

Inspection of The Forward Trust

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Established in 1991, The Forward Trust is a social enterprise with charitable status. It provides a range of services and interventions in communities and prisons nationwide, aimed at helping people to move forward with their lives. The trust began teaching apprenticeships and adult education courses in London and Kent in 2021. In the 2022/23 academic year, the trust had around 230 adult learners. At the time of the inspection, there were nine adult learners on the level 2 certificate in understanding climate change and environmental awareness, and five adults on the level 1 certificate in employability. There were two apprentices due to take their final assessments.

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

Many learners on courses at The Forward Trust have significant barriers to employment and learning. This includes criminal records and drug or alcohol addiction. Despite this, most learners achieve on their courses. They receive good support to improve their digital skills. They use online tools competently to create their CVs and to look and apply for jobs. Around a third succeed in gaining a job.

Learners remember and recall what they have been taught well. This is because their experienced tutors teach effectively. Tutors provide clear instructions and helpful explanations, and facilitate group discussions successfully so that learners secure their knowledge in a range of topics. For example, learners on the climate change and environmental awareness course learn how to interpret statistical information about climate change. They gain a good understanding of technical terms, such as deforestation, ecosystems and resource sufficiency.

Learners appreciate the welcoming and inclusive learning environments. They enjoy learning in small groups, where they quickly form friendships with their peers and positive and trusting relationships with tutors. They feel safe and know whom to contact if they have any concerns.

Learners' behaviour and attitudes towards learning are very positive. They enjoy their studies, have good attendance and are attentive in their lessons. They readily take part in discussions and respect each other's views and differences. They complete set work independently and respond well to questions.

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

Leaders and managers use their adult funding to offer clearly defined courses to meet the needs of local and national priorities. For example, they teach the climate change and environmental awareness course specifically to meet the Mayor of London's Green Skills agenda. Leaders are committed to supporting the most disadvantaged learners. They design the employability course so that learners gain the essential skills and behaviours they need for employment. However, leaders recognise the need to help more learners secure sustainable employment.

Leaders and managers make sure that the very small number of apprentices are in suitable job roles. Tutors support apprentices effectively to prepare for their final assessments. Apprentices benefit from frequent opportunities to practise their presentation skills and apply what they have learned at work. Tutors give apprentices useful feedback after their assessments, which helps them to improve their confidence and strive for high grades.

Leaders and tutors select and sequence the content of the courses so that learners gain knowledge and skills quickly. Courses are short, and tutors prioritise the skills learners need to cover first. For example, tutors help learners improve their English language skills on employability courses early, so that they can complete job

applications accurately. Tutors also link components together, so that learners gain an understanding of other topics outside their vocational studies. For example, on the climate change and environmental awareness course, tutors explore with learners their understanding of sustainability and how this impacts their personal lives and well-being.

Tutors use the information about learners' prior knowledge and skills effectively to plan their teaching. For example, they adapt the content and activities in lessons to meet learners' needs. Tutors use assessment competently to check learners' understanding through a variety of methods. As a result, they quickly identify whether learners have gaps in their knowledge or that they need to explain concepts more clearly. Learners have access to, and use a good range of, resources to support their learning. This includes laptops for the duration of their courses.

Staff and tutors give learners who need extra help good support. Tutors allow learners more time to complete activities. Learners have access to a good range of stress-relieving resources to help with anxiety in classrooms. Tutors have adapted materials suitably for a visually impaired apprentice, and tutors use voice recordings to complete assessments and give feedback.

Leaders and tutors have put in place suitable personal development opportunities for learners on short courses. They teach learners early in the course about the importance of fundamental British values and make this relevant to the activities that learners complete. Tutors help learners understand the importance of physical and mental health. Through discussions, tutors promote equality and diversity successfully. As a result, learners understand the importance of equality in the workplace.

Leaders and tutors ensure that the majority of learners benefit from external talks and visits from employers. For example, on the climate change and environmental awareness course, most learners visit community projects, such as a community kitchen to help them understand how to reduce food waste. A few learners on employability courses attend sessions on how to set up a business. Many learners attend talks from the local water supplier and a high-end retailer in London. This helps learners understand the types of jobs that are available and what employers expect from applicants. However, not all learners have an awareness of the full range of jobs available in green skills on completion of their course.

Staff are enthusiastic about their work and have high expectations of their learners. They appreciate the range of professional development activities that leaders give them to improve their practice and keep them up to date. As a result, tutors recognise how they improve elements of their teaching and assessment. For example, tutors have improved the developmental feedback they give on learners' work, including how they identify errors in spelling and grammar.

The Forward Trust has suitable governance arrangements in place. The advisory board supports and challenges leaders sufficiently. Leaders use a good range of activities to quality assure the learners' experience. The board receives a wide range

of information to check the quality of education and areas for improvement. However, leaders do not track closely enough where all learners go to when they leave their course early or after they complete their course. Nor do they have full oversight on how well learners attend across their centres and courses. As a result, they do not fully understand how successful their programmes are or whether there are any trends or concerns in respect of the attendance of learners.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Make sure that learners on the climate change and environmental awareness course know about the full range of jobs available in green skills.
- Increase the proportion of learners who successfully gain sustainable employment on completion of their course.
- Improve the oversight and tracking of learners' progression and attendance.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2674166
Address	Unit 106–107 Edinburgh House 170 Kennington Lane London SE11 5DP
Contact number	020 3981 5525
Website	www.forwardtrust.org.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Mike Trace
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans and the previous monitoring visit 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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