

North Yorkshire County Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

6–9 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too many adult learners leave their courses early and do not complete their qualifications.
- The attendance of adult learners on courses that lead to qualifications is poor with the result that they do not make good progress.
- Too few apprentices achieve their qualifications within planned timescales.
- Leaders and managers do not have access to timely data to identify areas for improvement and take swift action to tackle them.
- Managers do not manage the performance of many part-time teachers rigorously enough, with the result that the pace of improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too slow.
- Elected members and managers have too optimistic a view of the quality of the provision; they have not recognised and tackled the decline in the proportion of adults achieving their qualifications.
- Managers do not set teachers and assessors clear and specific actions to improve their practice following observations of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers and assessors set insufficiently specific and challenging targets to enable learners and apprentices to make good progress.
- Teachers and assessors do not raise learners' and apprentices' awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism sufficiently.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have successfully shifted the service towards meeting the priorities of employers and the needs of the most vulnerable adults within the county.
- Learners on community learning courses develop new skills, improve their health and progress on to accredited courses.
- Increasing numbers of learners with high needs develop good employability skills through well-planned internships and work experience.

Full report

Information about the provider

- North Yorkshire County Council's Adult Learning and Skills Service (ALSS) is part of the council's children and young people's directorate. ALSS operates across the seven district council areas within the county. These seven areas combine into three larger geographic units for the purposes of management and the delivery of education and training.
- North Yorkshire covers the largest geographical area of any county in England. Although the county has a lower rate of unemployment compared to the rest of the country, it is characterised by contrasting forms of deprivation, ranging from the lack of access to services in rural areas to underemployment in coastal towns such as Scarborough and Whitby.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Staff should place adult learners on courses at the right level and provide them with sufficient additional support to ensure that they complete their qualifications.
- Managers need to receive more timely information on the attendance of learners so that they can intervene more swiftly to identify and address the reasons for non-attendance.
- Managers and assessors need to improve the monitoring of apprentices' progress so they can identify more quickly those apprentices who are not making the expected progress, and put in place the appropriate support to enable them to achieve within their planned timescales.
- Directors and elected members should ensure that they provide effective oversight of the service's performance by equipping managers with the management information systems, and relevant training in their use, to produce timely and accurate data.
- Managers should carry out the same standard of performance management for their part-time teaching staff as they do for full-time staff to ensure that the quality of provision in all areas of the service's delivery is improved.
- Leaders and managers should be more critical and evaluative through their self-assessment processes so that they can identify and act on all areas for improvement.
- Managers should set and monitor the implementation of specific, timed and measurable improvement actions following observations of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers and assessors need to set specific and challenging targets for learners and apprentices based on their individual starting points to enable them to make good progress towards the completion of their qualifications.
- Teachers and assessors should reinforce the risks of radicalisation and extremism with their learners and apprentices at induction and through learning activities and reviews.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not been successful in tackling a number of the key areas for improvement since the last inspection. As a result, there has been a decline in the achievement of adult learners on qualification courses, and the pace of improvement in the proportion of apprentices completing their qualifications within planned timescales has been too slow.
- Leaders and managers do not have ready access to timely data to enable them to have a sufficient understanding of emerging areas for improvement and to take actions to address them quickly. Although managers have recognised this as an issue, and have updated their management information systems, it is still too early to see a positive impact.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of staff are not sufficiently rigorous and managers do not apply them consistently to all staff in the service. The performance management of full-time staff is effective, with the quick resolution of underperformance and the provision of good opportunities for staff to develop their skills through training and support. However, the supervision and appraisal of the large number of part-time teachers and assessors are less thorough, resulting in many of them not improving the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment.
- Although managers identify accurately the training and support needs of tutors and assessors through observations, they do not follow these up effectively enough by setting specific development plans with clear timescales to support teachers and assessors to improve their practice.
- Leaders' and managers' evaluation of the quality of the provision is too positive. The most recent self-assessment report was overly descriptive and lacked any evaluation of the reasons for the decline in the achievement of the large number of adults on courses that lead to qualifications. As a result, managers have been slow to address issues such as poor retention and attendance on these courses.
- Leaders and managers have successfully transformed ALSS from being a universal service delivering courses to predominantly affluent learners to one with a clear strategic focus on providing learning for the most vulnerable members of the community. Courses provided by ALSS help to reduce social isolation in sparsely populated rural areas, and effective partnership working with health services and voluntary groups in coastal towns target courses at the homeless and those with mental health issues.
- Managers have developed a curriculum for adults and apprentices that is highly responsive to the needs of local employers, particularly the many small- and medium-sized enterprises in the county. After close consultation with the local enterprise partnership and Jobcentre Plus, ALSS runs courses in bookkeeping, digital skills and child development that provide learners with the relevant skills to increase their chances of employment and enhance their career prospects once in work.
- Leaders and managers have been very effective in responding to the policy requirement to develop non-residential provision for learners with high needs. In a short space of time, they have established four centres across the county to offer each learner with high

