

# Bolton Council

## Inspection report

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Type of provider: Local Authority

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## Information about Bolton Council

1. The aims of Bolton Council's community provision are to narrow the gap between the most and least affluent members of the population, and to ensure economic prosperity. These aims are informed by the council's six priority themes:
  - healthy Bolton – improving life expectancy
  - achieving Bolton – improving educational attainment
  - strong and confident Bolton – improving life chances for communities
  - prosperous Bolton – creating quality jobs
  - clean and green Bolton – cleaner streets, better parks
  - safe Bolton – reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
2. The council provides non-accredited community learning for social and personal development, funded by the Skills Funding Agency for the North West. Provision includes personal and community development learning (PCDL), first steps, family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN), wider family learning (WFL) and neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC) across eleven subject categories. PCDL provision is the largest single area of provision. Across the borough, courses are offered at five 'hubs' and around 100 community venues, known as 'spokes'. The council's Head of Adult Learning has overall responsibility for the provision.
3. Bolton has a population of 261,037 of which 11% describe themselves as non-white; those from an Indian heritage form the largest minority ethnic group. A high proportion of adults have low level, or no, qualifications; 25% fall below national standards for literacy and numeracy and, in the most disadvantaged areas, this rises to one in three people. From December 2009 to February 2010, Bolton's unemployment rate was 8%, higher than that for the North West and for England as a whole.
4. The sole provider of learning opportunities for Bolton Council is:
  - Bolton Community College (the college)

| Type of provision  | Number of learners in 2008/09 |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Adult learner provision:<br>Learning for social and personal development | 5,881 part-time learners      |

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Overall effectiveness of provision           | Grade 2 |
| Capacity to improve                          | Grade 3 |
|  | Grade   |
| Outcomes for learners                        | 2       |
| Quality of provision                         | 2       |
| Leadership and management                    | 2       |
| Safeguarding                                 | 2       |
| Equality and diversity                       | 2       |
| Learning for social and personal development | Grade   |
| Information and communication technology     | 2       |
| English for speakers of other languages      | 3       |
| Family learning                              | 2       |
| Community development                        | 2       |

## Overall effectiveness

- Overall effectiveness is good. Outcomes for learners are good. Most learners complete their course and report that they achieve their learning goals and make good progress. The council and college place a high priority on health and safety, and learners consistently report that they feel safe. Learners and particularly community learning ambassadors contribute very effectively to their communities.
- The quality of provision is good. Tutors plan their sessions well. The most effective sessions make very good use of information learning technology (ILT) to enrich learning; clear and measurable targets inform planning for individualised learning. However, most tutors do not use available ILT effectively and most targets are vague or too broad to be realistically achievable. The good balance of planned and responsive courses meets most learners' needs and includes clearly identified progression routes. Particularly effective partnerships are mutually beneficial. Support for learners from tutors

and centre staff is very good. Information, advice and guidance are readily available. However, crèche provision is not always available when required.

7. Leadership and management are good. The council and college work very effectively together. Good strategic planning links all provision to one of the council's six priority themes. However, although the council and college monitor provision regularly, their use of data is insufficient to make informed judgments on college performance against the council's contract. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and comply with government legislative requirements. Arrangements for equality and diversity are good; staff place a high priority on respect, fair treatment and inclusiveness. Initiatives to widen participation are highly effective and have proved successful in recruiting learners from under-represented groups. Effective engagement with users and partners supports and promotes improvement.

