

Inspection dates	3–6 November 2015
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Governance is inadequate; there is no formal reporting mechanism for reviewing the performance of the service or for setting the strategic direction and curriculum offer.
- The management and provision of study programmes for the small number of learners aged 16 to 18 are inadequate.
- The service has made slow progress in shaping the curriculum to align it to local employment and skills needs and changes in government funding priorities.
- Targets that managers set to improve the provision are not sufficiently challenging and progress made towards achieving them are poorly monitored.
- Data available to managers to monitor learners' progress and achievements are unreliable.
- Managers have not addressed declines in the proportion of learners taking qualifications in English, mathematics, employability and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) who successfully achieve.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good enough to enable all learners to make sufficiently good progress.
- Too many tutors have low expectations of what learners can achieve.
- Learners from African, Pakistani and other Asian backgrounds who successfully achieve compared to learners from other backgrounds is low and has been for several consecutive years.

The provider has the following strengths

- Procedures to safeguard learners are good.
- Staff promote cultural diversity well, both in lessons and around community venues.
- The service uses a good range of community partnerships to provide family learning courses in areas of most need. A high proportion of council apprentices achieve their qualifications.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Wakefield district covers a mix of urban and rural communities and has a population of around 331,000 people. Around 14% of the population live in communities regarded as among the most deprived in the country. The proportion of residents claiming out of work benefits is higher than the regional and national averages.
- The Wakefield Adult and Community Education Service (ACES) is located within the council's Children and Young People Directorate. A new service manager was appointed in August 2014. This was the first stage in a management re-structure which is still underway. Learning takes place in three main centres and 14 community venues. The majority of learners are adults. The service oversees the delivery of programmes for the council's apprentices. The service also provides programmes for 48 learners aged 16 to 18. This provision was not inspected separately but judgements about the quality of study programmes are included throughout the report.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Carry out an urgent review of the effectiveness of governance and implement the changes necessary to ensure that mechanisms for reporting and reviewing performance are strengthened and leaders and managers are held to account for the strategic direction and quality of the service.
- Ensure that all learners aged 16 to 18 follow challenging and individualised programmes that support their personal development, future learning and career plans and meet the key requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Review the adult learning curriculum so that it aligns much more closely with the local employment and skills needs of the Wakefield district and fits the government-funding priorities for community learning and skills providers.
- Ensure that the targets managers set for improving the provision are focused sharply on the key areas of weakness and are sufficiently challenging. Improve the effectiveness of managers' monitoring of improvement actions to halt declines in performance and quicken the rate of improvement.
- Ensure that leaders and managers have access to timely and reliable data to inform their judgements about the quality of provision and the impact of actions taken to improve the provision.
- Urgently review the appropriateness of the curriculum and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment provided in English, mathematics, employability and ESOL provision; take swift action to address the declining trend in outcomes in these subjects and bring about rapid improvement.
- Strengthen performance management and professional development arrangements for tutors so that:
 - all tutors have sufficiently high expectations of what learners can achieve
 - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all areas of provision becomes consistently good, enabling all learners to make good progress.
- Managers must urgently investigate the reasons why the achievements of learners from African, Pakistani and other Asian backgrounds are worse than the achievements of learners from other backgrounds and take appropriate action to close the gap.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders and managers have failed to address areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection in 2011. Success rates for accredited courses have declined since that time. Weak governance means that the service has not been held to account for declining performance or for the failure to review the curriculum in the light of government funding priorities. Numerous changes in management personnel and responsibilities at different levels in the local authority have contributed to a lack of accountability.
- The current service manager, appointed in August 2014, has identified many weaknesses that were not previously recognised. Since her appointment, the culture within the service has begun to change and there is greater awareness of the need to review and evaluate the curriculum offer to meet government funding priorities and local employment skills needs better. A management restructure, lasting for around a year, is almost complete but there is insufficient evidence of this accelerating the pace of change or driving improvement.
- A new adult learning strategy includes a list of aims but is insufficiently specific about how the service will adapt and respond to government funding, or local authority priorities. Arrangements to identify local employer skills needs are weak and there is not enough evidence of these needs influencing the curriculum offer to support learners' progression into employment. Local enterprise partnership priorities are not referenced in curriculum planning. Business plans are not explicit about the rationale for the provision offered, which includes a wide range of leisure courses.
- Study programmes for the small number of 16 to 18 year olds are inadequately planned and managed. Learners are simply infilling on a selection of adult classes. No arrangements are in place to provide work-experience. Advice and guidance for 16 to 18 year olds are inadequate. Managers do not develop suitable individualised programmes with clear future study or employment aims. The provision does not meet the requirements of study programmes.
- Many centres used for adult learning are located appropriately in the areas of greatest deprivation in the district to improve engagement with local communities. Good examples exist of community learning initiatives for hard-to-reach groups. Partnerships with voluntary and community groups are well established. Managers responsible for community and family learning have reviewed the curriculum and made improvements. Plans to improve liaison with early intervention hubs are in place. The community learning manager analyses local school inspection grades and the proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium to target family learning support well. The service has recently introduced more courses for vulnerable groups such as adults with learning difficulties, and those with mental health problems.
- Managers' abilities to analyse data and self-assess the quality of provision are poor. During the inspection, managers struggled to provide accurate and consistent data for learner outcomes. Where data are available, managers often do not accept responsibility for these. Data analysis is not routinely explicit enough about strengths and weaknesses. Managers do not do enough to explain the link between the quality of teaching and outcomes, especially where outcomes are poor.
- Records of observations of teaching sessions often show insufficient attention to learning, and managers' judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are over-optimistic. This is particularly the case in the key priority areas of English and mathematics.
- Target setting and quality improvement planning are weak. Managers' grasp of targets and their ability to implement effective actions to drive improvement towards these are weak; a situation not helped by the absence of interim and final specific, measurable targets in quality improvement plans. Managers' reviews of quality improvement plans tend to focus on the process and not the impact of actions. External consultancy support engaged to help with improving English, mathematics and ESOL has resulted in some changes in approach, but overall success rates remain stubbornly low and improvement in this area is very slow. In quality improvement plans for this area in 2014/15, managers reported good progress had been made in implementing actions to address low success rates even though the fundamental weaknesses persisted and success rates declined.
- Management of apprenticeship programmes requires improvement. Initial advice and guidance, and assessments of apprentices' prior achievements at the start their apprenticeship do not always ensure that they are placed on programmes at the appropriate level. A few apprentices are following programmes that are insufficiently challenging.
- Managers ensure that the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and centres is good. However, success rates for learners from several substantial minority ethnic groups are well below their White British counterparts and similar groups nationally. Managers' analysis of the reasons for this or a strategy

