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10 April 2018

Mrs Elizabeth Moodie
Learning and Skills Manager
Redcar & Cleveland Adult Learning Service
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Dear Mrs Moodie

Short inspection of Redcar & Cleveland Adult Learning Service

Following the short inspection on 13 and 14 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in September 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your staff have successfully addressed almost all the recommendations made at your previous inspection. Learners and apprentices continue to receive a high-quality education.

You, and those in the local authority with governance responsibilities, have a clear vision for the future of the service. Leaders have made arrangements to remove an underperforming study programme from the end of this academic year. The introduction of two community-based 'learning hubs' supports the strategic priority to engage with adults who live in the most deprived wards.

You and your staff know your provision well. You have identified the key strengths of the service and you are addressing most of the weaknesses. However, the actions for improvement identified in your self-assessment report and quality improvement plan lack sufficient precision and information to enable you and your staff to review regularly and evaluate the progress that you are making.

Safeguarding is effective.

You carry out appropriate pre-employment checks before members of staff start working with learners and apprentices to ensure that there are no safeguarding concerns. You use high-quality training materials to make staff aware of their responsibilities in relation to the 'Prevent' duty and to ensure that they know how to keep vulnerable adults safe. However, learners and apprentices do not have a

thorough understanding of how radicalisation and extremism relate to their everyday lives. Tutors do not have the skills or confidence to engage learners and apprentices in meaningful discussions about these topics.

The new designated safeguarding officer, who was appointed in February 2018, has completed basic training in safeguarding and will carry out the local authority designated officer training in the near future. Until she has had the opportunity to complete this training, arrangements are in place for support to be available for learners and apprentices from the local authority's director of children's services, if needed.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, the adult learning service has moved directorates within the local authority on several occasions; it has only recently moved back into the economic growth directorate. Despite the recent changes, leaders, managers and those holding the position of governors have a clear and well-founded strategic vision for the future direction of the service.
- A broad curriculum meets the needs and interests of the local community well and includes family learning, community learning and accredited courses. Leaders responded quickly to local job losses when two large companies ceased trading, and the service successfully helped to retrain many of those who lost their jobs.
- Leaders and managers have plans to reduce the number of publicly funded 'leisure' courses from the start of the next academic year, and will convert them into courses for which learners pay fees to cover the full cost of delivering them. This decision will enable leaders and managers to focus more public funding on supporting learners taking formal qualifications to help them to achieve their career goals. However, leaders and managers have been too slow to make this decision.
- The service has a carefully considered approach to engaging with adults who live in the local authority's most deprived wards. The creation of community-based 'learning hubs' in two of these wards helps learners to overcome barriers to education. Learners engage in programmes that develop their skills and knowledge well, and this helps them to progress to courses on which they can achieve relevant qualifications.
- Staff understand and can articulate the strengths and weaknesses of the service; they know individual learners and apprentices well. However, the self-assessment lacks sufficient depth in its evaluation of the provision and does not identify precisely the key strengths and weaknesses. The quality improvement plan does not identify specific actions to address the areas of weakness. Managers focus too much on checking that they have carried out actions rather than evaluating the impact of these actions on learners. They are unable to identify incremental improvements to the quality of their service, and rely too heavily on evaluating the success of their actions at the end of the academic year.
- Performance management is effective at maintaining the quality of provision. All members of staff have annual appraisals, and managers set clear objectives for

staff to achieve that they review frequently. Following the repositioning of the service within the economic growth directorate, newly introduced performance measures, such as regular one-to-one meetings with her new line manager and quarterly performance review meetings, hold the learning and skills manager to account well.

- Managers observe lessons frequently and evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment accurately. They identify areas of improvement for tutors and assessors, following observations, and closely monitor the progress that tutors and assessors make towards overcoming weaknesses. As a result, most members of staff improve their teaching skills. In joint observations with inspectors, leaders and managers identified key strengths and weaknesses in teaching accurately.
- Careers education, advice and guidance are good. Learners and apprentices receive helpful advice and guidance before they start their learning; this ensures that they join courses that are right for them. As a result, the proportion of learners and apprentices who remain on their course is high. Good links exist with external agencies, such as the National Careers Service, which provide effective ongoing support and guidance to learners. Departments across the local authority, such as the Enterprise Team, offer good advice to learners who want to become self-employed.
- Leaders and managers do not monitor well enough what learners do after they complete their course. They only have information about the sustained destinations for around a third of learners and apprentices who studied with the service in 2016/17. As a result, they cannot evaluate whether courses meet the needs of learners well enough. While most of the learners whose destination was known moved onto a further course, the proportion progressing into employment was too low.
- Tutors and assessors take account of the starting points of learners and apprentices well. In most lessons, staff teaching mixed-ability groups use resources to meet their differing needs well. As a result, most learners work at a level that is appropriate to them and progress well. Staff use information about learners' and apprentices' prior skills and knowledge well when setting academic and personal targets, and regularly review learners' and apprentices' progress towards achieving their targets. However, tutors do not challenge a small number of the most able learners well enough. As a result, a small minority of learners do not make fast enough progress.
- Almost all apprentices make good progress. They develop vocational and personal skills well, both in lessons and at work. Assessors and employers focus well on the benefits of off-the-job training. Staff track apprentices' progress well, and employers are involved fully in setting targets that relate directly to apprentices' work. Apprentices benefit from comprehensive feedback that successfully develops their skills and knowledge.
- Most learners and apprentices on accredited courses achieve equally well, with very few gaps in the achievement rates of different groups. However, leaders have not analysed closely the reasons for the lower retention rate for learners from deprived wards. As a result, they have been unable to take action to

address this weakness, as they do not fully understand its cause.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff develop the skills and confidence to help all learners and apprentices understand how the risks of radicalisation and extremism relate to their everyday lives
- self-assessment processes enable managers to identify clearly key weaknesses and to measure, at frequent intervals, the impact of the actions that they take to address the weaknesses
- staff consistently challenge the most able learners to achieve their full potential
- they can evaluate fully the impact of courses by analysing the sustained destinations of a greater proportion of learners and apprentices, and the reasons for the lower retention rate for learners from deprived wards.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ken Merry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors were assisted by the learning and skills manager, as nominee. We met with a range of staff, had discussions with appropriate partners and support agencies, as well as observing lessons and reviews. We scrutinised key strategic and policy documents, including those related to self-assessment, quality assurance and safeguarding.