## Main findings

- Most learners complete their course, develop new skills and produce high standards of work. Learners enjoy their learning and participate enthusiastically in learning activities. Most report that they achieve their learning goals and many make good progress to other learning. Learners improved social contact and confidence increase their support networks and employment potential.
- Learners consistently report that they feel safe. The council and college place a very high priority on health and safety. Control measures are very secure. Learners understand and use safe working practices. Tutors frequently reinforce good practice to maintain a safe learning environment. However, in family learning, inappropriate use of child-size furniture for adults creates potential risk.
- Learners contribute very effectively to the community. The excellent work of community learning ambassadors, identified at the previous inspection, is well established. Ambassadors act as powerful and positive role models, showing the impact of learning and its life-changing potential. Other learners contribute in many ways, such as responding to charity appeals or supporting less confident learners.
- Tutors plan their sessions well. The most effective sessions are well paced and structured; make very effective use of ILT to enrich learning and set clear and measurable learning targets, which inform planning for individualised learning. However, most tutors do not use ILT interactively. Many targets are vague or too broad to be achievable. Tutors sometimes interpret progress as achievement.
- A broad range of provision meets the needs of most learners. Classes in many subjects meet community and individual learners' needs effectively. The good balance of courses provides clearly identified progression routes. However, in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), courses are too short for language development and do not meet the needs of all groups of learners.
- Partnerships are particularly effective and mutually beneficial in establishing need, setting and monitoring targets and reducing duplicated activity across the

area. Partners report that their own organisational development is significantly enhanced by their relationship with the council and the college.

- Support for learners from tutors and centre staff is very good. Staff recognise that many learners have significant barriers to learning and have good understanding of their specific needs. Information advice and guidance are readily available by referral and as an integral part of some programmes. However, crèche provision is not always available when required.
- The council and the college work very effectively together to promote and provide adult learning. Strategic planning is good and planning links all provision to one of the council's six priority themes. The council, college and the directors of council services monitor the provision at all levels. Elected members are kept fully informed of progress and developments.
- The use of data is insufficient to make informed judgments on the college's performance against the council's contract. Data do not include projections on how the college will meet contracted enrolment targets. Inspectors did not have full confidence in retention and achievement data. Some managers collect progression data, but this is not coordinated or sufficiently analysed.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are good and comply with government legislative requirements. Staff are trained in the protection of vulnerable adults and child protection. Good college links exist with the safeguarding board and organisations that support vulnerable people. College staff are represented on the council safeguarding board and make an active contribution.
- Arrangements for equality and diversity are good. All staff are trained in equality and diversity. A high priority is placed on respect, fair treatment and inclusiveness. Equality and diversity are well monitored through the committee structures. The college has introduced a single equality scheme that is in the final stages of being ratified by governors.
- Initiatives to widen participation are highly effective. The responsive curriculum is well planned to meet local needs. Several partners, committed to community provision as a priority, meet throughout the year to ensure that the offer for Adult Learners' Week meets the needs of communities and learners. Initiatives have proved successful in recruiting learners from under-represented groups.
- Effective engagement with users and partners supports and promotes improvement; stakeholders' views are collected, analysed and acted upon. In particular, community learning ambassadors and community involvement teams are highly effective in ensuring that community views are collected and used for improvement.

### What does Bolton Council need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality and use of data are fit for purpose by agreeing a suitable format to inform discussion. Include projections on how enrolments will accumulate to meet the contract target. Ensure accuracy in recording retention by consistently following the system for withdrawals. Fully implement plans for appropriate processes to establish how many learners meet their learning goals and coordinate and analyse progression data to demonstrate the impact of community learning.

- Further enhance teaching and learning by continuing to invest in the development of staff so that they become confident users of ILT and can use appropriate processes for setting and monitoring learners' targets and for recognising and recording their progress and achievement.
- Ensure that all accommodation, furniture and childcare provision meet the needs of adult learners, thereby minimising risk and reducing barriers to learning.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- the very supportive and patient tutors
- meeting and learning with a wide mix of people from different cultural backgrounds and communities to develop a sense of mutual respect
- believing that their views are listened to and valued
- their sense of pride and achievement in developing new skills and contributing to the community
- the much improved social contact gained by getting out of the house and not being isolated
- feeling particularly safe at the friendly and welcoming community learning centres
- the location and timing of courses that help other family commitments to be met
- the good opportunities to progress to other courses.

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- the quality of some accommodation and resources in some centres to ensure that all learners have access to a learning experience of the same high quality
- the availability of crèche provision
- the availability of longer courses
- the clarity of information about travel expenses for off-site learning to ensure that all learners understand their entitlements.

### Summary of the views of stakeholders and partners as confirmed by inspectors

#### What stakeholders and partners like:

- the wide availability of learning opportunities across Bolton, at neighbourhood level
- the open and responsive approach adopted when listening to partners' views that supports mutually beneficial development

- the very positive response to meeting needs identified through the work of community learning ambassadors that helps raise aspirations at local level.

