

Inspection of North Yorkshire County Council

Inspection dates:

7 to 10 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) delivers education and training across the county of North Yorkshire through its Adult Learning and Skills Service (ALSS). At the time of the inspection, there were 1,550 adult learners on a range of programmes, including courses leading to accredited qualifications and community learning courses. There were 25 apprentices enrolled on level 2 adult care worker and level 3 lead adult care worker programmes. There were also 152 learners in the Personalised Learning Colleges (PLCs), which provide bespoke programmes for learners with high needs, including those with profound and multiple learning disabilities. All learners are aged 19 or older, except 38 learners with high needs in the PLCs, who are aged 16 to 18.

NYCC works with seven sub-contractors to deliver the programmes for learners with high needs.

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

Learners and apprentices value their learning and have positive attitudes towards their studies. Most learners and apprentices are motivated to attend their lessons well, be punctual and take part in activities and discussions. They develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours and most achieve their qualifications or the objectives for their course.

Learners benefit from a curriculum which has a strong emphasis on improving their confidence and resilience. Apprentices engage in a variety of voluntary groups, and learners with high needs participate in sessions on gardening, creative writing and sport to broaden their interests. Adult learners can access courses which promote healthy living and positive mental attitude alongside accredited courses. Many learners improve their well-being, particularly those who have experienced mental ill-health and anxiety.

Learners and apprentices learn in a safe, respectful environment. Staff encourage learners to make friends, both in person and online. Learners and apprentices are confident to report any concerns to a trusted person, such as their teacher. Learners with high needs are taught very well about how to stay safe, including when travelling independently, being in the community and when online. However, although learners on community learning courses are provided with information on staying safe, they are too often unaware of risks which may affect them.

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

Leaders have recently implemented a new strategy for the whole service, which includes a new staff structure throughout ALSS. Most staff with management responsibilities are new to their role within the new structure. The new strategy aims to improve the consistency of approach in providing high-quality, relevant education and training across North Yorkshire. Although the intention is clear, it is not yet fully implemented.

Leaders and managers do not have sufficiently effective quality processes to enable them to understand the quality of teaching or what is happening in the classroom. They rightly recognise that previous quality assurance procedures have not been effective and they are in the process of making improvements, but it is too early to see the impact.

Leaders and managers do not have effective oversight of the curriculum. For example, they are unaware of the lack of progression from some traditional community learning courses. This means they cannot assure themselves that all the courses they offer align to the strategic aims of the service.

Those in a governance role are suitably experienced and are involved in shaping the strategic direction of the service. However, governors' ability to challenge is limited by the shortcomings of leaders' oversight of the whole provision.

As part of this new strategy, leaders have developed strong relationships with other providers and stakeholders. This includes other providers such as Harrogate College, public bodies, including the police and National Health Service, and a wide range of employers and charities across the region. They use these relationships to inform the courses they offer and understand the employment landscape across the large and diverse region of North Yorkshire.

Leaders have created a curriculum to enable most adult learners, apprentices and learners with high needs to achieve their ambitions. Staff design the content of most courses to ensure that learners develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that enhance their lives or prepare them for future study and employment. Learners with high needs follow programmes that meet their specific needs, including developing independent living skills and preparation for employment. The small apprenticeship programme trains adult care workers to join the workforce in NYCC care homes. However, a few adult learning courses are not sufficiently ambitious and simply provide social opportunities for adults with common interests.

Teachers are well qualified and continue to improve their knowledge and skills in their subject areas through relevant professional development. They work across community learning courses, accredited courses and apprenticeships, bringing their expertise to all areas. When adult learners move from non-accredited to accredited courses in a subject area, they stay with the same teacher, which helps maintain continuity and contributes to enabling learners to continue to make good progress.

Teachers plan learning carefully to enable each learner to develop incrementally the knowledge, skills and personal attributes that they need to live richer lives and achieve their goals. For example, in functional skills mathematics courses, teachers use a well-structured scheme of work, while adapting it to meet learners' individual needs and interests, whether that is related to their job or supporting their children with their homework.

