

Royal British Legion Industries

Monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by ESFA. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the *Further education and skills inspection handbook*, especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly funded to deliver adult learning provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

The Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) delivers qualifications in employability at entry level and level 1, functional skills from entry level to level 2, and a range of vocational qualifications at levels 1 and 2. RBLI has two subcontractors who deliver qualifications in computerised accounts and bookkeeping at levels 1 and 2 and health and social care at level 1. Currently, there are 84 learners on courses. RBLI started to deliver its newly funded adult learning in November 2017.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have drawn successfully on RBLI's long tradition of rehabilitating ex-service men and women to design an adult learning programme to meet the needs of the wider community in Kent. The primary rationale for this curriculum is to enable unemployed adults to develop the personal confidence and skills they need to enter the labour market.

Leaders and managers work effectively with partner organisations, particularly Jobcentre Plus (JCP), whose customers make up the great majority of RBLI's referrals. They ensure that courses are available across the network of RBLI centres in Kent and in outreach venues, which make them accessible to learners. Managers organise courses quickly in response to shifting demands in the local labour market. For example, courses in customer service were set up in Ashford to enable JCP customers to apply for new jobs in the town's large retail park.

Leaders and managers have extended the range and reach of their curriculum offer through their work with subcontractors. In response to demand from JCP, they subcontracted with one provider to deliver qualifications in computerised accounts and bookkeeping. These have proved successful in gaining learners' employment or enabling them to become self-employed. However, managers have not developed enough progression opportunities for learners in some vocational areas. For example,

in health and social care and retail, qualifications are only offered at level 1. This level is too low for employment in these sectors.

The board of trustees and chief executive officer of RBLI hold managers to account for their performance very effectively. Performance during the first five months of the new adult learning contract was poor. Very few learners completed their courses and achieved their qualifications, particularly in English and mathematics. Leaders intervened swiftly to appoint a new director and manager to oversee the delivery of adult learning. They have transformed the quality of the provision in a short space of time. The great majority of current learners now achieve their qualifications and develop useful employability skills.

Leaders and managers know their provision well. They have identified accurately most areas that they need to improve. For example, they have already planned to provide more opportunities for learners to progress to higher-level qualifications. However, they have overemphasised the strengths of certain aspects of their delivery, such as tutors' use of initial assessment to plan learning to develop learners' technical skills in a few subjects.

Leaders and managers are not yet able to evaluate the effectiveness of the courses they run. They have recently implemented a system to track the destinations of learners up to six months after they leave their courses through regular texts and emails. However, it is still too early to know the results of this new initiative.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that adult learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals? **Reasonable progress**

Teachers plan and deliver activities that enable the great majority of learners to develop the skills and behaviours that prepare them well for employment. In English, information and communication technology and computerised accounts and bookkeeping, learners develop good technical skills because of their learning. For example, they can write professional business letters and emails, use spreadsheets and tables correctly to run trial balances, and identify accounting errors. Learners grow in personal confidence and become more practised at communicating and working together as members of teams.

Teachers place a strong emphasis on improving learners' English skills. They ensure that learners understand the technical vocabulary that they will come across in different vocational settings and how they can apply it. Teachers mark learners' work frequently and swiftly. They provide immediate feedback on marked work to help learners to improve further.

Teachers know their learners well, enabling them to adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate the needs of different learners. For example, teachers ensure that learners with dyslexia are provided with coloured overlays so that they can work independently, and they reduce the use of video clips in lessons when learners with epilepsy are present. Teachers provide effective information and advice to help learners plan their next steps. During enrolment, teachers discuss thoroughly learners' career aspirations and personal goals to ensure that they are on an appropriate course. The many learners who are in receipt of the Employment and Support Allowance benefit from the advice of an RBLI job coach.

Managers have ensured that delivery staff have the relevant experience and qualifications to teach in the vocational areas where they are deployed. However, no RBLI teaching staff have qualifications in English and mathematics above level 2. This hampers their ability to offer courses at this level. As a result, managers signpost learners to one of the subcontractors, but this provision is not available in all locations.

In a minority of subject areas, teachers do not use information on learners' starting points sufficiently well to plan individual learning to meet the needs of learners of different abilities. In mathematics, for example, teachers do not identify the specific areas of skills development, such as division and percentages, that individual learners need to improve. Instead, they teach the same lesson to the whole group of learners. In a few subjects, learners do not develop enough technical skills and vocational knowledge to equip them for employment. Learners on retail courses, for example, could not explain how career options would be different depending on the size of organisation.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

The two designated safeguarding leads for the skills team implement RBLI's comprehensive corporate safeguarding policies and procedures effectively to ensure that learners are kept safe. The safeguarding of learners and users of RBLI's other services is a key organisational priority, with high-level support and promotion from the board and senior management team.

Managers ensure that all new staff are appointed through strict safer recruitment procedures. All staff undergo mandatory safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training, with regular updates on new issues and concerns. Staff identify safeguarding concerns and report them swiftly to the designated safeguarding leads. Divisional directors review all reported incidents monthly to understand emerging trends and organise relevant training to enable staff to support learners better. Managers ensure that subcontractors follow up-to-date safeguarding practices as part of the commissioning process and through performance reviews.

The very great majority of learners know how and to whom they should report any safeguarding concerns. However, only a few learners are aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism or feel that they are relevant to their everyday lives. Even after a few weeks, not enough learners could recall the content of the video on the different types of extremism that they were shown at their induction.

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