

# Inspection of The Cornwall Council

Inspection dates:

12 to 15 September 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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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>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

The Cornwall Council provides education and training through their 'Link into Learning' sites and Adult Education Centres. These are located at 17 sites in towns across the length and breadth of the geographically spread county.

Adults and young learners aged 16 to 18 study courses that lead to accredited qualifications. Most study 'skilled for life' courses that include basic skills in mathematics, English, information and communication technology (ICT) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Most adults study lower-level qualifications, with around 70% at entry level and level 1, and around 22% at level 2. Adults also study Access to HE courses at level 3, and counselling courses at levels 2 to 4. Adults participate in non-qualification community courses, such as arts and languages, including Cornish.

Around 1,600 adult learners and 60 learners aged 16 to 18 enrol each year. At the time of the inspection there were around 1,000 adults and around 36 learners aged 16 to 18 taking part in learning. Around half of 16- to 18-year olds and around one fifth of adult learners have additional learning needs and/or disabilities.

Around 130 learners with high needs aged 16 to 24 are taught in one of seven subcontractors. These are also located at different places around the county.

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

Adult learners, young learners and learners with high needs enjoy their learning because tutors create an inclusive environment that fosters high levels of respect. As a result, learners feel welcomed and valued, enabling them to learn effectively and gain self-confidence.

Learners are motivated well by their supportive tutors and are committed to their learning. Adult and young learners develop resilience and independence in their learning. Tutors support learners to recognise the knowledge and skills they are developing, where they have gaps in learning, and how to improve further. Tutors develop positive relationships with learners, so that they feel confident to ask questions to check their learning. Tutors give individual support to learners and a personal approach. For example, photography tutors provide one-to-one feedback during practical shoots on location and individual critique of learners' work.

Young learners are taught in classes alongside adult learners. Many young learners have not had positive experiences of school or have been electively home educated. They enjoy the mature and relaxed environment that tutors create, and they feel safe. Leaders have high expectations of all learners and clearly explain the importance of high attendance. Tutors reinforce this expectation with young learners by calling them if they are late or do not attend. This also helps tutors to be aware of any safeguarding concerns.

Adult learners and young learners with additional learning needs are mostly well supported by a combined approach from tutors and learning support assistants (LSAs) who plan learning sessions for individuals' needs well. Most tutors use appropriate strategies, such as 'read aloud' functions for dyslexic learners during ICT lessons. However, leaders do not ensure that all tutors are trained sufficiently in support strategies. Therefore a few learners are not supported as effectively as they could be.

Learners with high needs are well prepared for independence and employment because leaders place a strong focus on meaningful work experience and placements. Tutors enable learners to explore varied and relevant employment options such as through visits to farms and tree nurseries. As a result, learners have a clear idea of what they want to do, and many learners move into paid or voluntary employment.

Most adult and young learners improve their knowledge and skills because tutors teach them well. This supports them to move on to their next steps. The large majority of learners who take qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT achieve their qualifications and a high proportion move on to the next level. This supports learners to move into employment, apprenticeships and further study. For example, over a third of learners moved into employment of 16 hours or more.

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

Leaders focus well on supporting disadvantaged learners and those furthest from work to gain the skills and qualifications they need. This supports learners to gain employment or become self-employed. Leaders also provide a range of community courses, such as arts and languages, to help bring people together in their communities and reduce social isolation. Leaders ensure that learners from a wide geographical area, including areas of high deprivation and isolation in the county, can access courses through centres across the county and through selected online courses.

Leaders have concentrated most of their curriculum offer on basic skills to meet the needs of employers. Leaders have carefully selected a small number of level 3 and level 4 qualifications to support specific progression into higher education or skilled jobs, for example in health and social care and counselling. Leaders of Access to HE health and social care courses plan curriculum content in partnership with the local university to ensure learners learn content most relevant to their future careers.

Leaders have responded rapidly and effectively to the growing number of learners who need to study ESOL due to the increase in Ukrainian refugees in the county. Leaders work effectively with partners in the resettlement teams in the council to provide the support these learners need to develop their English skills and enable rapid integration into society.

Leaders and managers carefully consider the sub-contractors they work with to provide education for learners with high needs. Leaders choose sub-contractors for their specialisms, their focus on employability and their location in communities.

Leaders plan and sequence a curriculum for learners with high needs that allows them to explore possible careers and local employment opportunities. Learners enjoy participating in a range of meaningful work placements. For example, learners interested in retail and customer service get to experience how cafes, garden centres and game shops operate, and work with Royal Mail in their first year. Leaders ensure learners have one-to-one support in their placements to help them when needed. Tutors teach learners positive work behaviours, such as communicating with others effectively and following health and safety guidelines. As a result, learners feel confident about their next steps into the world of work.

Leaders do not ensure that tutors use the targets in learners' education, health and care (EHC) plans sufficiently well to design individual programmes with specific incremental targets. As a result, leaders do not measure the progress learners make towards achieving these targets and therefore cannot be sure learners make rapid progress.

Leaders ensure that tutors discuss the choice of courses with adult and young learners during a 'step-in' interview. Tutors check what learners already know and can do to ensure that learners are on the right course and level for their needs.

