

Swindon Unitary Authority

Local authority

Inspection dates

26 September and 10–11 October 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		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Managers and senior leaders do not monitor closely enough the quality of provision delivered by subcontractors.
- Managers and senior council leaders are not sufficiently critical when making judgements about the quality of provision delivered by subcontractors.
- Managers do not ensure that actions to bring about improvements are completed or result in improvements.
- Tutors do not take enough account of each learner's abilities and aspirations when they plan and set work.
- Managers do not set high enough standards for the quality of assessment. They do not challenge subcontractors sufficiently when their tutors' assessment decisions are not fully supported by the work the learners produce.
- Managers do not collect and analyse information about their learners' destinations and do not know the impact of the courses on learners' progression.
- Too many tutors do not set learners clear objectives for developing the skills and knowledge they most need to progress to further learning or employment.

The provider has the following strengths

- Managers and senior leaders have used their thorough knowledge of skills shortages, gaps in learning and community needs to develop a well-considered curriculum.
- Managers and senior leaders work closely with partners to ensure that the learners attending courses are those most in need of the education and training they offer.
- Most learners develop the skills and confidence that prepare them well for progression to further education or employment.
- Tutors provide a safe and welcoming environment in their classrooms that helps learners with little prior achievement to take their first steps back into education.

Full report

Information about the provider

- This inspection covered the adult community learning service of Swindon Unitary Authority. This service is managed within the children's services directorate. All courses are provided by eight subcontractors, with staff from the council taking responsibility for strategic leadership, assuring the quality of provision and providing information, advice and guidance to learners. Courses are delivered throughout the authority in community venues and schools. While a very small number of learners are on courses leading to qualifications, a large majority are on non-accredited courses that are designed to help them progress into further education or employment. A very high proportion of learners are from the most disadvantaged communities and are enrolled on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses or courses to develop their personal and communication, English and mathematics skills.
- The unitary authority encompasses the towns of Swindon and Highworth, as well as surrounding rural areas. The authority has a population of approximately 218,000 people. Employment rates are high but a relatively high proportion of people are employed in low-skilled jobs. Most of the population is White but over 6% are Asian or Asian/British.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Review the performance of subcontractors by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment more closely and making sure that improvements are made quickly.
- Develop a culture in which managers identify areas for improvement quickly and increase the thoroughness with which managers review the quality of provision by ensuring that all the actions they identify to improve provision are completed.
- Ensure that all tutors know how to set their learners specific objectives to ensure that all learners know what they need to do in order to achieve high standards.
- Improve tutors' abilities to assess learners' work, particularly the skills learners develop that help them to progress to further learning or employment.
- Provide learners with tasks that are designed to help learners of different abilities and starting points to achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Evaluate and report on the impact their courses have on learners' progression using accurate data.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Managers do not check sufficiently that tutors' assessments of learners' work are thorough and reliable. Since most courses are not accredited by an awarding organisation, the provider has sole responsibility for assuring the quality of assessment judgements on learners' achievement. Currently, tutors' assessment decisions are not subjected to sufficient scrutiny and managers do not pay enough attention to their quality when evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Service managers do not monitor the quality of provision in their subcontractors closely enough. Managers carry out a review of each provider twice per year. However, these reviews do not concentrate sufficiently on the quality of provision. When managers identify areas for improvement, they do not consistently check that the improvements are made. In a small number of instances, managers' judgements are not supported fully by the relevant data and some aspects of provision, for example the quality of assessment, are not given the critical attention they need.
- Managers rely too heavily on an annual observation of a lesson delivered by each tutor to make their judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision.
- Following an observation of a lesson, tutors are set an action plan for improvement. However, managers do not consistently check that actions and training have been completed or that tutors have been supported sufficiently to make improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have provided continuing professional development for tutors but this has not been effective in improving tutors' assessment of learners' work.
- Council leaders have successfully tackled the key weaknesses in information, advice and guidance, English and mathematics that were identified at the previous inspection in October 2013. However, weaknesses in gathering information about what learners do after attending a course, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and quality improvement have not been improved sufficiently.
- Senior leaders have used a wide range of information to develop a strategy for the adult community learning service that is closely aligned to the council's priorities. Service managers have a thorough knowledge of the communities and groups of people most in need of their service, such as unemployed people with low levels of qualifications and people with low levels of literacy and numeracy. The curriculum they have developed meets the needs of local communities well.
- Managers, council leaders and subcontractors work closely with partner organisations, such as local colleges, schools and community groups, to ensure that learners from the most deprived areas of Swindon are recruited onto the courses.

