

# Cornwall Council

## Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Local authority (adult and community learning)

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## FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Cornwall Council delivers its adult and community learning through the Cornwall Adult Education Service which is located in the council's Communities Directorate. It is managed by a principal and a senior management team. The council contracts with the Devon and Cornwall Learning Skills Council (LSC) to provide adult and community learning, Entry to Education courses, Train to Gain programmes for staff of local employers and employer-responsive training courses. It offers courses across 15 curriculum areas in approximately 500 community venues across the county.

Cornwall Council was inspected in June 2009. The overall effectiveness and main aspects of the provision were judged to be satisfactory, as was the adult and community learning provision. Train to Gain provision was good. Work-based learning was also judged to be satisfactory apart from its leadership and management which was inadequate. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit, which include the two mandatory themes of outcomes for learners and self-assessment and improvement planning. In particular, inspectors explored outcomes for those learners funded through adult learner-responsive funding.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Cornwall Council made in self-assessment and improvement planning? Reasonable progress

Cornwall Council has made reasonable progress in self-assessment and improvement planning. In the previous inspection it was judged to be in a satisfactory position to make improvements. Its self-assessment process was said to be well established and inclusive, but the self-assessment report was judged to be insufficiently self critical and evaluative. Self-assessment and evaluation have improved. Cross-service steering groups have recently been set up to analyse and improve aspects of provision across the county. Representatives from teaching and administrative staff, managers and the community now work collaboratively to identify cross-service areas for development and improvement planning. Areas for development across the service are now more clearly identified and staff, at all levels, are better involved in improvement planning. The service now has a greater focus on the success and retention rates of its learners and has improved the alignment between its staff development programme and its improvement planning priorities. The reports of the observations of teaching and learning are now more thoroughly moderated and the service now makes better use of data to evaluate progress against improvement planning targets.

## Outcomes for learners

What progress has Cornwall Council made in improving overall success rates in learner responsive provision? Insufficient progress

Cornwall Council has made insufficient progress in improving overall success rates in adult learner-responsive provision. Achievement and standards were satisfactory at the previous inspection. Success rates on accredited courses in most subject areas were good but were low on courses in information and communication technology (ICT) and for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Due to the large numbers of learners in these two subject areas, overall success rates on accredited courses were low but they improved in 2007/08. Overall success rates in 2008/09 were 69.8%, 6.9 percentage points below the current national average. Those for short courses were around national averages at 80.8%, and for long courses were 58.7%, 14.6 percentage points below the current national average. Cornwall Council has improved its approach to course planning and assessment in these subject areas. It has reviewed the range of programmes offered in ICT and Skills for Life. A clear course end date is now specified for each learner and the provider has an improved focus on timely success rates. The service's current data are showing early signs of improved retention in the recently introduced ICT and ESOL courses.

## Quality of provision

What progress has Cornwall Council made in monitoring and tracking the progress of all learners? Insufficient progress

Cornwall Council has made insufficient progress in monitoring and tracking the progress of all learners. In the previous inspection the planning of learning and the recording of learners' formative skills development were insufficient. The individual progress of learners was not systematically monitored and good practice not sufficiently shared. The provider has made progress at a strategic level and is currently carrying out trials of new learning plans in arts and leisure, family learning and Skills for Life provision to improve the monitoring of learner progress. Initiatives to identify good practice within the service and disseminate these across the whole organisation are in place. The introduction of standardised tracking arrangements in ICT courses is having a positive impact on retention. However, these initiatives have not yet had a significant impact in the classroom on monitoring individual learner progress and raising achievement across the service. Information gained through initial assessment and the writing of course and personal objectives on individual learning plans do not yet routinely inform the setting of SMART targets. Learners' individual targets are not yet used across all subject areas to plan lessons and systems are not yet sufficiently well established to monitor learners' progress towards their learning goals.

## Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving safeguarding arrangements? Do these arrangements for all learners now meet government requirements and are all risk assessments for safeguarding completed as required? Reasonable progress

Cornwall Council has made reasonable progress towards improving its safeguarding arrangements. At the last inspection procedures did not fully meet government requirements to safeguard ACL and Train to Gain learners and risk assessments on posts awaiting Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks were incomplete. These arrangements now meet government requirements and all necessary risk assessments have been completed. Five safeguarding champions have been appointed. All staff are now fully informed about safeguarding arrangements. Clarity about safeguarding matters has improved. The monitoring of referrals to safeguarding champions is effective. Tutors now receive more support and guidance on assisting learners.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are firmly in place and all delivery partners have independent safeguarding policies ratified by Cornwall Council. The designated person for safeguarding is a member of the council's safeguarding policy group and links are established with the local safeguarding board. The provider has carried out CRB checks for the majority of its staff and a risk management strategy is in place for those awaiting completion of their checks. All staff are listed on a central record. A good range of information on safeguarding is available for staff and learners and training has taken place.

What progress has Cornwall Council made in tackling the poor management of subcontracted employability programme provision and how effective has this action been in improving the monitoring and management of performance? Significant progress

Cornwall Council has made significant progress in tackling the poor management of subcontracted employability programme provision and in improving the monitoring and management of performance found in the last inspection. Following the last inspection contractual arrangements with subcontractors significantly changed, with a greater focus on the achievement of key objectives and the monitoring of learners' destinations. This has led to a significant improvement in learner outcomes.

Significant progress has been made in the management of, and quality improvement arrangements with, subcontractors. Subcontractors report that networking has improved and good support is given to them to monitor the progress of their learners. Communications between Cornwall Council and subcontractors are very clear with open and honest debate. Subcontractors have an improved understanding of the process and timings of reporting learner progress and achievement.

What progress has been made in using data more effectively for curriculum planning and in analysing and using information on the relative performance of different groups of learners? Reasonable progress

Cornwall Council has made reasonable progress in using data more effectively for curriculum planning. Its analysis and use of information on the relative performance of different groups of learners are less well developed. At the previous inspection the analysis and use of data for planning, managing and monitoring provision was insufficient in most areas. Arrangements for data analysis and use are now more systematic and these are better linked to improvement planning. The senior management team receives regular data reports which are used to monitor and plan improvement. Data are now more accurate and up to date. Data are now routinely communicated to learning support and curriculum managers who have received training in how to interpret and evaluate management information. Data are now being used more effectively to analyse success and retention rates by course and centre and to plan improvements to the curriculum. Cornwall Council has very recently carried out an analysis of the relative performance of different groups of learners, but this is not yet routinely monitored at curriculum or course level by all managers. Data are not yet consistently well used across all curriculum areas but understanding and an awareness of its use have improved overall.

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