

**Report of the Executive Director Core Services
and the Executive Director Place
to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
on 28th March 2018**

Report on the Adult Skills and Community Learning (ASCL) Service

1.0 Introduction and Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) with an overview of the progress made and activity undertaken within Adult Skills & Community Learning (ASCL) since the inspection by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) in December 2016.
- 1.2 This report also provides the OSC opportunity to follow up on their work undertaken as part of the 2015/16 Task and Finish Group (TFG) on Work Readiness. This included a visit to the ASCL Service to understand how they support our communities to progress into or towards employment.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Adult Skills and Community Learning (ASCL) is a direct delivery service acting as a key component of the Employment and Skills continuum directly linked to economic development and community regeneration. Local delivery is targeted, in, for and with communities to maximise the potential to engage with those adults, families and communities of Barnsley who may need extra help and support.
- 2.2 The balance of delivery between adult skills and community learning evidences the Council's commitment to learning in and for communities and the transformational potential of learning in all its forms. Learning is widely acknowledged as being profoundly important to people's lives. It can help people gain personal satisfaction, development and fulfilment. For the low skilled and those with poor experiences of formal education, an informal, non-accredited first step can be an important stepping stone to further learning, qualifications and more rewarding work. It can help keep people mentally and physically active and independent into old age. It can also bring people and communities together.
- 2.3 A community learning model is used to fund, support and engage with disadvantaged individuals and groups, creating progression pathways towards the wider learning continuum, including, but not limited to skills-focused learning and employment. This funding is used to support those who have the greatest barriers to employment by building their self-confidence, raising aspiration and encouraging progression by enabling their participation in a universally accessible adult learning offer open to all residents of Barnsley.
- 2.4 The primary source of funding for the service is through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) – an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Education (DfE) - and the fees it generates directly from the individuals and businesses that access it.
- 2.5 The AEB is used to deliver skills and qualifications training for those adults with few or no qualifications and prioritises transferable skills (English, maths and ICT) to facilitate progression into or towards employment. Also, to deliver in vocational areas that support the development of the wider Council workforce (adult social care; supporting

teaching and learning in schools; early years practitioners; and business administration).

- 2.6 By accessing this public funding to support the delivery of learning interventions for adults aged 19+, the Service falls within the scope for inspection by Ofsted. This necessitates the completion of a self-assessment process as part of a quality improvement cycle to ensure quality of delivery and outcomes.

3.0 Ofsted Inspection

- 3.1 During December 2016, the ASCL service was subject to a rigorous week of inspection activity involving learners, staff at all levels, managers, senior managers, partners and Elected Members.

- 3.2 Ofsted inspection grades are based on a provider's performance which can be judged to be:-

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement (formerly Satisfactory)
Grade 4	Inadequate

- 3.3 The inspection of ASCL resulted in an outcome of Grade 3: 'Requires Improvement' for 'overall effectiveness'. In addition, each of the four judgement areas of 'effectiveness of leadership and management'; 'quality of teaching, learning and assessment'; 'personal development, behaviour and welfare' and 'outcomes for learners' were also judged as 'Requires Improvement'. This judgement means that the Service will fall in to scope for inspection again within 12 to 24 months of the original inspection.

- 3.4 The Ofsted inspection identified the following:

Key strengths

- Leaders and managers lead highly effective partnerships which they use well to establish an adult learning curriculum that supports the most vulnerable and hardest to reach members of the community.
- Tutors plan and deliver a range of interesting and enjoyable learning activities that inspire learners so that they are keen to learn.
- Through attending programmes, adults improve significantly their confidence, communication skills, and employability skills.
- Managers and staff have established inclusive and welcoming environments where learners, many with significant barriers to participating, feel safe and motivated to learn.
- A high proportion of learners who take accredited vocational qualifications make good progress and gain the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve and progress to further learning or employment.

Key Areas for Improvement:

- Leaders and managers do not implement actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and learners' outcomes quickly enough.
- Leaders and managers do not have access to sufficiently detailed data about learners' progress and achievements to enable them to identify areas for concern early enough, such as when learners fall behind schedule in their learning.

