

Hackney London Borough Council

Local authority

Inspection dates

21–24 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Require improvement
Adult learning programmes	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection (The Learning Trust)	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers do not help learners to develop their written English skills well enough.
- Teachers' targets for learners and their monitoring of learners' progress, especially on non-accredited courses, do not enable enough learners to make the full progress of which they are capable.
- Too few learners on accredited courses achieve their qualifications.
- Senior leaders and managers have not yet implemented all of the recommendations from the previous inspection in full.
- Managers have not used all of the information available to them on the quality of provision to bring about improvements quickly enough.

The provider has the following strengths

- Managers are very effective at targeting courses at learners who would benefit most from participation in learning.
- Learners, particularly those who have experienced problems with their mental health, make very good progress with their self-confidence, self-esteem, health and well-being, life skills and employment prospects.
- Managers work very effectively with a wide range of partners to develop a relevant and effective curriculum offer.
- Learners produce practical work of a high quality and standard.
- Learners enjoy their courses and recognise the many benefits participation in learning brings to their daily lives.
- Learners from a very wide range of backgrounds and previous experiences work harmoniously together in a wide range of settings.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Hackney London Borough Council provides adult learning provision for the borough through Hackney Learning Trust (HLT), previously known as The Learning Trust. The provision includes courses that lead to qualifications, mostly in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and provision in family and community learning that does not lead to qualifications. Subcontractors who are selected as they have particular specialisms deliver approximately four fifths of the provision; about one fifth of the provision is delivered by HLT.
- The borough is one of the most deprived in Britain, but contains areas of increasing wealth and affluence. It is a culturally diverse borough, with a greater than average proportion of recent migrants to the area who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of school leavers who achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C is slightly below the national rate.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure senior leaders and managers set specific and challenging actions for improvement and that they monitor frequently the achievement of these actions, ensuring they are achieved in full and within the planned timescales.
- Improve the quality, consistency and impact of teachers' individual targets for learners, recognising their aspirations and starting points, to ensure that they make the full progress of which they are capable; ensure that teachers monitor learners' progress towards achievement frequently, setting clear actions for improvement when learners fall behind the expected rate of progress.
- Improve the proportion of learners who achieve qualifications in basic skills, especially mathematics, by supporting teachers to teach lessons that enable learners to become proficient through mastering particular skills.
- Develop teachers' skills to teach lessons that enable learners, especially the most able, to maximise their progress and achieve their full potential.
- Improve the feedback that teachers give to learners on their written work so they know what they need to do to improve and make better progress; ensure teachers correct learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar and help them to improve these skills over time.
- Enable all teachers to learn from the good practice that exists in the provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Senior leaders at the council, the trust and at service level have a clearly defined vision and sense of purpose for the adult learning service and work concertedly to improve the lives and opportunities for residents in the most deprived areas in the borough. However, they have yet to ensure that all learners experience consistently good-quality teaching, learning and assessment; the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications varies too much between different subjects.
- Service managers make very good use of local labour market information, along with detailed data on the changing demographics of the borough, to identify particular areas and communities with the greatest social and economic needs. Managers work effectively with a wide range of partners in the borough to plan the curriculum offer, which they review frequently, to ensure it meets the changing local needs and circumstances of borough residents. For example, the service has increased the range of vocational provision in retail and food safety and hygiene to meet local employers' needs and prepare local residents for employment opportunities.
- Adult learning provision is carefully designed to support the most vulnerable residents, specifically those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, residents with poor mental health, those with low levels of, or no, formal qualifications, unemployed residents and those in low paid or insecure employment. Arrangements for commissioning specialist provision from a range of local providers ensure that managers make best use of available expertise to support learners, as well as helping new or small providers to develop sustainable provision for the future. Managers are also responsive to learners' requests and have trialled provision in business start-up to support learners wanting to establish their own businesses.
- Managers monitor the quality of provision often, through team meetings and observations of lessons. However, too often their lesson observation records indicate that observers concentrate too much on the teachers' activities and use of resources and not enough on learners' progress, skills development or acquisition of knowledge. While the majority of observers identify areas for improvement, and make helpful suggestions to teachers to help them improve, their overall judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not always clear. Their actions for improvement are not sufficiently specific or time bound to ensure that teachers make swift improvements in their practice.
- Managers meet several times through the year with individual staff to review their performance and set personal goals and targets. Meetings are well documented but often focus more on administrative and resource issues, rather than improving the quality of teaching and learning. Managers provide much positive feedback and encouragement, but areas for development identified are not sufficiently specific or measurable to enable progress to be evaluated. Performance reviews identify individual training needs, but not in sufficient detail to identify clearly enough the required or expected impact on learners.
- Service managers hold their subcontractors to account for the quality of learners' experience and outcomes effectively. All subcontractors produce an annual self-assessment report and a safeguarding audit; however, their self-assessment reports are not always sufficiently self-critical and identify few areas where improvements could be made. Managers' overall self-assessment report for the service identifies clearly the most important areas for improvement, which inform quality improvement actions. In a few instances, managers identify strengths that might be considered as normal practice. Managers review quality improvement actions routinely, but the progress they record often refers more to the completion of actions, rather than their impact on securing improvements for learners.
- While managers have secured improvements in several areas identified as requiring improvement at the previous inspection of The Learning Trust, some significant weaknesses in the provision remain. Systems for monitoring learners' progress are not yet consistently rigorous and reliable. Lesson observation reports do not critically evaluate the impact of teaching and assessment on learners' progress, and managers acknowledge that they need to improve the systematic collection of information on learners' progression and positive destinations. A few areas identified as requiring improvement in the 2014/15 self-assessment report still require further improvement to be good, including attendance rates on a minority of courses and the development of learners' skills in written English.
- Managers make good use of feedback from learners when reviewing the provision. A large minority of learners complete evaluations at the end of their courses; their feedback indicates high levels of enjoyment and they report increased skills and confidence. Their good development of personal and social skills helps learners to be more confident and independent in their daily lives. Managers acknowledge that their overall analysis of this feedback reflects the views of around one third of all learners and they are developing different approaches to capture the views of a larger proportion of participants.

