

Inspection of Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association Limited

Inspection dates:

8 to 10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Adult learning programmes

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association Limited (Poplar HARCA) is based in east London and serves the training needs of the residents of Tower Hamlets. It teaches a variety of short courses lasting between one and six weeks. Courses range from entry level 1 to level 2.

At the time of the inspection, there were 42 learners on personal and social digital skills courses, 54 on English functional skills, 41 on mathematics functional skills, 18 on the mental health first-aider course and four on information, advice and guidance courses.

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

Learners receive outstanding support from tutors and support staff. They are nurtured by passionate and caring staff. Learners with complex and mental health needs receive excellent emotional support. As a result, learners' self-esteem significantly improves. Learners who believe that they cannot get meaningful jobs quickly realise this is not the case. Staff continually encourage learners to believe in themselves and to aim high.

Many female learners overcome significant barriers to learning. For example, women supported by charities that help those who have experienced domestic abuse often take part in learning for the very first time in their adult lives. They gain significantly in confidence and resilience. Most who have not previously achieved any qualifications succeed in their learning.

Learners' behaviour is exceptional. They have high levels of respect for each other and their tutors. Learners have positive attitudes and are highly committed to their learning. Their attendance is consistently high. They are highly motivated and ambitious.

Learners contribute very well to their online and in-person sessions. They ask pertinent questions, which prompts topical debates. For example, in the mental health first-aider course, learners ask questions about the protected characteristics and how discrimination leads to potential mental health issues. Almost all learners achieve their qualifications.

Learners really enjoy learning in local and inclusive community centres. They benefit from extremely calm and very welcoming environments. Learners have access to very good facilities and resources. Learners feel safe in the secure community centres.

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

Leaders, managers and staff are extremely dedicated and committed to supporting the most disadvantaged learners in their community, the vast majority of whom face personal, social and financial difficulties. Leaders develop close and highly effective partnerships with local stakeholders and employers. They work collaboratively to design a highly specific, targeted and successful curriculum to meet learners' needs. The joint pre-employment programme with local health-care services supports a very high number of unemployed learners into work.

Leaders and tutors design the curriculum to ensure that learners gain substantial new knowledge. They offer a bespoke range of courses that support learners to take the steps they need to succeed. Learners experience a demanding curriculum. They rapidly develop highly relevant skills that help them in their everyday lives. For example, learners on the digital skills courses who have little or no computer skills quickly learn how to write, send and reply to emails and to plan journeys online.

Tutors have excellent subject knowledge and teaching skills. They have high expectations for their learners. Tutors understand their learners' individual needs exceptionally well. They use this knowledge and their experience skilfully to ensure that learners enjoy programmes that meet their individual needs very well.

Tutors plan and teach sessions that interest, energise and motivate learners. This includes online learning. Tutors explain new information to learners accurately, clearly and logically. As a result, learners on English courses apply key grammatical features in their work with confidence. Learners on the mental health first-aider course remember earlier learning about the physical and emotional signs of psychosis.

Tutors complete a comprehensive assessment of learners' prior knowledge and skills. They use this very well to inform their teaching. They teach activities that differ in complexity depending on learners' individual needs. Tutors successfully change the content of their sessions based on the outcomes of learners' practice tests and assessments. As a result, learners receive very personalised teaching.

Tutors use a very good range of questioning techniques to check learners' understanding. They probe learners' understanding deeply to recap and recall prior learning. They use questions successfully to challenge learners to answer using appropriate technical vocabulary. In online mathematics sessions, tutors use the chat-box very effectively to check learners' application of mode, mean and medium. As a result, learners remember what they have been taught.

Tutors give learners very clear and effective feedback on their work. In English courses, tutors encourage learners to take photographs of their written work completed in and outside lessons, which they send to tutors. This ensures that learners receive written feedback very quickly. As a result, learners know what they need to do to improve before their next lesson. The standard of learners' work is consistently good.

Learners are very well supported for their next steps. Support staff give learners very good careers information, advice and guidance. This ensures that the vast majority of learners have a clear understanding of the opportunities available to them once they complete their course. Staff help learners complete job applications and prepare for interviews. A high proportion of learners gain jobs. Many learners progress to the next level of course. Staff give learners who are not ready to progress excellent one-to-one support to help them move on.

Learners benefit from a detailed induction at the start of their course. They receive clear information on how to access the many social and community activities available to them. For example, learners can develop their interest in topics such as cooking, budgeting and soft furnishings. The induction also covers topics such as fundamental British values and how to keep safe from extremism and radicalisation. However, staff do not revisit or sufficiently develop learners' understanding of these topics.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained for their roles. They give tutors very good support and opportunities to develop themselves and improve their teaching. Tutors find the feedback they receive on their teaching very useful in helping them improve.

Leaders ensure the well-being of staff. Leaders allow flexible homeworking to support staff with childcare needs. Staff really appreciate the support they receive. They are proud to work at Poplar HARCA.

Senior leaders and those responsible for governance provide very effective oversight of the quality of education and training. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development. They share the same commitment as Poplar HARCA staff to help learners in the local community achieve their goals.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff promote a positive safeguarding culture across the organisation. Leaders put in place appropriate policies and procedures. This includes their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. Staff complete appropriate safeguarding training. They are vigilant in spotting signs of abuse or neglect and promptly report their concerns.

Learners feel safe and know whom to contact if they have concerns. They receive information about how to keep themselves safe online. They have access to a good range of support services in the community through the wider Poplar HARCA organisation.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1270753
Address	Poplar HARCA 167a East India Dock Road London E14 0EA
Contact number	0207 510 9781
Website	www.poplarharca.co.uk
CEO	Steve Stride
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant director of employment and training, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous new provider monitoring visit 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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