

Inspection of Norfolk County Council Adult Learning

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Norfolk County Council Adult Learning (NCCAL) provides adult learning and apprenticeship programmes across the Norfolk region. NCCAL aims to ensure that learning is accessible to residents in the region, including those who are furthest from education. It provides community-based learning and online learning programmes. Currently, NCCAL operates in over 100 community venues across Norfolk.

At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 6,000 adult learners and 179 apprentices. Most adult learners are on level 1 and level 2 learning programmes. These programmes include English and mathematics, health and social care, preparation for work, and digital learning. More recently, NCCAL has started to offer construction courses for adult learners. Level 3 programmes include access to higher education (access to HE), accounting and finance, and supporting teaching and learning.

Most apprentices are over the age of 19 years and training on level 3 programmes, including teaching assistant, business administration and operational firefighter. NCCAL recently introduced the level 4 early intervention practitioner apprenticeship programme. There are approximately 20 apprenticeship standards with fewer than 10 apprentices in training.

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

Adult Learners and apprentices are enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed to their studies. They have clear plans for their future careers. Almost all plan to use their learning to improve their economic prospects or quality of life.

Adult learners benefit from a flexible approach to learning. Learners who struggle with mobility, social isolation and financial hardship can access programmes that meet their needs. Learners who are resident in retired living homes have increased their confidence, self-care and resilience after completing courses in basic cookery. Learners feel less isolated by completing the courses together and are excited to prepare and eat their own meals. As a result, these learners develop friendships, confidence and a sense of belonging in the communities in which they live.

Tutors ensure that learning takes place in a calm, encouraging and supportive environment. Learners and apprentices support their peers and are confident to ask questions and clarify misconceptions. Learners and apprentices share their own experiences to provide additional insights during discussions.

Most learners attend classes regularly and arrive punctually. In the few cases of learner absence, managers explore options to provide additional support to overcome the barriers that learners may be facing.

Most learners and apprentices study how to maintain their health and well-being. Staff encourage adult lip-reading learners to take walks, do gardening, and enjoy meeting new friends. This enables them to better manage their mental and physical health needs.

Apprentices feel safe in their work settings. They have a good understanding of safeguarding and how to report a concern. Learners and apprentices develop a secure understanding of British values and appreciate their importance. Adult learners benefit from course-related safeguarding. Accounting assistants understand about online fraud and the importance of cybersecurity. Most learners develop an understanding of radicalisation and can make early identification should it occur.

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

Leaders are ambitious for adults and apprentices in the region. They have formed highly effective partnerships with local stakeholders to design the curriculum. They have responded effectively to the growing demand in the region for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. Leaders work with libraries to identify and provide courses, such as digital literacy courses, in rural communities. Leaders work with job centres to promote their programmes in areas of skills shortage, such as construction trades. Leaders consider pathways to ensure that courses provide

routes into employment for learners. Leaders design inclusive courses with flexible delivery models that meet the needs of the local community.

Leaders have worked with local employers effectively to design apprenticeship courses. Leaders worked with employers to introduce the early intervention practitioner apprenticeship. Leaders responded to employers needing qualified staff in children's and adult services.

Leaders work with employers to ensure that apprentices establish and remember new skills in an incremental and secure way. Operational firefighter apprentices learn health and safety routines. They demonstrate the professional standards of behaviour expected of them in the fire service. Apprentices learn about nutrition, hydration and managing sleep patterns while working on shift. Staff highlight the effects of sleep patterns on hormone cycles and how to manage these to avoid conflict in the workplace. As a result, the apprenticeship is well matched to the needs of the fire service and leads logically towards their final examinations.

Tutors and assessors are well qualified in their subjects and have good workplace experience. This includes specialist courses, such as lip-reading. Tutors use their experience and expertise to enhance the learning and skills development for learners and apprentices.

Apprentices value the support they receive from their assessors and workplace mentors. Assessors plan frequent tripartite meetings to review the progress of apprentices. Assessors work with the workplace mentors to agree an individualised plan for on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices in danger of falling behind with their work receive additional support sessions to enable them to meet their targets.

