

# Richmond Upon Thames Borough Council

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 53144

**Name of lead inspector:** Gayle Saundry, Her Majesty's Inspector

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**Type of provider:** Local authority

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to Richmond Upon Thames London Borough Council, following publication of the inspection report on 12 February 2020 which found the provider to be inadequate overall. At a progress monitoring visit in March 2021 the provider was judged to have made reasonable progress in ensuring that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning.

Since their most recent inspection, leaders have significantly reduced the number of subcontractors with whom they work. All of the council's adult learning is now taught by Richmond and Hillcroft Adult Community College (RHACC), and their apprenticeship provision by Achieving for Children (AfC).

From March 2020, due to the pandemic, a large majority of the council's courses moved to online delivery. At the time of the visit, most adult learning courses had returned to face-to-face teaching, however, some courses and some elements of their apprenticeship delivery remain online.

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

### Themes

<b>What progress have leaders made in ensuring that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place?</b>	<b>Reasonable progress</b>
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Since their most recent inspection, leaders have appointed appropriately trained staff who have put in place the processes needed to gain an accurate oversight of safeguarding.

Leaders have updated the council's safeguarding policies, which now make clear how and to whom safeguarding concerns should be raised. Leaders made good use of external expertise when writing their policies and, as a result, their policies meet requirements.

Leaders now maintain an accurate record of all staff who work with learners in their own organisation and in that of their two subcontractors. Records provide evidence of the background checks and pre-employment checks that employers have undertaken. More recently, leaders have begun to test safeguarding arrangements through first-hand evidence, for instance by visiting apprentice reviews and adult learning lessons. As a result, leaders now have a good oversight of the safeguarding arrangements subcontractors have in place.

Leaders have ensured that all staff and governors have completed appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Governors have used their improved knowledge of safeguarding to challenge leaders to further improve their practice.

Learners feel safe when learning and would tell staff if they had any concerns about their well-being or safeguarding. Leaders maintain a log of any safeguarding concerns raised by their subcontractors. Where a concern is raised, leaders take appropriate steps to support that learner.

Leaders have undertaken appropriate risk assessments relating to radicalisation and extremism. However, these assessments do not identify the specific risks that their learners may face and, as such, specific mitigations against these risks have not been put in place.

Leaders recognise that there remain elements of their approach to safeguarding which could be improved. For instance, in safeguarding policies, leaders have missed opportunities to include guidance for staff and learners on important issues, such as sexual harassment and county lines.

**How effective have leaders been in implementing Reasonable progress an adult education curriculum which meets local priorities and enables learners to achieve their aspirations?**

Since their most recent inspection, leaders have worked closely with the head of employment and skills for the borough with Job Centre Plus and with a local recruitment service to identify local priorities for education and employment. This has led to an increase in courses such as in employability and information technology being offered.

More recently, leaders have added a range of courses designed to support adults with their well-being in response to the negative social impacts of Covid-19. These include courses such as Pilates, targeted to support learners to manage their mental and physical health and to engage confidently in learning as part of a group.

Leaders offer courses which support learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities to develop their skills in subjects they enjoy, such as art. Learners are proud of their achievements and show confidence when discussing their work. For example, learners on the enterprise course learn the skills needed to create lino prints and are proud of having their artwork for sale in the college shop.

When planning their curriculum, most teachers at the college consider the aspirations of learners when deciding what and how to teach. For example, teachers of English support learners who want to progress to GCSE English by focusing on the use of descriptive language when writing poetry. In lessons and in their marked work, teachers correct learners' misconceptions and provide them with feedback that helps them to achieve their goals.

In a few instances, leaders have not placed learners on the most appropriate course to meet their ambitions. For instance, in a course in supporting children with key stage two English, learners had a wide range of aims which were not well matched to the course curriculum.

**What progress have leaders made towards establishing effective quality assurance activities, including that of subcontracted provision, to give them oversight of the quality of adult education?**

**Reasonable progress**

Since their most recent inspection, leaders and governors have taken swift and decisive action to reduce the number of subcontractors with whom they work.

Leaders have put in place appropriate procedures to oversee the quality and performance of their subcontractors. They have recently introduced monthly meetings at which they monitor progress and set targets for improvement. For example, at a recent meeting, leaders challenged AfC to improve the way in which they track apprentices' progress, so that apprentices can more easily understand the progress they have made and identify any support they may need.

Governors have taken appropriate actions to bring in additional expertise to their leadership team and to broaden the range of experience on their board. In doing so, governors have committed the resources needed to improve the quality of their education provision.

Leaders have recently put in place a range of suitable activities to check that learners have a positive experience and learn new skills. These include evaluating online learning sessions and speaking to learners about how their courses meet their needs. However, these activities are in their infancy, and do not yet provide leaders with a thorough understanding of how well their subcontractors carry out initial advice and guidance, assess prior knowledge, and effectively induct their learners. Leaders mostly rely on their subcontractors' quality checks for this assurance, and leaders recognise they need to do more to improve.

Leaders have been slow to evaluate the impact of the courses offered by RHACC. As a result, they are not able to clearly articulate how the courses offered meet the priorities and needs of the borough, or how effectively they are doing so.

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