

Inspection of Bristol City Council

Inspection dates: 21 to 24 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Information about this provider

Bristol City Council's Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Service (ESL) is part of the Council's Education and Skills Division in the Children and Education Directorate.

The ESL provision spans adult community learning, apprenticeships, employment support and post-16 education and training. The council sub-contracts to nine providers, including North Somerset Community Learning and the City of Bristol College. ESL operates as On Site Bristol for apprenticeships and Community Learning West for its adult learning courses.

During the inspection, 280 apprentices were studying apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3, predominantly in construction trades. The three largest courses were level 3 installation electrician, level 3 gas engineering operative and level 2 carpentry and joinery. Three-quarters of apprentices were aged 16 to 18 at the start of their training and most of these were studying at level 3.

Most of the ESL's 2,200 adult learners live in socially and economically deprived areas of Bristol. Learners study courses such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and employability. Most recently, new courses include initiatives for people who are rough sleepers, ex-offenders, and isolated, unemployed women.

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

Apprentices' and adult learners' behaviours and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are punctual and have high rates of attendance. They enjoy the calm learning environments, value their learning and have developed the confidence to contribute and ask questions. They are proud of the good progress they are making in their learning. Learners feel safe, respected, and well supported by staff. Apprentices have developed a very good understanding of the safety-critical nature of the construction sector.

Teaching and training staff work very closely with and know their learners well, accommodating thoughtfully any additional learning need. Apprentices' training staff set high expectations for professional behaviours during training sessions. Apprentices respect and conform to these readily. For example, gas apprentices start their college training sessions ready to learn, with pens, rulers and calculators to hand from the outset.

Leaders' very good links with the local community ensure that adult learners and apprentices take part in a wide range of additional activities which add value and depth to their learning. For instance, apprentices are involved in skills competitions. They develop and use effective communication skills in their work. They volunteer for community projects. They visit schools to raise awareness among young people of the value of apprenticeships and the diversity of those involved. Learners studying on community learning courses take part in extensive volunteering opportunities during their courses and after they have completed them. Several learners have set up their community groups, such as a community kitchen, as a direct result of their learning experience at ESL.

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

ESL senior staff have devised curriculums which best meet the needs of the Bristol communities they work in, and the employers they work with. Senior staff work extensively and successfully with local partners and charities to attract disadvantaged and disaffected learners into learning. They develop and maintain strong working links with a wide range of small- and large-scale construction industry employers who contribute directly to the planning and review of the apprenticeships offered. This ensures that what is taught reflects what employers want. Senior staff have developed useful collaborative partnerships, for example with the NHS and City of Bristol College. This has recently led to an entry-level course offered in health- and care-based employment. This helps learners from outside the sector understand appropriate professional and ethical responsibilities when caring for clients.

Senior staff and managers work very effectively to remove any barriers which prevent learners in the city from taking part in learning and achieving qualifications. For example, they provide courses at times that are most convenient for learners. On several courses, mothers attend their lessons only because senior staff have

provided crèche facilities. The ESOL curriculums include a range of levels which meet the needs of learners with different abilities and include courses leading to qualifications.

Apprenticeship tutors are very well qualified and experienced. They make effective use of their relevant personal and work backgrounds to bring learning to life and ensure lesson content is up to date. They create realistic working scenarios to allow apprentices to fault diagnose, plan and cost repairs. Most teaching is effective, and engaging and uses methods to teach and present information clearly. Training officers provide a very effective link between apprentices, employers, subcontractors and On Site Bristol. Consequently, apprentices' on- and off-the-job activities are complementary, and well-planned and help promote good progress in learning. However, a minority of teaching does not use assessment effectively to check apprentices' understanding of key concepts. This means a few apprentices are not developing their technical knowledge in sufficient depth.

Tutors make sure adult learners know what they have achieved, and how to correct mistakes and improve their work. Most English teaching motivates learners and helps them remember and understand new material. On a carpentry course, adult ex-offenders with little or no previous knowledge develop sufficient basic carpentry skills to make or repair wood-based projects. ESL's network of development workers maintains very close links with Bristol communities, identifying each community's needs and new opportunities for adult learning.

Most apprentices gain new knowledge and skills and develop positive behaviours for life and work. Employers recognise this and give their apprentices more workplace responsibility, including trusting them to work independently on projects in domestic and commercial settings.

A very high proportion of adult apprentices achieve their qualification. A similarly high proportion of adults who start a course complete it and, where relevant, achieve the target qualification. However, the achievement of apprentices aged 16 to 18 has not been high enough. Senior staff improved the recruitment process for young apprentices, so they are placed on the right course and level. At the time of the inspection, the achievement of younger apprentices had risen from around half to just over three quarters.

Tutors ensure that apprentices and adult learners learn about wider aspects related to their personal and professional lives such as tolerance and inclusion. For instance, in ESOL classes, tutors help learners understand topics like marriage traditions in different cultures. Learners respectfully discuss and improve their knowledge of equality and diversity themes.

Tutors ensure that apprentices know about their employment rights, responsibilities and health and safety at work. They teach apprentices how to maintain their mental well-being. They make sure they know about the negative impact in construction trades of substance misuse on their health, well-being and employment prospects.

Tutors ensure younger apprentices have a good understanding of sexual health and healthy relationships.

Tutors teach apprentices and adult learners how to keep themselves safe in modern Britain, including recognising the signs of radicalisation. Adult learners can recall knowledge of these topics, but apprentices' recall is limited.

Tutors, development workers and training officers ensure learners and apprentices receive effective and impartial careers information, advice, and guidance. As a result, they know what their course or apprenticeship is equipping them for and have a good understanding of future training, education, or work options.

Senior staff have assembled an effective advisory board which includes representatives from influential employers and organisations in the area. Senior staff brief board members thoroughly on how well the provision is meeting the city's needs. Members share city knowledge and make well-informed recommendations for new provision. Members identify sources of funding, and new learning initiatives are consequently well supported and resourced.

Senior staff are in the process of aligning quality assurance arrangements for the sub-contracted apprenticeship to the more thorough 'deep dive' approach. This is now being used by senior staff to evaluate the content and impact of community learning courses. However, this has yet to have an impact.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning on all courses, notably that of the sub-contractors, is evaluated thoroughly and actions taken to confirm it is consistently good.
- Ensure tutors teach apprentices to develop a deep understanding of how to keep themselves safe in modern Britain, not least in their homes and workplaces.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50846
Address	The Park Daventry Road BS4 1DQ
Contact number	0117 251 0230
Websites	https://communitylearningwest.net/ https://www.onsitebristol.co.uk/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jane Taylor
Provider type	Community Learning
Date of previous inspection	22 to 25 February 2016
Main subcontractors	City of Bristol College North Somerset Council

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the adult and community learning 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

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