- The service works very well with a highly diverse range of learners and promotes an ethos of respect and tolerance for different communities and beliefs. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are integrated very well and acquire skills, confidence and independence through their participation in adult learning. Managers are willing to explore new areas of work and innovative approaches, such as the very well-received project where deaf learners worked alongside hearing learners; both groups noted how working together had increased their understanding of disability and different means of communication, which helped to decrease potential isolation for the deaf learners. Managers recognise that despite efforts to increase the participation of male learners, they remain under-represented across significant parts of the provision.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The adult learning service is part of the Hackney Learning Trust, which is responsible for the oversight of the provision, and sets the strategic priorities for the service in line with the council's main objectives. Service managers and directors of the trust meet regularly to review the range and quality of provision.
 - Lines of responsibility and accountability are clearly established, from service managers, through the assistant director of education to the senior leadership team of children's services and the council. Senior leaders hold service managers to account through quarterly reviews of the annual adult learning service plan, which sets out clear obligations, objectives and performance indicators.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Managers within HLT ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all staff who work directly with learners to ensure their suitability for their roles. All tutors and managers receive regular training and updates on a wide range of safeguarding topics, including working safely online and identifying potential risk of female genital mutilation, honour-based violence and domestic violence or abuse. Training also covers aspects of financial security in the recognition that some learners may be affected by debt-related problems or be vulnerable to financial fraud. They use this training well to support their learners.
 - Learners receive information on how to keep themselves safe at the start of their courses, along with details of staff to contact if they have any concerns. Security arrangements are good at the various community venues and learners report that they feel safe and know how to report concerns.
 - The service is responding effectively to the 'Prevent' duty to prevent radicalisation and extremism through training all staff and providing information to learners to raise their awareness of potential risks. Managers work effectively with a range of external agencies and have carefully tailored their work on preventing radicalisation and extremism to reflect the very diverse communities in the borough. The service supports staff and learners to discuss and explore British values through a 'universal values' approach and tutors are beginning to integrate this where appropriate into their courses and lessons. For example, learners explore concepts of democracy within the topical context of the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision varies too much. While learners make progress and the majority acquire new skills, too many work to targets which they achieve too easily and which do not reflect their personal goals and aspirations. For example, all learners in an ESOL class had the same target, to label five body parts, when their language levels differed considerably. In a fitness class participants with a range of medical needs and pre-existing conditions had all been set very similar exercise outcomes.
- Teachers' feedback on learners' progress over time lacks specific information to guide them on what they have done well and how they can improve further. As identified at the previous inspection of The Learning Trust, managers' monitoring of learners' progress is weak, as are their decisions on whether learners have achieved their learning goals, particularly on courses that do not lead to qualifications.
- Teachers' use of learners' assessment outcomes to plan lessons across the range of groups of learners is weak. In too many lessons teachers plan learning which meets the needs of the lower and middle range abilities within the group. The most able or more ambitious learners lose out because they work well below their level of competence and spend too much time without anything to do.
- Teachers tend to focus on task completion rather than the development of the skills which will enable learners to progress. This affects, for example, learners who have ambitions to set up their own businesses and who will need to meet industry standards. Too many of these learners do not have sufficient opportunity to develop the work skills and efficiencies that they will need to be successful in business.

