

Rotherham Borough Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

20–23 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Leaders and managers have not rectified areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. There has been a significant decline in the standards of teaching and learning and in learners' outcomes.
- Managers do not ensure that they put effective quality improvement plans in place quickly enough. Consequently, the progress that they make in improving courses is too slow.
- Elected council members, until recently, have not received clear information from managers about the performance of the adult learning service. This means that they were not able to challenge managers effectively or hold them to account for the decline in standards.
- Managers do not review the quality of subcontracted provision with sufficient rigour.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that learners receive good-quality advice and guidance which match their abilities and future aspirations. As a result, too many learners do not complete their courses.
- The large majority of learners make slow progress, and the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications is low. Different groups of learners do not achieve as well as each other.
- Too many learners do not improve their mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.
- The arrangements for monitoring and improving tutors' performance and the quality of courses are ineffective. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate.
- Tutors do not provide enough challenge in sessions to match learners' abilities, and so learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Attendance in lessons is too low.
- Too many tutors do not yet have the confidence to ensure that learners have a good understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

The provider has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, managers and staff promote an ethos of tolerance and mutual respect. Learners behave well in sessions.
- Learners who stay on their courses enjoy learning and are enthusiastic about their experiences.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's adult community learning service operates throughout the borough and is delivered directly by the service and by a number of subcontractors. Approximately a quarter of the learners are on courses leading to qualifications, including in functional skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The remainder are on a range of non-accredited courses, including family learning courses.
- Rotherham has a high level of unemployment, and the number of young people who are not in education, training or employment is higher than the regional and national averages. Significant areas of employment include manufacturing, retail, health and social care and education. Average pay is low for both full-time and part-time employees. Almost all businesses in the area have fewer than 50 employees.
- The proportion of adults in Rotherham with no qualifications is higher than the national average. The proportion of adults who have qualifications at level 2 is below average and the proportion who have qualifications at levels 3 and 4 is very low. However, the percentage of school leavers who gain at least five A* to C grades at GCSE has been higher than the national average for several years.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Identify accurately and address quickly areas of underperformance within the service.
- Increase the accuracy of reports about the service's performance, so that directors and elected members are better able to support, challenge and hold senior leaders to account for the quality of the provision.
- Increase the reliability and rigour of reviews of subcontracted provision.
- Provide high-quality advice and guidance to learners and potential learners to ensure that they enrol on courses that match their starting points and future aspirations.
- Ensure that learners make the progress of which they are capable by:
 - monitoring the progress of learners and groups of learners so that additional support can be provided when needed to help all to make rapid progress
 - providing tutors with the qualifications and skills that they need to support learners to improve their English, mathematics and ICT skills
 - providing immediate support to help tutors to improve the quality of their teaching and provide appropriately challenging lessons that enable learners to make the progress of which they are capable
 - providing feedback that informs learners about what they need to do to improve
 - taking rapid action to increase attendance in sessions.
- Ensure that tutors are confident in discussing the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism with learners, so that learners know how to keep themselves safe from

