

Inspection of Adult and Community Learning Service, Isle of Wight Council

Inspection dates: 29–31 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

The Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) is located within the corporate services directorate of the Isle of Wight Council and offers learning programmes to disadvantaged adults and communities across the island. ACLS offers a range of accredited and non-accredited courses, from entry level to level 2, to achieve its aim of encouraging social, educational, economic and personal progression for individuals and families.

At the time of the inspection, there were 222 learners enrolled on four different strands of adult learning. A third of learners were on health and well-being courses. A further third were on functional skills courses in English and mathematics. The remaining learners were on digital inclusion and family learning programmes. There are four subcontractors that deliver mainly non-accredited programmes.

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

Learners benefit from lessons in a relaxed and inclusive environment where they feel comfortable asking for help. Learners feel reassured that their patient and highly supportive tutors will answer their queries, even if they need to ask about the same topic more than once. As a result, learners share information about their personal experiences in an open and trusting way and help each other if the tutor is busy.

Learners develop a wide range of additional personal skills and knowledge which have a significant impact on their lives. For example, they feel capable of applying for a job or for promotion at work, supporting their child with homework or talking to their children's teachers. Older learners with no prior knowledge of computers gain digital skills that allow them to become more independent. They can carry out tasks, like online banking, for which they previously relied on family members.

Learners who felt isolated and lonely or who were anxious at the start of their courses grow in personal confidence and self-awareness as they progress. They feel more able to travel outside of their home environment and take part in other social activities. Those with mental health problems or learning difficulties are now volunteering and helping others.

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

Leaders and managers complement the service's direct provision of functional skills, health and well-being, and digital inclusion courses through well-managed subcontractors. As a result, learners benefit from specialist provision in family resilience and learn about carnival crafts. Learners with mental health issues work with ponies to develop their confidence in courses commissioned to an equestrian centre.

The vast majority of tutors have appropriate qualifications and expertise in their subject areas. Tutors use their expertise well to explain information to learners in a calm and supportive manner and suggest alternative approaches to learning a new method if required.

Tutors assess carefully most learners' starting points through tests, where appropriate, or through discussion with learners and their carers. This allows tutors to structure their lessons well around the individual tasks and topics that learners need to practise and learn. A few tutors make insufficient use of the information they have gathered about their learners' starting points to ensure that they receive specific support on the topics they struggle to understand.

Tutors use warm-up tasks and recap activities particularly well to check how much learners remember from their previous session. Learners find this very useful in preparing for the new session as they feel positive about knowing more and are reassured in their ability to learn.

Learners recall what they have learned and apply this knowledge to different scenarios and situations. For example, parents improve the way in which they talk to their children about their feelings, while nervous adults ask for help before a panic attack rather than finding themselves in an uncomfortable situation.

Tutors record learners' progress and achievement well on longer non-accredited programmes, setting targets around the specific areas of skills and knowledge learners need to develop. Tutors provide constructive feedback during training sessions and, when learners produce written work, they mark it promptly and make helpful comments. As a result, learners know what they are doing well and how they need to improve.

In short non-accredited workshops, tutors do not record learners' progress and achievement accurately. In too many cases, they accept the learners' assessment of their own progress without checking it sufficiently. As a result, learners are not set meaningful targets to achieve.

Leaders and managers have improved the quality of the provision since the previous inspection. They have changed the delivery model for functional skills to two intakes a year and introduced a more focused induction at the start of each. As a result, over the last three years, an increasing proportion of learners have successfully achieved their main functional skills qualifications.

Managers have reviewed the courses and qualifications they offer in digital skills to make them relevant to the needs of learners. As a result, learners gain the skills and knowledge they need in today's digital society. Leaders and managers introduced a drop-in service to enable learners to study independently and access online resources. This is well attended by learners who are eager to get extra practice in between their lessons.

Learners have a positive attitude and show commitment to their learning. For example, they make their tutors aware if they are likely to be absent and they quickly get on with their work if they arrive late to their lessons. Learners on digital skills courses who miss their planned session benefit from being able to attend on a different evening so they do not fall behind.

Learners who take functional skills and computer courses to improve their employment prospects do not receive sufficient impartial careers advice and guidance. As a result, they do not know if the courses they have chosen are the best to help them with their future careers. Managers have recently introduced a personal employability plan for those learners identified as seeking employment. Too few tutors use these plans effectively, with some learners not receiving them and others unsure of how to use them.

Members of the advisory board have a good mix of skills and experience which they use well to challenge service managers to bring about improvements. For example, they requested better recording of reasons for absence so that action can be taken to support learners who cannot avoid missing lessons. They provide managers with good

links to other areas of the council to facilitate partnership working, for example with housing associations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners feel safe in the community training centres and know how to report safeguarding concerns. Learners have a reasonable awareness of the risks they face, both in their community and online.

Leaders and managers have good links with the council and external partners and keep staff informed about local issues, such as domestic violence and online fraud. Tutors are well equipped to use these topics, for example a scam on universal credit applications, to reinforce learners' knowledge of how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders and managers do not keep suitably detailed written records of safeguarding incidents up to the point of resolution. As a result, records do not show how learners have been supported.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that tutors recognise and record progress and achievement in short non-accredited courses accurately so that they can better support their learners to develop new knowledge and skills.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners who undertake courses to improve their employment prospects receive impartial careers advice so that they understand what they need to do to reach their chosen career.
- Leaders and managers should record and monitor safeguarding incidents up to the point of resolution so that they can be sure that the support provided is effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	52544
Address	Community Learning Centre Westridge Brading Road Ryde Isle Of Wight PO33 1QS
Contact number	01983 817 280
Website	iwcommunitylearning.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Robert Brindley
Provider type	Local authority
Date of previous inspection	4–6 October 2017
Main subcontractors	The Crossley Company Bodster Equine Assisted Learning The New Carnival Company CIC Magpie Arts CIC

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Adult and Community Learning Service 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 observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Montserrat Perez-Parent, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joy Montgomery	Ofsted Inspector

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