- Too few learners achieve their qualifications in English, mathematics, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) writing skills, and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Tutors make insufficient use of information about learners' starting points or the progress that learners make to plan sufficiently challenging learning activities, particularly for the most able learners.
- Tutors do not explain clearly to adults on community and family learning courses the progress that they are making and, as a result, a minority of learners make slow progress.
- Staff do not reinforce sufficiently modern British values and how these relate to learners as citizens of Barnsley on their programmes.
- Staff do not develop learners' understanding of risks associated with radicalisation and extremism well enough.

4.0 Current Position

- 4.1 As a result of the inspection, a detailed Service Improvement Plan was established, covering all the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted. This report is updated on a monthly basis and is used to monitor actions and progress across all judgement areas and as a basis for operational management meetings. A summarised version of this is attached as Item 4b and outlines the areas for improvement and a RAG (red, amber, green) rating regarding progress.
- 4.2 An Improvement and Governing Board, established in May 2017, has made the governance framework more robust by providing scrutiny and challenge to the Service as well as identifying and facilitating improvements required. The Board is made up of two Elected Members; BMBC officers – both strategic and operational; local and regional further education sector representatives; and a voluntary and community sector representative. Members of the Board have taken on specific areas of responsibility relating to the Common Inspection Framework which Ofsted and providers use as a basis to make judgements about the provision being delivered. Activities to challenge and validate reported progress have, and continue to be, undertaken on a regular basis.
- 4.3 Following the creation of the new governance structure, the Council's Internal Audit function has been commissioned to undertake a review of the Service focusing on the governance, controls and risk management arrangements associated with it. The scope of the audit was to provide assurance that there are appropriate and effective governance and performance management arrangements in place over the ASCL service. The positive outcome of the review has been reported to the Board with recommendations subsequently incorporated into the Service Improvement Plan.
- 4.4 To support the Improvement and Governing Board to effectively discharge their role, key performance data, including information relating to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, is produced for each meeting. This enables the Board to rigorously challenge areas of under-performance.
- 4.4 A number of developments have been undertaken to ensure the conditions for success are created. This includes resolving issues relating to staff absence and performance, the creation of a new performance management framework and tools, and the introduction of a termly self-assessment review process. The self-assessment reports produced by subject leads reflecting quality of provision for 2016/17 indicated that progress towards sustained improvement was inconsistent and a clear impact on raising standards was not yet evident. Senior managers agreed to amend the self-

assessment process for 2017/18 to allow subject leads the opportunity to focus on key areas aligned to Ofsted's recommendations and review them on an ongoing basis rather than just a year-end assessment.

- 4.5 During January 2018, a minor restructure of the Service was completed with the commencement of a Lead Tutor Engagement and Wellbeing and a Performance Improvement Manager. This has resulted in strengthened management capacity to ensure the Service maintains a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the impact this has on outcomes for learners so that every learner in every subject and every lesson can be assured of a high quality experience which supports them to reach their full potential.
- 4.6 In the same month, subject leads were asked to prepare a position statement to evidence the progress within their areas from September 2017. A new proforma required them to focus on making judgements about key aspects of their provision with supporting evidence. As part of the quality assurance process, these position statements were moderated by senior managers. Based on the outcome of moderation more detailed reviews of childcare, ICT, engagement and wellbeing were undertaken to validate evidence and carry out lesson observations to evaluate the standard of teaching learning and assessment. Reviews of Maths and English have been deferred to the end of term 2 (March 2018) when it is anticipated that current absence issues affecting management capacity will have been resolved.
- 4.7 The reviews identified that good progress is being made in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the impact this has on the outcomes of learners. Quality assurance of the observation team has identified that all observers are making judgements in line with Ofsted requirements. This means that the emerging improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment can be viewed as an accurate representation of the current quality of provision. Learners on courses are better able to articulate their understanding of British Values and the risks they face in modern life (including of radicalisation and extremism). The introduction of processes to support learner attendance and retention through earlier intervention by the learning support team will help individuals, many of whom have complex personal situations, to remain in learning and achieve their goals.
- 4.8 As an outcome of the review activity, it is clear that there is evidence of improvement but insufficient to support a self-assessment grade of 'Good' in all areas as yet. A performance summary extract from the ASCL Position Statement September to December 2017 is attached as Item 4c. This details the percentage of retention, achievement and attendance of learners in each subject area during this period in comparison with overall performance from the 2016/17 academic year.
- 4.9 Subject managers have maintained a focus on teaching, learning and assessment in line with the over-arching intention of the Service Improvement Plan but have not ensured that the evidence generated is sufficiently specific to demonstrate improvement in all areas identified by Ofsted (feedback, effective questioning and Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar). Activity in term 2 (January to March 2018) will ensure that this evidence is sufficiently specific to evidence the improvement required.
- 4.10 To demonstrate the wider impact that the service has on learners, Item 4d (attached) provides some case study example of learners who have attended courses and the impact this has had on both their personal life and improving their employment opportunities.

