

Short inspection of Herefordshire Council

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 April 2023

Outcome

Herefordshire Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Herefordshire Council's Adult and Community Learning service is part of The County of Herefordshire District Council. The service provides adult learning courses across the county of Herefordshire. Adults study in a variety of community-based centres and all courses are taught in partnership with subcontracted providers. At the time of the inspection, there were 152 adults in learning. Adults study accredited qualifications in English, mathematics, caring for children and personal and social development. In addition, the service offers a variety of non-accredited community learning courses, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), skills for independent living, and well-being and mental health. At the time of the inspection, the service was working with six subcontracting partners.

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

Learners, who come from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, learn in positive and respectful environments. They are challenged to achieve their very best by supportive and well-qualified tutors. Learners undertake worthwhile and interactive learning activities. As a result, they develop character and confidence successfully.

Learners benefit from a range of learning programmes which help them to develop the key skills they require to be successful. For example, learners can communicate more effectively because of their studies.

Learners study in familiar settings and benefit from well-developed links with other local community organisations. As a result, learners access services which they need to lead healthier and more productive lives.

Learners feel safe and valued. They know where to go to seek additional support or to report any concerns regarding their safety. Learners frequently undertake activities which improve their mental health and well-being. For example, learners on well-

being courses benefit from meditation sessions and create individualised meditation programmes. Learners develop positive attitudes towards their futures. Learners attend their learning well, arrive promptly and ready to learn. However, a small minority of learners on ESOL programmes do not attend their studies consistently well.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculums that they offer, which are ambitious and challenging. They work with subcontractor partners very effectively in order to ensure that their provision closely aligns to and supports local priorities. Learners, as a result, develop the key skills and knowledge that they need to progress to employment in their local regions.

Leaders ensure that learners study in venues which are welcoming and friendly. Tutors promote equality and inclusion effectively. As a result, learners feel valued, and develop self-worth and confidence. For example, adult learners on ESOL programmes who are parents improve their confidence in reading stories to their children.

Tutors order the curriculum and subject content in a logical way so that learners develop essential knowledge quickly. For example, in childcare programmes learners develop a secure understanding of different parenting styles before learning how these styles can impact on a child's development. Learners are supported well to build on their prior knowledge and undertake more complicated tasks as they move through their studies.

Tutors ensure that learners complete a range of assessments at the start of their courses. They establish learners' personal development needs and initial confidence levels effectively. Tutors use this knowledge and the insight of learners' starting points to plan and develop purposeful learning. This serves to close the gaps in learners' knowledge, and as a result, learners make sustained progress over time from their respective starting points.

Tutors have high expectations of learners. They create inclusive learning atmospheres in lessons successfully. They establish a positive culture, which helps learners learn. As a result, learners display positive behaviours such as politeness and courtesy. Learners are respectful to their peers and teaching staff.

Tutors are suitably qualified and have good levels of sector-specific knowledge and expertise. They plan a well-considered range of interesting learning activities carefully. These activities meet the needs of learners and challenge them to extend their learning. For example, in childcare programmes, learners undertake role plays and work smartly in small groups to improve their parent to child communication skills.

Tutors provide regular opportunities in lessons for learners to recap and revisit their learning. For example, in ESOL lessons, teachers recap topics skilfully, such as the importance of the correct use of vowels and consonants in both written work and in their spoken English. As a result, learners are motivated and participate well. They gain confidence in applying their literacy skills for life, leisure and employment.

Leaders and tutors ensure that learners benefit from impartial careers advice and guidance. Tutors have frequent and detailed conversations with learners to discuss their career aspirations and opportunities, often supporting learners to move to their next steps successfully. Learners value these conversations greatly. As a result, learners are aware of the options available to them after their studies and they understand what they need to do to succeed.

Learners develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Nearly all learners move into further learning or into work. However, leaders do not routinely collect and analyse information on learners' medium- to long-term destinations. Leaders do not act on destination information well enough to improve curriculums further.

Leaders work to assure the quality and consistency of the subcontracted provision robustly. For example, leaders undertake observations of lessons, collect and consider learner voice, and analyse feedback from partner organisations. As a result, leaders have a well-developed understanding of their strengths and the areas for development.

Leaders ensure that the governing board have a sound understanding of the provider's strengths and weaknesses. The governing board supports leaders to ensure that the curriculums offered target the most vulnerable citizens of Herefordshire successfully. Leaders acknowledge that they do not currently benefit from a governing board that has sufficient expertise in understanding the challenges of the adult learning landscape. Leaders are working to bring a greater degree of oversight and external scrutiny by increasing wider stakeholder input. However, it is too early to assess whether these changes have had an impact on the quality of education that learners receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff promote a positive culture of safeguarding. Leaders set high expectations and demands to ensure that subcontracting partners keep learners safe. Leaders have in place clear policies and procedures relating to safer recruitment and the processes for the reporting of any safeguarding concerns. They ensure that subcontracting partners adhere to these diligently. Where concerns are raised, safeguarding leads respond quickly and appropriately, ensuring sound and sensible actions are taken.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular and useful safeguarding training. This training ensures that staff have a sound understanding of the local risks. Staff share their knowledge of these local risks with learners successfully, and as a result, learners have a well-developed understanding of the risks they may face in their day-to-day lives.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should act to improve the oversight arrangements for the tracking, monitoring and scrutiny of the service further, to provide the challenge they need to bring about more rapid change.
- Leaders should act to routinely collect and analyse learners' medium- to long-term destination information to allow them to make informed decisions and assess fully the impact the curriculums have on learners.
- Leaders should act to support the small number of learners who do not attend their learning well enough, so that through their studies they can achieve their full potential.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50221
Address	Plough Lane Offices Plough Lane Hereford HR4 0LE
Contact number	01432 260 264
Website	www.herefordshire.gov.uk/jobs-skills-opportunities/adult-learning
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Alexia Heath
Provider type	Community learning and skills – local authority
Dates of previous inspection	18 to 21 January 2016
Main subcontractors	Landau Ltd Riverside Training Ltd South Wye Development Trust Nationwide Community Learning Partnership The Cart Shed Charity CIO The Houghton Project

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Herefordshire Council was judged to be good in January 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant director of education, skills and learning, 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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