Most teachers provide good-quality teaching and support that enable learners to improve their understanding and acquire new skills, based on their starting points. In accountancy courses, teachers successfully deliver content that is directly linked to real workplace scenarios. On English for speakers for other languages courses, teachers help learners identify and correct common misconceptions about the English language.

Adult learning courses are offered either online or face to face. This provides learners with a choice to attend a format that suits them, depending on their preference and where they live. Teachers also develop learners' skills and confidence in working online in order to ensure that they can fully participate in and benefit from the course.

Teachers use assessment effectively, to identify how well learners and apprentices are progressing and provide helpful guidance on how to further improve their work. On accountancy courses, teachers provide useful feedback, which results in learners making progress rapidly. Apprentices receive feedback that helps them to improve and leads to clear targets for further development of their knowledge, skills and behaviours. However, too often, teachers do not take action to improve the accuracy of apprentices' written work and, in a few instances on adult learning courses, inaccuracies are not corrected.

In the PLCs, staff accurately identify the starting points of learners with high needs, and use this information, along with the content of their education health and care plans, to devise highly personalised programmes for learners to achieve their targets. Teachers use a wide range of teaching and assessment strategies to help learners improve and boost their confidence. Learners successfully build their understanding, communication skills and practical skills for independence.

Through a rigorous process, managers select suitable sub-contractors to work with the PLCs to enhance the offer for learners with high needs. This includes initially and annually assessing their safeguarding arrangements, the quality of teaching and their financial position. Leaders maintain frequent communication with sub-contractors to ensure that learners receive the same quality of curriculum as in directly delivered provision.

Teachers and learning engagement officers provide suitable careers advice, including information about possible next steps. Apprentices and learners with high needs have discussions with staff about their career paths and long-term goals. However, in a few instances, adult learners on community learning are not guided appropriately to courses that will help them to achieve their aspirations.

Most learners and apprentices develop their skills and knowledge successfully. A high proportion continue in education, training or employment, with the majority of adults moving into other programmes offered by the provider. Often learners will continue on a pathway from community learning to accredited courses, and from lower to higher-level courses. However, a few community learning courses do not prepare learners for progression to positive next steps and learners on these courses often complete the same or other short community courses repeatedly.

Teachers raise learners' and apprentices' awareness of life in modern Britain adequately. Learners with high needs demonstrate a clear understanding of the risks of grooming, particularly online, and understand that they may be at risk. However, on too many adult learning courses, teachers do not support learners to develop a deep enough understanding of British values and how these relate to their lives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have taken effective steps to keep learners and apprentices safe. Those responsible for safeguarding are trained appropriately and fully understand their role. The recent change to the designated safeguarding lead's role in the new structure has resulted in increased focus and time devoted to safeguarding and pastoral duties. Staff participate in effective training in safeguarding and receive frequent updates about local risks, relevant reports in the media and suggestions of how to integrate safeguarding into their lessons.

Leaders implement comprehensive policies and procedures for safeguarding, safer recruitment and in response to the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding lead keeps accurate records of safeguarding concerns, including low-level concerns, and responds swiftly to referrals, involving a wide range of other NYCC departments and external agencies where needed.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Establish that the recently revised quality assurance process is rapidly and fully implemented so that leaders and managers can accurately identify where improvements are needed.
- Ensure that all courses align to the strategy for learners to progress in their careers and lives.
- Ensure that adult learners gain a deeper understanding of British values and how they apply to their own lives.
- Ensure that staff have a strong focus on learners and apprentices developing accurate skills in written communication.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50229
Address	County Hall Racecourse Lane Northallerton DL7 8AD
Contact number	01609 533911
Website	www.northyorks.gov.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Paul Cliff
Provider type	Local authority
Dates of previous inspection	4 to 7 June 2019
Main subcontractors	Veloheads CIC Supporting Choice Ltd The Blueberry Academy Limited Strive for Education Ltd Disability Action Yorkshire Harrogate Skills 4 Living Centre Living Potential Care Farm CIC

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant 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

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