

Short inspection of Bristol City Council

Inspection dates:

12–13 February 2020

Outcome

Bristol City Council (BCC) continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Bristol City Council is the lead partner and contract holder in a consortium which is also known as Community Learning West. The consortium was established in 2011 and provides adult education and apprenticeships in over 150 venues or locations. Partners include North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and 12 smaller subcontractors, including local colleges. BCC apprenticeship provision trades under the name Bristol Apprenticeship Service and On Site Bristol.

BCC was last inspected in February 2016. Its provision was judged to be good.

BCC is currently working with 333 adult learners on accredited programmes, 1821 learners on community learning courses and 143 apprentices. The vast majority of learners are studying community learning courses to enable them to develop new knowledge, progress on to higher-level courses and prepare them for employment. The vast majority of apprentices are completing programmes in construction, with a few doing health and social care.

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

All learners and the majority of apprentices are benefiting from a positive learning experience at BCC. They acquire new skills and can describe how the new knowledge they are learning is making a difference to their lives and their future prospects. The apprenticeship programme contributes well to developing apprentices' positive behaviours and attitudes. Apprentices report that they feel much more mature than their peers in other further education provision.

Learners very much value staff who listen carefully to their views about their education and training and act promptly to their concerns. Staff use feedback to enhance learners' experiences, for example moving training to a larger building which included a creche facility for their children.

Studying the community learning curriculum at BCC has had a profound and affirmative effect on many learners' lives. A stimulating, well-planned and sequenced curriculum contributes significantly to learners becoming valued and noteworthy

members of society. Activities, such as organising and operating local refugee groups, provide opportunities to promote a deeper awareness of subjects such as female genital mutilation to community members.

The curriculum also ensures that learners increase significantly their subject knowledge and practical and academic skills. They develop appropriate behaviours for work and increase their levels of confidence. This enables them to gain employment and progress on to higher levels of learning.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum which provides learners and most apprentices with life changing opportunities. It is thoughtfully designed to ensure that it meets the needs of learners, many of whom have not previously benefited from formal education, training or employment. The curriculum ensures that learners gain the new skills, knowledge and behaviours required to progress into work. It also helps learners participate fully in their communities and become effective role models.

Staff harness carefully a culture of inclusivity, respect and support for all their learners and apprentices. They are diligent in ensuring that this is maintained at all locations. Staff actively promote community cohesion through their choice of the curriculum offer and the support they provide learners, for example providing learners with volunteering opportunities at large events such as St Paul's Carnival.

Learners and apprentices have access to safe and well-resourced learning environments. Staff are aspirational for their learners and their teaching ensures that all learners are involved and meeting their own personal targets and goals. As a result, learners are highly motivated to learn, increase their resilience and strive to achieve their qualifications swiftly.

Staff plan and teach the curriculum in a logical and systematic way. They provide learners and apprentices with plenty of opportunities to practice and master new skills. Staff use questions effectively in order to check and recap new knowledge and to ensure that they know and understand it before moving on to more complex and deeper learning.

Learners and apprentices demonstrate exceptional behaviours in learning sessions. They arrive well prepared and enjoy their learning. Learners and apprentices are extremely complementary about the academic and pastoral support and care provided by staff at BCC.

Learners develop their independent learning skills well; they set their own knowledge and skill development targets, reflect on what they need to do to improve the progress they make and can demonstrate their achievements over time. Staff check the progress learners make towards the curriculum goals and targets of those studying on non-accredited courses carefully.

Many apprentices benefit from effective and supportive reviews conducted by staff and employers. During the reviews, staff discuss local and wider social issues, and community and employment responsibilities. As a result, apprentices deepen their knowledge of subjects such as fundamental British values, health, safety and security, and how to spot signs of extremist behaviours. Apprentices use this helpful feedback to inform their understanding of the progress they have made from their starting points and to set new targets.

The curriculum content is well-designed and prepares learners and most apprentices well for their next steps in education, training or in becoming active citizens within their communities. Almost all learners move on to employment, further training or take up volunteering roles in the local community.

The curriculum content is thoughtfully planned. It enables learners and apprentices to use their newly acquired skills, such as being able to help their children complete mathematics homework, to further develop their careers and increase their employment prospects. The curriculum for the food hygiene course allows young people who have learning difficulties to progress successfully into paid work within the food industry.

A few subcontractors are not providing learners and apprentices with the right training and/or support to ensure that they make swift progress towards achieving their curriculum goals. For example, health and care apprentices are not achieving their qualifications within the expected timeframe and they are unhappy with the lack of support they are receiving from subcontractor staff.

Recent changes have strengthened the governance arrangements. As a result, leaders and managers now receive external input and scrutiny from newly appointed governors. However, it is too early to see the impact of these changes on the quality of the provision.

A few learners do not attend learning sessions regularly. Staff do not always challenge learners' lateness or non-attendance robustly enough. For example, too many apprentices arrive late for off-the-job learning sessions and their punctuality has not improved since the start of the programme.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff at BCC have a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding. This is updated frequently with effective training that meets their development needs. Staff use this knowledge well to enhance the curriculum content and deliver safeguarding topics, including the importance of e-safety and how to achieve it, to learners and most apprentices.

Learners and apprentices have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. They feel safe and are safe.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that the quality of all subcontractors meets their high expectations and that all learners receive a good or better training programme.
- Continue to improve the arrangements for governance so that clear oversight and challenge is provided to senior leaders that helps them to improve the service further.
- All staff should challenge lateness and/or poor attendance and support learners and apprentices to develop these essential work-related skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50846
Address	The Park Daventry Road BS4 1DQ
Contact number	0117 9039750
Website	www.bristol.gov.uk
Principal/CEO	Alison Hurley
Provider type	Adult Community Learning
Date of previous inspection	22–25 February 2016
Main subcontractors	South Gloucestershire Council North Somerset Council

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Bristol City Council was judged to be good in February 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the head of community learning, 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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