these risks.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Senior leaders and managers have presided over a significant decline in learners' outcomes and the standard of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have not yet been rectified. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now inadequate, and the proportion of learners who stay to the end of their course and achieve a qualification is low.
- Until very recently, managers did not take decisive enough action to tackle weaknesses on courses. The new senior leadership team recognises that quality improvement strategies, including self-assessment, were not rigorous enough and did not lead to rapid improvement, particularly in improving learners' achievement. They have taken recent actions to improve these arrangements, including restructuring the management team, reviewing the design of programmes and reviewing observations of lessons to ensure that tutors receive support to improve their practice. It is too early to evaluate if these actions are making a positive impact on learners' achievement and reducing the proportion of learners who leave their course early.
- Managers' arrangements to monitor and improve the performance of individual tutors and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment overall are ineffective. Records of lesson observations often show insufficient attention to learning, and managers' evaluations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are overoptimistic. Managers do not routinely use appropriate evidence to evaluate the performance of tutors. Due to a shortage of staff, only a small proportion of lesson observations have taken place this year. Consequently, the majority of tutors do not receive the support and development they need to improve their practice.
- Managers do not review carefully enough the quality of the targets that tutors set for each learner, based on their starting points, to ensure that learners make the progress that they should on non-accredited courses. Managers recognise that this is a weakness and have recently provided training for tutors to improve their ability to set robust targets. No impact is yet discernible.
- Leaders' and managers' arrangements to self-assess the quality of courses are not rigorous and, consequently, the judgements that they make are inaccurate. Managers have recently reviewed the self-assessment process, and this had led to the accurate identification of a few key weaknesses. However, managers fail to identify other key weaknesses, including the poor quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers do not ensure that they put effective quality improvement plans in place quickly enough. As a result, the progress that they make in improving courses is too slow. The targets that managers set in their quality improvement plan are imprecise, and managers do not assess the impact of their actions on the improvements that need to be made.
- The adult learning strategy is insufficiently specific about how the service will adapt and respond to changes in government funding or to most local authority priorities. For example, too many courses do not prepare learners for work. Arrangements to identify local employers' skills needs are weak, and employers do not influence the curriculum offer to support learners' progression into employment.

- Leaders and managers do not ensure that good-quality advice and guidance are available to enable learners to choose the most appropriate programme to match their abilities and career aspirations. For example, some learners were advised to enrol on functional skills courses even though their assessments had indicated that ESOL courses were more appropriate. This contributed to a high proportion of learners leaving their courses early in 2015/16 and in the current year.
- Managers' reviews of the quality of courses in the subcontracted provision are insufficiently rigorous. While managers review the progress of learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment during their visits to these providers, they do not agree clear targets with timescales in which the subcontractors must make improvements, nor do they review progress at subsequent meetings.
- Leaders, managers and staff strongly promote a culture of mutual respect which prepares learners well for life in modern Britain.
- The service contributes well to the council's strategy to provide support to disadvantaged families in the borough through its family learning initiatives. For example, parents benefit from a course on 'keeping children safe'. Parents of primary school children learn how to 'bring books to life', which helps their children to develop their reading skills.

The governance of the provider

- Until recently, managers have not given elected council members clear information about the performance of the adult learning service. This means that council members have been unable to challenge managers or hold them to account for the decline in standards in teaching, learning and assessment, and in learners' outcomes.
- Elected council members and directors have recently started to monitor the performance of the adult learning service through regular monthly performance board meetings where they review learners' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, including in subcontracted provision.
- Managers carry out appropriate staff recruitment checks. Through mandatory training, staff know how to ensure and maintain safe working practices and how to report any concerns about learners' safety.
- Managers ensure that the learning environments are safe for learners by carrying out appropriate risk assessments of premises and by checking that they have the appropriate health and safety and safeguarding policies in place.
- Learners know how to keep themselves safe, including when working online. They are aware of the requirements to work safely, both in the council venues and at subcontractors' premises.
- Learners do not have a good understanding of the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Although all staff have had training on the 'Prevent' duty, this has not yet had sufficient impact on learners' understanding. Too many staff lack the requisite confidence to discuss and explore the subject with learners.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Tutors do not use the information from assessments of learners' starting points to plan learning that matches learners' abilities. For example, in the large majority of functional skills mathematics classes, which contain learners of many different abilities, tutors do not provide enough activities to match learners' skills needs or challenge the most able learners. As a result, the majority of learners make very limited progress.
- Tutors do not set specific enough targets for learners, and tutors' reviews of targets do not enable learners to identify what they need to do to improve. Learners on courses which do not lead to qualifications often have no specific targets. This hinders their progress and means that too many learners do not make rapid or sufficient progress. A minority of learners remain on the same courses for too long.
- In too many instances, learners do not receive the additional support that they need from learning support assistants to make good progress. In some cases where this support is provided, it is not effective.
- Tutors' feedback on learners' work is infrequent and does not help learners to improve. As a result, most learners are unaware of what they are doing well or how to improve their work.
- Tutors do not have an adequate understanding of the progress that learners have made by the end of their courses.
- In too many instances, tutors do not have the relevant skills, experience or qualifications. For example, too many ESOL tutors do not have good enough English skills to enable them to correct learners' mistakes. Consequently, learners' progress is hampered and they do not develop skills that they should.
- Tutors do not provide enough opportunities for learners to work independently between lessons. Little homework is set or marked. As a result, learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Tutors help learners to develop a good understanding of diverse ways of life. For example, some learners have the opportunity to learn how to cook food from different cultures. Others learn about a variety of genres of music. This enables learners to develop a better understanding of their communities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Attendance is too low in many sessions. Information on timetabling and attendance is not always accurate. Consequently, managers are unable to monitor attendance accurately. Managers have recently begun to scrutinise attendance more closely and are now working to ensure that those who cannot attend for genuine reasons receive support to catch up.
- Too few learners benefit from work-related activities to increase their understanding of future employment options.
- Too many learners do not improve their mathematics, English and ICT skills. In too many instances, tutors do not identify or correct errors in learners' speaking or spelling. On too many occasions, tutors' own spelling and grammar are incorrect. Consequently, learners repeat the same mistakes and make limited progress.

