

Beacon Education Partnership Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

27 February–2 March 2018

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	Requires improvement		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Since gaining the direct contract to deliver advanced learner loans in health and social care, leaders and managers have been slow to identify and action the weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders do not challenge and support managers and staff well enough. They do not gather sufficient and accurate information about the progress learners make. As a result, leaders are not aware that too few current learners are not making good progress.
- Tutors and assessors do not check the prior skills and knowledge of learners well enough to support them to plan and teach activities that challenge all learners.
- Staff do not provide unemployed learners with work-related activities to help them understand the variety of jobs available in healthcare.
- Leaders and managers do not have high enough expectations for learners. They too readily accept learners' poor attendance, and do not set work that is challenging enough for learners to make good progress.
- Leaders and managers do not have a clear plan to promote and develop learners' English and mathematical skills. As a result, learners do not develop the appropriate skills in these areas.
- Tutors and assessors do not support learners who speak English as an additional language sufficiently to improve their verbal communication and written English skills.
- Tutors and assessors do not give learners feedback that gives clear information on how to improve their work or help them to gain a better mark in their assessed work.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers work very closely with community groups and employers in health and social care. Together they successfully engage with adults in under-represented communities.
- A high proportion of unemployed learners gain jobs as a result of achieving their qualification.
- Leaders focus the development of their curriculum well to meet the skills gaps in the healthcare sector. They work closely with sector specialists to design and develop good-quality resources for learners.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Beacon Education Partnership (Beacon), established in 1998 and owned by three directors, is a small independent learning provider based in Camden, London. In previous years, Beacon had delivered NVQ training and apprenticeships in health and social care through a subcontract arrangement. In 2015, Beacon successfully gained a direct contract to deliver adult learning programmes funded by advanced learner loans and ceased delivering the apprenticeship programme.
- Beacon works with local communities and a group of health and social care employers in several boroughs of London. They also support learners in Wales, Coventry, Bristol and Birmingham. The majority of teaching and learning takes place in community centres, in mosques and at employers' premises. The vast majority of learners study the level 3 diploma in health and social care, and approximately two thirds of learners are in employment.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop and put in place an effective quality improvement process to improve rapidly the weaknesses identified in teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that tutors and assessors check learners' prior attainment and skills to support them to plan and teach sessions that challenge all learners to make good progress
 - supporting tutors and assessors to develop their skills in giving learners clear and helpful feedback on their work to help them improve the quality of their work and gain higher assignment grades.
- Improve the English and mathematical skills of all learners, including those who speak English as an additional language, by:
 - implementing an effective policy to promote and develop learners' skills in these areas
 - supporting tutors and assessors to develop their skills and confidence in checking learners' prior skills in English and mathematics and agreeing the required actions to support learners to improve.
- Improve learners' attendance at sessions by setting them high expectations and being clear on the consequences of poor attendance.
- Make sufficient arrangements with employers to offer unemployed learners access to work-related activities.
- Develop and put in place effective arrangements for directors to provide challenge and support for senior managers and staff to improve the quality of provision by checking that all information they receive from staff is reliable and accurate, particularly information about the progress that learners make.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Beacon was awarded its own contract three years ago to offer advanced learner loans. Since operating this contract, the board of directors and senior managers have been slow to develop the company's procedures and practices to ensure that adult learners enjoy high-quality teaching, learning and assessment which support them to make good progress. As a result, the quality of the programme requires improvement.
- Leaders and managers do not accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. They rely too much on unchecked information from staff, such as the weekly reports on the progress of learners. Too often, leaders state that specific barriers are too difficult to overcome for their learner group, and they do not have high enough expectations for all learners. As a result, learners' attendance requires improvement and learners do not access work-related activity to support them with their career choices.
- Leaders' and managers' quality improvement arrangements do not provide a clear evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The quality improvement plan focuses on business growth and achievement rates, and not on how to secure a better experience for learners. Managers observe a range of teaching and support activities by tutors and assessors. However, their findings are often inaccurate because they do not focus sufficiently on learners' skill development, learning and progress. As a result, tutors and assessors do not know what they need to do to improve their practice and support learners better.
- Leaders and managers do not have a clear policy in place to develop learners' English and mathematical skills relevant to their vocational subject. For example, they have not implemented arrangements to check learners' skills at the start of the course in English and mathematics, or identified staff training for tutors and assessors which will help them support learners. As a result, learners do not develop the appropriate skills in these areas.
- Leaders and managers work very closely with community partners and employers to engage with learners in under-represented communities, such as Somali women. A majority of these learners would not normally access training and leaders ensure that training is accessible by offering weekend sessions and teaching in community centres and mosques.
- Leaders, managers and staff support the employers they work with very well to meet the skills needs in the healthcare sector. They work closely with sector specialist groups to design courses and resources which help employers to develop their staff, and learners to develop the skills and knowledge to support them into work. As a result, a high proportion of unemployed learners gain jobs with these employers.
- Leaders, managers and staff successfully create a very welcoming environment for learners from very diverse backgrounds. Leaders communicate their vision to meet the needs of the health and social care sector clearly to staff, employers and the communities they work in. As a result, they are highly regarded by employers and learners, and develop very effective partnerships. This supports learners to understand what it is like to be a British citizen.