- By contrast, teachers in several subjects use their subject expertise effectively to develop their learners' skills. For example, arts and fashion teachers help learners produce high-quality work. They set challenging targets, promote the development of skills between lessons effectively and give good support if learners find it difficult to know what to do next; these learners become confident to be responsible for their own learning. For example, at a charity for the homeless, following support from her tutor, a learner successfully set up her own business making and selling ceramic and paper masks for children's parties.
- Learners value the oral feedback that teachers provide on their work in lessons. However, teachers' written feedback on learners' work does not always pay sufficient attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation. As a result, learners do not get the chance to improve the quality of their writing to a standard that would enable them to be successful in their next steps in learning or training.
- The majority of teachers establish learners' prior knowledge and understanding well, for example by using questioning techniques effectively. They are also adept at checking how far each learner has progressed in lessons through a range of well-implemented activities. However, a minority of teachers ask whole-group questions, to which only the more confident learners respond. Consequently they are unable to evaluate how much learning has taken place for all members of the group.
- Staff provide a good service to learners who are vulnerable and socially isolated or do not have English as their first language. The courses on offer match these learners' aims and aspirations well. The service attracts many first-time learners who have never participated in adult learning. For many learners the provision forms their first step into learning and feeling part of their community. Pastoral support for learners is good across the provision, but is especially good for new entrants to adult education. Managers' use of a wide range of community venues across the borough enables learners to access first steps into learning provision easily. Provision in children's centres makes it possible for parents to attend classes as crèche facilities are available and are used well.
- In practical subjects, learners apply the skills they learn to improve the quality of their lives. For example, learners in sewing classes learn to make clothes for themselves and their families; learners in cookery classes learn to cook healthy meals for their families on a budget. Learners enjoy using these new skills and recognise how they can save money as a result.
- A high proportion of learners new to adult education become motivated to continue with their learning. A high proportion embrace the opportunity to progress to higher levels of study within the provider and then progress on to other provision within the borough and beyond. For example, learners who struggle with their mental health have specially tailored lessons and then have the option to move into general provision. Learners on arts courses move from beginner courses to further and higher education with other providers; they also have the opportunity to exhibit their work in high-profile exhibitions.
- Managers respond well to learners' requests for new courses. For example, the range of employability courses has been expanded recently to meet increased demand. Self-employment provision supports learners well, not just during the planning stage but also during the business start-up phase. Learners have set up new businesses as a result, in for example, catering, ceramics and music production.
- Teachers' focus on learners' work skills and helping them to find employment is good. Teachers support learners well in lessons with curriculum vitae writing, how to use websites to search for jobs and visiting libraries to access information on jobs and support services.
- Learners have access to good advice and guidance, both before they enrol and while they are on their course. The team of advisers has a good range of specialist skills which enables it to advise people with specific needs, such as those who speak English as an additional language and ex-offenders. The service has excellent partnerships with other providers in the area and acts as a hub for information sharing, which enables them to analyse the effectiveness of the service.
- Staff's focus on learners' health and safety is good, especially in practical subjects such as sewing and catering. Induction booklets provide learners with a good overview of health and safety principles on catering courses, which learners apply well in practice. Staff have access to a wide range of professional development and make good use of recent training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty in lessons. For example, in one lesson the teacher introduced the application of British values to a group of learners who speak English as an additional language. They role played how to vote in the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, and learned both concepts and vocabulary to understand the voting system in the UK.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- The vast majority of learners make very good progress with a wide range of vocational, work-related or personal and social skills as a result of their participation on courses at a wide range of venues in their local communities. Managers have numerous examples of how learning has empowered learners to make improvements to their employment prospects, well-being and family lives and how improved skills in mathematics and English have enabled them to improve the quality of their daily lives. For example, as a result of attendance at family learning courses, parents improve their parenting skills and are able to help their children with their homework more effectively, prepare healthier meals for their families to eat, and budget effectively.
- Learners make good improvements with their skills in spoken English and mathematics as a result of attending accredited and non-accredited courses. The majority of teachers help learners to develop their skills in English and mathematics on most vocational and community learning courses. They use vocational and other subject-specific terminology frequently and expect learners to use appropriate language correctly, highlighting this to them when they do not. For example, in a textiles lesson, learners used rulers to measure seam allowances and measured angles accurately when cutting out material to make a patchwork cushion.
- Learners from a wide range of backgrounds and communities work effectively and harmoniously together in a wide range of community venues. They value the course opportunities that are available to them through the adult learning service; they are respectful of their teachers and of each other. Learners make good use of the opportunities to progress to higher-level courses, both within the service and with a wide range of other local and regional providers. Staff provide good information to learners about their next steps in education, training or employment.
- Learners' attendance at lessons is high in the vast majority of cases; when they are unable to attend lessons they notify their course tutor of their absence and provide the reason. In the majority of instances, teachers work effectively to help learners catch up with the work they have missed.
- Staff work highly effectively to support learners with their learning and to overcome any barriers to learning they encounter in their daily lives. Learners value this support highly and, as a result, the vast majority of learners stay on their courses until the end; although not all learners achieve their qualifications. Staff are very adept at supporting learners with mental health issues and those who are socially isolated to access courses that will help improve their health, well-being and their outlook on life.
- Staff make very good use of former learners and members of the local community as volunteers; they act as role models to motivate new learners or as support for learners who need help in lessons. For example, staff ran a highly effective recruitment project and subsequent training in sign language for volunteers who now help deaf learners to attend courses and learn effectively.
- Learners on a wide range of courses benefit from additional activities, such as trips and visits to relevant locations in the borough. For example, learners on ESOL courses visit local libraries to learn how to borrow books to help develop their reading skills further. As a result of this, they also learn about and access a range of other services offered in public libraries, such as the internet.

