

Short inspection of Central Bedfordshire Council

Inspection dates:

10–11 March 2020

Outcome

Central Bedfordshire Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) was previously inspected in March 2016. CBC's management centre is in Shefford. Its courses are taught in venues across the local authority. At the time of inspection, CBC had 49 apprentices studying apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5. Approximately 230 adults were on functional skills programmes and 570 learners on a range of courses offered by 11 subcontractors.

The curriculum offer meets the needs of the most vulnerable residents in the local authority. Courses offered include functional skills, improving your personal health and well-being, and courses to help residents return to work.

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

Apprentices particularly enjoy their training. They gain qualifications to secure permanent employment on completion of their apprenticeship. Apprentices demonstrate a good use of sector-specific technical language. They draw on real-life experiences to link theory to their workplace practice.

Adult learners develop their confidence and self-esteem. This enables them to better manage their levels of social anxiety and mental well-being. They value learning in safe environments. Adults enjoy interacting and talking to people who face similar difficulties to themselves. This helps them find positive solutions to improve the day-to-day challenges they experience.

Learners develop their understanding of how to lead healthier lifestyles. This helps them improve underlying health conditions and to improve their mental well-being. For example, they learn which foods are beneficial to their health. They know how to embed more exercise into their daily lives. Learners develop realistic personalised plans to enable them to achieve their goals. They speak highly of the support and guidance they receive from their teachers to help them do so.

Learners feel safe at CBC.

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

Teaching staff provide a supportive and welcoming environment for learners. Teachers help adults to develop effective communication, teamwork and English skills. As a result, learners have improved their understanding and use of punctuation and spelling. They develop their confidence and self-esteem by interacting and working in small groups. Learners are engaged and motivated to learn.

Teachers effectively check the understanding, context and detail of apprentices' and adults' learning. Teaching staff make direct references to apprentices' and learners' real-life experiences. For example, childcare apprentices have a good understanding of recent serious case reviews. They use this knowledge to improve their own practice. Teachers often revisit topics to ensure that apprentices and learners retain their learning.

Assessors do not routinely monitor apprentices' development against all elements of their programme. The reviews they undertake are too generic. Apprentices are not clear about what they do well or need to improve. As a result, apprentices have a fragmented view of the progress they are making.

Tutors and assessors do not make effective use of apprentices' initial assessments to identify gaps in apprentices' English and mathematics knowledge. They do not use this information to help apprentices quickly develop the skills they need. Too many apprentices repeat English and mathematics tasks they are already competent in. Therefore, their progress towards achieving English and mathematics qualifications is too slow.

Adult learners receive useful, impartial advice and guidance from national careers service staff. Staff visit learners at the start of their courses or at taster sessions. As a result, learners make informed choices to help them gain paid employment or access further study.

Apprentices understand how their qualifications will help them realise their career aspirations. Assessors provide apprentices with relevant and useful information on their next steps. Apprentices make good use of online resources to research their wider options during their personal study time. As a result, on completion of their apprenticeship, apprentices know what they need to do next.

Leaders prioritise working with residents who have significant issues to overcome in their lives. This helps vulnerable residents get back into employment or gain better paid jobs. Leaders work with high-quality subcontractor partners. These partners have good experience of working with homeless residents and those with mental health needs. The result is a curriculum offer that is responsive and targeted to the needs of residents.

Senior leaders and governors have very comprehensive and clear guidelines to monitor the quality of subcontractors. All aspects of what they are expected to do are clearly articulated. Managers meet frequently with contractors to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities to a high standard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders have developed robust safeguarding processes. They ensure that subcontractors adhere to their responsibilities to keep learners safe. Centre managers closely monitor visitor access to their sites. As a result, apprentices and learners feel safe and are safe. They know who to report issues to should they arise.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure that apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills. Assessors must use the information that they have to plan relevant learning.
- Assessors must routinely monitor apprentices' development against all elements of their programme. They must ensure that apprentices are clear about what they do well or need to improve.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59021
Address	Priory House Monks Walk Chicksands Shefford SG17 5TQ
Contact number	0300 300 4105
Website	www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk ,
Principal/CEO	Anna Bosworth
Provider type	Community and adult education
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2016
Main subcontractors	All Dimension Be Positive Best Practice People Bedfordshire Training and Assessment Centre Develop Disability Resource Centre Evolve Your Future Impact Mental Health JRNY Noah Enterprise SSG

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Central Bedfordshire Council was judged to be good in March 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the employment and skills service 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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