

# Stockport Continuing Education Service

Local authority

## Inspection dates

3–6 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Learners on courses offered by the two local sixth-form colleges on behalf of the council do not have recorded, clear and ambitious learning targets, and so cannot monitor accurately their progress and achievements.
- Many tutors on courses that do not lead to formal qualifications do not plan learning well to reflect individual learners' aspirations, and hence learners are not prepared sufficiently well for employment or more involvement in their communities.
- Senior managers have not monitored robustly and regularly the courses that all subcontractors offer to ensure that they meet the service's priorities well.
- Managers are unable to monitor effectively the impact of the provision because they are unaware of many learners' destinations.
- Council leaders and senior managers do not challenge the service's senior managers sufficiently to bring about secure improvements, as they do not receive reliable analyses of learners' performance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers have not developed effective plans to recruit learners from the service's priority groups across all the provision, and consequently too few unemployed learners or learners on low pay benefit from the courses.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Most learners on accredited courses achieve.
- The large majority of learners on English and mathematics courses are successful.
- Tutors have high expectations of learners in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses and plan well to meet their individual needs, so the large majority of ESOL learners achieve.
- Tutors use current affairs very competently in their lessons to promote democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- The Continuing Education Service (the service) is part of Stockport Council's Place Directorate. The service delivers courses in a wide range of venues throughout the borough. The provision is targeted at those new to learning or with low levels of qualifications, those seeking employment and those on low pay.
- Around 65% of the Skills Funding Agency contract is allocated to courses for people who do not have formal qualifications. The very large majority of these courses are offered by the two local sixth-form colleges on behalf of the council. The service directly offers mostly accredited courses in English, mathematics and ESOL up to level 2, for the remainder of the contract.
- Stockport has more residents qualified to level 4 or higher and fewer residents without any qualifications than Greater Manchester and found nationally. The proportion of Stockport residents who are unemployed is lower than that in the North West region and the national average.

## What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all subcontractors have detailed and ambitious targets for all aspects of the provision, including the range of courses that they offer and the quality of the provision that they provide; monitor these targets routinely and robustly, and take effective action when subcontractors do not meet their obligations, so that the service's priorities are met well.
- Ensure that the council's elected members and senior managers receive detailed and reliable analyses of the groups of learners that are recruited, learners' performance, their destinations, and of the quality of the provision, so that they can support and challenge managers to make swift and secure improvements.
- Implement an effective strategy for recruiting learners from the service's priority groups, so that significantly more residents of Stockport at the risk of joblessness or low pay benefit from the provision.
- Ensure that learners, especially those on courses that do not lead to formal qualifications and are offered by the subcontractors, have clear and ambitious learning targets; make certain learners' progress against these targets is assessed and recorded regularly and accurately, so that learners understand the progress they are making and their achievements.
- Ensure that tutors plan and deliver their lessons well to reflect the aspirations and ability of learners, especially for progression into employment or greater participation in their communities.
- Develop robust arrangements to collect data and information about all learners' destinations in employment, education or training or their involvement in their communities; use this information well to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for residents in Stockport.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Following the previous inspection, leaders and managers at all levels have not taken effective action to improve the quality of the provision further. They have not monitored with sufficient rigour the provision offered by the local sixth-form colleges, which are the two largest contractors, to ensure that learners benefit from accurate assessment of their progress and achievements. Consequently, the quality of the provision has declined.
- Senior managers have not set detailed and challenging performance targets for the subcontractors, for example, to recruit learners from the service's priority groups. Until very recently, they relied too much on the subcontractors' self-assessments of the quality of the provision that they offer without a sound verification process. Senior managers have been too slow to take effective action when they identified weaknesses in some aspects of assessment practice in subcontractors, for example on non-accredited courses offered in the sixth-form colleges.
- Managers have not implemented effective arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of all the service's courses, especially the subcontracted provision. Managers until very recently have evaluated only the quality of teaching and learning that the service provides directly. They have sought external advice to help improve the teaching and learning practices of the service's tutors. For example, they have developed and implemented a robust full- and short-length lesson observation process, although it is too soon to evaluate the impact of this on the quality of teaching and learning. They have not ensured that all tutors share and use good practice in the recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement, for example in calligraphy courses.
- Managers across all courses, including those offered by subcontractors, have not implemented a consistent approach to ensure that the evaluation of learners' progress and achievements on non-accredited courses is reliable.
- Managers have not implemented an effective system to collect and evaluate learners' destinations after the completion of their courses. They have found it particularly difficult to collect robust information about the destinations of learners who study at the sixth-form colleges. Consequently, they have not evaluated fully the benefit of the provision to individual learners or the community in Stockport. Managers have very recently started to collect and use systematically information about the impact of the provision, including on individuals who have improved their life chances as a direct result of the provision.
- Managers have not been successful enough in recruiting learners from the priority groups that they have identified. The large majority of learners on the courses that the service directly provides, including those who have recently arrived in the country, have multiple difficulties which hinder learning or employment. However, only a small minority of learners who study on the courses that the two largest subcontractors offer are from the priority groups identified by the service.
- Managers have developed and implemented a comprehensive system for evaluating tutors' performance. They use a variety of information for this purpose, including the results of teaching and learning observations and learners' attendance. They agree clear improvement actions with individual tutors. However, managers do not ensure that the action plans are implemented routinely and effectively.
- Managers and staff have a very detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Their findings are accurate, honest and robust. The improvement action plan is detailed and ambitious and a good tool for rapid improvements. However, their overall evaluation of the provision is based on an inflated view of the quality of the subcontracted provision.
- Following a period of numerous changes, including significant reductions in funding and staffing, and changes in the council's senior leadership team, the service is now stable. Leaders, senior managers and staff at all levels are ambitious and determined to make swift improvements. Senior managers have reviewed the provision recently and have detailed plans to ensure that the provision meets the service's priorities effectively.
- Managers have successfully developed a culture that encourages tutors to develop new ways of teaching, and to be innovative and take risks in their teaching practices. They reflect well on the impact of their practices to make improvements. For example, tutors have modified one of the courses that they delivered in 2014/15 to cater better for the needs of long-term unemployed learners by including lessons at the beginning of the course in the use of English and in applied mathematics. Tutors on a course for learners with complex social and personal needs have introduced detailed weekly staff discussions about each learner's progress; when required, they introduce additional lessons or activities for individual learners to increase their chances of progress.

