

Lancashire Adult Learning

Local Authority

2–5 February 2016

Inspection dates**Overall effectiveness****Good**

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers took swift and successful action to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners following the previous inspection.
- A strong and effective board of governors now drives forward a good pace of improvement through robust and determined support and challenge.
- The strategy to engage and recruit the very large majority of learners from the most disadvantaged areas and groups is highly effective.
- The proportion of learners who successfully achieve their qualifications has rapidly improved since the previous inspection and is now high.
- Passionate tutors set high aspirations and expectations, using a wide range of activities to enable most learners to reach their potential.
- Tutors use the results of initial assessment of learners' individual needs well to plan and provide effective learning and additional support to help learners overcome problems which might otherwise prevent success.
- Many learners from marginalised communities develop the skills, confidence and self-esteem to make better life choices.
- Learners' development of functional skills in English and mathematics, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), are good.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Plans to ensure the permanency of senior leadership are not yet implemented.
- For a small minority of learners, tutors do not use individual learning targets to plan learning or measure the progress they are making.
- Leaders and managers do not systematically analyse non-accredited achievement to identify any differences in achievement between groups of learners.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Lancashire Adult Learning is Lancashire County Council's adult education services, which deliver almost all of the adult and community learning budget allocated to Lancashire by the Skills Funding Agency. The objective of the service is to focus on people or groups who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate and to raise fee income from those who can afford to pay. It provides learning at one main centre and over 120 community-based venues. Lancashire comprises 12 district councils. The employment rate has been lower than that which exists nationally for the past 12 years, and rates of deprivation are higher than average. Rates of ill health are higher for people in Lancashire than the average for England, while life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average.
- The service received four re-inspection monitoring visits, each completed by Her Majesty's Inspectors, following the inadequate judgement at the previous inspection in November 2014.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly implement the plans to establish permanent senior leadership arrangements for the service.
- Share best practice internally to ensure that individual targets for all learners are of a consistently high quality. Ensure that tutors use targets well to plan individual learning and to measure learners' progress on their course.
- Implement the systematic analysis of non-accredited learning to identify any differences in achievement between groups of learners. Ensure that managers and staff take effective actions to identify, tackle and reduce any identified differences.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Following the previous inspection, councillors took swift action to improve senior leadership and management of the adult learning service. A new and very effective interim senior management team was quickly established, pending further decisions about the how the provision is to be managed in the future. The senior leadership team comprises the current interim principal, the interim deputy principal and a permanent assistant principal. They have managed change exceptionally well, effecting rapid and significant improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and increasing learners' achievements. All the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection are now rectified. The interim principal, who is also a successful leader in an outstanding local further education college, and the board of governors have detailed ambitious plans to develop the service further and establish permanent management arrangements.
- Senior leaders and the board of governors have reviewed and reshaped the adult learning curriculum to meet the priority objectives of the council effectively. Consequently, the service recruits very successfully from the communities and groups of people who are most disadvantaged or at significant risk of social exclusion, such as learners with mental health difficulties and asylum seekers. A high proportion of learners have not been engaged in education for some considerable time and are developing the skills required to be more effective in their communities.
- Since the previous inspection, managers have developed a more secure and comprehensive arrangement to improve the quality of teaching. They use the outcomes from lesson observations well to identify tutors who need extra support. Mentors are allocated to the few tutors whose performance requires improvement. As a result, tutors improve their teaching practice rapidly.
- At the previous inspection the use of management information was a weakness and it is now good. Senior managers have rectified this, improving significantly the collection and use of data to monitor learners' progress and destinations.
- Managers provide well-targeted staff development to improve teaching practices, closely based on their evaluation of tutors' work. Tutors are encouraged to apply their learning from staff development and training to improve their teaching, and are supported well to do so. For example, most tutors who have received training on the use of the service's virtual learning environment use this system well to promote individual learning.
- Managers and subcontractors use self-assessment well to identify areas requiring improvement and to plan actions to tackle them. They draw on a good range of evidence to underpin their judgements, including the views of learners and partners. The strengths and areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report closely match those found by inspectors.
- The management of subcontractors is strong. Managers choose subcontractors carefully to provide specific focus on particular disadvantaged groups or communities. They monitor the quality and outcomes of subcontracted provision frequently and rigorously. Subcontractors attend mandatory training and opportunities to share good practice and this has led to improvements in the quality of their courses.
- Senior managers, managers and tutors have prioritised the development of learners' English and mathematical skills well. The service has a good strategy and a set of clear expectations about teaching practices to help learners develop these important skills. For example, managers require tutors to plan into their lessons the development of learners' better use of English and mathematics and to correct their spelling and grammatical mistakes. As a result, learners develop a good standard of skills and a high proportion complete their qualifications successfully.
- Leaders, managers, tutors and staff who act as equality champions promote successfully a culture of fair treatment and respect for different views, backgrounds and experiences. Tutors have received effective training on democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. As a result they promote these values successfully to learners. A number of tutors use innovative teaching practices, such as activities which initiate discussions, to extend learners' understanding of complex issues such as radicalisation, hate crime and the rights of people with different sexual orientations.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Following the previous inspection, a new board of governors was quickly established, providing a strong representation from education, business, the voluntary sector and Lancashire Council. The board use this wide range of expertise exceptionally well to support and provide critical challenge to senior leaders.