What stakeholders and partners would like to see improved:

- the availability, at local level, of high quality resources which meet 21st century standards.
- greater flexibility in the minimum group size required when setting up new courses for learners who need a high level of support or whose ability to travel is restricted.

## Main inspection findings

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. The council's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Since the appointment of its Head of Adult Learning in 2009/10 the council now monitors the college's performance at frequent meetings with key staff and takes an active part on college committees for key quality processes. However, this close involvement began only relatively recently after a long period where the college received little guidance from the council about its requirements. It is too soon to judge the long-term impact of these developments.
9. Self-assessment is used well to sustain improvement. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Inspectors agreed with most grades and many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified, but found some strengths to be no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report did not identify several areas for improvement identified by inspectors. Areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, such as ineffective target setting and insufficient childcare, have still not been fully resolved.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Most learners complete their course and make good learning and personal gains. They develop new skills, producing high standards of work, often beyond their expectations. Learners take pride in their work, enjoy learning and participate enthusiastically. Most report that they achieve their learning goals. Many learners, particularly in ESOL and community development, make good progress to other learning. However, inspectors did not have full confidence in retention and achievement data; progression data collected by individual managers are not co-ordinated or analysed fully.
11. Learners successfully improve their economic and social well-being. They report how improved social contact reduces isolation and promotes their confidence to attempt new challenges. Their involvement in community networks enriches friendships and builds good relationships. Learners with learning difficulties use appropriate social conventions well and ESOL learners improve their language

skills, enhancing their inclusion. Increased confidence and skills improve employment prospects and some learners progress onto paid or voluntary work.

12. Learners consistently report that they feel safe. The council and college place a high priority on health and safety. Control measures are very secure. Risk assessments include specific measures for activities and learners' particular needs. Learners understand and use safe working practices that tutors frequently reinforce, maintaining safe learning environments. However, inappropriate use of child-size furniture for adults in family learning creates potential risk.
13. Learners improve their health and well-being. People recovering from mental illness learn effective ways to manage anxiety. Others learn about making healthy food choices or growing their own vegetables. Gentle exercise classes include sessions targeting older people. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn how taking a pride in their appearance and helping others promote the 'feel good factor'.
14. Learners contribute very effectively to their community. Excellent work by community learning ambassadors, identified at the previous inspection, is very well established. Many ambassadors provide powerful and positive role models showing the life-changing impact of learning. Some progress to community involvement teams, conducting research that informs planning and evaluation for different service providers. Learners other contributions include responding to charity appeals or providing individual support to less confident learners.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

15. Tutors plan their teaching well, making good use of a varied range of learning strategies. Whole class teaching and individual coaching are good. Sessions are well paced and structured. In the best sessions, tutors make very effective use of ILT to enrich and stimulate learning and clearly identify individual learners' targets; planning activities that enable them to meet their targets. However, most tutors do not use ILT effectively, and fail to exploit its interactive features.
16. Target setting was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. The council and college acknowledge that the process to recognise and record progress and achievement remains ineffective. New documents are considerably more accessible than previously, but are inappropriate for some groups of learners. Many tutors do not fully understand how to plan for individualised learning, monitor progress and record achievement. They confuse learning activities with learning goals/targets, which are often too vague to be measurable or unrealistic for the course. Tutors sometimes interpret progress as achievement, compromising data reliability.
17. A broad range of provision meets the needs of most learners. A good balance of planned and responsive courses provides clearly identified progression routes. Learners and partners report that new interests are readily responded to, subject to demand. Courses for specific needs, for instance on a hospital ward



or in a community house for an estate with poor transport links, promote inclusion. Community learning ambassadors regularly talk to communities to identify new areas of interest. However, ESOL courses are too short for language development and do not meet the needs of all learners.

