

# Short inspection of Halton Borough Council

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 June 2023

## **Outcome**

Halton Borough Council continues to be a good provider.

## **Information about this provider**

The Adult Learning Service of Halton Borough Council directly provides a range of adult and family learning courses across the borough of Halton. The Service sits within the Employment, Learning and Skills Division of Halton Borough Council. The teaching for the adult learning courses takes place at three venues: Kingsway Learning Centre in Widnes, and Acorn Learning Centre and Halton Lea Library in Runcorn. The family learning provision is provided at a variety of local schools.

At the time of inspection, there were 264 learners on adult learning programmes. The largest numbers were on functional skills English, level 1 certificate in caring for children (childcare), and non-accredited well-being courses, such as 'improve your confidence' and 'coping with stress.' There were seven adult learners, who have education and health care plans, on supported internships at local employers and schools.

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

Most learners routinely attend their lessons. They are motivated to achieve their goals and improve their lives. Their courses are preparing most learners for their next steps. For example, further courses, employment or improving their personal lives.

Learners develop the skills they need to be successful at work and in life. Learners on well-being courses develop emotional resilience. They learn breathing techniques to help alleviate stress and anxiety.

Learners improve their confidence, independence and self-esteem. Learners who are on supported internships develop vital employability skills such as timekeeping, literacy and numeracy. They confidently interpret bus timetables when travelling independently to work, to help them arrive on time.

Learners feel safe. They know who to contact if they have any concerns. Most know about the local risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Learners know about xenophobia towards refugees and the dangers of county lines.

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

Leaders ensure that their curriculums closely align both with the borough's skills priorities, as well as the diverse needs of their residents. The curriculums challenge most learners to improve their skills, confidence, self-belief and ultimately, their lives. After completing their courses, around half of learners remain in, or gain employment. A substantial number of learners progress to further learning.

Leaders ensure that tutors are well qualified and well experienced to teach learners. Most tutors hold, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. Tutors benefit from training on effective assessment and providing useful feedback to help learners to improve their work. As a result, Halton Borough Council's learners receive a good standard of education.

Leaders and tutors plan teaching in a logical order so that learners build their knowledge and skills throughout their course. Learners on level 1 childcare firstly learn how to help children improve their confidence by listening and talking with them. They then learn how to make resources for children to play with. Learners recycle materials into toys and create miniature garden environments on trays for children to grow plants. Learners secure their knowledge in their long-term memories.

Tutors provide effective feedback to learners on level 1 childcare and health and well-being courses. However, in level 2 functional skills English and supported internships, tutors' feedback is too generic. This means that a small minority of learners do not know what they specifically need to do to improve their work.

Learners develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours because of their courses. In level 2 functional skills English, learners confidently write in a range of different genres, starting with magazine articles before composing emails, leaflets and blogs. Most learners make the progress expected of them and achieve their qualifications.

Tutors provide a range of useful information that helps learners make informed choices about their next steps. Most level 1 childcare learners progress to the level 2 teaching assistant course because their career goal is to become a teaching assistant.

Leaders have effective quality assurance and improvement processes in place. They have resolved the areas identified for improvement at their previous inspection. For example, leaders have improved the number of learners who achieve their English qualifications and have significantly reduced the number of learners who leave before completing their courses.

Those responsible for governance are suitably experienced for their roles. They receive appropriate information from senior leaders that enables them to provide effective scrutiny and challenge to senior leaders. For instance, to improve learners' attendance to their classes. Those responsible for governance acknowledge that while learners' attendance has increased, there is still more work to do to make further improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff put learners at the heart of everything they do. They understand the wide range of barriers that learners face, such as unemployment, food poverty and domestic abuse. Leaders provide a warm, welcoming and safe environment for learners to learn.

Leaders complete a range of appropriate checks when appointing new staff to make sure they are suitable to work with learners. All staff, including the safeguarding team receive appropriate training.

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

- Leaders should ensure that tutors provide effective feedback to learners so that all learners know what they have done well and specifically what they need to do to improve their work.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors routinely and consistently reinforce their high attendance expectations of learners so that learners' attendance continues to improve across all subjects within their provision.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	52104
<b>Address</b>	Room 21 Kingsway Learning Centre Victoria Road Widnes WA8 7QY
<b>Contact number</b>	0151 511 6794
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www3.halton.gov.uk/pages/educationandFamilies/adultlearning/adultlearning.aspx">www3.halton.gov.uk/pages/educationandFamilies/adultlearning/adultlearning.aspx</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Siobhan Saunders, Divisional Manager Employment, Learning & Skills
<b>Provider type</b>	Community learning and skills – local authority
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 and 18 April 2017
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since Halton Borough Council was judged to be good in April 2013.

The inspection team was assisted by the quality and learner experience 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

Kim Bleasdale, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Helen Whelan	His Majesty's Inspector
Maura Cummins	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Horner	His Majesty's Inspector
Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones	His Majesty's Inspector

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