to tackle it requires improvement.

- Performance management requires improvement. For tutors, arrangements focus on observation evidence. Much work has gone into ensuring that action plans are devised to support teachers to improve their teaching. Performance objectives are broadly appropriate, but not always explicit about the intended impact on learners. Tutors have had much professional development in the past year but even when managers had developed sound processes, such as those for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA), and tutors had received training, they did not implement these processes consistently or effectively.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governance is inadequate. There is no formal reporting mechanism for reviewing the performance of the service or for setting the strategic direction and curriculum offer. Members and senior officers took insufficient action following the decline in learners' outcomes in 2013/14 and the decline has continued.
 - The advisory board does not take a strategic role in overseeing the service and has made insufficient impact in setting its direction. The service has been very slow to respond to changes in government funding priorities.
 - Reports to the advisory board focus on funding and whether funding targets are met, and operational issues such as the management restructure. Minutes show members and senior offices provide minimal challenge and ask insufficient questions about aspects of weaker performance or progress with plans to improve the quality of provision.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Appropriate and robust policies are in place to safeguard learners. Safe recruitment practices are adhered to rigorously. Staff act promptly and effectively in identifying and responding to safeguarding matters.
 - Learners feel safe and an atmosphere of mutual respect prevails in learning centres and community venues.
 - Leaders and managers are well informed about the Prevent agenda and are aware of their duties to protect learners from extremism and radicalisation. Staff have received appropriate training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The progress that learners make varies too much because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. Progress is slow where lessons are dull, and learners receive limited feedback on how to improve. By contrast, learners make rapid progress when lessons are lively and challenging, and feedback is very helpful. The inconsistency in quality extends across all of the learning programmes. Because the arrangements for study programmes are inadequate, learners aged 16 to 18 are not making sufficient progress.
- Too many tutors do not use the findings from assessments of learners' prior knowledge or achievements effectively enough to establish individual targets for learners. This hinders tutors' ability to monitor progress from learners' starting points, build on their prior attainment and prepare for their next steps in education or employment.
- A significant minority of tutors have low expectations of what learners can achieve. This results in lessons that are undemanding, and which do not enthuse learners well enough. In too many lessons, tutors set the same tasks for learners of different abilities, resulting in most-able learners wasting time. Only a few tutors make effective use of interactive learning technology to support learning and too many learners receive insufficiently detailed feedback on their progress.
- In stark contrast, a minority of teaching is of a high standard and enables learners to make good progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge. In a lesson for teaching assistants, well-planned hypothetical case studies enabled learners to improve their understanding of the importance of confidentiality when dealing with safeguarding matters in schools. In a community learning sewing class, learners, most of whom had little prior skills in sewing, demonstrated their good and increasing skills in stitching and appliqué as they fashioned garments and furnishings.
- During lessons, most tutors do not do enough to check how much learning is taking place. For example, they do not ask enough direct questions of individual learners and instead ask questions of the whole group. This limits the involvement of the more reserved learners who are often reluctant to compete with their more vocal peers.
- Staff promote cultural diversity well both in lessons and around community venues. Most tutors successfully incorporate material into their lessons that helps prepare learners to understand the cultural

diversity they will encounter in their social lives and British society. Learners and apprentices have a good level of respect for each other's differences and for different cultures. In the majority of lessons, tutors make the most of classroom discussions and use the everyday experiences of learners to explore cultural differences.