Tutors discuss what learners want to gain from the course. Most tutors use this information well to plan curriculum content, which is often personalised for individuals. For example, in ICT learners learn techniques that are important for them, such as changing font styles, colour and sizes and learning how to use bullet points.

Tutors teach learners well. They assess what learners know, to identify gaps in learning. Tutors direct learning activities to fill these gaps. For example, English tutors ask learners to read their work and discuss whether their writing is formal or informal. Tutors reinforce new knowledge and skills by providing opportunities to practise. For example, mathematics tutors direct learners to specific video resources and linked tasks. This helps learners to practise and remember how to solve mathematics problems.

Adult learners studying creative arts courses produce work to a very high standard. For example, several ceramics learners produce work they sell in galleries and craft markets. Tutors also teach them knowledge of local markets and commercial pricing techniques to help them build their creative businesses.

Leaders have ensured that tutors teaching online lessons are experienced and provide high-quality teaching. Leaders have designed online courses for English and mathematics to support learners with barriers to attending in person, such as transport, or social anxiety. Learners attend well online. Tutors use online technologies very well to present information clearly. For example, mathematics tutors use interactive whiteboards to show worked examples. LSAs support learners with additional learning needs effectively. For example, they communicate through the chat facility to check learners' participation and to ask and answer questions.

Leaders ensure all learners have access to high-quality impartial careers advice and guidance. Leaders arrange visits from the careers service to lessons. Young learners understand the qualifications they need to gain for their next steps and what actions they need to take, such as how to find an apprenticeship. Adult learners develop suitable action plans to support their career goals, such as work experience with the ambulance service for aspiring paramedics. Leaders ensure learners with high needs receive impartial guidance from the careers service and that work placements link to their career interests, such as horticulture.

Leaders and managers observe tutors annually and visit lessons during 'drop-ins' to follow up on themes. Leaders often focus on learners' enjoyment and the feedback that learners receive, which results in mainly positive feedback to tutors. Leaders do not focus sufficiently on the planning of curriculum content, the use of target-setting and the measurements of progress made by learners. Leaders do not identify when tutors need to improve these skills. They do not set meaningful actions or provide training for them to improve curriculum planning or their teaching skills.

Leaders do not evaluate the quality of their subcontracted provision for high needs well enough. Leaders do not consider carefully the additional requirements and expectations for the high needs provision. They do not ensure that all tutors use

learners' EHC plan targets to personalise learning plans effectively. For example, at United Response, tutors do not identify and set targets for the stages that learners need to work towards to achieve their end goal. Tutors rely on opportunities for learners' wider personal development to present themselves naturally rather than planning for them in advance. Tutors at other subcontractors plan the curriculum more thoroughly and include opportunities such as visits from external specialists in sex education. Leaders do not identify the inconsistencies in quality between the seven subcontractors or provide training for staff to improve their teaching or support strategies.

Leaders encourage open communication between tutors and managers to support tutors who request further training. For example, tutors learn how to use interactive whiteboards and learn about the use of Makaton to support learners with communication needs. Leaders support tutors to keep up to date with industry practice, such as through courses in sculpting for ceramics tutors. However, leaders do not ensure that all tutors take part in meaningful training to improve their teaching skills over time.

Leaders and managers ensure that learners with high needs receive the specialist support they are entitled to. For example, managers ensure learners are supported by speech and language therapists, occupational health and the hearing impaired team, as required. Tutors work closely with specialists to ensure they support learners to work on specific targets set by therapists, including daily exercises and use of communication devices.

Governors work effectively with leaders to support their strategic mission to contribute to social inclusion and economic development and promote a culture of lifelong learning in Cornwall. Governors provide effective partnership working with the wider council to utilise funding opportunities to further develop provision, such as the new Multiply programme to improve adult numeracy. Governors use their varied and extensive expertise to provide appropriate challenge to leaders. For example, they are professionally curious and question leaders on differences in performance in different groups of learners.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Minor areas for improvement are needed. Leaders do not ensure that all follow-up actions for safeguarding concerns are appropriately recorded. This makes it difficult for leaders to have the oversight they need on open cases to ensure that appropriate actions have been taken.

Leaders need to check more thoroughly that all staff at subcontractors have completed mandatory 'Prevent' duty training, and that all staff have sufficient knowledge to teach learners how to stay safe from radicalisation and extremism.

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

- Plan the content of the curriculum for individual learners with high needs, considering their EHC plans and the specific targets they need to work towards.
- Develop quality assurance activities to ensure they identify all weaknesses and target specific actions for improvement, including in subcontracted provision.
- Develop tutors' teaching skills and knowledge of strategies to support learners with additional learning needs.
- Ensure all staff have sufficient knowledge of the 'Prevent' duty, and feel confident to teach about this and reinforce learners' understanding of radicalisation and extremism.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Mr Rob Sweetzer-Sturt
<b>Provider type</b>	Local Authority
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 March 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	United Response Kehelland Horticultural Centre Ltd Cornwall Community Development Ltd (Cornwall Rural Community Charity CRRC) Access Training (SW) Ltd Learn2 Cornwall Ltd Urban Biodiversity (Newquay Orchard) Reachout Creative Futures

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of adult education, 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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