Tutors do not consistently identify learners' and apprentices' existing skills and knowledge at the start of their course. Tutors do not use the information that they do collect on prior learning to tailor training for adults and apprentices. Tutors do not consistently agree and set effective targets for adult learners at the beginning of their programmes. In most cases, targets for adult learners are too vague and do not identify the skills that learners need to make the progress of which they are capable.

Most tutors present information skilfully, particularly in face-to-face sessions. They provide clear explanations, using their industry experience to explain key concepts. In access to HE, tutors provide clear explanations of key theories, such as person-centred therapy. Tutors include practical examples of class members' experience of using positive affirmation techniques. Tutors use stimulating learning materials, such as video clips, to reinforce the theories. Learners move on to compare and contrast with previously learned alternative therapy approaches. As a result, learners are developing substantial new knowledge and skills of psychodynamic approaches.

Most teachers use assessment effectively. Teachers use assessment to ensure that learners understand and remember key concepts. Tutors use effective questioning techniques to identify knowledge gaps, deepen understanding and quickly address

any misconceptions. In construction, tutors use questioning techniques with learners to reflect on the progress they have made. Tutors challenge learners to reflect on what they would do differently and what the impact would be.

Most learners and apprentices further develop their English and mathematics skills throughout their course. In ESOL, learners quickly develop their written English skills in the initial stages of their programme. Learners improve their written English in the use of tense and positive and negative verbs. Tutors ensure that learners understand and correct common mistakes. Learners studying ESOL make good use of their new skills in their personal lives. Learners take part in social activities, such as sports, where they feel welcomed and able to communicate with others. As a result, learners feel more confident and able to live independent lives.

However, leaders do not ensure that level 3 teaching assistant apprentices make good progress with English and mathematics. Leaders do not ensure that English and mathematics are successfully embedded or taught early enough in the programme. As a result, apprentices do not complete their apprenticeship in a timely manner.

Leaders and managers are ambitious for learners and apprentices, including learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). Tutors are aware of the broad additional needs of their learners and ensure that support is available to improve learners' access to learning. However, planning between teachers and learning support staff is not consistently effective. Leaders acknowledge that learners with LDD are not always supported effectively. Leaders are taking appropriate steps to resolve this issue, but it is too early to evidence the impact of these actions.

Tutors prepare apprentices very effectively for their final examinations. Apprentices have a good understanding of how their work contributes to their final assessment. Apprentices are keen to collect their best pieces of work for their final submission portfolio.

Most learners are well prepared for their next steps. Learners are aware of the wider careers support available to them should they wish to change their vocational route. Learners studying accounting know the career routes within their chosen sector. Tutors provide information about next steps and examples of the pathways taken by alumni. Learners studying access to HE programmes benefit from teaching that is jointly delivered with local university staff. They complete assignments that enable them to research careers in their chosen sector. The few learners who do not wish to progress to university receive support to plan their next steps. However, too few apprentices receive independent careers advice. Too few apprentices understand the wide range of job opportunities available to them in the future.

Most adult learners and apprentices achieve well and complete their programmes. Leaders have put in place appropriate actions to address the decline in achievement, where appropriate. Leaders have removed the embedded digital skills qualification from the functional skills programmes. Leaders have introduced more robust English diagnostic assessment for those learners studying functional skills level 2

mathematics. However, at the time of the inspection, it was too early to see the full impact of these actions.

Governors have a good understanding and oversight of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They provide effective support and challenge for leaders to continue to drive improvements. Governors challenged managers to improve their performance reporting to the board. As a result, governors have been instrumental in improving the monitoring and improvement of safeguarding compliance, such as timely safeguarding checks and refresher training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Tutors must establish learners' and apprentices' starting points to ensure that they are on an appropriate programme. Tutors must use these starting points to develop individual learning plans and targets for learners and apprentices.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices benefit from impartial careers advice and guidance to plan their future careers and progression pathways.
- Tutors and learning support assistants must communicate effectively to ensure that learners with LDD receive the support they need to access learning and make good progress.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53545
Address	County Hall Martineau Lane Norwich NR1 2DH
Contact number	01603 306605
Website	www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-learning
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Denise Saadvandi
Provider type	Community Learning and Skills – Local Authority
Date of previous inspection	18 to 21 April 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Head of Service, 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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