

Inspection of North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection dates: 13 to 16 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

North Tyneside Council Adult Learning Service is part of the council's employment and skills team, which is in the health, education, care and safeguarding directorate. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,040 adult learners on a range of programmes, including courses leading to accredited qualifications, community learning courses and employability courses. There were 31 learners on education programmes for young people, including a 'working roots' programme. There were 85 apprentices enrolled on programmes from level 2 to level 5. Twenty-two learners with high needs were enrolled on bespoke 'ignite your potential' programmes.

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

Learners and apprentices benefit from very well-planned and implemented programmes, which interest them and stimulate a love of learning. Adult learners and learners with high needs highly appreciate the support they receive from tutors as they start their learning journeys. They are made to feel particularly welcome when enrolling on courses. These learners make very rapid progress from their starting points and are enthusiastic about their next steps into further education, internships and employment.

Learners and apprentices feel very welcome, safe and secure when attending classes and in workplaces or on work placements. The health, safety and well-being of younger learners are carefully monitored throughout their programmes. Staff have a zero-tolerance culture towards bullying and harassment, and learners are confident that any occurrences of inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with swiftly. Learners and apprentices have access to a wide range of support should they feel the need to report a concern to a member of staff.

Learners and apprentices have very positive attitudes towards their learning and a high level of commitment. Staff place great importance on attendance and punctuality, and learners' and apprentices' attendance is very high. Adult learners are highly supportive of each other and are quick to offer praise in acknowledgement of what their peers do well. For example, in British Sign Language sessions, they congratulate each other when they sign extended sentences, celebrating these achievements. Level 3 early years practitioner apprentices demonstrate effective working practices and professional behaviours with others, such as discussing with parents the progress of their children and forthcoming transition steps from nursery to school.

Learners and apprentices enjoy participating in a wide range of enrichment activities. Learners with high needs use the training they receive in woodwork classes to make products that are sold to raise funds for charity. They help at car-washing events to support other charities with their fundraising activities. On the working roots programme, younger learners take an active role in their work placements with the council when they are assigned to social housing projects. They work in teams alongside supervisors, undertaking live work projects such as landscaping, gardening and decorating. This builds on their practical skills and prepares them well for future employment.

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

Leaders have successfully realised a clear vision: to provide high-quality learning and training programmes that enable the residents of North Tyneside to progress into employment or further training. They have carefully aligned the curriculum in response to feedback from employers and learners following borough-wide consultation about the types of programmes and courses that residents and

employers say they will benefit from most. For example, apprentices access programmes from level 2 to level 5 in sectors where there is a clear recruitment need, such as in teaching, healthcare and leadership.

Leaders have established to good effect working partnerships with large employers in the borough to develop 'get into' employability programmes that help employers fill roles for which recruitment is difficult. For example, they work very well with steel manufacturers to develop and deliver a 'get into welding' programme. Adult learners with no prior knowledge or experience are trained in welding and progress into employment in the steel industry in Tyneside.

Leaders recognise the need to attract learners and apprentices who are furthest away from education and training, often with significant personal and educational barriers to overcome. They ensure that the curriculum for young people is engaging for those who are most at risk of not participating in education or training through the provision of exciting, work-related experiences. Learners with high needs benefit from bespoke learning programmes that lead to independence, employment and training. For example, the 'ignite your potential' study programme provides a staged progression pathway for learners with high needs, with content that is highly appropriate in meeting individual aims and progression goals.

Tutors use information about learners' and apprentices' starting points well. They collect information from a range of partners prior to learners commencing programmes, and they use it effectively to create individual learning plans. This contributes to ensuring that most learners and apprentices make progress from their starting points in line with, or exceeding, expectations.

Tutors successfully use a range of innovative teaching and assessment strategies. Adult learning tutors plan learning activities exceptionally well. For example, in community learning, creative writing tutors ensure that learners understand the meaning of a dramatic monologue by first asking them to read, interpret and question material. They then move learners through a series of tasks so that they quickly produce their own high-quality monologues. In improvers' Spanish, teachers use visual and matching activities and true and false activities to ensure that learners are secure in their understanding of prepositions before asking learners to translate full sentences from English to Spanish.

Tutors develop learners' and apprentices' English and mathematical skills very well throughout their programmes. They encourage learners and apprentices to use and become familiar with specialist terminology and numerical calculations relevant to their subjects and industry sectors. For example, level 4 project manager apprentices continue to develop English and mathematics skills that are relevant to their working roles. They submit written assignments, using correct terminology and financial forecasting about the projects that they are involved in at work. This prepares them well for future roles in their chosen careers.