18. Particularly effective partnerships are mutually beneficial in establishing need, setting and monitoring targets and reducing duplicated activity. The council has established good relationships with a wide range of public and voluntary sector services, schools, faith and cultural organisations. These groups support council priorities through their various specialisms including sustainability, parenting, health, faith and culture, and extending community access to accommodation and resources. Productive links with the Council for Voluntary Services support effective management of devolved NLDC funding.
19. Support for learners is very good. All staff recognise that many learners have significant barriers to learning. Paid and voluntary support workers ably assist less confident learners. Learners' specific requirements are well met. Provision offered in conjunction with children's centres has crèche facilities, but this is not always the case elsewhere. Accommodation is not always suitable for childcare, restricting use of the council's crèche funds.
20. Information, advice and guidance are available from specialist college careers advisers and less formally through trained centre staff and community ambassadors. A referral system enables learners to receive advice in the community readily. A few areas, such as community development, provide effective integral advice and guidance.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

21. Leadership and management are good. The partnership between the council and the college works particularly well. A detailed service level agreement and agreed protocols ensure that both partners monitor the provision closely at all levels. Reporting arrangements ensure that directors of council services and elected members are fully informed. Strategic planning is good. The council is strongly committed to ensuring that the provision contributes successfully to its priorities. Since the previous inspection, the council's appointment of a Head of Adult Learning has much improved close working links with the college.
22. The council and college make insufficient use of data. Datasets discussed between the college and the council at their monthly monitoring meetings are not fit for purpose. They do not provide an accurate picture of performance against the contract or projections to show how the college will meet its targets. Inspectors did not have full confidence in college data for retention and achievement. They found inconsistencies in use of the process to withdraw learners and the process to recognise and record progress and achievement. Progression data collected by curriculum managers are not coordinated or used to measure the success of programmes for distinct groups of learners.

23. The quality of resources available to support learning programmes is satisfactory. Resources in ICT, identified as a weakness at the previous inspection, are now good. However, in some centres, inspectors identified concerns with the quality of accommodation or furniture.
24. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and comply with government legislative requirements. The council checks that all staff have appropriate enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks, or if they are on list 99, and maintains an appropriate central register. All staff are suitably trained in the protection of vulnerable adults and child protection. Designated senior managers for safeguarding are fully aware of their responsibilities and receive further training. The college maintains a record of learners at risk; its links with the local safeguarding board and other organisations supporting vulnerable people are good. The council's useful multi-agency guide for adult protection contains definitions, types and indicators of abuse together with appropriate actions. College staff and the Head of Adult Learning have good reciprocal arrangements for representation on safeguarding boards and at training.
25. Arrangements for equality and diversity are good. The council and the college's strong commitment to equality and diversity is promoted through appropriate policies, procedures and actions. They place a high priority on values such as respect, fair treatment, and inclusiveness. Governors, managers and all staff have received training in equality and diversity and are fully committed to learners' participation and success. Equality and diversity form a standing item on agendas of the quality improvement and monitoring group and the strategic managers group, both chaired by the Head of Adult Learning. The college's single equality scheme is in the final stages of ratification by governors following approval by the senior management team and learners, by means of the 'learner voice'.
26. Initiatives to widen participation are highly effective. The good work of learning ambassadors is instrumental to success in encouraging under-represented and hard-to-reach groups to participate in learning. Partners on the Adult Learners' Week committee are committed to community provision as a priority. They meet throughout the year to ensure that the week's offer meets the needs of marginalised communities. Several initiatives have been highly successful in widening participation, attracting adults from the most disadvantaged wards, those on low incomes, former substance and alcohol users and older learners from minority ethnic groups.
27. The council makes good use of learner and partner feedback to inform the improvement process. The council independently collects views of learners and communities to share with the college in order to secure improvements to meet needs, well supported by community learning ambassadors and community involvement teams.
28. The self-assessment process is thorough and includes the views of staff and learners. The council's adult learning manager now sits on the self-assessment report validation panel and the moderation panel for observations of teaching

and learning. Although some grades were changed through moderation, inspectors found that self-assessment subject grades and some observation of teaching and learning grades were over ambitious. A useful database allows analysis of findings from the observation process, to identify development themes and good practice.

29. The council is innovative in the use of external funds to improve provision and secure good value for money. Where possible, small class sizes are avoided through good management and merging of groups with similar learning aims.