needs a highly specific programme that supports the development of personal and independent living skills. An increasing number of learners benefit from internships and work placements at garden centres, schools and local hospitals.

- The management of subcontractors is good. Managers are effective in identifying and procuring specialist organisations who extend the service's capacity to respond to the needs of learners, such as community arts provision for learners with mental health issues. Managers deal with underperforming subcontractors quickly and link contract renewal to the achievement of positive outcomes for learners.

The governance of the provider

- Corporate directors and elected members do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of the provision because they do not receive timely data from service managers. As a result, they have not held managers to account effectively enough for the decline in the service's performance since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders recognise that the current governance arrangements do not provide sufficient challenge to managers of the service. They have well-considered plans to strengthen their capacity to hold managers to account for their actions through the creation of a new governance board, but this is yet to be implemented.
- Senior leaders have been successful in setting a clear strategic direction for the service to focus its resources on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents of the county, and in ensuring that managers implement this policy effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff. The designated safeguarding officer has up-to-date records of all safeguarding incidents, and disseminates effectively the lessons learned from these incidents to other members of staff. Staff and learners know how to report concerns. All staff have completed an appropriate level of training in safeguarding for their roles in the service. As a result, learners and apprentices feel safe.
- Leaders and managers have carried out a thorough risk assessment to support the implementation of a 'Prevent' duty action plan. However, they do not check whether learners and apprentices understand the information they receive on the risks of radicalisation and extremism at induction and in classes. As a result, learners' and apprentices' awareness of these risks is very basic.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the different types of provision. Although there are examples of well-planned and delivered learning activities, particularly in community learning and for learners with high needs, too often on accredited adult learning programmes and apprenticeships, teaching and assessment do not cater well enough for the different needs, abilities and starting points

of learners.

