

Inspection of Derby City Council

Inspection dates: 21 to 24 June 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Derby Adult Learning Service (DALs) provides adult learning courses and apprenticeships on behalf of Derby City Council. Adults study at one of many community-based centres in Derby. Most adults study courses that lead to accredited qualifications, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English, mathematics, digital skills and childcare. DALs also offers adult learners non-accredited community learning courses. Popular subjects include employability, modern foreign languages, family learning and health and well-being.

At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 1,200 adult learners. A small number of adults had special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There were also 34 apprentices, all of whom worked for Derby City Council. Most apprentices followed business administrator or team leader standards-based apprenticeships. A very small number of apprentices were under 18.

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

Adult learners describe DALs as a community, rather than just a place to study. Leaders and tutors ensure there is a welcoming and supportive environment for all learners to study in. Learners rightly value the inclusive atmosphere at DALs. They gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours and benefit from good-quality pastoral support.

Tutors have high ambitions for their learners. They help learners build their confidence and deal with setbacks. As a result, learners attend interviews for jobs they had previously thought were out of reach or deal calmly with difficult situations when on work placements.

Learners benefit from well-developed links between DALs' staff and the local community. Leaders focus their employment curriculum on skills shortages in Derby. As a result, unemployed learners study courses that directly lead to the prospect of a job. Leaders are adept at meeting changing needs. For example, they quickly introduced specific English courses for Afghani and Ukrainian refugees new to the city.

Apprenticeship tutors work closely with apprentices' line managers. They ensure that the new knowledge and skills they teach closely matches apprentices' job roles and workplace activities. Apprentices and their line managers feel well supported by DALs' staff.

Both adult learners and apprentices rightly feel safe when they study. Apprentices have a good knowledge of the safeguarding procedures that protect them and their colleagues. Adult learners, including adult learners with SEND, value the safe environment at DALs' centres and know who to contact if they have any concerns.

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

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the educational needs of people in Derby. They provide a highly effective curriculum that focuses on some of the key social and cultural challenges in the city. This includes ambitious work with those from under-represented communities. Leaders provide well-planned courses for those who are out of work, those who have mental health difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language. Leaders consult very effectively with local partners to ensure that courses meet learners' needs. For example, they use the knowledge of recruitment specialists to design courses for learners who have been out of work for significant periods of time.

Leaders have developed an apprenticeship curriculum that meets the needs of the local council. Apprentices that study the business administrator or team leader standards benefit from flexible, tailored courses that match well their job roles.

In the large majority of cases, tutors teach new knowledge in a logical order. For

example, learners with SEND on employability courses first develop knowledge of appropriate behaviour at work, before they research and visit potential workplaces. As a result of tutors' careful planning of the curriculum, learners develop a sound theoretical knowledge of work before they undertake work placements.

Tutors plan lessons well. In vocational subjects such as childcare and counselling, they use work-based scenarios to help learners apply theory to real life. Learners rightly value this approach, as it exposes them to a range of workplace situations that they may not otherwise encounter.

In taught sessions, tutors explain new knowledge clearly and thoroughly. In ESOL lessons at levels 1 and 2, for example, tutors ensure that learners understand the difference between formal and informal words and the impact that register has on audiences.

At the start of courses, tutors work with learners to set clear and appropriate ground rules. This enables tutors to develop a trusting and collaborative atmosphere in classes. The large majority of learners behave well in lessons. They are studious and support fellow learners well. When there are rare instances of poor behaviour or tension between learners, tutors resolve issues swiftly and positively.

In most cases, tutors assess learners' and apprentices' knowledge well and use this information to plan future classes. For example, tutors use questions effectively to ensure that apprentices understand how equality and diversity impact on both them and their customers. Tutors know the topics that their learners most struggle with and plan additional opportunities to recap and practise these.

In a few cases, tutors do not provide feedback on written assignments that helps learners to improve their spellings or to identify where they have misused words. Tutors in subjects such as ESOL and employability do not set learners specific enough targets to help them master the weakest areas of their knowledge. The targets that they set focus on broad goals such as using grammatical tenses correctly rather than helping learners to understand specifically what they need to do to improve.

