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Bracknell Forest Community Learning
Local authority

Inspection dates	22–24 November 2017

Overall effectiveness			**Good**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	**Good**	Adult learning programmes	**Good**
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	**Good**		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	**Good**		
Outcomes for learners	**Good**		

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have taken successful action to improve learners' achievement rates and these are now high.

- Leaders and managers work productively with partners to develop courses that meet learners' abilities and interests well.

- Learners use good-quality learning resources, activities and technology that help them gain good subject knowledge and skills.

- Tutors and volunteers give learners very effective individual support during lessons that motivates them to work hard.

- Learners develop valuable personal, social and work-related skills.

- Learners are enthusiastic and enjoy their courses, and the majority attend regularly.

- The large majority of learners make good progress towards achieving their qualifications or course goals.

- Not all tutors measure learners' progress or learning well enough to tell them clearly what they have learned and what they need to improve further.

- Leaders and managers do not gather enough information about learners' next steps into further learning, employment or continuation on community learning courses.

- Learners' achievement of English qualifications requires improvement.

- Learners do not understand how the dangers of extremism and radicalisation apply to their own lives.

Full report

Information about the provider

■ Bracknell Forest Community Learning is part of Bracknell Forest Council, a unitary authority in Berkshire. The community learning manager and the head of service manage a team of coordinators and tutors. A management board, which includes the director for children, young people and learning, oversees the effectiveness of the service. The majority of courses take place at the open learning centre, with others held at community venues, children's centres and schools, and through two subcontractors.

■ At the time of inspection, there were 445 learners. The very large majority of learners were taking community learning courses in family learning, fitness, well-being, preparation for work, or information and communication technology (ICT). A small minority of learners were on courses that lead to qualifications in English or mathematics. Bracknell Forest Community Learning also offers short vocational courses for unemployed learners. Bracknell Forest is one of the least deprived boroughs in England but has a number of less affluent areas. Unemployment is relatively low.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

■ Leaders and managers should gather, analyse and use information about learners' destinations to judge the full impact of courses, including on learners' outcomes.

■ Leaders and managers should monitor the actions to improve learners' achievement of English qualifications and take remedial action if these are unsuccessful.

■ Tutors should monitor and record learners' skills and knowledge development more thoroughly and tell them how to improve and reach their full potential.

■ Leaders and managers should adapt Bracknell Forest Council's 'Prevent' duty strategy and action plan and make them relevant for adult learners so they can raise learners' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism in a meaningful context.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good

- The director for children, young people and learning, the head of service and the community learning manager, recruited since the previous inspection, set high expectations for the service. They analyse performance data thoroughly and identify quickly what needs to improve. Leaders and managers now self-assess their provision well and have improved the quality of education as a result. They take effective and swift action, for example restructuring courses leading to qualifications into more intensive, short courses to increase attendance and retention. This restructuring led to improved achievement rates in 2016/17 compared with the previous two years, when they were static and required improvement.

- Leaders and managers take good account of learners' views when developing new courses. As a result, they meet learners' needs and interests particularly well. They align courses well to the service's identified priority groups, particularly to raise low skills and aspiration levels. This has helped increase the number of learners taking courses that lead to a qualification, particularly by those seeking employment.

- Leaders and managers work productively with partners to recruit learners from disadvantaged areas and socially isolated groups. One of the subcontractors provides a wide range of training and support for volunteers who would otherwise struggle to fund their courses. This makes the volunteers more effective and confident in their roles. Tutors and staff from neighbouring boroughs share their practice through regular meetings, which serves to aid improvements. For example, they measure learners' achievement of wider skills such as communicating effectively.

- Managers use good systems to judge the quality of teaching and learning. They place a good emphasis on learning, and the progress that learners make, when they observe lessons. Managers use findings from lesson observations well to help tutors improve. This has helped tutors widen the range of learning activities and teaching strategies they use.

- Managers are at an early stage in implementing some quality improvement initiatives. Recently, they introduced a forum to improve the quality of learners' targets, progress reviews and feedback, and this is starting to show results. Managers introduced more thorough monitoring of subcontractors' policies, procedures and documentation to improve target setting and learners' experience.

- Although managers collect and use data about courses leading to qualifications, they have insufficient information about the destinations of learners on community learning courses. This affects their ability to judge the full effectiveness and impact of provision. For example, managers cannot tell whether all those attending the 'job club' courses gain jobs.

The governance of the provider

- Changes over the past year have brought a new energy to the board and its role. As a result, board members challenge the pace of improvement more critically.

- Board members bring a good range of experience from across the council to support the service's development. They share their experiences from working with other sectors,

such as children's centres and schools. This has helped managers strengthen partnerships and improve processes, such as those for the performance management of tutors.

- Board members are at an early stage of monitoring the progress leaders and managers make with the quality improvement plan; challenging targets have been set, but not reviewed.

Safeguarding

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Tutors are well trained and use their knowledge to make sure the open learning centre is welcoming, and learners feel safe at all venues.

- When learners raise concerns, managers and tutors deal with these appropriately, drawing on external organisations for specialist help.