- Too few learners benefit from effective information, advice and guidance to help them to plan and manage their progression to employment or to further study.
- Most learners report that they feel safe and know who to report concerns to and how to protect themselves. Most learners are aware of the basic principles of safeguarding, including online safety.
- Many of the learners who are on appropriate programmes are very positive about their learning and enthusiastic about the benefits of their courses. For example, some learners explained how they are now able to help their own children learn to read.
- Learners behave well in sessions and there is a strong culture of mutual respect and support. Many learners are keen to support others in class who are struggling.
- Many learners develop the personal and social skills, such as increased confidence, that they will need to move on to further learning and employment. For example, a few learners develop confidence in their catering skills that enables them to consider applying for jobs in local restaurants.
- Learners taking part in community-based courses quickly develop the skills and confidence to take part in community activities, including productions and carnivals. For example, learners on African drumming courses planned to demonstrate their skills in a public performance.
- Many learners with mental health challenges show improvements in managing their health as a result of support from tutors and courses, such as mental health first aid.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- The large majority of learners on courses leading to qualifications, including in mathematics and English, make slow progress and the proportion of learners who stay on their course to the end and achieve their qualification is low. Learners in ESOL classes make particularly poor progress and the proportion of learners who achieve a qualification is very low.
- On courses that do not lead to qualifications, leaders and managers do not have an accurate understanding of achievement rates because tutors are not clear about what constitutes achievement. For example, a large minority of learners are considered to have achieved simply because they have completed a course.
- Leaders and managers do not have a clear understanding of the destinations of their learners.
- Different groups of learners do not achieve equally well. For example, learners from a minority ethnic heritage achieve less well than White British learners, male learners achieve less well than female learners and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as their peers.
- Many learners on family learning courses develop increased levels of confidence, higher aspirations and skills that enable them to make progress towards employment, further education and greater independence. These learners begin to contribute in a wide variety of ways to their communities and many of them develop skills that enable them to support their families better.
- The new management team has very recently introduced measures to address declining

achievement. It is too early to judge the impact of these measures.

Provider details

| | |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number | 50234 |
| Type of provider | Local authority |
| Age range of learners | 19+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 1,500 |
| Principal/CEO | Sharon Kemp |
| Telephone number | 01709 822 770 |
| Website | www.rotherham.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+ |
| | - | 702 | - | 98 | - | - | - | - |
| Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | | |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| 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 | - | | | | | | | |
| Funding received from: | Education and Skills Funding Agency | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | ABC Family Learners Autism Plus Pre-School Learning Alliance Serenity United Multicultural Centre YMCA | | | | | | | |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of service – 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 individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions and the inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Rebecca Clare, lead inspector | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Kathryn Townsley | Ofsted Inspector |
| Andrea Machell | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Richard Ronksley | Her Majesty’s Inspector |

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