

Inspection of Devon County Council Adult and Community Learning

Inspection dates: 26 to 29 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
<hr/>	
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Devon County Council Adult and Community Learning, known as Learn Devon, provides education and training to adult learners throughout Devon. It has four main centres and uses a range of community sites across the region. Each year around 1,850 adults study with Learn Devon. At the time of the inspection, around 800 learners were enrolled.

Most adults study courses that lead to accredited qualifications from entry level to level 2. This includes courses in English, mathematics, digital skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Around one third of learners study mathematics and around one fifth study English. Most learners study these subjects at level 2, with around one quarter studying GCSEs. Around a third of learners study digital skills, mostly at entry level. Around one sixth of learners study ESOL, most at entry level and level 1.

Learners also study other qualifications, such as employability, living and working in the UK and supporting teaching and learning in schools.

Adults also take part in community courses, which include courses to support employability, mental health and well-being.

All learners are aged 19 or over.

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

Learners enjoy the calm and purposeful learning environment created by their tutors. Learners are highly respectful of each other because tutors are good role models of respect. Tutors welcome questions from learners and answer them patiently to support learners' learning. Learners value highly the individual attention most receive from their tutors. As a result, most learners grow in confidence and are motivated to learn.

Most learners do not have a deep understanding of important aspects of life and culture in modern Britain. This is because leaders and managers have not ensured that tutors teach a wider curriculum, including topics such as British values, equality of opportunity and diversity, and recognising and avoiding the risks of radicalisation. Most tutors briefly introduce these topics at induction, but not in a meaningful way that enables learners to know and remember how this relates to their lives.

Most learners achieve their goals because tutors support them well to build their knowledge and skills over time. Around half move to the next level of study or into employment. Most learners have clear and realistic career aims. However, leaders and managers have not ensured that all learners receive the support and guidance they need to explore fully their career options.

Learners feel safe within learning centres and while learning online. They feel confident to raise any concerns and that these will be resolved.

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

Leaders have an ambitious strategic vision to provide high-quality and inclusive education and training to disadvantaged people in Devon. Leaders work hard to reach learners who have not previously succeeded in education to give them the second chances that they often need to be successful. Leaders work very effectively with the wider Devon County Council to ensure they design curriculums that align with the needs of the local economy. Leaders work purposefully with partner organisations such as Job Centre Plus (JCP) and community groups to design and implement specific courses. For example, leaders designed a digital skills course for JCP clients to help them to search for and apply for jobs online.

Leaders have recently updated their curriculum offer, to ensure clear progression routes are available between courses and levels. Leaders offer a wide range of community courses and often use these to help to get learners back into learning and encourage them to undertake further learning. Leaders also design courses for specific groups of people to meet local needs. For example, leaders have designed a range of courses for ESOL learners, such as supporting employment in hospitality and tourism.

Tutors are well qualified and have high levels of subject-specific knowledge. For example, several English tutors are education examiners with extensive experience. This helps them to design assessment activities for learners that are challenging and relevant.

Tutors and learning support assistants use effective strategies to support learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, tutors adapt resources, use software to support reading, and provide extra learning sessions and time for assessments. As a result, most learners with SEND make progress in line with their peers.

Most tutors plan teaching in a logical order that builds on learners' knowledge and skills. Tutors present information clearly and help learners to make links between their existing and new knowledge. For example, mathematics tutors explain the principles behind the new methods used by learners. This helps them to remember the methods, and to recognise the links between place value, arithmetic and fractions. Digital skills tutors explain carefully how to identify the difference between genuine emails and 'phishing' emails. They use real-life examples to help learners remember the importance of this.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that all tutors check what learners already know and can do in a timely or effective way at the start of courses. As a result, a minority of tutors do not consider this information well enough to design content and learning activities matched to learners needs. In a few cases, learners are taught in groups where the spread of abilities is too large for tutors to manage effectively. This leads to learners not participating well in activities because they are either too easy or too hard for them. For example, mathematics learners studying level 2 who complete activities quickly wait for others to complete tasks, rather than starting more complex tasks.

