

Inspection of East Sussex County Council

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

East Sussex County Council provides community learning programmes and apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, there were 102 learners on a range of family learning programmes, such as family cookery, music and preparation for employment. There were 30 apprentices studying apprenticeship standards, of whom 13 were studying level 3 business administrator, five were studying the level 3 team leader and 12 were studying the level 5 operations or departmental manager. Almost all apprentices are over 19 years of age. All apprentices work for East Sussex County Council. The council works with five subcontractors, who provide community family learning programmes.

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

Apprentices and learners enjoy their learning and are rightly positive about the impact it has on their respective professional and personal lives. Apprentices develop behaviours they need for the workplace very well. For example, level 5 operations or departmental manager apprentices become more competent, confident and resilient leaders. Learners on family learning programmes develop key parenting skills, such as how to teach their children to share toys.

Learners and apprentices attend very well. Tutors emphasise the importance of attendance and punctuality at the beginning of the programme. They are sensitive to the personal and family needs of learners and provide useful catch-up sessions so that learners do not fall behind.

Apprentices and learners develop new knowledge and skills quickly. For example, apprentices develop skills to take useful, clear and precise notes at meetings. In family learning, learners in music-making sessions select more appropriate music equipment to successfully engage their child in group activities.

Apprentices benefit from very good advice and guidance about additional courses and future career paths. For example, tutors and line managers encourage apprentices to apply for the project management course on completion of the apprenticeship. However, not all learners of family learning are sufficiently aware of the opportunities available to them, and so they are unable to fully plan their next steps.

Apprentices and learners rightly feel safe and are confident that concerns they may have will be dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Apprentices receive useful training and information about safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism during induction and throughout the apprenticeship. For example, leaders use regular 'hot topic' newsletters to keep apprentices well informed about local risk by making them aware of current and local issues. However, leaders do not help learners in community learning to understand the local risks in the areas where they live or study.

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

Leaders have a clear and purposeful intent: to provide high-quality training for apprentices and for learners in the community. For example, they have carefully planned and designed apprenticeships to support new and current staff to gain effective management skills needed within the council. Leaders have developed a wide range of family learning programmes to promote and improve the health, education and well-being of the community successfully.

Leaders ensure that apprenticeship and family learning programmes are planned and ordered sensibly. Leaders engage successfully with managers and subcontractors to adapt the curriculum to ensure learning is well sequenced and relevant. For example, for apprenticeships, the sequencing of topics is changed according to the business need, such as financing to coincide with budget planning. In family learning, the 'plant to play' programme is sequenced to provide opportunities for learners to plant seeds with their children to encourage them to develop healthy eating skills and habits. Learners first learn about different types of gardening tools and the process of growing fresh produce, both in the garden and in window boxes for those without gardens. Consequently, most apprentices achieve their qualification quickly, with many gaining a high grade, and many adults overcome personal barriers and confidently improve their parenting and social skills.

Tutors use initial assessment to develop highly effective and individualised training plans for all apprentices. Tutors involve line managers consistently well to identify and plan additional qualifications, which supports them to thrive in their roles. Tutors engage successfully with line managers to review progress and to ensure that apprentices receive very good support in both on-the-job and off-the-job training situations. Apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours swiftly, and they rightly recognise how this supports them to quickly improve the quality of their work, which is beneficial to their line managers and teams. They develop high levels of confidence to undertake additional tasks during their programme. For example, apprentices deliver presentations to large audiences successfully as a result of their training. Almost all apprentices secure permanent roles, with a high number securing promotions.

Leaders help the experienced and suitably qualified tutors to successfully develop their pedagogical skills. For example, staff complete additional training, such as the level 7 executive coaching, to better help apprentices and learners in their studies.

Tutors plan learning skilfully. They use a range of activities to help apprentices and learners develop their skills and consolidate their understanding. Tutors present new concepts effectively. For example, they teach about diversity in the workplace. As a result, apprentices are better able to support their own teams.

Tutors use assessment carefully to check and then extend learning. Apprentices and learners benefit from useful feedback, which helps them to improve, particularly their English and numeracy skills. For example, apprentices studying mathematics and English benefit from highly instructive feedback. Apprentices who require these qualifications improve the standard of their work significantly and gain these qualifications rapidly.

Tutors and progress coaches know their learners well, and learners and apprentices greatly appreciate the support they receive to enable them to achieve well. For example, apprentices benefit from additional coaching sessions, where they can safely practise the skills they need for their roles. Learners are actively involved in class discussions, and tutors value their contribution. Learners are considerate and respectful to one another.

Leaders and managers provide plentiful opportunities for apprentices to gain additional skills and knowledge beyond their apprenticeship. For example, apprentices can undertake training courses in report writing, web development and excel. As a result, apprentices gain valuable employability and transferable skills.

Leaders and managers promote apprentices' personal development well. For example, leaders provide opportunities and encourage apprentices to get involved in local events. They provide many opportunities for apprentices to participate in local authority volunteering and job shadowing events. For example, recycling and waste reducing projects are completed by learners as part of their apprenticeship project. As a result, apprentices become valued members of the council community and grow in confidence. However, in family learning, leaders have not ensured that learners are sufficiently aware of local activities and how they can participate.

Leaders are appropriately considerate of staff welfare and workload. They help staff to maintain suitable caseloads. Leaders ensure that staff have access to counselling, coaching services and performance programmes to help them in their work. As a result, staff feel well supported.

Governors and leaders have a strong understanding of the quality of education and training. Governors provide appropriate support and challenge to ensure ongoing improvements. They identify and resolve issues swiftly and successfully. For example, leaders evaluated induction procedures to ensure that apprentices were better aware of the expectations and requirements. As a result, more apprentices have remained in learning.

Leaders rightly recognise that there is more work to do in family learning to gather useful information on what learners do next in order to inform future planning, ensuring it meets the needs of the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, managers and staff have created a positive culture of safeguarding, ensuring that staff, learners and apprentices are supported to keep safe and know how to report any concerns. Designated safeguarding staff are appropriately trained and support staff with concerns well. Leaders use clear safeguarding procedures and policies and follow safer recruitment practices. Leaders ensure that staff and apprentices receive useful training and information about safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure they collate and use learner destination information to inform their planning for family learning sufficiently.

- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners in the community are sufficiently well informed about radicalisation, extremism and local threats applicable to the areas in which they live and study.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners in the community are sufficiently informed about the opportunities available to them to support their next steps.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners in the community are well informed about activities and events and how they can participate in their local areas.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50120
Address	County Hall St. Annes Crescent LEWES East Sussex BN7 1UE
Contact number	03456080190
Website	www.eastsussex.gov.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Becky Shaw
Provider type	community learning and skills, local authority
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	GRH Training Consultancy Ltd Crossland And Morton Training Ltd Education Futures Trust Sussex Community Development Association Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the apprenticeship and qualifications 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.

Inspection team

Jo-Ann Henderson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sam Hanmer

Ofsted Inspector

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