## Learning for social and personal development

Other social and community learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: *early years, health and social care; motor vehicle maintenance; catering and hospitality; hair, beauty and holistic therapies; health and fitness; visual and performing arts; modern foreign languages; education and training; literacy and numeracy, skills for independent living*

## Information and communication technology

Grade 2

### Context

30. The council offers ICT as short five-week introductory or taster courses and longer 10 week courses. The longer courses provide opportunities for learners to further develop their competency in ICT, and include the use of some specialist software. In 2008/09, 1,231 learners enrolled and this year 956 learners have enrolled.

### Key findings

- Learners progress quickly through their courses, developing good skills that are often beyond their expectations and in which they take great pride. Learners with no or limited experience frequently move on to longer and more complex courses. Learners' work is of a good standard and completed with close attention to detail. Their use of specialist software packages and application of newfound skills and knowledge enhance employability prospects.
- Health and safety are an integral and effectively promoted part of the learners' induction. Secure access to sites ensures that all visitors and staff are clearly identified. Detailed risk assessments are in place in all classrooms and tutors re-emphasise safe working practice throughout sessions. Learners routinely carry out safe working practice, for example by adjusting seating and screen position to ensure good posture when working on computers.
- Most teaching is good. All tutors prepare their sessions well, are sensitive to their learners' needs and successfully engage them in learning activities that promote their development of new skills, or further build on existing skills and knowledge. All tutors have good and up to date curriculum knowledge. However, few tutors use interactive whiteboards to enrich learning, mostly using them for projection.
- Tutors are piloting a new learning journal for recognising and recording progress and achievement. However, many targets for the development of personal skills are too generic, for example 'gain employment'; 'gain a qualification' and 'internet'. Insufficient use of initial assessment leads to the setting of over-general targets, which do not accurately reflect each learner's needs.
- The curriculum meets local employment needs and the social needs of learners well. Centre managers and community learning ambassadors collect information

about community needs and interests, reporting details back. Managers modify and develop the programme on offer effectively to ensure that it accurately responds to local need. Where they receive specific course requests, these are accommodated when a group of viable size has formed.

- Close community links provide a great amount of information about potential learners' needs and their barriers to learning. This information enables managers to take personal and faith-related factors into account when planning courses. In some examples, delaying the start date of the course or changing the day of the week selected for delivery results in more learners being able to attend.
- Learners receive good support for their learning. Where support needs are identified, a variety of approaches may be adopted, to best meet the learners' needs and ensure their participation in learning. Support workers provide in-class individual support; resources are available in Braille or large print; specialist software and adaptive technology are available for learners with visual impairments or physical disabilities.
- The provider has made good progress in updating and extending the range of current software since the previous inspection. Interactive whiteboards, a virtual learning environment, laptop and desktop computers are of a good standard for learners' use. Printers used for digital manipulation courses are of high quality. Tutors have received professional development in the use of interactive white boards, but do not apply these skills sufficiently in classrooms.
- Managers respond well to feedback from learners about the quality of provision. Feedback from the course review identified that learners were least satisfied by their ability to complete course work outside the classroom. This has now been resolved by the provision of the virtual learning environment and additional work being set.
- Centrally held retention data do not accurately reflect on-course retention. The college's formal process to withdraw learners from courses is not followed consistently and was described as a 'word of mouth' process. The inspector found a number of examples where paper registers did not match centrally produced data reports that indicated a higher number of retained learners than on the register.

What does Bolton Council need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that initial assessment forms an essential component in the identification of learners' needs and that tutors have the skills and understanding to use initial assessment results to set specific and measurable targets within the course context.
- Continue to enhance the quality of the learners' experience by supporting tutors to become confident users of interactive resources who maximise the range of media available to enrich their teaching.
- Review the procedure for collecting and maintaining learner data to ensure that it is fit for purpose within a community setting; ensure that all requests to

amend learner records are formally and promptly recorded to maintain an accurate retention record.

