

Short inspection of Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 November 2021

Outcome

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council manages its community learning and skills provision within the council's adult learning service department (the service). The service offers a range of accredited and non-accredited short courses, funded by Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

At the time of the inspection, there were 557 adult learners studying community learning and skills courses. The large majority study courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), digital skills and information and communication technology (ICT), numeracy and literacy. Around three quarters of current learners study entry level courses. The remaining learners follow courses at levels 1 and 2. Learning mostly takes place across four community learning centres. A few courses take place in community venues, such as schools.

At their previous inspection in November 2015, Bury Metropolitan Borough Council was judged to be good.

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

Learners are very happy with their courses. They enjoy making new friends in a welcoming and relaxed environment. Learners feel accepted. They are proud of the skills they develop.

Learning environments are calm and respectful. Classrooms are well resourced and conducive to learning. Learners enjoy their learning.

Learners appreciate the helpful and supportive staff. They benefit from individual tutoring and receive additional support if needed. Most learners make good progress on their course.

Learners develop the digital and language skills they need for work and life. They develop their confidence. Learners on ESOL courses gain confidence to be able to shop independently. For example, they learn how to ask the shop assistant for help in locating items they want to buy.

Learners feel safe and know who to go to if they have any concerns. They understand how to work safely while online. Learners are not clear about the signs, risks or potential impact of radicalisation and extremism.

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

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council is a good provider. Leaders have in place a clear strategy for their adult learning provision built around the needs of the local community. They have designed the curriculum for learners to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to move into employment or further study or to play a productive role in their local communities.

Leaders adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of learners. They introduced a mental health curriculum that supports learners to improve their confidence and prepares them to move into further study or work. During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders introduced new digital skills courses. Tutors support older learners to learn how to book appointments online and conduct online banking transactions safely.

Tutors teach the curriculum in a logical order so that learners incrementally develop and deepen what they know and can do. Learners on pre-entry ESOL courses develop their speaking and listening skills by reading and identifying letter sounds before learning how to say and spell numbers. Then they move on to saying more complex sentences with verbs.

Learners develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours effectively. Learners on ICT courses learn about file management and use spreadsheets skilfully. Learners on ESOL courses improve their reading, writing and speaking skills so that they can read stories to their children and help them with their homework.

Leaders' and tutors' support extends beyond the taught curriculum. They put the learner and the community at the heart of everything they do. Tutors provide wraparound support that learners greatly value. Leaders and tutors provide a coffee morning for learners and others in the community to get to know each other. Staff use their links with organisations to help learners who experience difficulties with housing and/or funding for childcare.

A few learners do not achieve their personal targets swiftly enough because tutors do not update learners' individual learning plans with sufficient rigour.

Learners benefit from effective, initial careers advice and guidance. Tutors use an initial assessment to assess learners' starting points which means they are enrolled on the correct level of course. At the end of their course, learners complete a review

of their next steps. Tutors direct them into further learning or onto the provider's information, advice and guidance officer or to the National Careers Service (NCS). Leaders are currently working with the NCS to relaunch careers training sessions which were halted at the start of the pandemic. They plan to deliver topics such as career choices, CV writing, applying for jobs and interview skills to groups of learners.

Leaders have strengthened the governance board since the previous inspection in 2015. Elected members challenge leaders about aspects such as ensuring the curriculum offer meets the needs of the borough. They tasked leaders to develop digital skills courses so that parents could support their children to stay safe and learn online. Leaders worked with local employers and community leaders to set up digital learning hubs across the borough to support parents to improve their digital skills. Elected members rightly recognise that leaders do not provide them with sufficiently detailed reports on learners' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. This hinders their opportunity to question leaders on these aspects of the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders work closely with partners in the local authority and external organisations to support learners with safeguarding needs. They make prompt and appropriate referrals where necessary. Leaders undertake frequent welfare checks with learners whose safeguarding cases remain open.

Although leaders have in place secure mechanisms for logging and storing safeguarding records, safeguarding officers are not able to quickly locate individual safeguarding cases. Leaders agree that they need to improve this.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that tutors set incisive targets so that all learners make rapid progress towards achieving their knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Leaders should collate, analyse and report to members of the governance board information about the progress that learners make from their starting points and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders should ensure that individual safeguarding cases are easy to locate.
- Leaders should ensure that learners understand the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism that they may encounter.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50898
Address	18 Haymarket Street Bury Lancashire BL9 0AQ
Contact number	01612535695
Website	www.bury.gov.uk/adultlearning
Acting head of service	Joanne Hatton
Provider type	Local authority
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 November 2015
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Bury Metropolitan Borough Council was judged to be good in November 2015.

The inspection team was assisted by the acting senior curriculum and quality leader, 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 visiting 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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Her Majesty's Inspector

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