

# Short inspection of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 March 2023

## **Outcome**

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council continues to be a good provider.

## **Information about this provider**

Sandwell Adult and Family Learning (SAFL) is the service within Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council which receives funding from the West Midlands Combined Authority to provide adult and community learning. SAFL directly teaches most of its provision but also use the service of two subcontractors to extend its provision into local communities.

At the time of the inspection, there were 2,323 adult learners on a range of funded courses of which the large majority are community-based and do not lead to a formal qualification. A small minority of learners attend vocational learning courses such as preparation for employment, development of English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

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

Learners benefit from a supportive environment where they feel safe and gain confidence to reach their potential. Learners trust their tutors and feel confident asking questions and seeking advice. This means that learners explore ideas to clarify their understanding and make good progress in extending their learning.

Learners on arts and crafts courses produce high-quality artwork while those on languages and citizenship courses develop their spoken and written skills well because of tutors' high expectations.

Learners' attendance is high; they arrive on time, are punctual and are ready to learn. They display positive attitudes to their learning and are respectful of their peers and to staff.

Most learners overcome significant personal issues, developing confidence and self-worth because of their learning. They value what they learn to help them improve their health and well-being, reduce social isolation and move on to further learning and/or employment.

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

Leaders and governors promote well the service's clear vision and mission. SAFL priorities are at the heart of many of the council's plans to tackle local learning and to rectify skills inequalities. Managers use local socio-economic and market intelligence to good effect in planning the service's curriculum. For example, increasing the employability skills of local residents through a focus on literacy, numeracy and basic ICT skills needs. In addition, leaders have adapted the community learning offer to focus on the health and well-being of the most disadvantaged residents across the borough.

Tutors are well organised and plan very effectively to engage learners in a good range of practical and interesting activities that encourage group and individual working, promote good progress and contribute to a good pace of learning. They use questioning well to stimulate lively discussions and to help monitor learning. As a result, learners feel confident to push themselves beyond their comfort zone and extend their learning.

The standard of learners' work is good across the provision. In painting and drawing, tutors place a strong emphasis on learners' understanding of sound design principles of shape, form and perspective using sketchbooks. In entry mathematics lessons, tutors carefully build on and reinforce mathematical concepts using everyday examples to which learners can easily relate too. In step-up English classes and lessons on British culture, tutors plan carefully crafted activities for learners that weaves literacy and language together creatively. As a result, learners use the new skills they have learned to increase their confidence and improve their everyday lives.

Tutors in mathematics at levels 1 and 2 do not consistently review and amend learners' targets to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable or provide incisive and detailed developmental feedback to help them extend their fluency in numeracy skills. In addition, a few tutors do not always use the results from initial assessments to identify the underlying support needs of learners or identify those aspects that have a measurable impact on learners' learning experiences.

Learners appreciate the clear guidance and information which give them confidence that they are on appropriate courses. Information, advice and guidance before, and at the start of courses are good and result in most learners remaining on the course; successfully extending their learning and where appropriate gaining their qualifications.

Tutors are very sensitive to the needs of the culturally and ethnically diverse learners and introduce relevant topics on equality and diversity well in most learning sessions. They create a productive and harmonious learning environment in which

learners learn well together. Learners trust their tutors and will seek their help with a wide range of personal, emotional, welfare and safeguarding related concerns. Leaders responded well to the recommendations from the previous inspection. Arrangements for the management of subcontractors are effective. Leaders agree and set appropriate quality monitoring targets with the subcontractors and regularly evaluate the quality of education they provide.

Governors provide good scrutiny and challenge to leaders. They have a good understanding of the current challenges faced by the service and ensure that adult and community learning courses meet the changing needs of learners and their communities. However, governors do not receive sufficient timely information about the in-year progress of current learners.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead and members of the safeguarding team are suitably trained to undertake the role effectively. They keep detailed records of actions they take for learners who need help and/or support.

Learners have a secure understanding of life in modern Britain and how to protect themselves from the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. A few aspects of the services' safeguarding and 'Prevent' policies are not reflective of current legislative guidance.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders should ensure that management reports arising from internal quality assurance activities have a clear focus on reviewing the impact of additional support provided to learners; they should ensure that tutors routinely record learners' progress against agreed personal learning targets.
- Leaders should provide governors with more detailed and informative reports regarding the in-year progress that learners make so that they can hold leaders and managers to account, to improve the quality of education further.
- Leaders should ensure that all safeguarding and Prevent-related policies are fully reflective of current legislative guidance; and that the SAFL prevent strategy and implementation plan is more closely aligned to the priorities and actions set out in the authority's overarching Prevent delivery plan.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	54267
<b>Address</b>	Sandwell Adult Learning and Family Learning Service Tipton College Alexandra Road Tipton DY4 7NR
<b>Contact number</b>	0121 569 8480
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.learnsafl.ac.uk/">https://www.learnsafl.ac.uk/</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Tonia Green
<b>Provider type</b>	Local authority
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 to 19 January 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Local Education and Development Limited TOPPS Social Enterprise Limited

## Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council was judged to be good in January 2018.

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.

## Inspection team

Victor Reid, lead inspector

Helen Morgan

Rob Mottram

His Majesty's Inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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