

# Blackpool Unitary Authority

Adult and community learning

**Inspection dates**

22–25 January 2019

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Senior leaders, managers and staff provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe learning environment.
- Adults and their families benefit from a high standard of teaching and learning which helps them improve their immediate day-to-day lives and future prospects.
- Governors and senior leaders have successfully rectified most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.
- Governors have high expectations of the standards they require. They set clear and measurable targets for managers and staff to achieve and they monitor progress against these targets rigorously.
- Managers have developed good partnerships with a range of organisations to ensure that adults with unsettled lives or long periods of unemployment make their first steps back to learning and/or to employment.
- The vast majority of adults achieve their qualifications or learning goals and progress to further study or employment.
- Tutors and staff provide exceptional support to adults which means that they enjoy their learning, raise their expectations and restore their self-esteem.
- Learners who have high needs benefit from high-quality internships. These learners gain new skills, knowledge and self-confidence and most progress into valuable and paid employment.
- While managers have improved the quality of their self-assessment of courses they do not always use data well enough to inform their priorities for improvement.
- In a few instances tutors do not provide sufficient levels of stretch and challenge in lessons to ensure that the most able learners make the progress of which they are capable.
- The proportion of learners on a few accredited courses in information and communication technology (ICT), level 1 health and safety and mathematics at level 2 who pass their qualification is too low.
- Learners on accredited courses with learning difficulties or disabilities do not achieve as well as their peers.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- The community learning and skills service within Blackpool's unitary authority is part of the directorate responsible for resilience in its communities. Courses are offered at approximately 50 outreach venues including libraries, children's centres, schools, partners' premises and social services centres. The service also works with one subcontractor to provide learning to specific groups of adults. Around three quarters of courses do not lead to formal qualifications. Nearly half of accredited courses are in basic English and mathematics.
- Blackpool is ranked the most deprived local authority area in England. It has a total population of around 139,000 and is one of the most densely populated local authority areas. Almost 18.6% of the working-age population claim out-of-work benefits compared to a national level of 8.4%. Substance and alcohol misuse in Blackpool is considered high, with alcohol-related deaths ranking the second highest in England for males. Referrals of high-risk domestic abuse cases are three times the national average. Approximately 80% of the adults who study at the adult learning service have no or low-level qualifications, which is much higher than the national figure.

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

- Managers should improve the rigour of self-assessment of the provision by using the data available to analyse more precisely which courses have low achievement rates. Managers should ensure that they identify any differences in the outcomes that learners achieve on courses which lead to a qualification and those that do not.
- Tutors should use their assessment of learners' starting points to plan lessons that provide sufficient stretch and challenge for the most able learners. Tutors should set ambitious personal targets for learners so that all learners make the progress they are capable of achieving.
- Managers and tutors should increase the proportion of learners who pass their course on health and safety, mathematics and ICT courses.
- Managers should ensure that learners with a learning difficulty or disability on courses that lead to a qualification receive the support they need to pass their course.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Governors, managers and staff provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe learning environment where adults and their families benefit from a high standard of teaching and learning. This helps them to improve their lives and future prospects.
- Governors and senior leaders have rectified most of the weaknesses that were identified at the previous inspection. Their swift actions have been successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and of outcomes for adults, which are now good.
- Managers now receive up-to-date information on how well the service performs. They use this information well to monitor the performance of staff and the attendance and progress of learners. Tutors and managers check carefully the progress that current learners make in their studies and put in place effective support to help learners to catch up when they make slow progress.
- Senior leaders and managers have made significant improvements to the process for checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers use the information available, such as attendance in lessons, the progress of learners and learner feedback, to make an accurate assessment of individual teachers' practice. Managers provide training and support for staff who need it, and in most cases, this leads to improvements in the standard of education and training that learners receive.
- Managers' strategies to improve attendance have been successful. Through the analysis of data, managers identify lessons where attendance is too low. Staff contact learners who fail to attend and are quick to identify any potential problems that may exist. Consequently, attendance is now high.
- Managers ensure, through rigorous monitoring processes, that the subcontractor provides courses of a high standard to learners who otherwise would not engage in learning. For example, they offer courses in employability and first aid that help learners progress to their next stage of learning.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear strategy to meet the needs of adults in Blackpool through a well-thought-out strategic plan which links well with other services at the council such as mental health services and adult social care. As a result of attending courses, many learners feel less socially isolated and a significant number report that they have improved their physical or mental health.
- Managers develop good relationships with a range of partners to ensure that learners with unsettled lives or long periods of unemployment make their first steps back to learning and to employment.
- While managers have improved the quality of their self-assessment of courses, they do not use data well enough to inform their priorities for improvement in all cases. For example, managers did not identify the difference in the outcomes that learners who have a learning difficulty or disability achieve on accredited courses. The associated quality improvement plan is thorough and sets clear and measurable targets that senior leaders