- For the majority of adults following accredited qualifications and apprenticeships, teachers and assessors set insufficiently specific or challenging targets to enable learners and apprentices to make good progress. The majority of targets are superficial, rarely covering more than the basic qualification criteria. Teachers and assessors do not focus enough on personal learning or development goals when setting targets. As a result, learners and apprentices have insufficient knowledge of the progress that they are making.
- Assessors do not identify well enough the skills that apprentices already have when they start their programmes. As a result, they fail to plan properly how to develop their apprentices' skills further.
- Assessors do not monitor rigorously enough the progress that apprentices make. They concentrate on ensuring that their apprentices meet the minimum standards of the qualification rather than on pushing them to work towards more challenging goals.
- Teachers' and assessors' written feedback on learners' and apprentices' work does not provide them with enough information about what they have done well or precise guidance about how they can improve their work further.
- Teachers and assessors pay insufficient attention to identifying spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in learners' and apprentices' work or in showing them how to make corrections. As a result, learners and apprentices repeat the same mistakes throughout their qualifications.
- Teachers know their adult learners well. They create welcoming environments for learners where they feel safe and able to learn. For example, the highly responsive provision for recently arrived refugee families from Syria helps learners to integrate quickly into the local community by teaching them the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening in English.
- Managers and teachers have improved successfully the rigour of the procedures for recognising and recording the progress that learners make on the large community learning programme. They use these well to help learners to understand the progress that they make in the development of specific skills, such as learning a language or a new craft technique, as well as the development of personal skills, such as confidence and resilience. However, tracking of learners' progress on the smaller programme of courses leading to qualifications is not rigorous enough.
- Teachers plan programmes for learners with high needs skilfully. They ensure that learners follow a highly specific programme based on a thorough identification of their starting points and the destinations that they want to achieve. Learners make very good progress in acquiring the necessary skills to live more independently or to enter supported employment.
- Teachers provide adult learners with the information they need about how to stay safe in their learning. Learners know how and to whom they report any safeguarding concerns.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- The attendance of adult learners taking qualifications is low. Poor attendance results in these adults not acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their qualifications.
- Apprentices do not receive sufficient guidance on the requirements of their qualifications, particularly the demands of English and mathematics qualifications. Apprentices are not sufficiently aware of their potential next steps as they move towards the completion of their qualifications. As a result, too few apprentices progress to a higher-level qualification.
- Adult learners and apprentices do not recognise the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Staff are not explicit enough in raising this issue with learners and apprentices. For example, the learner handbook makes no mention of the potential dangers of exposure to extremist websites in its section on how to stay safe online.
- The majority of adult learners and apprentices are not aware of the relevance of British values to their work and their lives, despite the materials they receive at induction and through information displays in classrooms.
- Although the procedures for identifying and allocating additional learning support to learners are thorough and effective, managers do not know what impact this has as they do not request or receive any data on the progress these learners make.
- Apprentices and adult learners on community learning courses are confident and motivated to learn. They produce work to a good standard, of which they are proud.
- The majority of adult learners who attend courses develop positive attitudes towards learning. They are respectful of other learners' points of view and contributions to class discussions.
- Adults on community learning courses develop good English and mathematical skills through practical exercises such as calculating the amount of cloth needed to make dolls in a craft class and converting times between an analogue and digital clock.
- Highly-qualified and experienced advisers deliver a comprehensive programme of information, advice and guidance to adult learners before, during and at the end of their courses. As a result, many learners on community learning courses progress to take further qualifications.
- Adults on vocational courses, such as those for teaching and learning assistants, develop a good understanding of how to support children and parents from diverse cultures and nationalities.
- Apprentices develop good work-related skills in their workplaces, becoming more effective at working with colleagues and dealing with customers. An increasing number of learners with high needs experience the world of work through internships. The very small number of 16- to 19-year-old learners benefit from good quality work experience in the heritage industries.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of adult learners achieving their qualifications has declined since the last inspection, taking the achievement rate to well below that of similar providers. The proportion of adult learners completing their courses in the current year has declined further. The number of adults leaving their courses early is particularly high on functional skills courses, in health and social care, information and communication technology (ICT), and education and training.
- Managers do not track the destinations of their learners sufficiently well. They rely too heavily on self-reporting by learners when they finish courses, and from a brief period of follow-up phone calls after learners have left. As a result, this data does not provide managers with any useful information with which to evaluate the impact of courses on their learners' destinations.
- Managers do not collect specific information on the progress of the some of their most vulnerable learners, such as children looked after and care leavers. However, there are no persistent gaps in attainment between the main groups of learners.
- Most adults on non-accredited community learning courses complete and achieve their learning objectives across all subject areas. They improve their health and sense of well-being, they increase their participation in voluntary activities, and they improve specific skills, such as the ability to speak another language.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their overall qualification has increased significantly over the past two years, across all age groups and at all levels, and was well above the rate for similar providers in 2015/16. However, the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications within their planned timescales is too low, despite some significant improvements from a very low base over the past two years. Apprentices on child development and education and training apprenticeships make particularly slow progress towards the completion of their qualifications.
- Adults make good progress from community learning courses, with many of them moving on to take a qualification with ALSS.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- There are 1,941 learners on short non-accredited community learning programmes, and 814 learners on accredited part-time adult education and training programmes. A small number of learners are in receipt of adult loans. Courses range from level 1 to level 3. The largest subject areas are English and mathematics, ICT, English for speakers of other languages, and accounting and finance.
- Attendance in too many lessons is low, leading to poor progress for those who are frequently absent. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics functional skills classes.
- Teachers' tracking of learners' progress on courses that lead to qualifications is insufficiently rigorous. Teachers do not use individual learning plans routinely to monitor the progress of learners on their courses, so they do not identify those learners who need

additional support to prevent them from falling behind in their studies. As a result, too many adult learners leave their programmes early or do not achieve their qualifications.

