

# The Wiltshire Council

Progress monitoring report

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

The Wiltshire Council was last inspected in January 2020. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

### Theme

**What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have made reasonable progress in improving the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

Leaders and managers have developed new partnerships with a range of community-based organisations. Together, they design courses that support the learning and employment goals of their clients. Through involvement in strategic employment partnerships, managers have set up courses that respond effectively to local skills shortages. For example, learners looking for work in the early years sector attend a short course about the knowledge and skills required to work in childcare settings.

Learners benefit from a guaranteed interview with an employer. They also gain confidence in taking part in online interviews.

Many of the partner organisations, however, are in the initial stages of identifying what they would like the family and community learning service to run for them. Consequently, a great deal of courses expected as a result of these new partnerships have not yet started. Managers are still exploring how the service can set up courses where there are local job vacancies, such as in construction and in customer service centres.

Tutors give learners constructive feedback, which helps them correct their mistakes and apply their learning. As a result of the feedback, learners studying on courses for English for speakers of other languages now understand when to use 'is' and 'are' in a sentence. Learners studying on budgeting courses know the difference between expenditure and outgoings. They can work out how much they need to set aside for occasional costs, such as travel.

Tutors' assessments of learners' skills at the start of the course determine which learning outcomes learners can achieve in each lesson. Too often, these outcomes are generic to the lesson and are based on tasks tutors ask learners to complete. Tutors do not focus enough on the knowledge, skills and behaviours learners need to gain over time to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Tutors are appropriately qualified and have subject specialist expertise. They receive relevant training in teaching online, which is targeted at their skills gaps. Managers recognise that tutors would benefit from more training to develop further their skills in teaching online.

Not all learners gain confidence quickly enough to use their cameras in online lessons. This is because tutors are not always successful in encouraging them to do so. This makes it difficult for tutors to assess learners' interest, concentration, and attendance in lessons.

Learners appreciate the support they receive from staff to help them overcome personal difficulties. Leaders and managers refer learners to other services in the community, such as food banks and mental health services. Learners value the positive impact this has on their health and well-being.

Tutors often give learners extra help with their learning before the start of lessons. They make effective use of 'chat bars' and the virtual learning platform to help learners with anything they have not understood.

Since the previous inspection, membership of the governing body and its terms of reference have been revised. A new chair and several new members are now in place. The membership includes representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions, and the education sector. Following a joint review of its vision and values, the governing body is starting to work positively with the service.

Leaders provide information to help governors monitor the progress towards the achievement of the agreed key performance indicators. They identify accurately that a key target is to increase and widen learners' participation. As a result of the reports they now routinely receive, they know that this is beginning to happen. Governors rightly acknowledge that having a better understanding of the service will help them challenge and support leaders in a more informed way.

Leaders communicate frequently with partner organisations. They respond well to the feedback partners give. At the end of each course, managers at Wiltshire Council discuss the improvements to make with the relevant partner. As a result, leaders make the changes needed in the next course to better meet learners' needs. Leaders ask for and receive feedback frequently from partners through a recently introduced survey. They now give partners more notice of the start date of courses.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- develop specific learning goals for each learner, and use these to provide the new knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need over time to meet their planned next steps and aspirations
- support tutors to improve their teaching skills, especially for online and remote teaching, so that they can assess learners' participation in lessons, and help them to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours at the highest level of which they are capable
- continue to improve the governing body's understanding of the provision more rapidly so that governors can challenge, monitor and support leaders rigorously, and from a more well-informed position.

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