

# Civil Ceremonies Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

28–30 November 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>		<b>Outstanding</b>	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>	Adult learning programmes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>		
Outcomes for learners	<b>Outstanding</b>		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

## Summary of key findings

### This is an outstanding provider

- Learners make excellent progress in skills, knowledge and behaviour development and achievement rates are very high.
- Resources to support learning and skills development are of a high quality.
- A high proportion of learners become self-employed and practise as celebrants throughout the United Kingdom.
- The celebrant qualifications and standards developed by the provider allow their courses to be delivered to a wider audience by other providers to meet local and national need.
- All training staff have very good sector knowledge and experience, which they use effectively to develop learners' skills, knowledge and behaviours to a very high level.
- Training programmes are very well designed and demanding, and provide learners with excellent training to become celebrants at funerals and at naming and couples' ceremonies.
- Learners receive excellent information, advice and guidance that prepare them very well for their chosen career paths.
- Learners have a very good understanding of British values, social inclusion and equality and diversity and can apply these in their work as celebrants.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

Civil Ceremonies Ltd (CCL) is a small business that provides level 3 diploma courses in funeral celebrancy and in celebrancy for naming and couples. Both programmes comprise distance learning units followed by a week-long residential course. The company recruits learners from across the United Kingdom. It previously offered 24+ learner loans through a local further education college and has been offering advanced learner loans directly since August 2016. The company employs four members of staff at its offices in Burton Latimer, near Kettering in Northamptonshire. A small team of 13 tutors, assessors and expert witnesses deliver the programmes. At the time of inspection, CCL was running 10 funeral courses and six naming and couples courses a year. There were 49 learners on the funeral celebrancy course and 26 on the naming and couples course. Most are White British, and the majority are female.

Leaders and managers have been highly successful in implementing their vision and mission for the business. They have developed two level 3 qualifications, within the unregulated funeral and regulated wedding sectors, which provide learners with recognised qualifications and routes to become celebrants at funerals, and at couples' and naming and family ceremonies. Leaders and managers are proud that their qualifications and standards have national recognition and that other providers use them, enabling more learners to become celebrants across the United Kingdom.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Leaders and managers have a detailed business plan that has a clear focus on continual improvement of their high-quality distance learning and challenging and demanding residential courses for both funeral celebrants and naming and couples' celebrants. This has enabled many individuals to develop new, and build on existing, skills, knowledge and behaviours. Learners apply these in a wide range of demanding and highly challenging working environments and often refer to these experiences as life changing.
- Links with national and local wedding and funeral organisations, institutes and associations are outstanding. CCL has representation on the Institute of Civil Funerals (IoCF) and works closely with the Association of Independent Celebrants (AOIC) and is a preferred training provider for both. Learners who achieve the level 3 funeral celebrants qualification are eligible for membership of the IoCF. As a result, learners benefit from introductions to experienced practitioners, which contributes significantly to their chances of employment and self-employment.
- Assessors and tutors are practising celebrants and are highly experienced. They are empathetic and supportive throughout the training. All learners and qualified celebrants understand that their valued advice and support are available to them at any time should they need them. Consequently, formal and informal networking provides an important support infrastructure. A range of carefully selected external speakers and expert witnesses provides learners with valuable insights into their chosen career path and clear feedback following their performance to help manage expectations and prepare them well for their role as celebrants.
- Tutors receive a supportive observation visit once a year. The oral feedback they receive from these visits and clear plans for improvement actions, monitored at each subsequent observation, help them further improve their teaching and training skills. Performance management of all staff is effective in maintaining the company's high standards. Most continuing professional development is gained through work as practitioners.
- Learners' progress on both programmes is monitored rigorously during distance learning training by dedicated assessors. This provides leaders and managers with a comprehensive understanding of their developmental needs and is used effectively in residential training to support individual progress. Simulations of funerals are undertaken in crematoriums and at prepared graves in cemeteries where coffins are used in the creation of a realistic working environment. Similar careful simulation is also used for naming and couples' ceremonies.
- The company's self-assessment report is largely accurate, but in some sections is overly discursive and insufficiently judgemental. Inspectors gave higher grades than those in the self-assessment report for leadership and management and teaching, learning and assessment. The quality improvement plan identifies all relevant improvement actions, and leaders and managers monitor milestones and regularly review the impact of improvement actions on the provision.

