

Sandwell Adult and Family Learning

Local authority

Inspection dates

17–20 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Current year enrolments are too low and learners have had delayed starts.
- The impact of recent changes instigated by managers is not yet measurable.
- For a small minority of learners on non-accredited courses, tutors have not identified specific learning aims at the start of the course, set precise targets or kept sufficient progress records.
- A minority of tutors provide feedback on learners' written work which is too brief and does not always identify what learners have done well and what they need to do to extend their learning.
- Managers do not sufficiently collect and analyse data about learners' destinations after their courses, to ensure the service is effective in improving their employability and well-being.
- Not all learners know how to protect themselves from bullying related to radicalisation or have a good understanding of British values; staff do not effectively promote understanding of these potential dangers.
- Learners' success rates on a minority of accredited programmes are too low; not all groups of learners succeed as well as each other.

The provider has the following strengths

- Managers have taken strong action recently to secure improvements in programme management and to re-establish the provision.
- The strategy to engage the most disadvantaged learners is very effective.
- Tutors set high aspirations and expectations to enable most learners to reach their potential.
- Tutors plan lessons skilfully; they use a wide range of activities creatively to improve the personal skills, health and well-being of learners.
- Many learners from marginalised communities develop the skills, confidence and self-esteem to make better life choices.
- Learners receive constructive verbal feedback from tutors and this encouragement motivates them to take part in sessions enthusiastically, enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- The vast majority of community learners complete their learning and achieve the aims of their course.
- Learners' development of basic skills in English and mathematics is good.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Since the previous inspection, Sandwell Adult and Family Learning has transferred its apprenticeship and traineeship provision, and the staff associated with these programmes, to the local college of further education. Learning takes place in three main adult learning centres and in a range of community venues, including schools and faith centres. Most learners undertake community-based courses which do not lead to a qualification. At inspection, around 10% of learners were undertaking courses to improve their employability, and qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT), administration and English and mathematics.
- Sandwell is an ethnically diverse borough, with over a third of the population from minority ethnic groups. Unemployment is around the West Midlands average but higher than the national rate.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff maintain accurate records of learners' progress, and that individual learning plans meet funding body requirements to avoid future service disruption.
- Ensure recent changes instigated by managers are evaluated for their effectiveness by:
 - reviewing subcontracting arrangements
 - capturing data to ensure that learners are attending regularly, are punctual and are progressing from their courses to positive destinations.
- Complete the 'Prevent' duty staff training and development programme to ensure that all tutors are able to promote British values and enable learners to know how to protect themselves from the risks of radicalisation.
- Monitor the success of all learners on accredited programmes and take action to ensure that all groups of learners achieve as well as each other.
- Share best practice internally to ensure that individual targets for all learners are of a consistently high quality; and ensure that tutors use targets well to plan individual learning and to measure learners' progress on their course.
- Ensure that tutors improve the level and standard of their written feedback on learners' work and progress, so that learners are clear on how they can improve their performance and standard of work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Audit issues prevented new learners enrolling on courses for a considerable period of time during 2015/16. The systems and processes in place in 2014/15 to ensure that staff completed individual learning records accurately were inadequate. Senior managers now ensure that audit requirements are met fully, but previous poor practice has resulted in much lower enrolments in 2015/16. As a result, the number of enrolments for the current year is just over half of that in the previous year.
- The management of subcontractors has much improved. Senior managers suspended recruitment and did not contract with subcontractors until mid-way through the 2015/16 contract year, while they strengthened the contract specifications and the procurement process. Of the six subcontractors who succeeded in securing contracts, a minority have targets that they are unable to meet in the much shorter timescale. The learners who expected to start their courses with the subcontractors at the start of the contract year lost enthusiasm and did not return to learning.
- Since September 2015, senior managers have swiftly conducted a wholesale review of the various management processes through which they evaluate the experience of learners and the impact of the provision on their lives. They have refined, revised and strengthened many of the processes to improve the management of programmes.
- Managers used a broad range of evidence from classes, tutors and learners to produce the current self-assessment report. This gives an honest, self-critical and accurate account of the current position. However the views of partners, employers and subcontractors were not sufficiently included.
- Managers have taken successful steps to improve quality improvement processes, and previously weak aspects of the provision have already improved this year. For example, the quality of observations of teaching, learning and assessment has improved, and tutors are more successful at reinforcing learners' English and mathematics in most vocational courses. However, in other aspects, the impact of improvement measures is not yet fully evident. For example, managers do not yet have effective systems for the collection of information on how well learners progress to their next steps in education or employment; and not all tutors use the outcomes from the initial assessment of learners' skills to set individual learning goals.
- Observers evaluate the quality of teaching and assessment accurately, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, although they do not always focus on what learners learned in lessons and the impact the lesson had on them. Managers provide good support and guidance to help tutors to improve their practice and have advanced plans to share good practice from other community learning providers.
- Managers have not yet ensured that all groups of learners succeed equally; while outcomes for disabled learners have improved, male and Black learners do not yet succeed at the same rate as their peers.
- During a period of significant service disruption, teaching staff maintained, and in some cases improved, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The revised contract specifications for subcontractors are now more detailed. Managers monitor the provision thoroughly and provide timely support to improve the learners' experience successfully in most cases.
- Tutors take pride in improving their knowledge and skills and take many formal and informal training opportunities such as listening to informative webinars, radio programmes, reading of reports and shadowing other colleagues. These activities have sharpened their practice.
- Programme and performance management in the current year are much improved. Senior managers are fully aware of the performance of each course, tutor and curriculum quality leader as the information on all courses is available on a single data 'dashboard'. They identify any dip in performance immediately. They take swift action to improve learners' attendance and continuation on their courses, and tackle any poor performance by tutors. As a result, learners' attendance and retention on courses have improved markedly.
- The provision is very responsive to the needs of communities, Jobcentre Plus and a few employers. Sandwell Adult and Family Learning provides courses flexibly in the local neighbourhood where learners can attend easily. Courses meet the needs of local residents well in improving their skills to seek jobs and develop vocational skills. For example, in a short period of time, some 120 learners have passed an essential test to work in the construction industry. Courses also help to improve learners' personal effectiveness and health; learners develop better interactions with their children through family learning classes.
- The learning environment in centres is harmonious, and learners feel safe. Learners from different minority groups and backgrounds work very well together in classes, and learn from each other. Senior managers have worked very closely with Asian groups to establish classes in the local community as well