- Governors receive detailed reports on learners' outcomes and the quality of provision. They have set challenging targets for senior managers and these are monitored frequently to effect improvements quickly.
- The service has the financial stability to maintain high-quality resources to support learning in the community. However, the board have yet to implement the agreed permanent management arrangements at senior leadership level.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and include appropriate checks on staff. As a result of good training, staff know how to keep learners safe and are vigilant about safeguarding issues. They have received good staff development including on aspects such as forced marriage, domestic violence and female genital mutilation, and are better informed about how to identify any learners at risk, report any concerns and identify appropriate support.
- Tutors and learners know how to contact the designated safeguarding officers. All staff are very well aware of their new responsibility to protect their learners from extremism and radicalisation. They have completed the relevant training courses, and made a good start in implementing required policies.
- Managers ensure that all the training venues are risk assessed to assure the safety of learners.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Tutors inspire and challenge their learners, who are well motivated, enjoy their learning and work with concentration and focus in lessons. Most tutors use a good range of activities and carefully crafted resources that interest learners and enrich their understanding of key topics. As a consequence most learners develop good knowledge and 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, ESOL learners increase their confidence when speaking in groups, and learners of modern foreign languages courses develop a basic vocabulary enabling them to practise their speaking and listening skills. Learners develop their reading and writing skills well in vocational sessions.
- Tutors provide learners with good individual support and group coaching sessions which learners value highly. In mathematics lessons, tutors help to rapidly develop basic mathematical skills, such as calculating ratios. Mathematics is integrated well in vocational lessons. For example, ESOL learners make shopping lists and calculate the cost of a healthy meal.
- Tutors use information gathered at the start of the course on learners' prior attainment and background to provide quickly any additional support needed. In lessons for disabled learners or those with learning difficulties, additional learning support is used particularly well to help learners make swift progress. Learning support workers use a variety of successful techniques to ensure that learners can take part in and contribute to sessions. They carefully record the support given, frequently evaluate its impact on learners and work with the teacher to adjust support so that learners successfully develop their independent living skills and reduce their reliance on support.
- Tutors use a good range of techniques to assess learning, such as effective questioning techniques, quizzes and role play. Tutors' oral and written feedback is frequent and constructive; it successfully motivates learners, making it clear what they have done well and how they can improve the standard of their work. In a few cases, written feedback is too brief. Tutors do not consistently follow the policy on identifying and correcting learners' spelling and grammatical errors, slowing learners' progress.
- 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.
- In lessons, tutors promote and develop learners' understanding of diversity well, using innovative and fun activities. For example, to develop learners' understanding of hate crime against people with disabilities one subcontractor has developed a bingo activity, replacing the usual numbers with hate crime words and prompting good discussion within the group as each word is drawn.
- Most tutors rigorously apply a range of techniques to measure and validate the progress that learners on non-accredited courses are making. For a small minority of learners, tutors do not set sufficiently detailed targets for planning individual learning or measuring learners' progress. As a result these learners are unclear about the progress they are making from their starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- Learners, many from marginalised communities, develop the skills, confidence and self-esteem to make better life choices. Learners on family-learning courses are better able to support their children's development through, for example, helping them with their homework and attending parents evenings. Learners on employability programmes or attending job clubs develop good job-search skills. They learn how to write an effective curriculum vitae and present themselves well at interviews.
- Tutors provide effective advice and guidance to new learners, ensuring that they are placed on the most suitable courses. Many prospective adult learners are referred to the service as a result of close working with partnership organisations such as children's centres. During their studies, learners receive further constructive advice and guidance on their future options. As a result, over a quarter of learners have revised their intended destinations and are more ambitious about their futures. Feedback from learners confirms that they are prepared well for their chosen destinations.
- Managers have designed provision which is closely focused on identified priority groups. The needs of learners in these groups are met well, through the use of a wide range of community-based venues and through strong working with subcontractors from the voluntary sector who specialise in engaging with and supporting people with specific needs. Many of those learners in need of the greatest support refer to their experience as being 'life-changing and transformational'.
- Learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including the use of the internet and social media. Activities within class, and resources around the buildings, support learners' understanding of the dangers from radicalisation and extremism. Accommodation is frequently checked to ensure that it provides a safe learning environment. Staff encourage learners to improve their health and well-being in appropriate ways. For example, learners with learning difficulties understand and can talk with confidence about different aspects of healthy eating, why this is important and how they have improved their eating habits.
- Learners develop a good understanding of the rights and responsibilities of living in modern Britain. Ground rules set at the start of courses establish high expectations for mutual respect and tolerance. Many learners met during the inspection confirmed that for the first time they had been able to interact with, and consequently increase their understanding of and respect for, people from different cultures.
- Attendance and punctuality are good and have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Learners come well prepared for lessons, contribute well to activities, discussions and debates, and consequently enjoy their courses.