## English for speakers of other languages

## Grade 3

### Context

31. The council offers courses for 165 part-time adult learners. In 2008/09 only two centres delivered ESOL. This has increased to 12 in the current year. The majority of classes contain mixed ability learners from entry level 1 to entry level 3. A few classes also contain learners at pre-entry level.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Many learners make good progress with their language skills and improve their confidence to communicate in English. However, in some classes, the more able do not progress quickly enough and the less able do not always receive sufficient guidance. Retention in 2008/09 was very good at 96%. Attendance is satisfactory.
- In 2008/09 a high number of learners, 77%, progressed on to a second ESOL course or on to mainstream provision in another learning area. Learners enjoy their learning and the opportunity to attend a class in their locality.
- Learners make satisfactory progress in improving their understanding of key elements of the British system and their ability to gain access to services. For example, in one class, they learn how to call NHS Direct and the vocabulary associated with various health professionals and illnesses. In a few centres, learners improve their understanding of the world of work and their job-seeking skills through a recently introduced employability module.
- Learners feel safe. Classes offer supportive learning environments. Many classes contain learners from a very wide range of nationalities and differing religious, ethnic and educational backgrounds. They work well together and offer each other a good level of support and encouragement.
- Tutors use a range of interesting, relevant and well-produced worksheets effectively to improve learners' language ability. They plan lessons well to enable learners to practise their oral skills and improve their pronunciation. However, they do not always provide a sufficient range of learning opportunities to meet the needs of all learners in mixed ability groups.
- Course and personal targets are frequently too generic to offer guidance to learners about the specific skills they should be improving. They do not provide a robust starting point against which to measure progress. In many cases, learners do not easily understand their targets.
- Initial assessment is not used effectively. All learners complete an initial assessment. However, this is not marked in any detail and the results of assessment are not used to inform learner profiles, lesson planning and target setting. The information learners receive from their assessment does not help them to set their own learning targets or to know which areas they need to develop.

- The length of courses is not sufficient to enable learners to gain effective language skills. Courses are now significantly shorter than in previous years and run for two hours per week over nine weeks. There are insufficient classes for the minority of learners at higher levels of ability.
- Partnerships and community links are effective. New links to community groups and improved partnership working have led to an increase in the number of venues running classes. The number of ESOL learners since 2008/09 has increased significantly. Classes and their timing respond well to specific community needs. For example, the council is now running evening classes.
- ESOL learners do not easily understand many course documents. Tutors offer good oral explanations to learners of key processes such as induction. However, the language level of written documents is frequently too difficult for a learner at entry level to understand, for example, the health and safety checklist, which all learners are required to sign. The individual learning plan is not suited to learners whose language ability is only at entry level.
- Leadership and management are good. Managers monitor the provision well. They provide good support to staff through regular meetings and staff development. There is a strong strategic direction and a good understanding of how to continue to improve the considerably enlarged provision. Managers are aware of the areas needing improvement and have already started to set actions in place to resolve them.
- Managers have taken highly effective steps to investigate under-representation and underachievement of particular groups of learners. Their understanding and analysis of equality and diversity data have improved significantly. Actions are now in place to tackle these challenges.

#### What does Bolton Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve target setting to ensure it offers clear and specific guidance to learners and can be used to measure progress. Use information gained from the initial assessment to inform individual targets.
- Ensure that the needs of all learners are fully met when planning and providing classes. Implement plans to increase the range, length and frequency of classes and provide more learning opportunities at higher levels.
- Ensure that all documentation received by learners regarding their course is written in language that they can understand. Consider introducing an individual learning plan specifically for ESOL learners that uses simple language structures and vocabulary at an appropriate level.