as in religious venues to meet their language and cultural needs.

- Through its network of subcontractors, the service provides learning to some of the most marginalised groups, such as groups for disabled learners, and Bangladeshi and women's groups, for people who would otherwise not attend classes. These classes have improved the levels of engagement and self-confidence of the learners to lead more fulfilling lives. In the process, the subcontractors are in a stronger position to work more effectively with their clients as their knowledge and skills improve.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The council's portfolio holder for adult and family learning and the service's senior managers have a good understanding of the role of community learning programmes in empowering local residents. They are highly committed to providing such learning in their neighbourhood.
 - Senior leaders meet frequently with tutors and other staff to gain insight into the quality of the provision.
 - Until very recently, senior managers did not receive reports with sufficient performance measures and indicators to use as the basis for accurate evaluation of the quality and impact of provision, and to support action for improvement.
 - The portfolio holder and senior managers are currently undertaking a major review of the adult and family learning service. They are exploring a number of different models for ways of providing the service; they are identifying links with other council services to strengthen the adult and family learning service.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - All staff, including managers, are checked for their suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults. They have appropriate awareness of issues of safeguarding, child sexual exploitation, cyber security and abuse and take necessary steps to make learners aware of the dangers.
 - Managers have introduced a well-devised programme of staff training to ensure that all learners have a good understanding of British values and know how to protect themselves from the risks of radicalisation; however, minor slippages in the timescale for the training mean that some staff have not yet been trained. As a result, not all tutors are currently able to promote understanding of these themes well in their classes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Tutors have high expectations of learners, which motivates learners to achieve their learning goals. The range of courses reflects the education and training needs of local residents well, focusing strongly on the most disadvantaged groups. A very good range of venues in local communities makes it much easier for learners to take their first steps into learning. Learners become more self-confident and able to lead independent lives; many improve their mental health and well-being significantly.
- Tutors are appropriately qualified and have good vocationally relevant experience which they use skilfully to deepen learners' knowledge and understanding. Tutors use a good range of activities and resources effectively, to actively involve their learners. As a result, learners are well motivated, increase their levels of ability, confidence and practical skills and make good progress.
- Learners make good progress in developing their English skills. Tutors engage learners in meaningful discussions, helping them to develop their speaking and listening skills well. As a result, second language speakers quickly develop the confidence to take part in group discussions with their peers and to communicate confidently with their children's teachers and staff at school. In vocational lessons learners are encouraged to take notes and, as a result, most learners develop their written English skills well.
- In mathematics lessons, tutors help to develop rapidly learners' basic mathematical skills, enabling them to undertake a range of everyday tasks confidently, such as measuring the area of a room. Tutors also integrate mathematics well in vocational lessons. Learners on sewing and dressmaking courses take measurements very precisely to make patterns, carefully cut fabric and use a range of techniques to stitch garments to a high standard. As a result, learners are better equipped to be successful in their personal lives and future careers.
- Learners benefit from good individual coaching and support in lessons, which they value highly. Learners are able to link their learning well with personal experiences. In a paediatric first aid session, learners effectively build on their prior learning, accurately identifying the correct treatment of head injuries in young children.
- Tutors use an appropriate range of techniques to assess learning, such as observation, peer assessment and quizzes. During vocational lessons, tutors provide learners with frequent, constructive oral feedback which motivates them to make good progress. Staff provide useful information and guidance services, enabling the majority of learners to develop clear and realistic plans for their progression at the end of

their course. Learners on employability courses receive useful practical support with job applications, curriculum vitae (CV) writing and interview skills, thus helping them to progress to employment.

