

# Inspection of The Wiltshire Council

Inspection dates:

21–23 January 2020

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Adult learning programmes

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## Information about this provider

Wiltshire Council is a single unitary authority formed in 2009. The county is predominantly rural, with a population of around 500,000.

Wiltshire Council's family and community learning service aims to provide access to services and improve the quality of life in rural areas where social exclusion may occur. The provision focuses on adult learning programmes for disadvantaged communities. The large majority of courses in these programmes do not lead to formal qualifications. However, the curriculum also includes qualifications in functional English, mathematics and information technology. The courses aim to help learners of different ages and backgrounds to reconnect with learning, gain new knowledge and skills, and progress to further learning, employment or volunteering. All sessions take place in community venues or children's centres.

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

Learners improve their confidence and readiness to progress to further education and training. Effective teaching helps learners who have personal barriers to engaging in further education and training or who have not taken part in education for some time.

Most teachers plan courses that build on what learners already know and to fill any gaps in learners' knowledge. However, a small minority of learners on courses already have the knowledge they need to pass. Teachers do not teach these learners anything more about the subject.

Learners are quick to learn how to work productively with each other. They appreciate the sensitive ways that teachers conduct their lessons. Teachers and learners respect each other's views and listen patiently to each other's opinions. Their discussions are lively and help learners understand how best to approach tasks.

Learners are motivated and take part in lessons enthusiastically because they recognise how the subject content they have learned builds their potential and capacity to learn by linking to their everyday lives and aspirations.

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

Too few adults who would benefit from education are being reached. Leaders do not work closely enough with partner organisations to design and promote a curriculum that attracts potential new learners. This means that only very small numbers of people attend current courses, and a large number of programmes have been cancelled as they do not have sufficient learners. Leaders have consistently missed their own targets to widen the curriculum offer and they have no clear plan to deal with this long-standing issue.

Managers and tutors do not set clear goals for each course, particularly in relation to developing the valuable interpersonal skills many learners will be working towards. Too often, course plans consist of a list of activities or tasks that learners will complete rather than focusing strongly on the knowledge or skills learners will acquire. This means that such goals are not assessed, and learners do not know how far they have developed. In a minority of programmes, the curriculum aim is not reflected in the content of the curriculum. For example, the goal for mathematics learners is that they become confident in using mathematics in their everyday lives. However, the content does not include enough emphasis on how to apply these skills and develop learners' confidence.

Leaders have improved their oversight of the quality of the courses they provide. They now check that teachers are assessing learners' skills and knowledge at the start of their programmes accurately. The resources teachers use are now of good quality. More regular professional development for tutors, and opportunities to share

their specialism with others, is improving the quality of teaching and mentoring practice across the team. A wider range of information, advice and guidance provided for learners is ensuring that more are aware of their potential next steps.

Tutors carefully plan learning to build on learners' skills from previous and current courses. Tutors provide sensitive support to re-engage learners and let them know about additional resources or guidance. For example, one tutor sends a weekly email to learners, reminding them of the knowledge they have covered that week, and provides links to useful additional resources.

Most tutors identify learners' prior experience effectively and respond by adapting the curriculum. Opportunities for learners to discuss the difficulties they face in their daily lives and explore successful strategies to overcome such problems build their confidence and develop their speaking and listening skills well. For example, when learning about budgeting, learners had identified a desire to be positive role models for their children. The tutor incorporated strategies to achieve this into the curriculum plan. Tutors use their own and learners' experiences well to help learners better understand key concepts.

The majority of tutors check learners' understanding of topics well. They carefully recap previous work through quizzes and group questioning. They use this information to build in additional support or set higher expectations for what their learners can achieve. However, a minority of tutors do not do this, and as a result a few of their learners do not have time to repeat and reinforce the knowledge being taught.

Tutors use community resources effectively to ensure that learners can access programmes. Through locating programmes in children's centres with crèches, parents and carers can attend learning knowing that their children are being looked after nearby.

Learners are at different stages of their journey towards employment or further study, but the majority know how the knowledge, skills and behaviours they are developing will help them achieve such goals. They become able to apply their new skills in their daily lives, such as being able to help their children with homework or learning how to set up a business.

Learners develop their confidence in their own abilities, such as going into their children's schools to discuss their child's progress with teachers. This confidence enables them to become actively involved in their local communities. However, the very small class sizes restrict opportunities for learners to work with a wide enough range of people or learn how to work effectively in groups.

Tutors have a positive, confident approach to ensuring that learners understand and value diversity and equality of opportunity. Tutors give learners who have difficulties communicating the time to have their say, and for their contribution to be valued. This contributes to learners being respectful of each other and listening carefully during discussions. Tutors skilfully support learners with disabilities to ensure that

they can access and gain from the learning offer. Learners actively support any of their peers who lack confidence.

Tutors provide useful information to learners about potential risks associated with their local area and in their personal lives. Learners value the opportunity to discuss these issues and understand where to access support.

Governance oversight has been hampered by several changes to board membership. As a result, governors do not offer sufficient challenge to managers or hold them to account well enough for meeting agreed targets.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The majority of learners have a good understanding of how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremist views. Staff know their learners well and highlight any potential concerns swiftly. They are skilled at not stigmatising learners who face difficult issues in their personal lives.

Leaders have good links with other council support teams and use these effectively to gain advice and refer learners for additional support if required. Leaders have sound processes to check that staff can work safely with vulnerable adults.

Governors work closely with leaders to deal with individual safeguarding issues and have recently established additional monthly quality assurance checks to better understand and learn from any themes identified.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Work closely with partners to design and implement an effective curriculum that attracts a substantially greater number of learners. It should meet the needs of those at risk of social disadvantage and build stronger communities.
- Establish formal feedback systems for partners, which support the service to improve.
- Set course goals which focus on the knowledge, skills and behaviours learners will develop rather than on the tasks and activities they will be carrying out.
- Develop governance arrangements which are effective at holding leaders to account.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	50245
<b>Address</b>	County Hall Bythesea Road Trowbridge BA14 8JN
<b>Contact number</b>	01225 713264
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/family-learning">www.wiltshire.gov.uk/family-learning</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Amanda Timbrell, Head of Employment and Skills
<b>Provider type</b>	Adult and community learning
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5–7 December 2017

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the family and community learning manager, 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

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