## Family learning

## Grade 2

### Context

32. In 2009/10, 632 learners enrolled on family learning programmes. Programmes include wider family learning and family language, literacy and numeracy courses. Courses vary in length and include workshops, taster sessions and longer 20 week courses. Courses are taught at a range of venues. A curriculum leader, supported by two full-time and two part-time tutors, manages the programme.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are very good. Learners enjoy learning and develop good knowledge and personal skills. They participate well during sessions and produce good standards of work. Learners apply their learning effectively in home activities with their children. They gain confidence to become more involved in school activities and improve their literacy, ICT and numeracy skills. Some also progress onto further learning within family learning or in other curriculum areas. Retention is very high and during 2008/09 was 98%.
- Learners' contribution to the community is positive. They acquire knowledge about the education system and their own abilities, which they use effectively to increase and improve their engagement with schools, with school staff and with other agencies. A few learners use their newly gained knowledge and increased confidence to progress to voluntary work within schools or other organisations. Learners feel safe; access to learning environments is appropriately controlled.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors plan their sessions well, with clear objectives to promote learning and are enthusiastic and skilled at engaging all learners. Teaching and learning activities are varied and sessions well-paced. Tutors use effective questioning techniques to challenge learners and reinforce learning. They frequently assess learning using appropriate assessment tasks and regular summaries of group learning.
- The use of targets to plan individual learning and monitor progress is insufficient. Often, too many group and individual goals are set to be achievable in a meaningful way for learners. Specific targets, which relate to learners' individual needs, are not established. Tutors monitor learners' general progress with learning well, but do not record progress in relation to individual learning needs or targets.
- Partners such as local schools, Every Child Matters local partnerships, libraries and museums are actively involved in planning the highly responsive provision, which meets the needs of learners together with local and national priorities. Many programmes target disadvantaged communities and successfully engage hard-to-reach learners. Learners report that course location, in their children's school, influences their decision to enrol. A few courses are offered specifically in response to direct requests from learners.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners receive good personal support and encouragement from tutors. They also receive clear guidance and

information about progression onto other courses. However, access to childcare provision is restricted and not offered at all venues.

- Managers and tutors work very effectively with partners to plan and develop provision and to recruit learners from hard-to-reach target groups. Communication within the team and with partners is good. Managers systematically use course reviews, and learner, partner and tutor evaluations to plan and develop provision.
- Partnership arrangements for course delivery are insufficiently specific about minimum standards. Agreements with partners are based on verbal commitments and do not establish protocols for each partner's responsibilities. In most sessions, no adult furniture was available in classrooms. In at least one case, school staff shared access to and use of the room during the session. The lack of crèches or appropriate childcare arrangements excludes potential learners from some courses.
- Tutors have an inclusive approach to their work with learners and are very sensitive to the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds. The promotion of equality and diversity is well established within family learning. The promotion of safeguarding is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. However, it is over-graded and some judgements are insufficiently supported by evidence.

What does Bolton Council need to do to improve further?

- Develop effective protocol agreements with partners to ensure that arrangements for course provision are secure and to define minimum standards for accommodation, furniture and the learning environment.
- Set targets for learners that enable and support the planning and monitoring of learning specific to learners' needs and interests.
- Improve the availability of childcare provision to minimise barriers for potential learners.

## Community development

## Grade 2

### Context

33. The council's community learning and regeneration provision includes targeted projects and learning programmes aimed at hard-to-reach learners and communities. In 2009/10, 349 learners enrolled on community development programmes, including 30 NLDC learners. Over 40% of learners are from minority ethnic groups and 74% are women. Courses range from taster days to short courses and workshops. One full-time programme manager, assisted by three curriculum leaders, manages the programme.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Retention is very high at 98% in 2008/09 and 2009/10 in-year. Learners report that they consistently achieve their personal and group learning goals. Many learners progress from tasters and preparation courses on to courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Progression is particularly good for community learning ambassadors. In 2008/09, 90 ambassadors progressed onto 369 accredited courses, volunteering opportunities and/or jobs in the community.
- Learners enjoy learning and develop good and useful personal and social skills, self-confidence, communication and basic ICT skills. Community learning ambassadors develop considerably. They speak confidently in public when making presentations to partners and community groups. Learners gain confidence and overcome their fears of using a computer, becoming very keen to progress onto other courses. Learners produce a good standard of work in portfolios.
- A good range of activities and learning sessions help inform learners' choices about health and well-being. Learners report that they frequently implement new skills and knowledge about healthy eating, drugs and alcohol misuse and health conditions such as mental illnesses, with their friends and families. Community learning ambassadors actively promote health and well-being in their local communities.
- Community learning ambassadors make an outstanding contribution to their communities as learning champions in the targeted regeneration areas. Their work has developed particularly well since the previous inspection. Many work as volunteers; others are employed to engage local learners and support them in overcoming barriers to learning. They actively promote courses, carry out research to widen participation, inform planning and improve access to provision. Many are now employed in the community or as council employees.
- Teaching and learning are good. Well-planned sessions and all schemes of work are linked to Every Learner Matters, health, safety, equality and diversity themes. Sessions are lively, engaging and well paced, with a variety of activities to engage and motivate learners. Skilful tutors quickly put learners at ease and

gain their respect and trust. Tutors use group work and discussions effectively to encourage learners to develop communication skills.