- Tutors are aware of the need to help learners to improve their skills in English and mathematics but do this with varying degrees of success. The majority of tutors correct learners' grammatical and spelling errors both in lessons and in their written work but, in a few cases, this requires improvement. In arts and crafts lessons, tutors encourage learners to improve their skills in mathematics by promoting the use of rulers and tape measures to calculate accurately the lengths of materials.
- The vast majority of tutors identify learners who need extra help at the start of their courses, and arrange for appropriate support to be provided. In lessons, tutors use learning support assistants well to support individuals and groups who need extra help.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

require improvement

- Adult learners gain in confidence through their courses and build positive relationships with other members of their community. The majority of adults engage well in their learning activities and support each other to overcome personal and learning problems.
- Although there are a few good examples in creative arts, tutors across the service do not routinely agree or record sufficiently detailed or challenging targets with learners relating to their personal development, behaviour and welfare. As a result, learners' progress in improving their skills is often poorly recorded.
- Classrooms and communal areas are well maintained, tidy and enlivened by appropriate displays and information. Learners value the facilities and treat them with respect.
- A few of the practical areas used for vocational training are untidy and do not sufficiently reflect the commercial standards of the industry learners are training to work in, or reinforce the expected behaviours of the industry. For example, one hairdressing salon is cluttered with classroom desks. Learners spread folders, coats and bags untidily over them when external clients are booked for appointments.
- Adult learners have good access to independent careers advice and guidance through the well-established relationships that the service has with a range of partners such as National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus. Adults have a good awareness about how the courses they are currently following, and those they could progress to, will improve their chances of finding new or improved employment.
- Advice and guidance for 16 to 18 year old learners who should be following study programmes are inadequate. The programmes they follow are not sufficiently broad or challenging to enable them to improve their skills in English and mathematics or to benefit from planned work experience. They do not adequately prepare learners for their next steps in learning or employment. Apprentices do not always get sufficiently good advice and guidance to ensure they are placed on courses at a sufficiently challenging level, based on their prior attainment.
- Staff in all learning centres ensure communal displays promote safeguarding well. Learners receive good information during induction about how to stay safe online. They have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe from the risk of radicalisation and extremism.
- A good range of enrichment activities and themed events enable learners to explore personal, social and ethical issues relating to life in Britain through their learning activities. Although this raises learners' awareness about life in Britain well, the progress made by learners from minority ethnicity backgrounds in achieving the skills and qualifications that would improve their chances to work and engage in wider British society requires improvement.
- The majority of learners are punctual and attend well. The attendance of a minority of learners requires improvement. This results in a small number of lessons where low attendance impedes social interaction for the few learners attending.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- The proportion of adults following accredited qualifications who gain the necessary skills and achieve their qualifications has declined over three consecutive years. The progress that adults following accredited qualifications in English and mathematics make in improving their skills in these subjects requires significant improvement. The proportion of learners following ESOL courses who improve their skills in

English and achieve qualifications is too low. Not enough adults following courses designed to prepare them for work achieve their personal learning targets and qualifications.

- An increasing, and now good, proportion of adults taking vocational qualifications acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to pass their intended qualifications. Most learners work to the industrial and commercial standards required for their vocational area. Adult learners following non-accredited courses in community education and family learning make good progress during lessons towards achieving their personal learning targets.
- A high proportion of apprentices aged 16 to 23 achieve their qualifications within the planned time. The proportion of apprentices aged over 24 who achieve their qualification is improving but too many make slow progress and take longer than planned to achieve their planned targets.
- Learners aged 16 to 18 on programmes with Wakefield ACES make insufficient progress in improving their skills in English and mathematics. Because of the inadequate design and management of study programmes, these learners make slow progress in gaining the vocational skills and experience of work, which would help them to progress to further learning, employment or work.
- Some significant differences in the achievements of different groups of learners exist and this requires urgent improvement. The lower proportion of learners from African, Pakistani and other Asian backgrounds who successfully achieved compared to learners from other backgrounds remained unchanged in 2014/15 compared to the previous year.
- The collection of information on learners' next steps requires improvement. ACES only collects information on the next steps of just over half of the learners who complete courses. For learners whose next steps are known, a minority progress to further learning or employment.
- A good proportion of learners who attend family learning courses enjoy learning and acquire confidence to re-engage in the community and help their children's learning through the programmes provided.
- A high proportion of apprentices remain in full-time employment, the vast majority with Wakefield Council when they complete their apprenticeships.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

