

Short inspection of Hertfordshire County Council

Inspection dates:

11–12 February 2020

Outcome

Hertfordshire County Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Hertfordshire County Council provides education and training as Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service (HAFLS). HAFLS is part of the Adult Care Services Division of Hertfordshire County Council.

Most provision is courses for adults in health and well-being, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English, skills for work, digital skills and mathematics. HAFLS also offers study programmes to 15 young people aged 16 to 19 years. Forty-four apprentices are currently working towards the Level 3 Operational Fire Fighter standards-based programme. HAFLS has recently started a pilot programme called 'Pathways' for nine learners with high needs. The course aims to prepare them for independent living and work.

Sixteen subcontractors provide most of the courses through community venues. Courses aim to help learners improve their life skills, gain employment or enter further education.

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

Learners across the wide range of courses taught have a good experience. They enjoy interesting classes in community venues, close to their homes and workplaces.

Teachers know their learners well. Teachers skilfully guide learners to acquire new knowledge and skills. Learners on employment-related courses improve their writing skills. They know how to write a good letter of introduction to a prospective employer.

Learners develop increased levels of self-confidence. For example, learners with high needs took part in a Christmas show. They felt empowered to perform to a large audience.

Teachers focus on improving learners' well-being. Classes often start with a topic on promoting physical and emotional health. Teachers use small-group discussions skilfully to generate learners' interest in staying healthy.

Learners and apprentices gain a sound understanding and respect for other cultures and people. For example, learners with high needs discuss being tolerant of other learners with specific traits, such as incessant pacing.

Learners feel safe and are kept safe while using the service. Teachers place a strong emphasis in lessons on keeping safe and safe working practices. Apprentices and adult learners have a good awareness of the dangers arising from use of the internet and social media.

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

Managers have successfully maintained the high quality of the provision. Outcomes for learners are good. Most learners on accredited courses achieve their qualifications. Careers advice and guidance remains good.

Senior leaders ensure that the provision meets the strategic objectives of the authority. As a result of the good range of courses, residents improve their health, well-being and employment prospects.

Senior leaders acted very swiftly in response to a reduction in local provision by further education colleges. They opened three new area hubs, ensuring continuity of access to learning.

Leaders ensure that the selection and monitoring of subcontractors is rigorous. They ensure that subcontractors receive very effective challenge to help them deliver the planned curriculum successfully. Leaders do not hesitate to end contracts for providers who underperform.

Senior leaders have improved their monitoring and management of the apprenticeship provision. The current programme fully meets the requirements of an apprenticeship programme. Well-qualified trainers provide high-quality on- and off-the-job training. As a result, apprentices make good progress with their learning.

Leaders ensure that staff help learners consolidate their prior knowledge and develop valuable new skills. For example, they have recently introduced a foundation course in punctuation and grammar. As a result, current learners make good progress.

Teachers and trainers assess learners' starting points well. Any extra help that learners and apprentices may need is quickly identified and put in place. As a result, these learners and apprentices successfully complete their training.

Teachers check learners' understanding of new topics effectively throughout their courses. They use a wide range of activities to assess and reinforce learners' recall of their previous learning.

Adult learners develop good work-related literacy skills. They clearly recognise how better use of punctuation has improved their confidence and performance at work.

Leaders have successfully implemented the 16 to 19 study programmes. They provide tailored study for those young people who have not accessed education. Many learners face complex personal challenges. Leaders have taken swift action to improve learners' English and mathematics skills. This has led to improved functional skills results for learners. More learners now achieve their vocational qualifications than was previously the case.

Provision for high needs funded learners is not yet good. Teachers do not know what learners are able to do when they start their programme. They do not have enough information to plan learning effectively. As a result, teachers are unable to plan developmental milestones. Some learning activities are insufficiently demanding of learners.

Staff speech and language expertise is insufficient. Staff are not always able to provide appropriate communication strategies for high needs funded learners.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

HAFSL safeguarding practices are robust and reflect current guidance. Teachers report any safeguarding concerns to managers, who investigate swiftly and effectively. Senior leaders use well their effective links with external partners to refer learners. For example, they refer vulnerable learners to partners who provide effective mental health support, or who help victims of domestic violence. Managers' monitoring of their most vulnerable learners is highly effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

Leaders should rapidly improve the quality of provision for high needs funded learners by ensuring that:

- teachers understand what learners are able to do at the start of their programme
- teachers use this information to plan developmental milestones for individual learners
- teachers plan learning activities that challenge and inspire learners
- staff expertise is enough to enable them to provide appropriate communication strategies for individual learners.

Provider details

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Address	Room 328 CHO 121 County Hall Pegs Lane Hertford Hertfordshire SG13 8DF
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Website	www.hafls.hertfordshire.gov.uk
Principal	Chantal Lommel
Provider type	Local authority
Date of previous inspection	11 February 2020
Main subcontractors	Community Learning Partnership Dacorum Council for Voluntary Service Oaklands College SPS Training Solutions Watford Women's' Centre

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since Hertfordshire County Council was judged to be good in May 2012.

The inspection team was assisted by the operation and administration 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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