Leaders ensure tutors receive useful training to enable them to teach online. Tutors use a range of effective techniques to plan and teach online lessons. For example, English tutors provide clear, concise instructions to enable learners to use the chat box and breakout room facilities effectively to complete activities in pairs. ESOL tutors make good use of online teaching resources, such as class notebooks, particularly when teaching learners studying at higher levels. As a result, learners deepen their knowledge and become confident discussing their work online with their tutors and peers.

Most tutors effectively and quickly check learners' knowledge using a range of assessment techniques. Tutors provide learners with helpful and concise feedback that helps them to improve. For example, mathematics tutors show learners how to lay out their workings to avoid errors in calculations. English tutors correct learners' mistakes accurately, and routinely set homework to ensure learners practise and improve their skills. As a result, tutors and learners identify and fill gaps in their knowledge. However, this is less successful in online mathematics lessons where tutors do not use techniques to see learners work during lessons, so, at times, misconceptions go unnoticed.

Tutors revisit topics regularly to support learners to develop fluency and remember what they have learned. For example, in digital skills, tutors use online quizzes to test learners' knowledge of older and newer content in the curriculum. Mathematics tutors revisit number topics each lesson to support learners' confidence to complete addition and subtraction without using a calculator.

Leaders have not designed or implemented effectively employability programmes designed specifically for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Leaders have not designed a curriculum that is ambitious enough or sufficiently personalised for individual learners' needs. Learners make new friends in the community and learn to visit shops independently. Tutors do not provide the realistic simulated work environment that they intended. Tutors do not support learners well enough to improve their employability skills. As a result, although leaders intend for the programme to help learners to gain employment, too few learners progress quickly into employment.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of most of their strengths and weaknesses. They use a range of useful activities to check the accuracy of their evaluation, such as lesson observations, professional discussions with staff, analysing data and learner surveys. They take timely and appropriate actions to improve weaknesses. For example, leaders now plan defined start and end dates for qualification courses, rather than allowing learners to enrol throughout the year, because they found this was less successful. Leaders recognise rightly the need to improve the careers information, advice and guidance that learners receive, but their plans to improve it have not yet had impact.

Leaders have not been sufficiently critical in their view of the quality of teaching of the broader curriculum. They have not checked well enough what learners are taught, to support their personal development. As a result, they have not ensured that tutors plan and teach important topics, such as how to stay safe online. Leaders have not ensured that all learners know how to get information to help them to improve their mental and physical health.

Senior leaders at Devon County Council provide effective governance. They help to shape and strengthen the strategic direction very well. They ensure that leaders contribute to the council's identified priorities and support employers' needs through a well-planned curriculum offer. Governors use their considerable knowledge and experience well to help to ensure disadvantaged groups of learners increase their skills and knowledge as a result of studying the courses they need. This includes specific local needs, such as ESOL. Governors challenge leaders appropriately to improve identified weaknesses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the planning and teaching of the curriculum for the employability courses specifically designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to ensure that learners are supported into employment effectively.
- Improve the planning and teaching of the wider personal development curriculum to ensure that all learners deepen their knowledge of life in modern Britain and to help learners to know their options and plan for their next steps.
- Improve the use of information about what learners already know and can do at the start of their courses, to group learners together more effectively, and ensure tutors are able to teach all learners to the level they need.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51540
Address	The Kennaway Centre, 10–12 Victoria Street Exmouth EX8 1DL
Contact number	03451 551014
Website	https://learndevon.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Nicholas Child
Provider type	Local authority
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2017
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations 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

Lowenna Bradley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Matt Hann	His Majesty's Inspector
Nick Crombie	His Majesty's Inspector
Lois Knight	Ofsted Inspector
Pino Butler	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Shobrook	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023