

Newcastle upon Tyne City Council

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Newcastle City Learning is part of Newcastle upon Tyne City Council's Education and Skills division within the People's Directorate. It delivers community learning, adult skills training, study programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds, courses for learners who have high needs, and apprenticeships.

Newcastle City Learning was inspected in March 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement. The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Themes

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that they have access to timely and accurate management information with which to address key areas for improvement? Significant progress

Leaders and senior managers have taken decisive action to enhance the quality and timeliness of the information that they use to manage and improve the provision. As a result, they have been able to bring about rapid improvements to address many of the major weaknesses evident at the time of the previous inspection. For example, the proportion of adults achieving their qualifications has increased so that it is now above that found at similar providers. The overall attendance of adult learners and learners on study programmes has also improved significantly.

Managers can now interrogate data at many different levels, from individual courses up to curriculum areas, for individual tutors, and by learner characteristics. This enables them to identify emerging gaps in performance and put in place swift interventions. For example, the poor quality of the provision for learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties was recognised early enough to bring about a redesign of the curriculum and subsequent improvement to the outcomes for these learners.

Managers have developed an effective system through which they can track and monitor the progress of learners. Most tutors use this information well to identify additional support for those learners making slower than expected progress. A small minority of tutors, however, have not yet implemented the system fully.

Senior managers use the improved range of data available to them to manage effectively the performance of their staff. As a result, teachers delivering poor-quality provision have been managed out of the service successfully.

Members of the service's governing board have greater confidence in holding senior managers to account for the performance of the provision because they can now rely on the accuracy of the reports that they receive.

Have tutors improved their use of information on learners' starting points with which to plan and deliver learning, and do they provide learners with helpful feedback that enables them to improve and make more rapid progress? **Reasonable progress**

Managers have adopted a sensible approach to addressing the areas of weakness in teaching, learning and assessment identified at the previous inspection. They recognise that, because many of their teachers work on a part-time basis, the implementation of improvements needs to be staged carefully. Most teachers have improved the way that they use learners' starting points to plan and deliver learning, and feedback to learners is more constructive. However, a small minority of teachers have yet to embrace the required changes or have not had an opportunity to implement them.

Tutors have responded enthusiastically to a major shift away from planning learning around the achievement of qualifications to an approach based more on the development of learners' attitudes, skills and knowledge. They have become more adept at setting individual targets for learners based on their prior experience and qualifications, and in a language that learners can understand. A small number of tutors still need further support in adopting this approach to plan programmes for individual learners that will enable them to make more rapid progress.

The great majority of tutors provide helpful feedback on their learners' work. Tutors identify specific areas for development in their written feedback that enable learners to improve. In mathematics lessons, tutors challenge learners to reflect on why they have given the wrong answers and to learn from their mistakes. In a minority of subjects, tutors' feedback is confined to how learners can achieve a unit for their qualification and not on the development of broader skills.

These improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment enable a higher proportion of current learners to make better progress than at the time of the previous inspection.

What progress have managers and tutors made in improving the attendance of learners? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, managers and tutors have taken a range of effective actions to improve the overall attendance of learners. The attendance of adult learners has risen by over 10 percentage points. For learners on study programmes, who had the lowest attendance at the time of the previous inspection, attendance has improved by seven percentage points. Managers acknowledge, however, that

there are still areas of the provision where attendance needs to improve further, such as in access to higher education, and in English and mathematics.

Managers and tutors now have higher expectations about the attendance of their learners. At the beginning of the new academic year, they met with all study programme learners and their parents and carers to discuss and sign a new behaviour and attendance agreement. They have implemented a system of incentives to reward high attendance and have enforced sanctions swiftly for poor attenders. The service has invested in additional pastoral support workers, whose role is to follow up and support those learners whose attendance declines. Tutors have improved online resources to enable learners who miss sessions to catch up.

Managers reinforce the importance of attendance by making it one of the key improvement measures when they report to governors and manage the performance of teaching staff.

What progress have leaders, managers and tutors made in improving the development of learners' mathematical skills?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have made the development of learners' mathematical skills a key strategic priority. This has involved two strands of work. The first was to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on functional skills and GCSE mathematics courses. The second was to raise the skills and confidence levels of all tutors to plan and deliver practical mathematics, where appropriate, through their main subject areas.

Managers responsible for mathematics have used the improved data available to them to manage the performance of their tutors more effectively, and to identify which learners need additional support to make better progress within the subject. As a result, the proportion of learners achieving mathematics functional skills qualifications improved significantly by the end of 2017/18. Current learners on mathematics courses are making good progress.

All tutors in the service have been assessed for their level of mathematical skills and knowledge. Those who did not achieve a minimum standard have been provided with additional training to bring them up to the required level. All staff have received support on how to integrate mathematics into their subject specialisms. However, this has not yet translated into learners having the opportunity to develop their mathematical skills in all subject areas.

How effective have leaders, managers and tutors been in increasing learners' and apprentices' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism? Reasonable progress

Managers have intensified the range of strategies they use to increase learners' and apprentices' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They have redesigned the induction process that all learners undergo to place greater emphasis on these risks and they have given them greater prominence in learner handbooks. Teachers have produced short video cartoons, available in a range of languages and designed for different learner groups, that show learners, in an enjoyable way, how to identify the potential signs of someone becoming radicalised. All tutors have received additional training to increase their confidence in having discussions with learners about extremism, and how respect for core values can combat it.

These initiatives have had more impact in raising the awareness of apprentices of the risks of radicalisation and extremism than they have for adult and study programme learners. Assessors use their regular reviews with apprentices to discuss these risks, so they can measure over time how their level of understanding has increased. Managers cannot yet do this for adult and study programme learners because they only have anecdotal evidence about their learners' knowledge of the risks.

Managers have been hampered from making rapid progress on raising their adult and study programme learners' awareness because they have focused too much on attempting to get learners to identify what the 'Prevent' duty means, rather than concentrating on the risks that the duty is designed to combat.

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