and governors monitor closely.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Since the previous inspection the arrangements for governance have improved. New members of the management committee, who have expertise in health, adult mental health services and further education, have been recruited. Governors now provide support and challenge to senior leaders.
- Governors have high aspirations of the standards they expect. They set clear and measurable targets for managers and staff to achieve and they monitor progress against these targets rigorously.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and managers give a high priority to safeguarding learners and staff. The designated safeguarding officer has benefited from appropriate training. Staff receive good update training in safeguarding. Managers check the suitability of staff to work in the service. The personnel records show appropriate employment checks are completed, including for the subcontractor, and the records are up to date and accurate.
- Learners feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when working online. They are clear about to whom they should report concerns relating to their safety. The vast majority of learners have a good understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. However, learners who have high needs only have a very basic awareness.
- The designated safeguarding officer takes safeguarding and related incidents very seriously. Safeguarding officers take prompt action when staff or learners report an incident. The records of safeguarding incidents provide a detailed commentary of the event and what actions staff take. The designated safeguarding officer refers learners to other specialist agencies quickly, such as those dealing with homelessness or domestic violence, when specialist advice is needed.

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

**Good**

- At the time of the inspection, there were 125 adult learners. There are 116 at entry level/level 1 and nine at level 2. Of these, nine learners study at the subcontractor UR Potential.
- Managers and tutors provide a welcoming learning environment. This enables adults who often lack confidence or who are new to learning to settle in quickly and make friends. Tutors provide exceptional support, including for disadvantaged learners such as migrants, homeless people or former drug or alcohol addicts.
- The vast majority of tutors set challenging and measurable targets for learners on courses that do not lead to formal qualifications. Tutors use the information they collect about learners' starting points to plan learning and set aspirational, individual targets that are challenging for the vast majority of learners. This includes learners on subcontracted

courses. Learners are aware of what they need to do to complete their course successfully, and the majority make good progress. This is particularly the case for learners on entry level mathematics and English courses.

- Tutors have good subject knowledge and the majority plan well a range of activities that motivate learners. This helps learners to make good progress and work enthusiastically. For example, in first-aid lessons tutors make good use of visual aids to help learners visualise the potential choking hazards for infants and toddlers.
- Tutors make good links to learners' personal experiences and use these appropriately to help them understand, develop and apply their knowledge, and the English skills they gain, in their everyday lives. Tutors develop learners' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills successfully. For example, learners in a family learning lesson enjoyed learning how to improve their storytelling and reading skills to enable them to read stories to their children.
- Tutors use their expertise well to engage learners in lessons. Tutors are very sensitive to their learners' difficult circumstances and nervousness about returning to study. They ensure that learners feel confident in contributing to lesson activities. As a result, learners work collaboratively and support each other. For example, in a volunteering class, learners supported each other when they fed back their results from a mystery shopping exercise.
- The courses for learners who have high needs are of a high standard. Learners gain the skills and knowledge they need to become independent in their everyday lives and for work. The contribution that learners make to employers and their business is valued. Parents of learners who have high needs understand the importance of them being able to develop new skills and become independent.
- Learners produce an appropriate standard of work for the courses they follow. Tutors provide feedback to learners that is constructive and gives clear guidance on how to improve. Most tutors correct learners' spelling mistakes in marked work. However, too often grammatical errors are neither identified nor corrected, which means that learners repeat their errors.
- In a small minority of lessons tutors do not use the assessment of learners' starting points to set targets to enhance further their personal skills development. A minority of tutors in lessons do not provide a sufficient level of stretch and challenge to the more able learners. Consequently, in these lessons, they all work at the same pace and do not make the progress that they are capable of.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Adult learners from disadvantaged communities develop confidence, resilience and self-esteem. As a result, they gain a better appreciation of how their skills and qualities can help make a positive contribution in the community. For example, learners follow a recipe to produce a healthy family meal using nutritious ingredients. Learners who are homeless gain the skills they need to become assertive and self-aware.
- Learners' behaviour is good. Tutors motivate and engage adults in their learning. As a result of this, they develop new skills and knowledge and take pride in their work. For example, learners in mathematics and English lessons work together collaboratively and

recognise and correct errors in each other's work. Learners on a safeguarding course work effectively together in groups to produce posters that raise awareness of the different types of neglect.

