

Sunderland City Council

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second re-inspection monitoring visit to Sunderland City Council following publication of the inspection report on 19 February 2018 which found the provider to be inadequate overall. The effectiveness of leadership and management, and personal development, behaviour and welfare were also judged as inadequate. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners required improvement. Of the provision types inspected, apprenticeships were found to be inadequate and adult learning required improvement.

Since the previous monitoring visit, the planned merger of the Tyne and Wear Care Alliance, the Family, Adult and Community Learning service, and Connexions into a single organisation has been completed.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 204 apprentices on health and social care programmes; 90 apprentices were on programmes delivered by two subcontractors and 114 apprentices were on programmes delivered by the council's assessment centre. Following the inspection, the council has not recruited any new apprentices on to programmes and is winding down its apprenticeship contract.

There were 103 learners on community learning courses, and 82 learners on adult-skills funded programmes. All the adult learning provision is delivered by 15 subcontractors.

Themes

Have managers undertaken a service-specific 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and have they started to implement effectively the actions arising from the risk assessment? Are learners and apprentices more aware of how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism?

Reasonable progress

At the time of the previous monitoring visit, managers had implemented the great majority of the actions that they had identified through the risk assessment carried out after the inspection. Since then, managers have redoubled their efforts through staff training and the development of high-quality learning resources to ensure that apprentices and learners are more aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Managers monitor regularly the level of apprentices' understanding of these risks through surveys and interviews. In the latest survey, two thirds of apprentices reported that they understood what radicalisation and extremism meant, and that they knew how to report any concerns. Managers have implemented a similar approach for adult learners, but have not yet analysed any results.

Managers work effectively with the regional 'Prevent' coordinator to get a better understanding of the specific threats from extremism in their own locality. They share this information well with their subcontractors. As a result, staff from subcontractors have been able to report appropriate concerns to the relevant authorities.

Managers have been slow to implement the few remaining actions from the 'Prevent' duty action plan, such as the policy on social media and the insertion of specific clauses on 'Prevent' in the contracts for subcontractors. These have all been developed but are only now being implemented due to delays in the council's consultation and decision-making processes.

Have managers established an effective system for reporting, analysing and acting upon safeguarding incidents across the directly delivered and subcontracted provision? Are tutors/assessors and learners/apprentices clear about how they report safeguarding incidents? **Reasonable progress**

Managers have strengthened further the system for reporting safeguarding incidents and concerns that they established after the inspection. The effectiveness of subcontractors' incident reporting arrangements is a key measure that managers use to determine the overall performance of subcontractors. The council's chief executive and the elected portfolio holder for the service ensure that they receive regular reports on the volume and nature of safeguarding concerns and incidents.

Managers have introduced useful refinements to their reporting on safeguarding, introducing a clear distinction between incidents that need to be referred on to the local authority's safeguarding service, and welfare concerns that can be dealt with by the provider and its partners. Staff at subcontractors apply this distinction effectively. They have recently escalated incidents relating to trafficking and extremism to the service's designated safeguarding officer, ensuring that swift action was taken to keep learners safe.

Due to the short period of time that the new system has been in place, managers are not yet in a position to identify trends in reported concerns or incidents to enable them to adapt the support they give to learners.

Are elected members and senior leaders ensuring that the actions for improvement from the previous inspection are being implemented swiftly and effectively? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous monitoring visit, the council has appointed a new chief executive, and a new portfolio holder has been elected to oversee the service. Both were well briefed on the outcome of the previous inspection when they took up their posts. The chief executive ensured that the service's progress against its post-inspection

action plan was reviewed at the earliest opportunity at the council's chief officers' group. The portfolio holder has developed a detailed understanding of the challenges facing the service in the short space of time she has been in post. As a result, the senior leadership in the council is effective in holding managers to account for the performance of the service.

Managers have improved the post-inspection action plan since the previous monitoring visit so that it now contains objectives with clear timescales and with realistic numerical targets. As a result, senior leaders in the council can monitor more effectively the achievement of the great majority of the key performance indicators in the plan, such as the reduction in the number of apprentices withdrawing from programmes or who take a break in learning.

However, managers have not identified all the key areas for improvement. For example, they only report on the increase in the overall achievement of apprentices, but do not acknowledge that there has been a decline in the proportion of apprentices achieving their qualifications within their planned timescales.

Have managers improved their use of management information to enable them to evaluate better the quality of teaching, learning and assessment? Are managers using this information more effectively to monitor the implementation of quality improvement actions?

Reasonable progress

Managers now use timely and accurate management information to enable them to evaluate the performance of subcontractors and the quality of the provision they deliver. At the previous monitoring visit, managers had just installed a new management information system, but staff were not yet trained in how to input information on to the system or how to generate reports from it. Service staff now have the capacity and expertise to produce timely and accurate data on most aspects of the service's delivery.

Managers recognise that they are not using the system to its full potential. For example, they do not yet compare the outcomes of learners from different groups in any depth and they have a limited range of reports on community learning.

Have managers improved the arrangements for monitoring the quality of adult learning and apprenticeship provision delivered by subcontractors?

Reasonable progress

At the time of the previous monitoring visit, the arrangements for the performance management of the subcontractors delivering apprenticeships were stronger than those for the subcontractors delivering adult learning. Managers have now effectively aligned the procedures for the performance management of both types of subcontractor. They now all receive the same number of review meetings and they

all have to report against the same performance measures. As a result, managers of the larger adult learning provision now intervene more swiftly if there is a decline in performance.

Managers work intensively with subcontractors to monitor the progress of individual apprentices. They draw up action plans for those apprentices who are at risk of not completing their programmes and constantly review their implementation. As a result, the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has continued to increase since the previous monitoring visit. However, too many apprentices make slow progress and do not complete their qualifications within their planned timescales.

Managers have identified accurately that their current approach to performance management is too focused on the completion and achievement of qualifications rather than the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Although managers carry out regular reviews of learners' work and observe teaching and learning sessions, they do not ensure that they follow up consistently the completion of improvement actions from these activities. In response, managers have increased the capacity of the service's quality assurance team, but it is still too early to see the impact of these staffing changes.

Are apprentices receiving their entitlement to high-quality off-the-job training, and have managers established the systems to ensure that this is taking place? Reasonable progress

The great majority of current apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. Since the previous inspection, the recording of off-the-job training has improved. Managers of the council's direct-delivery assessment centre have introduced a training log so that apprentices can capture the learning activities they undertake while at work. Both subcontractors have also introduced training logs, but they have not applied these retrospectively, so they only have records of the off-the-job training that has taken place since their introduction.

Assessors at the council's assessment centre and at one of the subcontractors involve apprentices' employers and line managers well at their regular reviews. Employers help these apprentices to meet their assessment targets before their next review. Apprentices at the other subcontractor do not receive such regular reviews, and when they do take place there is little employer engagement. These apprentices make slower progress.

The great majority of apprentices can describe the new knowledge and skills that they have developed through the apprenticeship and how it has helped them to be more effective in their job roles. A minority have gained promotion while on their apprenticeship or have progressed on to higher-level qualifications.

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