- Learners work well individually and in small groups. Tutors encourage learners to listen to each other and respect each other's opinions and contributions to discussions. Tutors have established a culture in which learners show mutual respect and understand the importance of valuing diversity.
- Overall, the quality of learning and standards of learners' work are good. However, in a small minority of lessons tutors do not set sufficiently difficult work for the most able learners; as a result, these learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- A minority of tutors do not record well the outcomes of the initial assessment of learners' skills at the start of their courses. As a result, they do not record precisely enough the ongoing progress of a small minority of learners. While these learners have a clear understanding of what they intend to achieve during their courses, not all make the rapid progress required to achieve higher standards. Tutors' feedback on learners' written work is too brief and does not always identify what learners have done well and what they need to do to extend their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

- Managers have not yet fully established systems to identify the external and internal progression rates of learners after they have completed accredited and non-accredited courses. As a result, they do not have a good understanding of the overall impact of learning in enabling learners to progress to positive destinations that improve the economic circumstances and well-being of the community.
- Managers have much improved the collection of data and the monitoring of attendance and punctuality. Learners' attendance in classes this year is good; few courses that have completed this year have had poor attendance. Managers now have a sound understanding of how to address late arrivals and minimise disruption in class. Early indicators are that learners generally arrive on time for their classes. However, it is too soon for managers to have a complete understanding of patterns of punctuality and make any adjustments to the course offer if required.
- A minority of learners do not have a good understanding of how to protect themselves from bullying and harassment related to radicalisation. Slippages in the programme of development for tutors in these subjects have meant that some tutors are not able to promote understanding effectively among learners in their classes.
- On accredited courses, learners are gaining skills that are improving their employability; in particular, they are developing well their skills in ICT, English and mathematics and preparation for work. In community learning programmes, learners are making good gains in confidence, health and independent learning skills.
- The provision of information, advice and guidance is good. Learners are well directed to an appropriate course of learning. Learners have a good understanding about what can do when they complete their learning.
- Learners feel safe and show appropriate attention to e-safety relevant to the level of their course. They display good behaviour, and show high levels of respect for each other and their tutors. They work cooperatively with each other in class and value differences in culture and ability.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Success rates are around national rates on vocational accredited courses, and the large majority of learners achieve their qualification aims. Rates are particularly high in ICT and administration qualifications. The proportion of learners who are successful in English and mathematics is improving and success rates are just below national rates.
- The proportion of learners who complete their courses is very high in non-accredited programmes and almost all learners who commence a programme offered by the service achieve the aims of their course.
- Most learners understand what they are setting out to achieve. Tutors recognise and record learners' prior achievement effectively for the large majority of learners as a starting point for learning. However, a small minority of learners do not have well-defined personal or course targets that can be accurately measured for achievement.
- Learners enjoy learning and make good progress. The provision helps to improve skills which increase the well-being of learners, particularly those who are unemployed, or who have disabilities or mental ill-health. Learners' confidence improves, they develop healthy lifestyles and improve their self-esteem.

- Most learners develop their English and mathematical skills well across both accredited and non-accredited course provision. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Differences in the performance of different groups of learners persist since the previous inspection. The success rates of learners with disabilities have improved and they now succeed well, but male and Black learners do not succeed as well as other groups of learners.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,991
Director	Mr Christopher Ward
Website address	www.sandwell.gov.uk

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+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)		1,048						
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
Number of learners aged 14–16								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ TOPPS Social Enterprise Limited ■ Skills Work and Enterprise Development Agency ■ Confederation of Bangladeshi Organisations Limited ■ Birmingham Disability Resource Centre ■ Community Advice Service ■ Jubilee Park and Community Centre 							

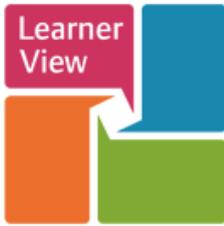
Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Maxine Mayer, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harmesh Manghra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sylvia Farrier	Ofsted Inspector
Margaret Fobister	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the lead manager, post-16 and adult learning, 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 and online questionnaires to gather the views of students; 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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