- Staff at all levels successfully promote fair treatment and respect for individuals. Managers monitor effectively the performance of different groups of learners and take good measures to ensure that no groups of learners are disadvantaged. For example, as a result of good monitoring and additional support, the proportion of learners with learning difficulties or disability who successfully complete their qualifications has improved significantly. Managers have encouraged tutors very successfully to promote the values that prepare learners well for life in Britain. As a result, learners, including those who have arrived more recently in the country, recognise their roles and responsibilities in promoting a fair and open-minded community.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Leaders and senior managers have a well-developed understanding of the contribution that the service makes to the community in Stockport and are very determined to make significant improvements. They have recently carried out a review of governance and are clear about the required improvements, such as offering more support and challenge to the service's senior managers.
  - Managers do not provide the elected members and the council's senior managers with reliable and sufficiently detailed analyses of the quality of the provision and of learners' performance. As a result, elected members do not have a sound oversight of the provision and do not challenge senior managers well to ensure robust and swift improvements.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Managers ensure that all the appropriate staff, including tutors in family learning sessions where children are present accompanied by parents or carers, are checked for criminal records and safeguarding concerns.
  - Staff receive regular training on their responsibilities in relation to keeping learners safe and reporting any concerns identified. Managers have a detailed record of safeguarding policies and procedures in the subcontractors. They keep good records of any safeguarding concerns and the responses made.
  - Managers and tutors have received appropriate training to ensure that they understand their responsibility in preventing extremism and radicalisation. Tutors raise appropriately learners' awareness of the dangers of extreme views and how to stay safe.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement**

- Tutors' practice on non-accredited courses varies considerably in quality across different subjects across the service; only a small minority is good. Too often, tutors in subcontracted provision do not assess, record and use learners' starting points well enough to ensure that all learners achieve their potential. Consequently, the most-able learners do not achieve what they are capable of. Tutors do not provide learners with specific personal learning targets and plan their teaching to ensure that learners meet their objectives. Consequently, learners cannot accurately monitor and review their progress and skill development.
- Most tutors in subcontracted provision do not routinely and accurately assess learners' progress and achievements. They do not ensure that learners have a reliable record of their skill development, which limits learners' ability to be more ambitious about their learning; for example, learners on dressmaking courses cannot assess when they are ready to use a wider range of fabrics.
- Not all the service's tutors have high expectations of learners who have learning difficulties or disability on courses that do not have formal qualifications. Too often, tutors set personal targets that do not relate well to learners' specific developmental needs; for example, broader targets such as 'to enjoy the course' are not sufficiently backed up by detailed learning targets tailored for individual learners. On these courses, progress reviews are not frequent enough, and learners cannot see at regular intervals the progress that they are making.
- Tutors in a minority of lessons do not include relevant and useful activities to keep all learners motivated to learn. For example, when tutors require learners to complete worksheets for too long, learners' motivation for learning is reduced, hindering their progress.
- The service's tutors assess learners' starting points accurately in English and mathematics, and identify their individual learning needs effectively. Each learner has a good understanding of what they need to learn. However, the tutors on vocational courses do not ensure that learners improve their English in the context of the subject that they are studying. Consequently, learners do not develop job-specific writing skills well. For example, in child-minding lessons, not all learners develop good writing skills for expressing the development of children.