## The governance of the provider

- Current oversight of the provision is fit for purpose and is undertaken by an independent assessor.
- The 2018/19 business plan identified the need for more formal governance and oversight arrangements to provide additional challenge and to hold leaders and managers to better account. These arrangements are now in place. Senior representatives from the IoCF and AOIC have agreed to be governors and provide additional challenge and scrutiny to bolster the current arrangements. The new governors are scheduled to meet for the first time in December.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding officer has received suitable training to help them carry out their role. All staff receive recruitment and background checks and detailed records are held. Training in the 'Prevent' duty, British values and equality and diversity is delivered through distance learning programmes to all staff and learners and reinforced throughout the programmes.
- Tutors are rigorous in ensuring that learners gain practical experience of how to stay safe in their chosen working environments. They are made aware of e-safety and the issues they can face when using social media to promote their businesses. As a result, learners feel safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- Tutors and assessors have exceptionally high expectations of their learners and work hard to help them achieve and prepare for the highly sensitive and emotional environments in which they will work. As a result, they provide strong support and honest and accurate feedback, and coach learners to very high standards.
- All applicants undergo a probing telephone interview and a focused pre-course assessment. This ensures that they have the time, commitment and the language and writing skills to cope with the demands of the programme, and may result in signposting them to an appropriate course or additional preparatory work. Staff design initial guidance carefully to ensure that applicants are aware of the content and demands of the course and their chosen job role. An assessment before learners start their training is used well by tutors to support learners' speaking, English, mathematical and computer skills throughout their programmes. This ensures that most achieve their qualification.
- Tutors use a wide range of techniques to ensure effective learning and skills development. Learners can find discussions in classes challenging and appreciate the variety of questioning, video, role-play and practical activities that allows them to make good progress and build relationships. The mixture of distance learning and a residential programme provides learners with a sound understanding of the practical skills they require. For example, tutors use role-play effectively to build learners' confidence before they deliver a celebrant ceremony in a range of venues, such as crematoriums, cemeteries or hotels.

- Assessment of learners' knowledge and practical skills is thorough. Assessors manage the distance learning programme scrupulously and industry experts join tutors during the residential programme to observe learners' practice and award grades according to clear criteria. They assess theory assignments promptly and provide learners with clear feedback. Video is used well to demonstrate where and how learners can improve their practice. One learner who found delivery of her eulogy difficult made good progress and achieved well following careful analysis of her presentations on video.
- Tutors and assessors use their extensive experience in the industry to give effective and insightful feedback throughout the programme. This ensures that learners improve and develop skills, knowledge and behaviours well. As a result, most learners meet the demanding criteria for the qualification and are successful in entering the industry.
- The development of learners' English skills has a high priority and is applied rigorously throughout both celebrant programmes. For example, learners on the funeral celebrancy diploma must visit a burial site during the distance learning phase and write about it. Learners develop their mathematical skills through the self-employment module, where they learn about business planning, invoicing and forecasting. As a result, they have a very good understanding of the demands, processes, risks and legal duties involved in becoming self-employed.
- Learners benefit greatly from expert guest speakers and through visiting venues. For example, a funeral director makes it clear how learners should work with them, for example how to market their services and to contact them, and what is expected in the industry. Naming and couples' learners visit hotels and wedding venues, escorted by a wedding planner, who gives them insights into the pitfalls they may encounter and valuable tips for working in the industry.
- Training materials are of a very high quality and are comprehensive. These provide learners with an excellent handbook and reference document that they use well during the course and when they become self-employed.
- Learners with specific support needs, whether physical or mental, receive excellent support to help them achieve. All declared disabilities or needs are followed up individually by telephone to establish what support is best and how this can be provided. Staff take great care to ensure that accommodation arrangements for the residential course are suitable for all learners. This includes access to rooms, facilities and training materials. Tutors make distance learning materials and handbooks available on different-coloured paper for learners with dyslexia. They provided one learner with a special chair during training to accommodate her spinal condition. Staff ensure that learners understand fully the demands and rigours of the job they are training for and the barriers they may face, such as the need to visit bereaving families in their home, which may not be easily accessible.
- Learners enjoy the challenge that the celebrant programmes offer, but acknowledge that it is sometimes a harder course than anticipated. They are aware that some personal feedback can be difficult to take, but are encouraged throughout to use this to improve their skills and behaviours, which most do. Teaching methods and activities take suitable account of learners' experience and maturity.
- Learners are aware of the risks associated with lone working. They understand the risks associated with extremism, but their knowledge of what to do about concerns over extremism or potential unlawful activity they may come across during their work is

