

Inspection of City of London Adult Community Learning

Inspection dates:

14 to 17 June 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

The City of London Adult Skills and Education Service (ASES) is based in the community and children's services department. It provides education and training for residents and employees in the City of London and its neighbouring local authorities and uses sites both inside and outside the borough. At the time of the inspection, around 350 learners were studying courses. Approximately 150 learners were on accredited courses that lead to qualifications, mostly in English and mathematics. Around 200 learners were enrolled on non-accredited courses that do not lead to qualifications. These courses provide skills for employment or support them to increase their confidence, reduce feelings of loneliness or help people participate more fully in their local communities and with their families. The number of apprentices enrolled with the service has decreased recently to around 45, the majority in business-related subjects. ASES works with six subcontractors who teach a very small number of their apprentices.

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

Learners and apprentices study in a friendly and supportive environment. From the point at which they enquire about a course, staff give them as much time as they need to ask questions and find out all the information they need. This level of support and encouragement continues throughout their studies.

Learners and apprentices are taught by assessors and tutors who are highly qualified and have relevant industry knowledge and experience. Many staff who teach vocational subjects have current industry experience in the subjects they teach. They use this skilfully to ensure that they pass on up-to-date knowledge and skills to their learners.

Leaders put on courses that meet the immediate needs of learners. For example, learners can attend short courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in which teachers help them quickly learn language skills so that they can begin to converse in English.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and know how to report concerns. Assessors thoughtfully deliver safeguarding topics that help apprentices understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, apprentices learn about the potential risk of abuse and exploitation and dealing with sexual harassment.

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

Leaders and managers focus effectively on the moral responsibility that the ASES has in helping residents to improve their employment prospects, as well as their health and well-being. They link the strategic plan for the adult education service closely to the adult skills, education and cultural plans of the corporation. They ensure that the offer of education and skills training is targeted to a wide range of population groups.

Leaders and managers work rapidly with partners to provide courses for newly arrived Afghan refugees. Staff respond quickly to put on ESOL courses for refugees, many of whom could not speak any English. Tutors work out of two local hotels where refugees are housed to ensure that language support is available to as many of the refugees as possible. Leaders and managers also have good links with a local charity that provides interpreting and volunteer work. This helps learners who are new to the country to gain confidence and settle into life in the United Kingdom, before being relocated to other parts of the country.

The ASES steering group operates independently of the council. It provides an effective challenge to senior leaders. Members of the group have a good understanding of the service and the quality of the curriculum offered. Despite being independent of the council's formal committees, matters are reported to the strategic director for escalation to the elected representatives as required. As a

result, leaders and managers have a good overview of the quality of the provision offered by the service.

Tutors provide good support to learners and apprentices. They have a secure understanding of the apprenticeship standards and use this well to plan their lessons. For example, in accountancy apprenticeships, tutors recognise that the basics of bookkeeping need to be understood in detail before apprentices can start learning about management accounts. They plan the curriculum accordingly, with a heavy emphasis on teaching bookkeeping skills in the early stage of the course.

Tutors support learners effectively to develop their skills through clear explanations and good use of strategies to check learning. In art lessons, learners develop their skills enabling them to produce work of a high standard. In ESOL lessons, tutors help those with almost no spoken English to develop confidence in speaking. In a few instances, tutors do not correct errors in learners' use of English. For example, they do not place sufficient emphasis on showing learners where stresses come in words or the pronunciation of local place names. This results in learners, at times, repeatedly making the same mistakes in their spoken English.

Most apprentices receive helpful feedback on their work from tutors. They also have regular reviews in which they evaluate their progress with their employer and assessor. Apprentices in business administration and customer service receive feedback from tutors encouraging them to work towards a distinction. Tutors provide clear guidance on what apprentices need to do to achieve this. However, apprentices on the procurement apprenticeship and learners on some ESOL courses do not receive feedback which is sufficiently detailed and helps these apprentices or learners to improve.

Most tutors set targets that help apprentices and learners make progress. However, in a small number of cases, targets for apprentices are not always challenging enough and do not encourage apprentices to go beyond the minimum requirements of their qualification. In non-accredited ESOL lessons, learners often exceed their targets quickly. Teachers do not subsequently set targets that challenge learners further to develop their language skills. As a result, a few apprentices and learners are not challenged sufficiently well.

Tutors create a calm and relaxed environment in which to learn. In apprenticeships, tutors create a calm environment and are skilful at engaging apprentices in discussions. Consequently, apprentices and learners are motivated to learn and demonstrate a good attitude to learning. They are polite and respectful to their peers and tutors and demonstrate behaviours that are appropriate to the workplace.

Tutors help learners apply their learning to be active citizens. For example, in philosophy lessons, learners develop their critical thinking skills and apply these to evaluate and discuss current affairs. They also apply their philosophical knowledge to the concept of law and democracy. They recognise how respect and tolerance towards each other apply when discussing controversial issues, which they feel safe to do. In ESOL classes, learners start to access local services independently, such as

joining the public library, using public transport and accessing their local medical surgery. This leads to female learners in particular feeling empowered that they can access services, such as medical services, on their own.

Staff provide a wide range of opportunities for learners to stay physically and mentally healthy, such as cooking and Christmas card making at various community locations. ESOL learners can also access other opportunities provided by the City of London, such as football, chess and a homework club in their temporary accommodation. Apprentices and learners have access to local running and football clubs, nature walks and healthy eating workshops. As a result, learners and apprentices are helped to maintain a healthy lifestyle, improve their mental health and reduce feelings of isolation.

Learners and apprentices benefit from good careers advice. Through a dedicated careers programme, referred to as The Grow Project, staff support learners who wish to change careers. They help people develop their confidence through writing curriculum vitae and learning interview techniques, particularly for online interviews. The volunteer programme for ESOL learners in a local hospice's retail shops helps learners develop the skills needed to work in customer service roles.

Staff support learners effectively for their next steps. In non-accredited ESOL courses, staff use process cards on which they record what learners can do. These can be taken by learners if they leave education or should they move out of the area unexpectedly.

Leaders and managers meet with subcontractors frequently. These meetings include a review of compliance and quality issues. However, leaders do not review sufficiently well the quality of education and apprentices' experiences at subcontractors. As a result, leaders and managers do not have an accurate enough understanding of the quality of subcontracted provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have a positive culture of safeguarding. This is led by the director who communicates effectively to staff their responsibility for safeguarding. All staff have been trained beyond the minimum requirements. As a result, staff can discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Leaders and managers have a good overview of any safeguarding issues. They track concerns well, referring to external agencies as appropriate. The director and members of the safeguarding steering group receive frequent reports on any safeguarding concerns.

Apprentices and learners feel safe and have an appropriate understanding of the risks associated with living in, or near to, the City of London. They know who to contact should they have any concerns.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that targets set by tutors for apprentices and learners challenge them to develop their skills beyond the minimum requirements of their qualification.
- Tutors should provide feedback on learners' and apprentices' work that is clear, concise and helps learners and apprentices improve.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that they have an accurate overview of the quality of provision offered by subcontractors.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51359
Address	PO Box 270 EC2P 2EJ
Contact number	020 7606 3030
Website	www.cityoflondon.gov.uk
Principal/CEO	Andrew Carter
Provider type	Community learning and skills
Date of previous inspection	23 to 26 May 2016
Main subcontractors	London Metropolitan University Capel Manor College The college of animal welfare Ltd Professional Training Solutions Ltd Just IT training Ltd The West Midlands Creative Alliance Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of service, 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.

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