

# South Gloucestershire Council

Monitoring visit report

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<b>Address:</b>	Civic Centre High Street Kingswood BS15 9TR

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

South Gloucestershire Council's Adult Education and Community Learning Service (SGC) is in the Council's Children, Adults and Health directorate. SGC became a directly funded provider in August 2020. SGC teaches online and classroom-based learning in 37 community-based venues across the South Gloucestershire area.

Since September 2021, SGC has taught 365 adult learners. The service focuses on learners whose prior education attainment is below level 2 and aims to improve their skills and quality of life.

Most learners study community learning courses that enable them to build and develop their confidence, acquire new skills and knowledge and prepare them for progression to both higher-level study and employment. Some of these courses lead to accredited outcomes in both functional skills and employability.

### Themes

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose? Reasonable progress**

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the service. They use current information about local skills requirements to address effectively social disadvantages and improve employability skills through the curriculum. For example, in response to a request during the national lockdown from staff in the Department for Work and Pensions, leaders devised an effective eight-week course to support learners in Yate to improve their skills to enable them to find employment and be ready for work.

Leaders have formed highly effective, collaborative partnerships within the council and in the local area with organisations such as the local further education college. They work together to meet local learning and skills needs effectively and reduce unnecessary competition and duplication of provision. As a result, learners have access to courses in their local communities that give them the confidence to participate more fully in their community.

Leaders and managers enable staff to gain the skills necessary to provide effective support to their learners. For example, all staff are encouraged to study the level 2 information, advice and guidance course, enabling them to provide well-informed careers advice for their learners. Leaders actively encourage staff to apply for promotions and provide tailored training for those new in post. However, not enough attention is paid to constantly updating tutors' teaching skills. As a result, a small minority of tutors do not provide suitably challenging learning sessions for learners.

Leaders' approach to quality assurance is not consistently effective. Leaders have established a range of activities that are mapped into an annual review cycle. However, not all staff implement the agreed procedures. As a result, the appropriate areas for improvement are not always identified and actions are not in place to improve the provision further. For example, although course files are comprehensive and are scrutinised at the end of every course by middle managers, key weaknesses are not discussed with tutors who are, therefore, not aware of how to improve in the future.

The advisory board, which provides governance oversight, has an appropriate and diverse membership, including a learner representative. However, board members do not have a detailed enough understanding of the quality of the provision to provide sufficient challenge and to ensure that new standards that leaders have introduced are maintained and improved.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals? Reasonable progress**

Learners benefit from a wide range of community and family learning courses that are taught both in their local community and online. As a result, learners can attend around their wider work and family commitments, and, consequently, attendance is good. The majority of staff make learning sessions interesting and relevant to individual learners' goals and aspirations.

Learners receive appropriate advice to enable them to make informed choices to prepare for their future career plans or goals. Leaders use information from these discussions to inform the curriculum. For example, a reading course was established in response to feedback from learners which enabled parents to improve their ability to read books to their children.

Learners enjoy studying their programmes and have good relationships with their tutors, who provide strong professional and pastoral support. Learners develop valuable skills to support them in the future, including independent learning, timekeeping and preparation for work. Learners studying English improve their writing and speaking skills and their self-confidence through group discussions and undertaking tasks that are relevant to their everyday lives, such as writing a letter to their children's school.

Managers have recruited well-qualified staff to lead and teach across different curriculum areas. The majority of them are recruited from professional backgrounds, such as primary headteachers and this helps them to enrich their teaching using personal knowledge and experiences.

Learners use diaries to record what they can do and how they need to develop further against their learning goals. However, not all tutors ensure that these are used effectively to help them improve further. In too many cases, learners' diaries are not completed, and tutors' comments do not provide learners with feedback on what and how to improve their skills, knowledge or behaviours.

Learners are given regular opportunities to feedback on their learning and support. Tutors use this feedback effectively to make any changes or improvements to their course. However, managers' oversight of this is not always effective and improvements are not always shared across programmes for the benefit of all learners.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress**

All staff have a good understanding and awareness of how to safeguard their learner groups. For example, they explore with parents how they will discuss sexual harassment with their children. Learners are confident that staff at the provider would help them if they had any concerns about their own or their family's welfare.

Staff provide learners with aide-mémoires on fundamental British values, 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding at the start of their course. Managers have identified that these need to be revisited more often during courses so that they can ensure learners know and understand this content. They have planned training for staff to reinforce this.

The designated safeguarding lead is well qualified and ensures that all staff have regular updates and the information that they can use with their learners. Leaders discuss the lessons learned from any incident and share appropriate information with staff.

All venues used to teach courses have regular health and safety checks, which include COVID-19 risk assessments, to ensure learners' safety. However, not all courses have access to a first-aid kit or a qualified first aider.

The provider has a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan in place. However, it is not updated frequently, has no meaningful actions and has no link to local intelligence. Leaders recognise that actions need to be assigned to individuals and checked regularly by managers to ensure that staff and learners are kept fully informed.

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