

East Birmingham Community Forum

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Not for profit organisation

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly funded to deliver adult learning provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

The East Birmingham Community Forum (EBCF) training team provide a range of entry level, level 1 and level 2 courses for unemployed adult learners in north and east Birmingham. At the time of the monitoring visit, the provision comprised short courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and functional skills courses in English, mathematics and information and communication technologies (ICT). These courses support around 350 learners each year, many of whom enrol on successive courses as their skills and knowledge develop. Leaders have well-developed plans to expand the provision to include a range of vocational courses when additional funding becomes available.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the learning needs of adults who live in the communities that EBCF serves. These communities are very diverse and have high levels of unemployment. A high proportion of adults are returning to education after long periods. Many have arrived recently in the country with little or no knowledge of English. Therefore, the provision has an appropriate focus on ESOL and functional skills qualifications from entry level to level 2.

Leaders ensure that adults learn in well-resourced classrooms and are taught by well-qualified staff. Managers' evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is broadly accurate. However, evaluation does not yet focus sufficiently on how well learners achieve what is planned for them in each lesson. Nevertheless, learners make generally good progress during their short courses and a very high proportion achieve their qualifications, most at their first attempt.

Learners become much more confident and enjoy interacting with others from their very diverse communities. They rapidly develop their English and ICT skills. They use

these skills well to help them to navigate online sites, to prepare for employment and to become more active members of their communities.

Leaders have a very strong understanding of the needs of local employers. Well-trained advisers work alongside training staff through the national careers service information advice and guidance contract that EBCF holds. This helps leaders to maintain their understanding of local needs.

Managers monitor the progress of different groups of learners effectively. They ensure that tutors provide individualised support to help learners to catch up where required.

A high proportion of learners move on to other courses provided at EBCF and around a quarter secure places on courses elsewhere. Managers recognise that they need to improve their knowledge of learners' next steps when they leave EBCF.

Managers collect data on learners' attendance and discuss this with individual tutors to support improvement where needed. However, they do not analyse overall attendance closely enough to enable them to identify actions for improvement.

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals?

Reasonable progress

Staff assess learners' starting points well to ensure that learners are enrolled on the most appropriate course to meet their needs. Learners enjoy their courses and have good relationships with each other and their tutors.

Tutors set work that improves learners' English skills and is relevant to their futures and everyday lives. Examples include exploring job roles and reading and summarising current events reported in newspapers.

Learners make reasonable or better progress in lessons and develop skills which meet their learning needs. Tutors give effective feedback during sessions which encourages their learners and helps them to develop their confidence.

Tutors are well qualified and have high expectations of their learners. They attend regular training sessions which help them to improve their teaching skills, particularly in mathematics and English.

Most tutors provide learners with useful feedback on spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in their written work. In a few instances, however, tutors' assessment of learners' written work is inaccurate, including marking incorrect answers from learners as correct.

A minority of learners' individual plans do not have sufficiently detailed targets that identify clearly what learners need to do to improve. This includes the skills and knowledge that will help them to achieve their qualifications as well as the broader personal skills that they develop during their courses.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Learners feel and are safe.

Managers ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to control entry to learning centres. Learners wear lanyards so that they can identify fellow learners.

Staff follow up on unexpected absences with a telephone call to ensure that learners are safe and to encourage them to attend.

Staff carry out appropriate checks on all staff who work with learners. Managers ensure that human resources staff have a strong focus on safe recruitment.

All staff undergo annual safeguarding training. Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) carry out their duties effectively. Although tutors raise any minor concerns with DSLs, they do not keep a central log of these concerns, which makes identifying any trends difficult.

Although learners have a basic awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, they have insufficient understanding of the issues that they may face in their own communities. Learners are aware of the dangers that they may face online.

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