- In too many English and mathematics lessons, teachers use approaches that do not capture sufficiently the interest of most learners, leading to them losing their motivation and becoming unwilling to continue to attend. In these lessons, learners spend too much time completing worksheets that fail to interest them.
- Teachers' written feedback is often too general. It does not provide information on the specific steps that learners need to take to improve, and so does not help learners to make good progress.
- Most teachers provide a good level of verbal feedback in lessons that encourages learners to develop their work further. Teachers accurately identify errors in learners' work and suggest ways to avoid repeating them.
- Teachers of non-accredited courses set challenging but realistic targets that are specific to each individual learner and help them to develop personal and technical skills. For example, in craft classes for learners with mental health issues, tutors focus on improving learners' concentration levels as well as their understanding of craft techniques.
- Teachers closely and accurately monitor and record the progress that learners on the community learning programme make towards achieving their targets and goals. This helps learners to understand the progress that they are making in improving their skills.
- Leaders and managers have developed productive partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and community organisations to plan a range of programmes to help the most disadvantaged adults to participate in learning. Managers work well with employers to develop adult learning courses aligned with local needs. For example, foreign national jockeys and stable staff from the local horse racing community attend English classes to improve their communication skills in the workplace.
- Learners receive effective information, advice and guidance while they are on courses. Guidance from learning and skills advisers enables learners to make informed decisions about their next steps; this includes advice about adult loans and further qualifications.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- There are 220 apprentices currently on intermediate- and advanced-level programmes, with the great majority being adult apprentices. Subjects include business administration, team leading, management, accounting and supporting teaching and learning.
- Too many assessors do not take into account apprentices' existing skills at the start of their qualifications. Assessors set identical training and assessment programmes for all apprentices, irrespective of their different starting points. As a result, most apprentices do not make the progress expected of them within the planned timescales.
- Assessors do not set apprentices sufficiently clear or challenging targets to ensure that they develop their skills and extend their knowledge beyond the minimum levels required by the qualification. Consequently, the most-able apprentices do not get the opportunity to develop their skills to a higher level.
- Managers and assessors do not have sufficient information on the skills and knowledge that apprentices develop in off-the-job training. As a result, they are not in a position to

assess accurately the progress that apprentices make towards the completion of their qualifications, or to provide additional support if they fall behind.

- Assessors' written feedback lacks sufficient detail to enable apprentices to understand what they have done well and what they still need to improve. Too often, assessors resort to bland comments such as 'good' or 'excellent' without an explanation as to why and how the work could be improved further.
- Assessors do not routinely identify and correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. They do not provide apprentices with sufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills, so apprentices repeat many of the same mistakes at the end of their qualification as they made at the beginning.
- Assessors give apprentices effective verbal feedback that identifies what they have done well. For example, an assessor observing child development apprentices leading storytelling sessions gave prompt positive feedback that reinforced apprentices' confidence in their skills.
- Apprentices develop a good range of industry-specific terminology that they use accurately and confidently in their jobs. For example, accountancy apprentices are able to explain the complexities of tax returns to clients.
- Managers have good links with a wide range of employers across the county that they use successfully to develop apprenticeship programmes to meet regional employment priorities. Managers identify additional units at the request of employers, such as in dealing in corporation tax for accountancy firms.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50229
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,070
Principal/CEO	Marc Mason
Telephone number	08458 727 374
Website	www.northyorks.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	48	890	-	332	-	71	-	15
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	7	78	9	125	-	1		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	48							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Yorkshire Coast Enterprise NYBEP Rural Arts Groundworks Activ8 Disability Action Yorkshire							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the team leader, quality and curriculum, 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.

Inspection team

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