Apprentices benefit from useful reviews of their progress, which are conducted collaboratively with tutors, employers, Connexions advisers and personal mentors.

Staff use these reviews to assess and discuss apprentices' progress and make plans for their next steps. However, in a few instances, targets set are insufficiently challenging or personalised to enable apprentices to understand fully how to achieve the highest grades at end-point assessment.

Learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very effective support. Learners with visual impairments use assistive technologies, such as the read-aloud function, to enable them to understand assessment questions. Learners develop very relevant life skills and become increasingly resilient, independent and confident. For example, they are taught to travel independently and develop social coping strategies. Learners with high needs progress into positive destinations, and a substantial proportion have been successful in achieving high-quality internships.

Leaders are committed to the continual improvement of all aspects of the provision. They undertake carefully planned activities to evaluate the quality of teaching and training. Where underperformance is identified, leaders provide extensive support and intervention to help tutors improve. Leaders provide teaching staff with opportunities to develop their careers beyond teaching in the classroom. For example, tutors and managers take on projects that extend their management experience. They work on new and innovative initiatives, such as the setting up of 'working well employability hubs', which helps residents to access learning and training alongside wider council services and support.

Tutors are well qualified to teach their subject specialisms. Leaders ensure that staff receive allocated time to undertake relevant training to enhance their subject knowledge and teaching skills. They support staff to take teaching degrees and provide training that enables staff to engage with current pedagogical thinking, such as the impact of trauma on learning and cognitive and metacognition theory. As a result, staff feel highly valued and take pride in their work.

Leaders and managers have implemented an age-appropriate personal development programme for learners and apprentices, which supports them in developing their knowledge, confidence and resilience. Younger learners are taught how to maintain a healthy lifestyle through teaching that covers a range of topics, such as mental health, well-being and maintaining relationships. Learners competently discuss the positive practices associated with these topics and have meaningful conversations with their tutors, with information about how to access support and guidance.

Tutors develop learners' understanding of risks they may encounter. Learners benefit from talks from external speakers, such as the police, who discuss cybercrime, to ensure that they understand the risks associated with technology and know how to stay safe online. They are made aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Learners and apprentices benefit from an appropriate range of careers advice, information and guidance. They have access to specialist careers advice through a bespoke service that offers impartial progression guidance. Most adult learners, learners with high needs and apprentices use information well to make informed

decisions about their next steps. However, while young learners on the working roots programme receive useful careers and progression guidance, a few do not have an ambitious plan in place for their next steps that ensures they remain motivated and keen to progress on to further learning and employment.

Adult learners and learners with high needs make exceptional progress from their starting points and are very well prepared for their next steps. However, a very small minority of apprentices are behind their planned end dates due to personal and work-related challenges, such as redundancy. Staff have worked effectively to support these few apprentices to catch up. As a result, they are close to being ready for end-point assessment.

Those responsible for governance and oversight have a clear understanding of the intent, implementation and impact of the service's provision. Councillors and directors take a strong interest in how the adult learning provision meets residents' and employers' needs. They provide effective scrutiny and challenge to ensure that the needs of residents and employers in the borough are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners and apprentices feel safe. Leaders and staff extensively promote a culture of safeguarding within the service. They ensure that learners who are deemed to be the most vulnerable within the borough are nurtured and cared for, and they use safeguarding mechanisms very well to protect them.

Leaders work very well with other council departments and with external services and agencies to safeguard learners, apprentices and vulnerable adults. They implement comprehensive policies and procedures for safeguarding, safer recruitment and in response to the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders have trained key staff to be specialist leads in domestic abuse in response to an increase in reports of violent crime and assault. They involve specialists within the service, who have experience in county lines and child exploitation, to help learners and their families access the support they need.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all learners and apprentices understand the progress that they make and how to achieve the highest grades from early in their programmes.
- Ensure that all young learners benefit from a well-planned and consistent personal development programme that provides very clear direction to inform decisions about their next steps.
- Ensure that remaining apprentices behind their planned end dates continue to make swift progress towards gateway and end-point assessment.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53603
Address	Quadrant 16 The Silverlink North Cobalt Business Park North Tyneside NE27 0BY
Contact number	0191 6436061
Website	www.skillsnorthtyneside.org.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Paul Hanson
Provider type	Community learning and skills – local authority
Date of previous inspection	13 May 2013
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the senior manager for employment and skills, 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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