5.0 Future Plans & Challenges

- 5.1 Providers judged as 'require improvement' at inspection are subject to 'support and challenge' visits before the full re-inspection. The Service has the first such visit planned for 20 March 2018.
- 5.2 The self-assessment review process for term 2 (April – March 2018) will commence in April and culminate in a review of English and Maths on 9th May. The outcomes of the review will inform the judgements made in the term 2 position statement.
- 5.3 Preparation for full re-inspection is ongoing and the Service remains on high alert for short-notice of commencement. It is likely that this will take place prior to December 2018. Performance data, the self-assessment report and in-year position statements will form the basis of the Lead Inspectors pre-inspection analysis of evidence. Accuracy is therefore important to show that the service is aware of its own strengths and weaknesses.
- 5.4 During the inspectors' visit, evidence-gathering will include observations of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as support arrangements, discussions with learners, scrutiny of learners' work and the arrangements made for them to gain experience of work. Inspectors may undertake some inspection activities jointly with the service's staff, such as visits to learning sessions, to evaluate the progress that learners are making.
- 5.5 The Service has to ensure that all staff work to progress the Service Improvement Plan and maintain a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the impact this has on outcomes for learners. This is so that every learner in every subject and every lesson can be assured of a high quality experience which supports them to reach their full potential.
- 5.6 Whilst the Service aspires to be an 'Outstanding' provider, its ambition is to improve from a judgement of 'Requires Improvement' to a judgement of 'Good' by the end of July 2018.

6.0 Invited Witnesses

- 6.1 The following witnesses have been invited to today's meeting to answer questions regarding the ASCL Service:
 - Matt Gladstone, Executive Director – Place
 - Anne-Marie Holdsworth, Adult Skills, Employability & Community Learning Manager
 - Vikki Annetts, Performance Improvement Manager, Adult Skills & Community Learning Service
 - Councillor Robert Frost, Cabinet Support Member, Place

7.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

- 7.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:
 - What is the key to improving service quality and how will you know if you have achieved it?
 - How are partners supporting the ASCL service to recruit and engage with potential learners e.g. schools and family centres?

- How does Barnsley ASCL service compare with others in relation to the Ofsted outcome and the issues requiring improvement?
- What value has the newly developed performance management framework added and what is it currently showing?
- When do you expect to see progress on the outstanding key actions rated as red and what are the reasons for them not being achieved on time?
- How are you using feedback to improve the service and to ensure that learners know how they are developing and where they need to improve?
- What support is available for learners with additional needs to help them achieve their full potential?
- How do you plan to improve achievements in the lowest scoring subjects?
- What are the barriers to improving the attendance figures and how do you plan to overcome these?
- What has been done to learn from best practice in further education establishments or other learning environments?
- Are there any actions which could be taken by Members to support the improvement of the ASCL service?

8.0 Background Papers and Links

- Item 4b – ASCL Service Improvement Plan Summary (attached)
- Item 4c - Performance Summary Extract from ASCL Position Statement September – December 2017 (attached)
- Item 4d – ASCL Case Studies
- ASCL Self-Assessment Report 2016/17 (available upon request)
- ASCL Ofsted Report (January 2017):
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2637307/urn/50609.pdf>
- Common inspection framework for education, skills and early years', Ofsted, August 2015:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015 .
- Further Education and Skills Handbook, Ofsted, for use from 9th February 2018:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683094/Further_education_and_skills_inspection_handbook_for_use_from_February_2018.pdf
- BMBC Work Readiness TFG Report 2015/16:
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s8211/Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20-%20Work%20Readiness%20-%20Adults.pdf>

9.0 Glossary

AEB	Adult Education Budget
ASCL	Adult Skills and Community Learning
BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

DfE	Department for Education
ESFA	Education & Skills Funding Agency
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
ICT	Information & Communications Technology
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

10.0 Officer Contact

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