Outcomes for learners are good

- Learners, many with low prior achievements, make good progress while attending Lancashire Adult Learning. Few learners now leave their programmes early and retention rates have improved significantly.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the proportion of learners successfully completing and achieving their qualifications was in decline. The decline has been reversed and rapid improvement has led to the large majority of learners now being successful. Most learners in community learning complete their courses, and achieve their individual learning and personal goals.
- Learners improve their English and mathematical skills well, with most of the learners taking qualifications successfully achieving them. Learners for whom English is an additional language develop good language skills quickly, with the large majority successfully achieving their qualifications.
- The large majority of learners progress to further learning, employment and other positive destinations such as volunteering. Currently just over a third of those learners surveyed for their destinations have progressed into employment.
- There are no significant differences in the progress or achievement of groups of learners working towards qualifications. Most groups, for example ethnic groups, achieve better than the relevant national average. However, data for learners on non-accredited courses are not systematically analysed by different groupings 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	18,387
Principal/CEO	Amanda Melton
Website address	www.lancashire.gov.uk/adultlearning

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)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	1,962	N/A	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Skills Funding Agency (SFA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access Ability ■ Artfull – Express Yourself ■ Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Volunteer Centre ■ Calico – Furniture Matters ■ Community Solutions North West ■ Disability Equality North West ■ Intact ■ Lancashire BME Network ■ Lancashire Women’s Centre ■ Lancaster CVS ■ More Music ■ UR Potential 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Mike White, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shahram Safavi	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jean Webb	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Hartmann	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the associate principal of quality, resources and learning support services, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. 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 students 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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