

# Inspection of Milton Keynes City Council – Community Learning MK

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2023

## **Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## **Information about this provider**

Milton Keynes City Council provides apprentices, community learning programmes, and education programmes for young people who are not in education, employment or training. At the time of the inspection, there were 760 learners on a range of adult and family learning programmes, such as Spanish, British sign language, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and mathematics and English qualifications.

There were seven learners aged 16 to 18 years old studying a preparation for employment programme. Almost all of these learners have had previously poor experiences of education. Many suffer from a range of social anxiety issues.

There were 47 apprentices studying apprenticeship standards. Of these, three were studying level 3 business administrator, 14 were studying the level 3 team leader and four were studying the level 5 operations or departmental manager. The remaining 28 apprentices were studying adult care at levels 2 to 5. Almost all apprentices are over 19 years of age. All apprentices work for Milton Keynes City Council. The council does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices and learners are highly motivated, have a positive attitude to their learning and attend well. As a result, most achieve their qualifications quickly and develop the knowledge and skills required to engage in the community or progress in the workplace.

Apprentices and learners enjoy their learning. They benefit from well-planned activities that support their learning successfully. For example, apprentices learn about person-centred care in order to ensure that they are appropriately equipped to meet the basic needs of those they care for quickly. Learners on ESOL courses become more confident in communicating, which helps them better integrate into their communities. Learners on education programmes for young people focus on developing interpersonal and communication skills to help them prepare them for employment or training. As a result, they learn the behaviours and skills to progress to their next steps.

Adult and young learners benefit from helpful advice, guidance and support for their next steps in training or employment. For example, teachers help learners create personal statements and complete practice job applications successfully. As a result, most learners are sufficiently prepared for their next stage of education or career. However, not all apprentices benefit from consistent advice and guidance to inform them of the wider opportunities available to them. Consequently, too many apprentices are unable to fully plan their next steps.

Apprentices and learners know how to report any concerns they may have. They rightly feel safe and are confident that any concerns will be dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Apprentices and learners receive useful training and information about safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism during induction and throughout their programmes. For example, teachers use these topics in activities skilfully, such as creating posters so that learners have a good understanding of how to keep safe.

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

Leaders have a sensible and coherent strategy for their curriculum offer, which concentrates on improving the work and life chances of the people of Milton Keynes. For example, the Council now offers apprenticeships in adult care to better support the social care sector within the region. Team leader apprentices learn the specific skills needed to support the operation of the council.

Leaders and managers have designed a comprehensive curriculum offer to meet the needs of adults and young people who have not been in education for a significant period. For example, those newly arrived in the United Kingdom attend the ESOL café and make new friendship groups. Young learners are supported to develop their communication skills and re-engage in learning. Leaders have selected an

appropriate apprenticeship curriculum that meets the needs of the local authority and the national and regional skills shortages in the health care sector.

Teachers have developed a well-planned and sequenced curriculum to support apprentices and learners to build the skills they need for the workplace. For example, learners who study British sign language learn to better communicate with people who have hearing impairments. Apprentices learn about end-of-life care, which helps them care for clients and their relatives with compassion. As a result, apprentices become more resilient in the workplace.

Appropriately qualified and experienced staff benefit from a range of activities that help them develop and stay up to date with their teaching skills and practice. Leaders provide training which helps staff to better support vulnerable learners, including those with additional learning needs. For example, staff receive useful training on mental health, trauma sensitive teaching and British sign language with aspects of lip reading, and as a result, vulnerable learners make as good progress as their peers.

Teachers and assessors use a wide range of training activities effectively, to help apprentices and learners learn. They explain concepts clearly, so that apprentices and learners can understand increasingly complex ideas. For example, teachers support adult ESOL learners to understand the use of personal pronouns. In education programmes of young people, teachers use starter questions well to encourage learners to interact and discuss current news and events.

Teachers and assessors use assessment effectively in order to check and extend learning and adjust and inform individualised teaching. Teachers use extensive questioning to check learning and develop discussions to ensure that learners are making the expected progress. Most teachers support learners to practise what they have learned so that they develop fluency and consistency and can apply their knowledge well. A small minority of teachers in adult learning do not consistently identify learners' starting points to set meaningful targets to monitor the progress learners are making. As a result, a small number of learners do not know their progress nor how to improve their work.

Leaders ensure that apprenticeship programmes meet the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision. They involve employers successfully to align apprentices' training with opportunities to apply and consolidate their learning in the workplace. However, leaders have not ensured that all apprentices have sufficient off-the-job time to complete their coursework. As a result, a very small number of apprentices make slower progress than their peers.

Leaders and managers have purposefully designed an adult learning curriculum that is aligned to the council's intent to build stronger communities, to provide better homes and better lives. Leaders focus on engaging learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, including refugees and adults seeking employment. Leaders deliver ESOL across the city to improve life chances and employment opportunities. The

Carefully planned curriculum provides opportunities for learners next steps in learning, work and engagement in the community well.

Teachers support apprentices and learners to have a good understanding of the core values the council adheres to, such as respect and tolerance. Apprentices and learners demonstrate these well in classrooms, their workplaces and with vulnerable clients. Teachers help adult learners and apprentices to develop their understanding of healthy living. However, leaders do not ensure that young learners have sufficient opportunities to learn about consent, healthy relationships and healthy lifestyles to support them to make positive choices.

Apprentices and learners are respectful and courteous, they listen carefully to staff and each other. However, teachers do not set clear expectations early enough to support young learners to develop the professional behaviours they will need for their next steps in education or employment. For example, on too many occasions, learners were distracted by mobile phone use.

Senior leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses in adult and community learning courses. They meet frequently and understand the strengths and weaknesses in significant detail. They challenge leaders effectively, to take the steps they need in order to improve quality quickly. For example, leaders identified that accommodation was not sufficient to meet the needs of the service, senior leaders worked together to provide solutions through internal departments and external partners. However, senior leaders do not have sufficiently robust oversight of apprenticeship provision. As a result, they are not able to appropriately support and challenge leaders to make further improvements in this area.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, managers and staff have developed a positive ethos of safeguarding that ensures apprentices and learners are helped to stay safe. Leaders use appropriate policies and procedures to ensure safer recruitment. Leaders ensure that staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and participate in relevant updating activities to maintain their skills and knowledge.

Senior safeguarding staff have a good understanding of the regional and national risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. For example, leaders have a good awareness of the local gang culture, knife crime and county lines and share this information with staff and learners well.

The designated safeguarding lead and deputies monitor safeguarding issues to identify patterns or trends that emerge and develop appropriate strategies to support staff to deal with these effectively.

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

- Leaders should ensure that apprentices are sufficiently well informed about future careers and the wider opportunities open to them.
- Leaders should ensure that all apprentices receive adequate off-the-job training time so that they can make good progress and complete their studies in a timely manner.
- Leaders should ensure that expectations are set early enough to support young learners to develop the behaviours they need for the future.
- Leaders should ensure that young learners benefit from a well-planned curriculum to support their understanding about consent, healthy relationships and healthy lifestyles.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that teaching staff are sufficiently trained to use learners starting points to provide purposeful targets to identify the progress adult learners are making over time.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	50169
<b>Address</b>	Milton Keynes Central Library 555 Silbury Blvd Milton Keynes MK9 3HL
<b>Contact number</b>	01908 556762
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk">www.milton-keynes.gov.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Gayle Fothergill
<b>Provider type</b>	Community Learning and Skills – Local authority
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November 2012
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the strategic lead for community learning and employment services, 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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