- Attendance at most sessions is good. As result of this, a high proportion of learners successfully complete their course and gain new knowledge and skills.
- Learners develop a wide-range of life and employability skills that helps them to lead more independent lives. For example, learners on an ICT course develop skills in digital literacy. This enables them to apply online for Universal Credit.
- Learners who have high needs develop their independence by travelling to and from home and to their work placement. Learners on internships benefit from valuable and challenging work placements where they gain the skills they need for work. As a result, most progress into sustained and paid employment.
- Learners feel safe and know how to report any concerns about their safety. Learners know how to protect their personal information when using social media, work safely online and understand how to report bullying.
- Adult learners develop a good understanding of British values, and are able to apply them well in their learning and in their lives. For example, in lessons learners share their points of view and respectfully listen to the views of others. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities. For example, learners working at Blackpool Council understand their responsibility to keep personal information confidential.
- Tutors plan lessons effectively to ensure that learners develop English skills in lessons. As a result, learners are able to communicate effectively in written and spoken English. For example, learners on ICT courses are able to identify homophones in sentences when learning about the function of the spellchecker. Parents on family learning courses develop communication and presentation skills, make good use of dictionaries and develop note-taking skills during small-group work.
- Learners benefit from effective careers advice and guidance that helps them to progress to further study, volunteering or work. For example, learners who have high needs benefit from ongoing careers advice and guidance, before entering the 'Project Search' programme.
- The vast majority of learners are aware of the risks associated with radicalisation. This enables them to identify and report any concerns they may have. For example, parents on the 'Learn Together' programme develop their understanding of the 'Prevent' duty, enabling them to articulate clearly the dangers of radicalisation and extremism such as terrorism, hate crime, homophobia and the consequences of both far-right and far-left political views.
- In a small minority of lessons, punctuality is poor, and learners do not attend sufficiently well. As a result, learners miss valuable learning time and do not make the progress of which they are capable. For example, when lessons have a break, not all learners return punctually to the classroom to resume their learning.
- In a minority of lessons learners do not develop the mathematical skills they need for everyday life. For example, in cookery lessons, when weighing food ingredients, learners did not understand the difference between the units of measurement and the proportions of food used in a recipe.

## Outcomes for learners

Good

- Managers' strategies to improve the proportion of adults who achieve their qualifications or learning goals have been successful for the vast majority of courses. In 2017/18, overall achievement rates were high considering the low levels of attainment that learners have on entry.
- The proportion of learners on subcontracted courses who achieved their qualifications in 2017/18 is high.
- The vast majority of current learners make good progress on their courses. They develop relevant knowledge and skills that help them to achieve their personal goals and aspirations, including on courses without a qualification.
- The proportion of learners who gained English and mathematical basic skills qualifications rose in 2017/18 compared to the previous year and was high. The vast majority of learners who stay on their courses to the end pass their examinations in English and in mathematics at entry level.
- Adult learners develop practical skills that help them and their families in their everyday lives. For example, adults on ICT courses learn how to use browsing technology safely to compare food prices when using supermarket websites. Parents on family learning courses learn how to prepare healthy food, provide basic first aid and help their children with reading.
- The work of most learners is of the expected standard. Learners on functional skills English courses develop good language skills, which include pronunciation, reading, speaking and listening confidently. These skills enable learners to progress to further study as well as helping them in their everyday lives. For example, learners use their language skills to become more confident when accessing health services.
- Managers and staff now collect the intended and actual destinations of learners when they leave the course. The vast majority of learners progress to other courses at the Council and around a quarter gain employment.
- The proportion of learners on a few courses in ICT, level 1 health and safety and mathematics at level 2 who pass their qualification is too low. Learners on accredited courses with learning difficulties or disabilities do not achieve as well as their peers.

## Provider details

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number   | 50737  |
| Type of provider  | Adult learning and community skills  |
| Age range of learners   | 19+  |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 2,500  |
| Principal/CEO   | Neil Jack-Chief Executive  |
| Telephone number  | 0782 436 1256  |
| Website   | <a href="http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Education-and-schools/Adult-Learning/Adult-learning">www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Education-and-schools/Adult-Learning/Adult-learning</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 or above |     |
|---|------------------|-----|----------|-----|---------|-----|------------------|-----|
|   | 16–18            | 19+ | 16–18    | 19+ | 16–18   | 19+ | 16–18            | 19+ |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)                                      | 2                | 114 | –        | 9   | –       | 0   | –                | –   |
| 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 to 16  | –                |     |          |     |         |     |                  |     |
| Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding                     | 9                |     |          |     |         |     |                  |     |
| At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | UR Potential     |     |          |     |         |     |                  |     |

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Assistant Head of 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, 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.

## Inspection team

|                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Andrea Machell, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Bob Busby                      | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Susan Keenan                   | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Marinette Bazin                | Ofsted Inspector        |

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