The governance of the provider

- Councillors take a keen interest in the service by monitoring it through quarterly reports from service managers and by taking responsibility for agreeing the overall strategy. Senior council leaders have identified that they do not monitor the performance of the

service closely enough. The recently appointed director of children's services is developing plans to rectify this.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Tutors and subcontractors have assessed risks for each venue and service managers check that these are in place and comprehensive. Staff have received appropriate levels of training in safeguarding and in their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.
- A senior member of staff is identified as the designated safeguarding lead. However, tutors do not refer safeguarding concerns to this member of staff or draw on their expertise. The point of contact for tutors is a different member of staff who is not trained sufficiently for this role.
- Senior leaders have assessed the risks their learners face from radicalisation and extremism and produced an appropriate action plan to reduce these risks. They closely monitor their progress on implementing this action plan.
- Senior leaders have put in place effective arrangements for learners to receive support from the council's adult social care team if learners have a concern about their safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Tutors do not assess their learners' achievements well enough. On ESOL courses, tutors do not ensure that learners produce enough work to demonstrate that they have achieved their learning objectives. On a small number of courses, tutors do not assess whether learners have achieved their learning objectives. Tutors set learners on health and well-being courses too many learning objectives, leading to confusion about the purpose of the course.
- Tutors do not use the information they have about their learners sufficiently to provide them all with work that is at an appropriate level or builds on their prior learning. In a small number of instances, tutors' attempts to make lessons more challenging for the most able learners are not effective. Too often, tutors do not set work that encourages learners to reach the standards of which they are capable. In a small number of cases, they do not give support workers and volunteers enough guidance on how best to encourage learners to improve their work.
- The council's attempts to provide new learners with information about the course and council services are not sufficiently effective. Information packs are too big and use language that many learners do not understand. However, council staff and staff from other partners, such as Jobcentre Plus and local colleges, provide useful and impartial information, advice and guidance to existing learners about opportunities for further study. They provide opportunities for learners to take part in activities that increase their chances of progressing to further learning or employment, for example work experience or support from the council's public health team to resolve personal health issues.
- Tutors, volunteers and support workers instil a supportive culture in their lessons which helps learners who are not confident about their abilities to participate fully. For many, this is their first experience of education for a long time. Tutors' caring approach is

instrumental in helping learners to enjoy their learning and gain the confidence to express their views, ask questions and learn from each other.

- Most learners benefit from tutors' regular and skilful individual coaching and feedback during lessons. This enables most to develop their skills and increase their confidence.
- Teachers use resources well to help learners master new skills and knowledge in lessons. For example, pictures provide visual prompts for ESOL learners who are making their first attempts at constructing sentences in English. In a health and well-being course, the tutor uses a can of carbonated drink to prompt a useful discussion about sugar in the diet.
- Teachers promote tolerance and respect very well by encouraging learners from a very wide range of backgrounds to work cooperatively together and to understand fundamental British values. For example, ESOL learners have an objective to speak English in a polite way in order to demonstrate their respect for others.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners, often from a very low starting point, develop their confidence in talking to others, expressing their thoughts and ideas and recognising their potential to develop new skills and knowledge.
- Learners are able to describe how their course prepares them well for progressing to further education or employment. They understand the options available to them. As a result of the confidence they have developed, many aspire to further study.
- Learners enjoy their lessons and participate with enthusiasm. When tutors set high expectations, learners respond well by working hard to improve their work. Learners are very positive about the courses they attend and can identify how they help them to live more enriching lives. For example, a learner with very little command of English on entry to the course was able to explain how he can now better understand information from his doctor as a result of his studies.
- A high proportion of learners attend their lessons and complete their course.
- Learners feel safe in lessons. Managers choose the venues for courses well to ensure that learners do not have to travel far from their homes to attend. Learners have useful and accessible information about how to seek support on, or report, a safeguarding issue.
- Learners work well together in lessons. In ESOL classes, they work hard and support each other to master English and use it in discussions. For example, they correct each other's pronunciation and grammar.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- A very high proportion of learners achieve their learning objectives. However, for too many, these objectives are not challenging, precise or tailored to reflect their individual aspirations. On many courses, tutors do not set learning objectives for important components of the course and therefore do not evaluate the skills and knowledge that learners develop. For example, on a course that is partly designed to develop parents' ability to teach their children art skills, learners are not assessed on the extent to which they develop their ability to teach art skills to their children.

- Managers do not have reliable information about the destinations of their learners once they finish studying with the service. They do not report accurately on the impact of their courses on learners' progression. However, managers have a better understanding of the progression of learners from one course to another. A high proportion of learners who take more than one course with the service progress to a higher level.
- Most learners develop new skills, knowledge and understanding of the topic they are studying. For example, learners who started their ESOL course with very little command of the language are able to explain their daily routines. Learners on a course in health and well-being have a greater understanding of the changes they need to make to their lifestyle and diet in order to improve their lives. However, on some courses, the most able learners are not set work that is hard enough. On others, teachers do not set high enough expectations for their least able learners. As a result, too many learners do not make sufficient progress.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54719
Type of provider	Adult and community learning
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	881
Principal/CEO	Sally Burnett
Telephone number	01793 463 061
Website	www.swindon.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	-	107	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	N/A							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Best Practice Training and Development Ltd The Learning Curve (Voluntary Sector Development) Adult Training Network Madanu Ltd Smiley Cats Ltd Steps2progression Ltd Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting Ltd Workers' Educational Association							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the commissioning manager for skills and employment, 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 and telephone calls to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Steven Tucker, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kathleen Tyler	Ofsted Inspector

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