

Short inspection of Bracknell Forest Borough Council

Inspection date:

18 May 2023

Outcome

Bracknell Forest Borough Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Bracknell Forest Borough Council is a unitary authority in Berkshire. Its community learning service provides skills and community learning to adults within the Bracknell area. It is a direct provider of nearly all of its courses.

At the time of the inspection, 660 learners were enrolled on courses. Nearly all learners were taking community learning courses such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), numeracy, family learning, well-being, preparation for work and information and communication technology. A small number of learners were working towards accredited qualifications, including functional skills English and mathematics. The vast majority of courses take place at the Council's open learning centre, with the remainder at other venues within the community.

Bracknell Forest Borough Council works with Involve Community Services as its subcontractor for a very small number of courses for community-based groups such as safeguarding and conflict management.

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

Learners enjoy attending their courses. They grow in confidence as they learn new skills. Learners value the support and encouragement tutors give them.

Most learners develop useful skills that they use to gain employment and in their personal lives quickly. For example, level 2 functional skills English learners can now write professional letters to help them apply for jobs. Learners on ESOL courses learn how to book appointments to see their general practitioner. As a result, they make high-quality applications for jobs and interact confidently in their local communities.

Learners rightly feel safe when they attend classes. They are confident about reporting any concerns they have. Staff ensure learners using the internet know how to be safe online, including keeping their personal information secure.

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

Leaders have chosen their courses carefully so that they meet local skills and employment needs. They have developed their ESOL and well-being courses to support the council's strategic priority to build stronger communities. Leaders have planned English, mathematics and preparation for employment courses to help disadvantaged learners learn new skills and gain employment. As a result, leaders ensure that their programmes meet the needs of their community well.

Leaders and managers plan the order of topics in each course carefully so that learners build on their existing knowledge quickly. For example, tutors support level 1 functional skills English learners to engage with more challenging content at an early stage of their learning. Learners on mathematics courses learn about the correct order for mathematical operations before they apply this knowledge in evaluating mathematical expressions. Consequently, learners develop new skills and knowledge quickly and confidently.

Suitably experienced tutors use effective strategies to help learners secure knowledge in their long-term memory. For example, tutors in everyday mathematics recap learning from the previous session. Tutors support learners on ESOL courses to improve their conversational skills using set topics and items of vocabulary. As a result, learners recall what they have learned confidently.

Tutors provide detailed and useful feedback to learners on how they can improve. For example, tutors show functional skills English learners how to use punctuation and structure their sentences correctly when writing formally. They use assessments of learners' starting points effectively to decide on what to teach them first. Tutors record learners' progress and achievement appropriately. Consequently, tutors use assessment well to help learners progress swiftly.

Most learners develop valuable new skills and complete their courses successfully. For example, learners on ESOL courses purchase items in shops and make new friends. Learners attending preparation for employment sessions write effective applications for employment and many secure job interviews. Nearly all learners achieve successfully. However, too many learners on a few longer courses leave before they complete their learning.

Leaders ensure that learners benefit from highly effective careers information, advice and guidance. Managers and tutors work closely with Job Centre Plus to direct learners to job club sessions where they research employment opportunities and learn how to write effective applications. Learners who go to job club benefit from expert guidance from representatives of the National Careers Service who attend every session. Consequently, most learners can identify suitable job opportunities and are able to make effective applications.

Although leaders have a strong understanding of local risks, they have not ensured that learners consistently know what these are. Leaders have put plans in place to ensure that learners understand local risks fully, but it is too early to see the impact.

A highly experienced management board holds leaders to account effectively. Leaders use a variety of methods to carefully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their provision, including their subcontracted provision. As a result, leaders use an accurate assessment of their strengths and areas for development to improve the experience of learners.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team, including the designated safeguarding lead, is well-qualified and experienced. Leaders ensure staff receive suitable and frequently updated safeguarding training.

Leaders ensure that staff appropriately identify, report and manage safeguarding and welfare concerns. They have implemented a suitable action plan to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders use appropriate and effective processes for safer recruitment to ensure that staff are safe to work with adult learners who may be vulnerable.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that all learners remain on their courses and complete their learning successfully.
- Leaders should ensure that all learners are aware of local risks so that they know how better to keep themselves safe in their communities.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50798
Address	Community Learning Team The Open Learning Centre Rectory Lane Bracknell RG12 7GR
Contact number	01344 354 220
Website	www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/community-learning
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Zoe Livingstone
Provider type	Community learning and skills
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 November 2017
Main subcontractors	Involve Community Services

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Bracknell Forest Borough Council was judged to be good in November 2017.

The inspection team was assisted by the Community and Continuing Education 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

David Towsey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sam Hanmer

Ofsted Inspector

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