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Mr Robert Shore  
Adult Learning Manager  
Rutland County Council  
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Dear Mr Shore

### **Short inspection of Rutland County Council**

Following the short inspection on 23 and 24 April 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in June 2015.

### **This provider continues to be good.**

Since the previous inspection, you and your colleagues have continued to focus on apprenticeship and community learning provision that meets the needs of county residents. You receive good support in achieving this from an experienced and committed team of tutors, assessors and staff working for the subcontractor, Peterborough Regional College (PRC).

You provide good opportunities for young people and adults to enrol on apprenticeship programmes that meet local needs in vocational subjects such as early years, business administration and health and care. Your classroom-based courses for adult learners focus on the promotion of basic skills in English and mathematics for the small proportion of county residents without a qualification at level 2 in these subjects. You also offer a range of suitable leisure courses that meet the needs of the relatively high number of retired people in the county.

You and senior colleagues have made good progress in maintaining the standards of community learning provision found at the last inspection and in successfully tackling the most significant weaknesses. Apprentices and learners rightly comment favourably on the high quality of teaching and learning they receive and on the good standard of the classroom accommodation at the Oakham Enterprise Park site.

Together with your colleagues at PRC, you have implemented a range of measures to reverse the decline in apprenticeship outcomes for young people aged 16 to 18 in 2016/17. These measures included the introduction of a six-week taster course for new apprentices and a significantly increased number of assessor visits to the workplace to monitor progress. The impact of these measures is reflected in the very high retention of apprentices aged 16 to 18 in 2017/18 and in the large majority of apprentices of all ages who are now on course to achieving within the planned period.

Achievement rates on accredited courses declined in 2016/17, but remained similar to national rates. The proportion of learners who achieved a high grade in GCSE mathematics was high. Achievement rates were high for adults studying accountancy qualifications and for apprentices and adult learners on functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. The proportion of learners who achieved a high grade in GCSE English language was higher than that for similar providers, but you agree that it requires improvement.

Your teaching and training staff, including those working for the subcontractor, are highly qualified and enthusiastic for their subjects, which they communicate well, especially in modern foreign languages and in art. An appropriate range of staff development activities helps teaching staff and assessors to improve their practice.

Tutors have high expectations of their learners and expect them to achieve and progress well. The standard of work of many learners is high. In 2017, arts learners organised an exhibition of their work at a local museum which saw good attendance by members of the public and which resulted in the sale of several pieces of learners' artwork. Learners in Spanish and Italian comment enthusiastically on the range and extent of the fluency they have achieved in these languages, which they rightly attribute to the passion and skill of their tutors.

You have designed your curriculum offer to meet specifically the needs of the communities that you serve. In particular, your links with a nearby army barracks, local schools and small- and medium-sized employers have resulted in a clearly defined curriculum that meets the learning needs of army families, school leavers and employees. You and your staff have responded well to developments in standards-based apprenticeships for the few learners you have enrolled onto these qualifications.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your colleagues have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that action to safeguard apprentices and learners is prompt and proportionate, especially for those who have special educational needs. Tutors and assessors ensure that apprentices and adult learners have a good understanding of health and safety at work. Apprentices adopt safe working practices and are mindful of their employers' standards of workplace safety.

All staff, including volunteers and those working for PRC, receive an appropriate background check to ensure their suitability. Suitable arrangements for recording and responding to safeguarding referrals are in place. Links with social services, the police, local mental health services, as well as with other directorates of the council, ensure that you have a network of relevant agencies to whom you can make referrals when necessary.

Assessors and tutors review apprentices' and learners' understanding of how to keep safe well, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty. As a result, apprentices and learners have a reasonably good knowledge of how to stay safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism, for example when using the internet and working online. Apprentices' and learners' understanding of British values is generally good.

### **Inspection findings**

- You know your provision well and you continue to tackle the weaknesses found at the last inspection and those identified as a result of internal improvement activities and through self-assessment. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment remain good, especially in classroom-based provision.
- As the adult learning manager, you have suitably high expectations of PRC, which is responsible for delivering the apprenticeship provision, as well as a few courses leading to a qualification. You meet regularly with PRC staff to review all aspects of performance, including retention and achievement rates, as well as carrying out joint lesson observations with PRC staff. You have developed an appropriate framework for monitoring and assessing PRC's quality of delivery. Consequently, outcomes on accredited courses are generally high and you have jointly resolved the weaknesses in apprenticeship outcomes in 2016/17.
- The majority of apprentices receive good support and relevant on-the-job training from their employer. Consequently, they develop good vocational skills in line with industry standards and become increasingly effective in the workplace. Assessors visit apprentices in the workplace and provide effective coaching and support. As a result, apprentices make good progress towards timely completion of their apprenticeship. However, progress reviews do not routinely involve employers to ensure the effective coordination of on- and off-the-job training. Many apprentices do not receive the level of off-the-job training to which they are entitled. The large majority of apprentices are highly motivated and very able, but assessors do not set sufficiently challenging targets. As a result, apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Individual learning plans record and review progress towards targets well. Apprentices and learners have an appropriate understanding of what they have achieved and what they still have to do to complete their studies.
- Information, advice and careers guidance arrangements for learners and apprentices aged 16 to 19 are suitable and meet their needs. Staff regularly visit local schools to promote opportunities for young people to study an apprenticeship. The impact of this has been a steady stream of young school leavers applying to study childcare and business administration courses with the service.

- The provision of guidance on next steps and further courses for adult learners on part-time programmes is satisfactory, although few take advantage of this service. The advice for adult learners on counselling and accountancy courses, however, is good.
- Tutors and assessors make good use of the available information on learners' school records, prior attainment and any significant barriers to learning when advising learners about an appropriate apprenticeship or adult learning programme. As a result, few apprentices in 2017/18 left their programme early. The proportion of adult learners in 2017/18 who are still on their programme and likely to complete their studies has increased since last year, though you correctly acknowledge that improvements are required.
- Apprentices receive good support and guidance from workplace mentors, training officers and colleagues, who use their extensive industrial experience to work closely together to ensure that apprentices make good progress. Assessors visit apprentices in the workplace regularly, providing help and guidance through well-structured coaching and assessment activities.
- Self-assessment is suitably rigorous. PRC staff produce appropriately detailed self-assessment reports that you then carefully scrutinise. In your own self-assessment, you make good use of a range of evidence to support judgements and you clearly identify the strengths and areas for improvement. The self-assessment report is generally accurate and evaluative, although inspectors found areas for improvement in the apprenticeship programme that you had not identified in the self-assessment report or position statement.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- PRC's management and delivery of the apprenticeship programme continue to receive careful scrutiny and monitoring so that in-year improvements in retention and achievement become consolidated and strengthened
- PRC's managers and assessors work with employers to provide sufficient off-the-job training and suitably challenging targets to help apprentices reach their full potential
- they identify the reasons for learners' poorer performance in GCSE English and take appropriate actions to help more learners achieve a high grade in this subject.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jai Sharda  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector, assisted by you as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of your most recent position statements and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used individual interviews, telephone calls and meetings with the subcontractor to gather the views of learners and employers. They reviewed key documents, including those related to safeguarding, learners' achievements and progression.