require improvement

- Adult learners account for almost all of the 786 learners, other than apprentices, that are currently participating in learning. Just over half of learners are following non-accredited community education and family learning courses. The remainder are on part-time programmes taking accredited qualifications in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, ESOL, employability, health and social care, child development and wellbeing, information and communication technology (ICT), hairdressing, beauty therapy, creative arts, languages, literature and culture, supporting teaching and learning in schools, accounting and finance and business management.
- The service is implementing a well-considered plan to make community and family learning provision more relevant to local need by targeting priority areas. Good links with early intervention hubs and voluntary and community partners is helping in this process.
- The service has made slow progress in re-focusing the range of accredited provision to meet community learning and skills funding priorities and the needs of employers in the district. Although decreasing, a significant minority of funded provision is for personal development and leisure courses, with no clear rationale provided by managers in the service's strategy as to how this offer is justified.
- The progress that learners make varies too much because of the variable quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics and ESOL lessons and on courses leading to qualifications that prepare learners for work. Learners' differing abilities are not taken into account sufficiently by tutors when planning and delivering learning. Consequently, there is insufficient challenge for many learners leading to them making slower progress than they should, based on their starting points.
- The majority of tutors provide clear and helpful verbal feedback to learners in lessons but written feedback is much weaker. Although there are some good examples of RARPA processes being well used in non-accredited learning, too often tutors' written feedback in both non-accredited and accredited learning contains insufficient detailed information for learners to guide them to make improvements in their work. Further learning targets that tutors set are often insufficiently detailed or challenging.
- Adults improve their confidence through learning. The majority value the support they receive from tutors to attend lessons, develop new skills, achieve personal goals and participate in their community. Learners following employability programmes gain in confidence to research employment opportunities and apply for jobs. Learners following courses to support children's learning gain confidence to volunteer and

recognise how this improves their prospects of obtaining paid work.

Apprenticeships

require improvement

- The significant majority of the 98 apprentices are on accounting and finance, administration and business management programmes. The remainder follow programmes in health and social care, child development and wellbeing, horticulture, customer services, premises management and supporting teaching and learning in schools.
- Management of the apprenticeship programme requires improvement. Although ACES managers are taking increased responsibility for managing the provision, links with managers in other departments of the council who are responsible for recruiting apprentices are not sufficiently good. Apprentices receive insufficiently detailed advice and guidance before starting their apprenticeship and a few apprentices are on programmes that are not sufficiently challenging, given their prior levels of attainment.
- The very large majority of apprentices aged 16 to 23 make good progress and achieve their qualifications in the planned time. Apprentices aged 24 and over make slow progress and the proportion who achieve in the planned time is declining and too low.
- Assessors carry out frequent assessments of apprentices in their workplaces. Assessors in accounting and finance, administration, business management and care settings plan their visits sensitively to minimise disruptions to normal work activities. Verbal feedback provided to apprentices about the quality of their work and how they could improve is good. Not enough written feedback or targets for improvement that apprentices are left to reflect on by their assessors capture this same level of detail. Too much written feedback is bland, descriptive, insufficiently detailed and overly encouraging.
- Apprentices' workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in assessments or reviews of progress. As a result, apprentices are seldom set targets related to skills development, behaviours and attitudes in the workplace.
- The quality of off-the-job training varies too much. In a lesson for business management apprentices, the tutor successfully reinforced the need to proofread business letters and emails accurately before sending them. Apprentices made good progress in identifying common errors when examining well-prepared examples, which also made them consider whether they recognise correct and incorrect use of punctuation and grammar. In other off-the-job lessons, tutors' expectations of what apprentices can achieve are too low and learning activities provide insufficient challenge.
- Apprentices gain in confidence through their learning and work. A good proportion gain employment in full-time roles with Wakefield Council when they complete their apprenticeship. A few apprentices identify that their apprenticeship has given them sufficient skills and confidence to apply for better jobs.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	9,368
Corporate Director	John Wilson
Website address	www.wakefield.gov.uk

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	445	29	269	3	24	N/A	N/A
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	21	20	24	33	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	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 							

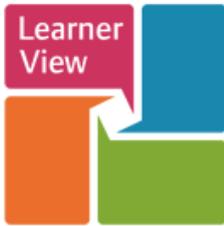
Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Malcolm Fraser, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ruth James	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dan Grant	Ofsted Inspector
Shabana Mahmood	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Young	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the service manager, 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 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.

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