The governance of the provider

- The oversight, support and challenge that the directors provide require improvement.
- Directors receive insufficient information from managers and staff to help them understand the main strengths and weaknesses of the programme. As a result, they do not provide appropriate challenge to managers to improve the quality of provision, including improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Managers' training plan for safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty is effective. Staff understand well how to identify the signs and indicators of radicalisation and extremism. Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding and they are very aware of the issues, threats and risks that may exist for learners in their different communities, such as female genital mutilation. As a result, staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, follow appropriate procedures when concerns are raised, and develop effective links with the relevant local authorities.
- Leaders and managers ensure that learners learn in safe and secure environments. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place for the safer recruitment of staff. Learners feel safe and know whom to contact should they have concerns. Managers and staff ensure that the learning environments, such as community centres, meet the relevant health and safety requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Tutors and assessors do not assess learners' prior educational attainment or skills effectively to support them to plan and teach well enough. They do not discuss and set learners clear and challenging learning targets to match their individual needs and aspirations to ensure that they make good progress. As a result, all learners work towards the same targets, and tutors do not know which of their learners could make more rapid progress and achieve higher marks in their assignments.
- Tutors and assessors focus too narrowly on meeting the minimum requirements and standards that learners need to achieve. In their tracking of learners' progress, they only take into account the progress made towards achieving a unit on the course. They do not track the skills, knowledge and behaviours learners develop during their course. As a result, a minority of learners do not understand the progress they make or the specific skills in health and social care they need to develop.
- Tutors' and assessors' feedback to learners requires improvement. While tutors and assessors give praise and encouragement in their feedback on learners' work, they do not give learners clear information on how to improve their work or help learners to gain a better mark in their assessed work. They do not correct spelling or grammatical errors and learners often resubmit work that still has errors.
- Tutors do not support learners well enough during sessions to develop their independent study and language skills. For example, very few learners take notes in lessons to support them to improve their understanding of specialist vocational content, or to record their

learning from the discussions and revision activities. Too many learners struggle with technical language and writing at length, which slows their progress.