- The use of ILT is minimal in some learning sessions and access to equipment inadequate at some learning venues. However, this was recognised as an area for development in the self-assessment report and the quality improvement plan includes actions to remedy the problem.
- Target setting is weak and relies mainly on learners' self-assessment of personal goals. Many learning goals consist of one or two words such as 'develop communication skills' or 'internet'. It is unclear how tutors and learners effectively monitor and measure these targets to show progress and achievement.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. The service offers a good range of activities and enrichment from taster courses and short preparation courses to courses at foundation, intermediate, advanced levels and above. The variety of subjects is diverse and rich. Accessible provision is located in priority areas across the borough. Progression routes into further development, education, volunteering and employment are good.
- The effectiveness of partnerships is outstanding. Staff and community learning ambassadors work collaboratively and productively with a wide range of statutory and voluntary providers across the borough. They have developed a multitude of projects and outreach provision including neighbourhood management, youth work, family and children's self-help groups. Hard-to-reach groups are attracted effectively to learning. One local community event alone generated 250 enrolments onto learning courses.
- Support for learners is good. Learners receive particularly good advice and guidance on careers progression. For community learning ambassadors' courses, 'making choices' and 'family health' learners information, advice and guidance are effectively built into the course to develop employment skills and promote volunteering. Outside speakers attend sessions to promote the benefits of volunteering and to highlight the career pathways that are available to learners.
- The programme is well managed and structured to engage learners and promote progression. The team of staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic. Many of the well-qualified and experienced team have developed and progressed from attending classes to becoming employees in the service; they act as good role models to others.
- The promotion of equality, diversity and safeguarding are good in schemes of work, induction and in centres. Learners who want to work with children or vulnerable adults have good access to specialist training. Diversity is celebrated in sessions where multi-cultural groups work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. The self-assessment report was broadly accurate and contained clear judgements, but over-graded many aspects of the provision.

What does Bolton Council need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the clarity of targets and personal learning goals set with and by learners to ensure that learners' progress and achievement can be effectively monitored, measured and moderated.
- Continue to develop staff to ensure that they use ILT effectively in sessions to meet the preferred learning methods of all learners. Implement the results from the recent survey of learning hubs/spokes to ensure cooperation from partners and access to ILT resources.

## Information about the inspection

34. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Bolton Council's Head of Adult Learning as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
35. Inspectors used group, individual interviews and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and partners/stakeholders had completed at the request of the council and the college. They also visited learning sessions. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## Bolton Council

Learning types: 14-16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships. Social and personal development: all adult safeguarded provision

| Grades using the 4 point scale<br>1: Outstanding; 2: Good;<br>3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate   | Overall | Social and personal development |
|--|---------|---------------------------------|
| Approximate number of enrolled learners  |         |                                 |
| Part-time learners   | 520     | 520                             |
| Overall effectiveness  | 2       | 2                               |
| Capacity to improve  | 3       |                                 |
|  |         |                                 |
| A. Outcomes for learners   | 2       | 2                               |
| A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?   | 2       |                                 |
| A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?  | 2       |                                 |
| A1.b) How well do learners progress?   | 2       |                                 |
| A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?                              | 2       |                                 |
| A3. Do learners feel safe?   | 2       |                                 |
| A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*   | 3       |                                 |
| A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*   | 2       |                                 |
| B. Quality of provision  | 2       | 2                               |
| B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?   | 3       |                                 |
| B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?  | 2       |                                 |
| B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?                     | 2       |                                 |
| B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?                                    | 2       |                                 |
| C. Leadership and management   | 2       | 2                               |
| C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?                     | 2       |                                 |
| C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*                                | 2       |                                 |
| C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?  | 2       |                                 |
| C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 2       |                                 |
| C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?  | 2       |                                 |
| C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?                             | 3       |                                 |
| C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?                         | 2       |                                 |

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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