- Tutors are enthusiastic and eager for their learners to succeed. Most learning assistants and volunteer tutors support learners very effectively in lessons. In a minority of lessons, the service's tutors do not plan the deployment of learning assistants and volunteer tutors well; as a result, learners do not benefit sufficiently from this additional support to progress at the pace that they should.
- The majority of the service's tutors who teach non-accredited courses record learners' progress and achievements against specific course aims well. They regularly review learners' skills development; for example, on a medieval history course, they record learners' progress in the development of research skills. As a result, learners know what they have achieved and what they still have to do to complete their course successfully.
- On vocational courses, the service's tutors plan teaching and individual coaching activities well to ensure that learners gain the work-related skills that will help them to find jobs. They encourage learners well to apply their newly gained skills in different settings. For example, in courses for bilingual classroom support assistants, they emphasise the opportunities that learners can explore for paid employment, volunteering and community involvement.
- Tutors offer learners effective oral and written feedback. The feedback is sufficiently detailed to enable learners to understand what they have completed correctly, what is incorrect and what they still need to do to improve their work.
- The service's tutors on ESOL courses plan their lessons thoroughly to ensure that stimulating activities enable learners to improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills significantly. They use current affairs very skilfully to encourage learners to apply their learning and gain a better understanding of British society. For example, by learning about, discussing and writing about Emmeline Pankhurst and how she fought for equal voting rights for women, learners gain a good understanding of the development of democracy in Britain.
- Tutors promote fair treatment and respect for differences in ethnicity, national origin, disability, sexual orientation and religion well. Learners are respectful and supportive of each other and tutors are sensitive to learners' individual circumstances. Staff have successfully created an environment of trust to support learning.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

### **requires improvement**

- The large majority of learners on courses without formal qualifications, such as dressmaking, cookery and flower arranging, are not from the priority groups defined by the service. These learners do not develop sufficiently their employment prospects or more involvement in the community as a result of the provision. A minority of learners on creative arts courses have started their own businesses selling their paintings.
- Learners with learning difficulties or disability do not extend their use of English well because not all tutors take sufficient care in using English in lessons. A minority of tutors give learners individual learning plans that contain spelling and grammatical errors, inhibiting learners' understanding of accurate written English.
- Staff provide particularly helpful information, advice and guidance at enrolment to enable learners to choose appropriate courses at the correct level. As a result, most learners attend their lessons regularly and on time. However, learners are not offered good enough advice and guidance to help them to consider routes into employment and develop future career plans. Tutors do not encourage learners sufficiently to consider ways in which they can contribute to their local communities, especially if they are retired and/or do not seek employment.
- Most learners enjoy learning and take considerable pride in their work. Many learners enhance their self-confidence, self-assurance and oral communication skills as a result of the courses that they attend.
- Learners' behaviour is very good and conducive to effective learning. High levels of mutual respect among learners and tutors exist. Many tutors employed by the service make very good use of current affairs issues in lessons, such as the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and local elections, to make learning relevant to learners' day-to-day experiences. Learners have a good awareness of the dangers of terrorism, extremism and radicalisation. They feel safe and are aware of what to do should they not feel safe.

- The evaluation of outcomes for most learners is imprecise, as staff are using unreliable arrangements for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement of learners on non-accredited courses, especially in the two sixth-form colleges. However, learners on a few courses of this type that the service offers directly, such as courses on digital photography and family learning, clearly achieve well.
- Managers do not have sufficient information on learners' destinations. Consequently, they cannot evaluate the impact of the service's provision on learners' future lives and prospects.
- In 2014/15, on accredited courses, the proportion of learners who achieved their qualifications at levels 1 and 2, considering their low starting points, was good. The large majority of learners on English and mathematics courses were successful.
- Most learners make the expected progress, especially learners with low starting points. Many make progress in ways that reflect their personal circumstances, for example to overcome their personal difficulties and, in some cases, tragedies, through courses that help them to take more control of their day-to-day lives. The standard of most learners' work is appropriate, considering their previous educational attainment; however, the most-able learners do not achieve their potential.
- Learners on all courses enhance their personal, social and employability skills. Many improve their use of English, mathematics and information and communication technology, and so are better prepared to find new jobs. Learners on family learning courses develop the skills to teach their children fundamental concepts in mathematics, such as fractions. Learners on ESOL courses improve their use of English well as a result of particularly good support from tutors.
- On accredited courses, few differences exist between the achievements of learners from different groups. Similarly, on non-accredited courses, no discernible differences exist between learners from different backgrounds or between those who have learning difficulties or physical disability and their peers.

## Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,700
Head of service	Mr Richard Mortimer
Website address	<a href="http://stockport.moodle.webanywhere.co.uk">http://stockport.moodle.webanywhere.co.uk</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	0	297	0	98	0	47	0	0
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency							
	<div><div></div> Aquinas College</div> <div><div></div> Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College</div> <div><div></div> Ethnic Diversity Service</div> <div><div></div> MOSAIC Young People’s Drug and Alcohol Service.</div>							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:								

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Shahram Safavi	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
David Longworth	Ofsted Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the service manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.



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