

Short inspection of Camden London Borough Council

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 October 2022

Outcome

Camden London Borough Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Camden Adult Community Learning (CACL) is a provider of adult community learning and skills in community-based venues across the London Borough of Camden. All courses are run in partnership with local organisations based in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the borough. The service is located in the Early Intervention and Prevention Directorate of the council.

CACL offers adult learning provision across five curriculum areas. The largest are courses in health and well-being, digital skills, family learning and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). CACL runs a small number of community development courses. A very high proportion of courses are non-accredited.

At the time of the short inspection, there were 182 learners on health and well-being courses, 146 on digital skills courses, 145 on family learning courses and 105 on ESOL courses. Of those, 42 learners were on courses subcontracted to South Hampstead Education and Life-long Learning.

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

Most learners highly value the courses they attend. Learners feel relaxed learning in welcoming environments in their own communities. For many learners, this helps them overcome feelings of isolation.

Learners benefit from a range of additional support measures that enable them to study. For example, learners on family learning courses have an on-site creche facility. As a result, learners feel confident that their children are safe while they learn.

Learners feel safe. They trust teachers or centre staff to take appropriate actions should they need to report any concerns.

The majority of learners develop their self-esteem and gain a newfound lease of life as a result of the courses they study. On ESOL courses, learners gradually improve their confidence in talking in front of others in their group.

Most learners gain the skills and knowledge they need to progress to further learning or employment. A small minority of learners do not progress effectively to other courses.

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

Leaders work very closely with local community organisations to develop courses that meet the needs of learners who are most disadvantaged. For example, leaders respond well to gaps in provision for older learners who lack digital skills. Teachers plan these courses effectively so that learners gradually build their confidence in using computers, smart phones and tablets. Learners gain valuable knowledge in how to stay safe when online, such as how to recognise malicious emails. Teachers prepare learners well for their next steps in learning or employment.

On most courses, teachers plan in detail the knowledge, skills and behaviours they expect learners to gain. On ESOL courses, teachers start with activities for learners to practise basic introductions. They then move on to teaching the key vocabulary learners need in their daily lives, such as for shopping and local travel. On family learning courses, learners gain confidence in their understanding of mathematics, which they value highly so that they can support their children with their homework.

On a minority of courses, teachers do not link clearly the activities learners do in lessons to the knowledge and skills that learners need to develop over time. Consequently, teachers are not able to evaluate thoroughly the progress learners make.

Leaders provide good opportunities for teachers to develop their teaching skills, such as in how to assess learners' progress. Teachers use their skills highly effectively to set and review learners' achievement of their goals. For example, on family learning courses, teachers explain clearly to learners what they will learn and should be able to do by the end of the lesson. Learners and teachers later jointly reflect, measure and record the new knowledge that learners have gained in the lesson.

On a small minority of courses, teachers do not check sufficiently what learners already know, or the experience they have before they start a course. In a few instances, managers place learners on courses that are too easy for them. Consequently, learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Leaders and managers provide learners with a useful range of opportunities to gain information and advice about their next steps. They organise open days for learners to find out about higher level courses and apprenticeships at other colleges. Leaders ensure that unemployed learners benefit from advice through the council's employment support team.

Leaders and governors have a thorough understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement across different aspects of provision. They meet termly to review the quality of education learners receive. Governors challenge leaders appropriately to make changes to the curriculum. This includes increasing the number of accredited courses that leaders plan, and reducing the amount of subcontracted provision. Governors lack the information they need to assess how well learners progress to other courses in CACL.

Leaders have rigorous processes for checking on the quality of teaching on subcontracted courses. They observe teaching staff annually and give helpful feedback on how to make improvements. Leaders provide staff with relevant training to develop their teaching skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have appointed suitably trained staff as safeguarding leads. They ensure that safeguarding risk assessments take place for the community venues in which they work.

All staff benefit from an extensive programme of safeguarding training. This includes topics such as white supremacy beliefs and violence against women. Leaders appropriately identify safeguarding concerns that affect learners, such as the cost-of-living crisis. They provide good pastoral care to support learners' health and well-being.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that teachers on the small number of courses that require it clearly identify the knowledge, skills and behaviours they expect learners to gain, so that they can measure learners' achievement of their learning goals.
- Leaders should ensure that on ESOL courses, teachers check learners' prior knowledge and experience sufficiently so that they place learners on the right level of course to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders should provide governors with the detailed information they need to evaluate learners' progression and achievement on courses at CACL.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53110
Address	Camden Adult and Community Learning 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG
Contact number	0207 974 2148
Website	www.camden.gov.uk/adult-community-learning
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Mark Isherwood (Head of Service)
Provider type	Community learning and skills (local authority)
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 June 2016
Main subcontractors	British Academy of Jewellery Camden Learning Learning and Skills Solutions South Hampstead Education and Life-long Learning Unity Works Well Grounded

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Camden London Borough Council was judged to be good in June 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy 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.

Inspection team

Sue Hasty, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Marta Gajewska-Kopczyk	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Nelson	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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