Aspire board and WSCC contract meetings. WSCC managers ensure that every member of staff involved in regulated activity, including new recruits, has had a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

All teaching staff have undertaken training which covers the key requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. The large majority of staff have also received further training to help them raise learners' awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation and the importance of tolerance as part of a broader understanding of British values. WSCC managers have instructed Aspire to complete this training for all teaching staff by the end of February 2017.

WSCC senior managers have a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment action plan which includes reference to Aspire and the requirement for their staff to be appropriately trained. However, it does not include a risk assessment action plan which specifically covers the community learning programmes or reflects the different risks associated with different areas of the county.

Managers and tutors ensure that learners are aware of how to keep themselves safe while online, and tutors supervise access to the internet when it forms part of classroom learning activities. Staff have produced clear guidelines which state the

learners' responsibilities for ensuring that they do not access inappropriate social media and websites. These guidelines are published on noticeboards in classrooms. Learners interviewed during the visit had a good understanding of their responsibilities.

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

**Significant progress**

Managers have made significant progress in improving the process for identifying and recording safeguarding issues. Staff ensure that records are clear and describe when actions have been taken and completed. Staff make appropriate reference to personal details to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. Incidents are now recorded in sufficient detail and records confirm that appropriate action was taken. Managers' relationships with county council safeguarding teams and external support and referral agencies continue to be strong and very effective.

Aspire managers also maintain a central record of formal complaints which has clear detail on the actions taken. WSCC managers review these complaints records during frequent audits to identify any broad issues or concerns across sites. Teaching staff keep records of lower-level comments, complaints and concerns across sites, but managers do not keep a central record. As a result, managers are unable to monitor any trends in learners' concerns.

**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.**

**Significant progress**

WSCC managers, working in close partnership with the Aspire team, have ensured that all venues have been risk-assessed and that they are safe and accessible for learners. As a result of this work, 25 venues are no longer used and a further 34 venues have clear action plans which identify improvements that are required. These plans are well documented and venues are appropriately prioritised. Senior managers track and monitor progress in making the necessary improvements and manage any interim risks well.

Venues visited by inspectors were well managed and it was apparent that managers had improved security for access to sites and buildings. On one site, managers had made substantial changes and moved classes to different buildings to provide a more secure environment. At one centre, access for learners with wheelchairs and those with restricted mobility was difficult. Managers had provided learners with personal alarms to attract support to open heavy doors. Plans were well advanced to remedy deficiencies. However, it was too early to verify the full impact of implementing these plans.

**Ensure thorough monitoring of contracts and performance, and analyse data more incisively, to measure the impact of actions being taken to improve the provision.**

**Significant progress**

WSCC and Aspire senior managers have continued to work relentlessly to develop further the strong working relationships and drive improvement. WSCC continues to attend Aspire's board of trustees meetings. A member of the board oversees safeguarding and ensures that it remains a high priority. The county council economic and community engagement teams provide WSCC and Aspire senior managers with an excellent range of support. Managers responded quickly to requests from the Home Office to provide English for speakers of other languages classes for refugees. Tutors are delivering classes successfully in Crawley.

The management and oversight of contract performance is far more rigorous and thorough. Performance targets are clear and provide an accurate picture of the provision across all sites in the county. WSCC managers look in depth at participation and achievement on all courses at contract management meetings and ensure that actions to improve areas of concern are monitored regularly. While the management information from Aspire is clear and extremely useful, work is progressing well on converting to a better and more responsive system to enable data to be analysed more effectively.

WSCC and Aspire staff share observations of teaching and learning and provide training and support where appropriate. Plans are in place to ensure that all teaching staff are observed over the next few months. Inspectors observed learning sessions in a number of venues during the visit and observed well-planned sessions with a good range of activities. Sessions included reinforcement of British values and the impact of extremism and radicalisation, using events such as Remembrance Day. Learners were punctual and enjoying the sessions.

WSCC managers recognise that they need to urgently review the provision for the small number of 16- to 18-year-old learners to ensure that it meets funding body requirements and learners' needs. WSCC managers have suspended enrolments until this review has been completed.

Managers continue to use self-assessment and improvement plans effectively to set challenging targets to address weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and monitoring visits. Improvements had been made to attendance, punctuality and achievements in some areas, although managers recognise that improvements in English and mathematics require further work.

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

**Reasonable progress**

Aspire has made reasonable progress in improving achievements in some areas since the previous visit. Retention for 2015/16 in English and mathematics at GCSE level

improved and was good. However, WSCC and Aspire managers recognise the need to improve further the proportion of learners achieving A\* to C grades in English and mathematics.

Learners' achievements of full functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics continue to improve and are now high. Achievements of the small number of learners aged 16–18 have improved significantly and are high.

Learners' ESOL achievements remain at a similar level to 2014/15, but are still too low. Changes in delivery patterns and funding have contributed to achievements remaining at around 70%. WSCC and Aspire managers are fully aware of the areas that require improvement and have implemented robust plans to improve the provision. However, it is too early to measure the full impact of these actions.

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