rudimentary.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

- Learners take pride in their work and find their chosen celebrant courses both demanding and rewarding. The majority have some experience of public speaking, but often find conducting civil ceremonies challenging and quickly understand the need for sensitivity and authority. For example, at the start of the funeral residential course, learners develop their skills and behaviours with a coffin present in the training room and in later sessions a child's coffin is introduced. This helps them realise the impact this can have and to recognise the gravity of the role they are learning.
- Learners are overwhelmingly positive about the impact the distance learning programme and the residential course have on their skills, knowledge and behaviour development. The support and guidance they receive from tutors, assessors, visiting speakers and expert witnesses are outstanding.
- Learners have a clear understanding of how to start a business through the self-employment unit. As a result, one celebrant has developed a successful business and has carried out 150 ceremonies in two years. However, not all celebrants have had such success because the availability of work can vary regionally and between the two celebrant roles. Most celebrants gain work and continue to practise, often years after their training. A few return to CCL as tutors, assessors or expert witnesses.
- Tutors provide effective training in equality and inclusivity that helps learners meet the diverse needs of their clients. For example, one celebrant felt the training had helped in the funeral of a gay person whose family was unaware of the deceased person's sexuality. Another was mindful that a young child would be present during a family funeral and the celebrant was particularly careful about the language she used so that the child understood what was happening without further distress.
- Learners feel safe. They are aware of the risks of working alone and know how to use a lone working application on their mobile phone that they can activate if they feel threatened or vulnerable. The celebrant role can be highly emotional and distressing, and as a result, learners receive training to manage their health and well-being effectively, with guidance on good diet, exercise and mental health.
- Learners benefit from excellent, impartial careers advice about their specialist role. They clearly understand the value of marketing as part of the business model and the need to establish their service in the local community. Learners value highly the contact with previous learners when deciding to apply for the course. One learner made good use of a local celebrant as her mentor throughout the course. This enabled her to forge links with local funeral directors in preparation for when she qualified.

## Outcomes for learners

## Outstanding

- The proportion of learners recruited to the funeral and the naming and couples' ceremonies programmes in 2016 and 2017 who achieved their qualification is very high, as is the proportion who achieved within the planned period of study. Provisional data for 2017 and 2018 suggests that the company is maintaining these good outcomes, though

the proportion completing within the planned period has fallen slightly.

- Current learners are all on track to achieve and make excellent progress from their starting points. The retention rate of learners on both programmes since 2016 is very high, as is attendance on all residential courses.
- On completion of their level 3 qualifications, all celebrants have a variety of additional courses they can study. For funeral celebrants, these include a level 4 child and baby course, a level 2 poetry and readings for funerals course, and a level 1 strewing of cremated remains course.
- Most adult learners are aged between 45 and 65 on both programmes and most see these qualifications as an opportunity to change their career path or to pursue a new profession when facing retirement. Learners' starting points are clearly established, and learners are often surprised by how demanding their course can be. For example, a teacher with many years' experience was surprised by how much she needed to develop the skills involved in interviewing the bereaved and preparing an accurate and sensitive eulogy.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	1248008
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	82
Managing Director	Anne Barber
Telephone number	01480 276080
Website	<a href="http://www.civilceremonies.co.uk">www.civilceremonies.co.uk</a>

## 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)	0	0	0	0	0	75	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
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:	N/A							



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

### Inspection team

Bob Hamp, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Phil Romain	Ofsted Inspector
Barbara Hughes	Ofsted Inspector

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