- Tutors help learners to apply their understanding of equality and diversity when working in the care sector very well. Learners know how to adapt their behaviour appropriately when talking and listening to elderly clients. They are very well aware of the differing needs of the various ethnic and cultural groups they may work with. For example, they have a good understanding of dietary requirements for those with specific religious beliefs.
- Tutors and assessors use their good knowledge and experience in health and social care very effectively to develop learners' subject understanding and set their expectations of working in the industry. Learners develop good vocational skills. For example, they know how to identify the signs of different types of abuse, and how to follow the correct health and safety procedures to reduce the risk of infection. Employed learners relate what they have learned well to their work and share their experiences with their peers.
- Learners enjoy good one-to-one support outside their sessions. Assessors respond quickly to questions by electronic communication and ensure that learners can access the good-quality resources available to them online. As a result, a minority of learners who are behind catch up on the work they have missed or needed to resubmit.
- Assessors develop very good relationships with employers and communicate with them regularly about the progress their learners make. Employers feel very involved with the programme and readily identify the benefit to their company when learners achieve their qualifications.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- For a majority of learners who speak English as an additional language, tutors do not support them sufficiently to develop their written English and verbal communication skills. While tutors support learners with interpretation during sessions to understand complex vocational terminology, they do not support learners well enough to improve their written and spoken English. As a result, too many learners struggle to speak English and write to the required standard needed at level 3.
- Staff do not promote well enough to learners the importance of attending sessions. As a result, learners do not fully understand why they should attend at all times and on time. Too many learners do not attend well. Managers do monitor learners' attendance and have introduced options for weekend learning. Attendance at these sessions is high.
- Staff do not provide unemployed adult learners with suitable work-related activities, including work experience. Consequently, learners do not develop essential work-related skills, or understand the choices available to them in the health and social care sector. As a result, the majority of unemployed learners work towards gaining employment in domiciliary care only.
- Managers and staff do not develop learners' mathematical skills, in relation to health and social care, well enough. The majority of learners cannot relate and use mathematics during their learning and tutors do not fully understand their role in supporting learners to develop these skills.

- Learners enjoy their learning, are keen to learn and have high aspirations to gain employment or gain extra responsibilities at work. A minority of learners want to go on to nursing or midwifery courses. For many learners, particularly females from Somalia, this is the first time they have accessed education and they overcome significant barriers to enable them to take part in learning.
- Learners receive effective information and guidance at the start of their programme, informing them about the course and opportunities available to them. Those learners already employed understand well what gaining their qualification means to them in relation to their work. As a result, these learners often increase their responsibility at work and gain pay awards. However, for the minority of learners who want to move into higher education, staff do not give them enough ongoing guidance on how to achieve this.
- Learners from diverse backgrounds work very well together, and show respect and tolerance to each other and staff. Learners are polite and highly value the opportunity to learn in their local communities. For example, they attend learning in mosques, at their employers and in community centres.
- Employed learners enjoy the close working relationships Beacon has with its employers. For example, one employer sends a member of staff to every learning session to work with the tutor to discuss relevant case studies and scenarios and to answer questions about employment. As a result, learners gain a better understanding of how to apply their skills and knowledge to real-life situations.
- Learners feel safe in their learning environment and at work. They know whom to contact should they have any concerns. Learners receive appropriate information at the start of their programme on radicalisation, extremism, online safety and the risks that may exist in their different communities. However, a majority of learners do not fully understand the impact of this on their individual lives and many cannot recall receiving ongoing updates through the 'topics of the month' discussions in their learning sessions.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Leaders, managers and staff do not check the progress that current learners make well enough. Leaders rely too much on information received from staff that learners are on track, and do not regularly check that learners are making good progress. The majority of current learners are not making good progress. Too few have achieved the required units for the time they have been on the programme and too many are behind target.
- The standard of learners' work is not consistently good. Although the majority of learners produce work that meets the requirements of the awarding body and achieve their qualifications, too few learners produce a good or outstanding standard of work. Too much of learners' written work is not corrected and contains weak sentence construction and paragraphs. Too few learners achieve high grades in their unit assignments.
- In 2016/17, the majority of adult learners achieved their vocational qualifications in health and social care, and within their planned time. A high proportion of those unemployed learners who completed their course gained employment in domiciliary care. A minority of employed learners gained promotion at work.

- Leaders track the performance of different groups of learners effectively. The majority of learners at Beacon come from black and minority ethnic groups and there are no significant variations in achievement rates.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1236704
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	260
Principal/CEO	Christian Wilkins
Telephone number	020 7788 4007
Website	www.beaconeducationpartnership.org.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)	-	-	-	-	-	208	-	9
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:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of funding and contract, 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 and reviewed assessments, progress reviews and learners' work. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Jane Hughes, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Karen Green	Ofsted Inspector
Kanwaljit Dhillon	Ofsted Inspector

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