Learners and apprentices produce work that is of a good standard. For example, after they study housing and community on their courses, entry-level ESOL learners accurately describe where they live and the positive and negative aspects of their local area. Level 4 counselling learners produce thoughtful and insightful weekly reflections. Learners with SEND who study employability have appropriate knowledge of why they need to wear personal protective equipment at work.

The large majority of learners that take accredited examinations pass these successfully. First-time pass rates are particularly high in ESOL and mathematics, but too many learners do not make the same progress in functional English. Most learners who attend courses to help them find a job achieve their aims. A substantial number gain employment or continue with their studies. However, leaders do not know about the post-course destinations of a significant minority of adult learners,

and so cannot use this information to inform future curriculum changes.

A few apprentices make slow progress in their studies. This is partly because they had to work from home during periods of COVID-19 restrictions and could not apply new knowledge in the workplace. High numbers of apprentices that finish their courses move on to full-time employment or higher levels of study.

Leaders conduct a suitable array of quality assurance activities, including for subcontracted work. They understand well the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum they offer. When they identify weaknesses in the curriculum, they introduce effective measures that lead to improvements.

Tutors benefit from a broad range of training opportunities. This includes training to gain up-to-date subject and teaching knowledge, as well as on pertinent topics such as mental health awareness and ways to support learners who have dyslexia. As a result, the quality of education is good.

Governors have a good understanding of DALs' performance. They are thorough during their frequent scrutiny of the curriculum. Governors have suitable qualifications and experience for their roles, which means that they can hold senior leaders to account effectively. They offer leaders developmental support, as well as challenge.

Tutors skilfully help learners to develop their knowledge of different cultures and faiths. For example, they focus sections of lessons on the importance of tolerating others' lifestyle choices and respecting others' beliefs. As a result, learners study in inclusive environments and have a good knowledge of the fundamental British values of individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance. However, in too many cases, they have limited knowledge of the importance of democracy or the rule of law.

On many courses, tutors cover well topics that relate to learners' health and well-being. For example, learners who study ESOL gain knowledge about healthy living, mental health issues and the risks of too much screen time. This supports learners to live healthier lives. For example, learners decide to reduce their sugar intake after they study healthy eating.

Leaders provide a careers programme that meets the needs of the large majority of learners and apprentices. For example, learners with entry-level English skills develop their knowledge of how to fill in application forms, while learners at higher levels get support with job interview techniques and volunteering opportunities. Although a few apprentices benefit from similar, tailored support, many do not know about the careers opportunities open to them beyond their current jobs.

Adult learners attend their courses at rates that are too low, in particular on ESOL, employability and community learning courses. Apprentices and learners with SEND have high rates of attendance. Leaders recognise that overall attendance rates are not high enough and have undertaken work to understand the reasons behind this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have implemented appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures, including procedures to report safeguarding concerns. They ensure that staff carry out appropriate safer recruitment checks on new employees.

Tutors complete appropriate safeguarding training, for example on the 'Prevent' duty and peer-on-peer abuse. They understand their safeguarding obligations and can identify how to respond if they have concerns about learners.

Leaders have a thorough knowledge of the local risks that learners face, such as from local extremist groups. They confidently identify how to manage these risks and work closely with partners to support learners.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that adult learners from all curriculum areas attend their courses at high rates.
- Leaders should gather data on all learners' and apprentices' destinations after they finish their courses to help them inform future curriculum changes.
- Leaders should ensure that all tutors set learners specific targets to help learners develop the weakest areas of their knowledge.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50216
Address	Allen Park Centre Allen Street Allenton Derby DE24 9DE
Contact number	01332 956565
Website	www.adult-learning-derby.org.uk/
Principal/CEO	Paul Simpson
Provider type	Community learning and skills – local authority
Date of previous inspection	12 to 15 January 2016
Main subcontractors	The Skills Network

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the senior teaching, learning and quality manager, 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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