

Short inspection of Gateshead Council

Inspection dates:

14–15 January 2020

Outcome

Gateshead Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Gateshead Council provides education and training as LearningSkills, which is in the care, well-being and learning directorate of the council. LearningSkills currently has just over 2,000 adult learners, the vast majority of whom follow courses in English, mathematics, information technology and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) at level 2 or below. A small minority of adult learners study other vocational courses or courses preparing them for employment. The adult learning provision also includes family and community learning. There are 128 adult learners on the 'open door' programme for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. LearningSkills also provides study programmes and traineeships for young people, and there are 65 learners following these courses. There are 308 apprentices in learning, with just over half studying at level 2. Apprenticeships are offered in a range of subject areas, including management, supporting teaching and learning in schools, and customer service. The largest subject area in which apprenticeships are delivered is business administration.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Leaders, managers and staff share the vision of the wider council to ensure that local communities thrive, and they are committed to improving the lives of the people in Gateshead. Learners benefit greatly from this ethos and flourish in the safe and welcoming learning environments that staff create.

Staff focus well on preparing learners and apprentices for life and work in modern Britain. Learners gain a range of new and enhanced knowledge and skills, such as communication and digital skills, which are useful to them in their everyday life, in their search for employment and at work. Younger learners develop very good practical construction skills which are well matched to local job opportunities. Apprentices in customer service develop confidence in dealing with a wide range of customers, including in difficult or challenging circumstances such as when customers are dissatisfied.

Staff have high expectations of learners to work together cooperatively, respect difference and celebrate diversity. Learners respond well to these expectations and

standards of behaviour are very high.

Learners and apprentices benefit from the support and care that they receive from their tutors and support workers. Most learners develop their confidence and resilience, which helps them to be successful in their studies. Staff work well with employers if apprentices experience difficulties that impact on their work.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have strengthened governance arrangements since the previous inspection. Governors, who are senior politicians in the council, increasingly hold the new leadership team to account to improve the quality of education and training that LearningSkills provides. Leaders and managers at all levels have an accurate understanding of what they need to improve and how they need to develop the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of the communities that they serve. For example, they have a clear and effective strategy to build on the rapid improvements that they have made to the apprenticeship provision.

Employers support apprentices well and are fully involved in their programmes. They monitor apprentices' progress closely and contribute fully to progress reviews. Tutors and employers identify quickly any apprentices at risk of falling behind to put in appropriate support, such as more frequent workplace visits. This is effective in getting apprentices back on track.

Tutors ensure that apprentices develop the knowledge and skills that they need for their current job roles and apprenticeship qualification. As a result, apprentices work professionally and carry out their job roles to a high standard. Tutors focus heavily on helping apprentices to gather evidence of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they demonstrate in their work roles to compile their evidence portfolio. However, they do not provide sufficient teaching that enables apprentices to develop their knowledge beyond their current work role or the work of their employer. This means that apprentices are not prepared well enough for their future work and careers.

Tutors who teach younger learners have good subject knowledge and vocational experience, which they use well to plan and sequence learning activities that develop learners' knowledge and practical skills. For example, in painting and decorating, tutors cover the theory behind the importance of surface preparation, how to calculate the amount of paint needed and different techniques such as 'cutting in'. Learners then apply this knowledge in practical workshops, practising until they can produce work of a high and commercially acceptable standard.

Tutors place significant emphasis on the personal development of younger learners, many of whom have previously been out of education, training or employment. For example, tutors develop learners' knowledge of the dangers of alcohol and drug misuse, which are significant risks that these younger learners face. Staff have implemented successfully a range of strategies, such as increased one-to-one

support, to improve the attendance of younger learners. Tutors also ensure that learners' behaviour is very good and of the standard expected in the workplace. Too many younger learners leave their programme before they take the important qualifications that they need for their future.

Tutors use a range of effective teaching strategies to develop the knowledge and skills that adult learners want and need to acquire. In mathematics classes, tutors apply mathematics to practical situations that learners may encounter in their everyday life, such as identifying whether furniture will fit in a room and using and reading a tape measure accurately. As a result, learners improve their knowledge significantly and a high proportion achieve their qualifications.

In ESOL classes, tutors plan the curriculum effectively so that learners develop the knowledge that they need to live successfully in the community and to support their families. Tutors use questioning and observation successfully to assess whether learners can recall new vocabulary and use it accurately. Learners make good progress; for example, they quickly learn how to make medical and housing appointments. Learners also rapidly develop their written answers from one word to full and accurate sentences.

Learners who take courses that prepare them for employment benefit from helpful feedback from their tutors which enables them to improve their communication skills and the quality of their job applications. Learners improve their confidence and use their improving skills in their everyday lives. However, too few move into employment.

For adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, managers provide an increasingly broad curriculum which supports learners to live happy, healthy and, where appropriate, independent adult lives. Managers have sensibly introduced digital skills into the curriculum and, consequently, learners develop an understanding of how to search for useful information on the internet and how to stay safe online by, for example, using good-quality passwords. Tutors direct support workers well and this helps learners to develop their knowledge and skills. Learners enjoy attending classes such as cooking and baking in which tutors help them develop their knowledge and skills in preparing the food that they like to eat and to practise good food hygiene.

Learners and apprentices benefit from helpful information and guidance provided by their tutors. Managers have not ensured that all adult learners and apprentices who need impartial, high-quality careers advice and guidance to understand the full range of options available to them receive it.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners know how they can report any safeguarding concerns. Staff thoroughly record safeguarding incidents and actions that they take in response, including

referrals to other agencies. The designated safeguarding leads have a good understanding of the safeguarding issues experienced by their learners, such as the increase in mental health issues and anxiety among learners. They provide mindfulness activities to help learners manage their mental health and a mentor to work with young people around these issues.

Managers understand the local risks well. For example, they are aware of the increase in gang-related activity in Gateshead and Newcastle and the impact this can have on their younger and vulnerable learners. However, managers have not done enough to equip all tutors with the skills to discuss these issues with learners with confidence and, therefore, learners' knowledge of these issues is not well developed.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that tutors plan a curriculum that enables apprentices to develop knowledge that is useful beyond their immediate job role.
- For learners following programmes that prepare them for employment, take action to increase the proportion who progress into work.
- Ensure that the proportion of young people who remain on their programme and successfully complete their courses increases.
- Improve the provision of high-quality impartial careers advice for adult learners and apprentices.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51938
Address	Dryden Professional Centre Evistones Road Gateshead NE9 5UR
Contact number	0191 433 8650
Website	gatesheadlearningskills.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Sonya Anderson
Provider type	Community learning and skills
Date of previous inspection	2 March 2016
Main subcontractors	ALD Hairdressing

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since Gateshead Council was judged to be good in November 2010.

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Rachel Angus, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jacque Brown	Her Majesty's Inspector
Neil Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Pat Hornsby	Ofsted Inspector

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020