- Although Bracknell Forest Council has a 'Prevent' duty strategy and action plan, leaders and managers have only recently started adapting these to be relevant for adult learners.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment   Good

- Tutors plan and deliver interesting and lively lessons. They teach learners to apply theory well and to practise their newly acquired skills and knowledge in a safe environment. For example, learners in a residential care home increased their mobility and flexibility though playing indoor, seated football; learners on family learning courses made stimulating games to help their children develop reading, writing and counting skills.

- Learners use high-quality learning resources and technology to enhance their learning. During an ICT drop-in session, learners with low levels of confidence in using technology learned how to start building a website and set up smartphones.

- Tutors have good specialist knowledge that they use in lessons to make subjects meaningful. They demonstrate concepts very effectively during practical lessons, which helps learners become proficient and confident. For example, in a baby-massage lesson, learners applied the movements their tutor demonstrated correctly to aid their babies' digestion and could explain the benefits of massage.

- Tutors and volunteers provide learners with good-quality support. They know their learners well and use this knowledge to good effect to adapt learning resources and individualise the help they give. In the well-attended 'job club', the tutors and volunteers give learners bespoke help with seeking employment and developing interview techniques.

- Tutors use assessments of learners' starting points well to plan learning. They adapt group and paired learning activities well to challenge learners, particularly the most able, so they can achieve well. In one English lesson, the tutor carefully selected groups so they could adapt and develop their speaking and listening skills.

- Tutors develop learners' English skills well in lessons. They correct learners' spelling and grammatical errors and prompt them to use good English. This was particularly effective in an ICT drop-in lesson, where learners who speak English as an additional language used online learning materials to develop their English skills. Tutors do not always develop learners' mathematical skills in community learning lessons.

- Learners develop a good understanding of the importance of equality and the value of diversity. For example, learners attending the 'job club' evaluated the impact of body language on different cultures.

- Tutors give most learners useful feedback after assessments. Tutors mark learners' work carefully, helping them identify the skills and knowledge they need to develop. In a few lessons with large groups, tutors struggle to give each learner feedback.

- On short community learning courses, tutors do not always check learners' progress or check what they have learned during the lesson. Their recording of learners' progress and learning is too superficial, merely listing the tasks learners have completed in the lesson. As a result, learners are not always clear what they need to improve or how they can do this.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare   Good

- Learners develop good social, personal and work-related skills. Many learners gain coping strategies that help them overcome significant barriers to learning, such as low self-esteem and confidence. In one lesson, learners identified the triggers that create their negative feelings and discussed how they would overcome these, so they could deal with similar situations later.

- Learners are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. They develop a good attitude to learning and work well with their tutors and peers. Tutors create a harmonious and respectful learning environment that promotes British values well.

- Tutors give learners good advice and support to help them stay fit and adopt a healthy lifestyle. They help learners maintain good posture when using computers and during physical exercise. Learners know more about the importance of exercise and its effect on their physical and mental well-being. In a tai chi lesson, elderly learners in a care home practised mindfulness techniques to reduce stress and worry.

- Learners feel safe. They know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their own, or their peers', safety. Tutors raise learners' understanding about their personal safety and security, including when using the internet. In an ICT drop-in class, learners found out about the most prevalent internet 'scams' to help them recognise these when working away from the open learning centre.

- Managers and tutors display visually appealing posters to remind learners about safeguarding and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. However, not all learners can relate this information to their own situations.

- The majority of learners attend regularly, an improvement on the previous year. However, too few tutors challenge learners who are late or miss lessons.

Outcomes for learners   Good

- Learners' achievement of qualifications is now good and has improved significantly during 2016/17. Where learners are on courses to prepare them for employment, the achievement of vocational qualifications is consistently high, improving their prospects of gaining a job. Almost all groups of learners achieve at a similar rate, including those taking courses with subcontractors.

- Managers have made significant improvements to the process of recruitment and assessment of learners' starting points and the structure of the English functional skills courses. This has resulted in achievement increasing rapidly from a very low rate. Managers know that learners' achievement of English qualifications could improve further and plan to extend the range of courses offered to include those specifically for learners who speak English as an additional language.

- The large majority of learners make good progress towards their course goals or their qualifications. They produce good work that is well organised and well presented. Many learners' written work demonstrates clearly the improvement they make over time. Learners taking English and mathematics functional skills qualifications improve the accuracy of their expression, and their confidence, which prepares them better for taking external tests.

- Achievement rates for learners on community learning courses are high, and have been for the past three years. This year, managers and tutors strengthened the learners' targets, which they use to measure achievement. A few learners, mainly on family learning courses, still have badly defined learning aims, and managers cannot measure their achievement effectively.

- Around half of the learners who have completed courses leading to qualifications gained a job or progressed to further education or learning. Many learners continue their studies with the service, having started their learning on an introductory or short course before moving to a level 1 and/or level 2 qualification. However, managers and tutors do not know the destinations of the majority of learners on community learning courses.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50798
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,377
Principal/CEO	Jeremy Saunders
Telephone number	01344 354220
Website	www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/community-learning

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+
	-	44	-	45	-	30	-	50

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	-
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Bracknell Forest Homes Involve Community Services

Information about this inspection

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

Inspection team

Janet Rodgers, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Philip Elliott	Ofsted Inspector

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