

Short inspection of West Sussex County Council

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

West Sussex County Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is a local authority providing community learning and skills to adults and education programmes for young people aged from 16 to 19 years in West Sussex. At the time of the inspection, there were 238 adult learners, 154 of whom were studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, and 84 were following bespoke programmes for adults with learning disabilities. Nine young people were following study programmes. Learners study at a range of community sites across the county.

WSCC works with two subcontractors. Asphaleia Limited provides young people with courses to improve their English, mathematics and employability skills, and Albion in the Community provides courses that support adults to progress to employment. WSCC ceased working with Aspire, its largest subcontractor, in November 2022.

WSCC was last inspected in January 2017, at which time it received a judgement of good.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners enjoy their learning, and they build their confidence successfully. They participate well and regularly practise what they learn to achieve fluency. ESOL learners are able to hold conversations with people in shops and surgeries to get the things they need. Young people take part in lessons despite previous negative experiences.

Most learners develop substantial new knowledge and skills quickly and effectively. They are becoming more proficient and able to use what they have learned in their lives. Adults with learning disabilities improve their cooking skills and develop their understanding of healthy eating. Young people are improving the English and mathematics skills they need for their futures.

Most learners benefit from the wide-ranging and regular careers advice and guidance that WSCC and its partners provide. This helps them to decide what they will do next. For example, most ESOL learners plan to continue learning and improve their English skills. Adults with learning disabilities prepare for supported employment in, for example, retail.

Learners benefit highly from the knowledge, experience and processes that WSCC staff and partners have in safeguarding. Learners feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for education and skills: to support the most vulnerable, including refugees, adults with learning disabilities and those who may not be in education, employment or training. Leaders and managers are developing a responsive curriculum, with the help of their partners, to closely match the needs of their communities. Vulnerable learners benefit from the opportunities to improve their English skills, develop their confidence to live in the community and build future aspirations. Leaders rightly recognise that learners might benefit further from the introduction of accredited qualifications.

Following the swift collapse of the major subcontractor in November 2022, leaders and managers have acted rapidly to prioritise the needs of learners. They have recruited skilled and experienced staff, quickly established relevant, high-quality courses, and ensured that there has been minimal disruption to learners. Learners highly value their lessons, the experience they are getting and the knowledge and skills they are developing.

Tutors design activities skilfully and work effectively with learners, which inspires them to contribute enthusiastically in lessons, take risks and accept challenges. Learners build their confidence quickly and achieve their goals well. Tutors expertly encourage ESOL learners to discuss images of their home countries with pride and competently answer questions from their peers. Tutors help adults with learning disabilities to consider access arrangements in their local area so they may present their ideas to a visiting council member.

Tutors use assessment effectively to understand learners' starting points and regularly check what they have learned. As a result, learners benefit from the challenging targets tutors set, developing fluency and learning new knowledge rapidly. Study programme learners use the feedback they are given to improve their confidence and competency in English and mathematics. Through regular practice, adults with learning disabilities improve their motor skills over time.

Leaders and managers provide tutors with highly valued training and have clear plans for their professional development to sustain improvement. Tutors benefit from the training they receive, and they make use of what they learn when working with

learners. For example, tutors make good use of online training materials to improve their understanding of autism spectrum disorder and dementia. Tutors have the opportunity to learn about online gaming so that they can help adults with learning disabilities to play safely at home or in their care setting.

Leaders and managers have clear oversight of the performance of their subcontractors. They ensure that subcontracting staff are suitable to work with learners, that the quality of provision remains high and that safeguarding risks are clearly communicated. As a result, learners are safe, and they benefit from high-quality training to support them to continue in education and move on to their next steps.

Governors are committed to the vision of education that leaders and managers have set and have high expectations of them. Governors are passionate about adult learning and the opportunities that the changing model of provision brings. With leaders and managers, governors are determined to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the communities WSCC serves and that continued improvement is sustained. Governance is in its infancy, and it is too early to evaluate the impact it is having.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have established an effective culture of safeguarding. All staff are responsible for safeguarding, and they receive regular updates and training. All staff are recruited with integrity, following safer recruitment practices. Managers frequently review learners at risk and ensure that support is in place for those who need it. There is a clear governance structure in place to ensure that learners are safe and processes are effective and robust. Subcontractors fulfil the high expectations that leaders and managers set. As a result, learners are safe.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that the routes of progression available to learners provide opportunities for accredited qualifications that help them to secure employment and further education.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that arrangements for governance bring about sustained, high-quality learning, a curriculum that is responsive to local needs and the continued safety of learners.
- As the curriculum develops, leaders and managers should ensure that they employ the same robust practices with new partners that they use with existing subcontractors.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50208
Address	Skills West Sussex County Council, Second Floor, 215, East Wing, County Hall Chichester Sussex PO19 1RF
Contact number	0330 222 5399
Website	www.westsussex.gov.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Lucy Butler, Director of Children, Young People and Learning
Provider type	Community learning and skills – local authority
Date of previous inspection	24 to 27 January 2017
Main subcontractors	Asphaleia Limited Albion in the Community

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since West Sussex County Council was judged to be good in January 2017.

The inspection team was assisted by the adult learning manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Mark Hillman, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jo-Ann Henderson	His Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Beale	His Majesty's Inspector
Hannah Staddon	Ofsted Inspector

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