Outcomes for learners require improvement

- Too few learners on courses that lead to qualifications achieve them, especially in English and mathematics. Those on ICT courses make better progress and the proportion who achieve their qualifications is rising, but still requires further improvement. Learners on courses for teaching assistants make very good progress and almost all of them achieve their qualifications. A high proportion of learners who do not achieve the full qualification for their course are supported very well by their teachers to achieve parts of the qualification.
- While the majority of learners on courses that do not lead to qualifications make good progress with their skills, knowledge and understanding and achieve the course learning goals, not enough make the gains and progress of which they are capable. For example, in too many cases the learning goals or aims are the same or similar for the whole group and teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' starting points, or what they want to gain from completing their course.
- Learners studying for functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics achieve well at entry level, but are less successful at levels 1 and 2. A minority of learners have already taken their examinations this year and managers' predictions, based on these results and the results of learners' mock examinations, indicate that the proportion of learners achieving their English qualifications will improve significantly from the low rate achieved in the 2014/15 academic year. However, similar data for mathematics achievements shows a likely decline.

- The proportion of learners achieving ESOL qualifications rose significantly in 2014/15, but remained too low. An increasing proportion of learners who have taken their examinations at both entry level and level 1 in this academic year have achieved them and the rate is now high, with very few learners still to sit their tests.
- Managers have identified that there are very few gaps in the achievement of different groups of learners on qualification-based courses. However, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities such as dyslexia, dyscalculia or mobility problems on courses that lead to qualifications do less well than learners who have not declared a learning difficulty and/or disability. Learners who learn in subcontracted provision achieve at the same rate as those who learn in provision directly provided by HLT.
- Learners make good progress to their next steps in learning, employment or personal and social development. While the proportion of learners who do not achieve their qualifications remains too high, the skills and confidence that the vast majority of them gain as a result of participating in a course helps them to move on to a wide range of destinations. They improve the quality of their daily lives through greater participation in family life or improve their health, well-being and self-confidence.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,714
Head of Service	Mr Nene Mburu
Website address	www.learningtrust.co.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)	0	2,868	0	92	0	13	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hackney Community College ■ ELATT ■ African Community School ■ City & Hackney MIND ■ Core Arts ■ Cromwell College ■ Peter Bedford ■ Shian Housing Association ■ Tado ■ Work Skills Learning 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Richard Pemble, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janet Mercer	Her Majesty's Inspector
Philida Schellekens	Ofsted Inspector
Judy Lye-Forster	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of quality assurance and curriculum, as nominee. 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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