

**CABINET – 18 MARCH 2025****LEICESTERSHIRE ADULT LEARNING SERVICE**
OFSTED INSPECTION FINDINGS**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the findings from the inspection of Leicestershire's Adult Learning Service (LALS) conducted by Ofsted from 14 to 17 January 2025. The findings are attached as Appendix A to this report.

Recommendations

- 2 It is recommended that:
 - a) The findings from the Leicestershire's Adult Learning Service (LALS) Ofsted inspection from 14 to 17 January 2025 be noted;
 - b) The actions set out in the quality improvement plan to monitor improvement be noted;
 - c) A further report be presented to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlining progress with the actions in the quality improvement plan in due course.

Reasons for Recommendation

- 3 Good quality adult education supports individual opportunity and life chances and is central to the delivery of strategic outcomes such as economic growth and managing demands on public services. Inspection findings confirm that the Council's adult learning provision continues to be of a high standard and the quality of education is good. Learning activities effectively support adults develop skills and behaviours they need to advance their employment and improve health and wellbeing.
- 4 The quality improvement plan (QIP), performance monitoring and challenge through the governance framework will ensure residents continue to benefit from an effective adult education service.

- 5 Oversight of service performance by the executive is good practice and is central to meeting the expectations of governance within the Ofsted inspection framework.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

- 6 The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on 3 March 2025 and its comments are set out in paragraph 35.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 7 Further Education providers in England, including local authority delivered services, are subject to Ofsted regulation under Section 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 8 The Education Inspection Framework (EIF) details how Ofsted inspects maintained schools, academies, non-association independent schools, further education and skills provision and registered early years settings in England. The EIF includes the principles that apply to inspection, and the main judgements that inspectors make when carrying out inspections.
- 9 The LALS was graded 'Good' for Overall Effectiveness from the previous inspection undertaken in 2018.
- 10 On 21 June 2024, the Cabinet approved the closure of the Transitions Learning Programme at the end of the academic year.

Resource Implications

- 11 LALS receives external grant funding of approximately £4m per annum from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for the delivery of adult education provision across the County. A further £1m in funding is generated through tuition fee income, project funding and the apprenticeship levy.
- 12 The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

- 13 None.

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PART B

- 14 The ESFA funding rules state the purpose of the Adult Education Budget is ‘to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to progress into, or within, work’, or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables flexible, tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible adults engage in learning, build confidence and/or enhance their wellbeing’.
- 15 The LALS enrolls circa 7,000 adults per annum in 49 venues across the County. The curriculum offer is designed to support adults develop their basic skills, mental health, vocational skills, and wellbeing. The service delivers apprenticeships and runs a programme of English classes for adults being supported through the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Project and Homes for Ukraine initiatives. LALS is also leading the Council’s Multiply programme, a national project to improve adult numeracy skills which is due to end in March 2025.
- 16 The service employs 257 staff, many of whom are sessional tutors who hold part-time contracts with the Council.
- 17 At the time of the Ofsted inspection there were 2,098 learners attending 348 classes at the 49 venues. Service areas selected for inspection included apprenticeships, English, mathematics, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), digital skills, learning for independence and learning for wellbeing.
- 18 The Ofsted inspection team included five inspectors who used evidence from visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners’ work, a review of performance data and service records to inform key judgements. In addition, an online survey captured the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders.

Ofsted Education Inspection Framework

- 19 The Ofsted framework uses a four-point grading scale to make principal judgements:
- Grade 1 – outstanding;
 - Grade 2 – good;
 - Grade 3 – requires improvement;
 - Grade 4 – inadequate.
- 20 Inspectors make graded judgements on specific aspects of the service including the Quality of education, Behaviour and attitudes, Personal development, and Leadership and management. Findings from each of these focus areas, along with a range of other evidence, inform the final grade for Overall Effectiveness.

Summary of Grades Awarded

21 LALS received the following judgements:

- Overall Effectiveness Good
- Quality of education Good
- Behaviour and attitudes Good
- Personal development Good
- Leadership and management Good
- Adult Learning Programmes Good
- Apprenticeships Good

Ofsted Inspection Findings

- 22 To establish the level of learner satisfaction, inspectors used direct feedback from adults during their class visits together with findings from the Ofsted survey. Of the 222 adults responding to the questionnaire, 97% agreed they would recommend the service to family or friends. Inspectors found that adults were extremely positive about their learning experience due to the inclusive environment which helps create a sense of belonging within a supportive learning community.
- 23 LALS has recently strengthened its governance through the introduction of the accountability agreement, reviewed by the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2023. As a result, the service intent is clearly defined, and inspectors were able to clearly see the direct connection between course content and its relevance to delivery of the strategic outcomes of the Council. Inspectors recognised the role of elected members in providing oversight, support and challenge, and underpinning effective governance.
- 24 The Ofsted inspection team noted that the curriculum supports adults to develop skills to progress within their careers. In addition, the wider impact of learning is captured within the inspection report, for example, how social interaction, a sense of accomplishment and physical activity helps improve learners' mental health and wellbeing.
- 25 The overall judgement for the Quality of Education is Good and inspectors reported that, in most cases, tutors are using their expertise well to plan and teach effectively. Indeed, most of the feedback from inspectors following class observations was extremely positive throughout the inspection. The inspection report does highlight the need to further improve quality assurance to address inconsistencies with the quality of teaching and learner achievement rates. However, this relates to a few specific courses within ESOL and apprenticeship programmes.
- 26 Inspectors reported that learners and apprentices with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) progress well on their courses, noting that they develop confidence and social skills for living independently. Positive findings validate service investment into additional support measures to ensure all adults have an equal opportunity to achieve. Throughout the curriculum,

learning activities are aligned to support independence and reduce need, central to the Adults and Communities Departmental strategy.

- 27 The service intent focusses on engaging adults, removing barriers to learning and supporting progression to next steps. Across most programmes inspectors recognised that careers advice is suitable with apprentices securing promotions and learners progressing to higher level study. However, the inspection report highlights the need for further work to ensure adults attending non-accredited courses receive appropriate career advice and guidance.
- 28 Scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements included a review of service processes for reporting concerns, a focus on the safe recruitment of staff, and effective use of the Disclosure and Barring Service to complete ongoing checks. Findings confirmed that safeguarding is effective, with inspectors reporting that learners and apprentices feel safe and are comfortable reporting safeguarding or welfare concerns.

Summary of Key Strengths

- 29 A summary of key strengths included:
- Learners feel welcomed and valued;
 - Most learners and apprentices gain new knowledge, skills and professional behaviours that enable them to progress;
 - Learners and apprentices feel safe and are comfortable reporting safeguarding and welfare concerns;
 - In most cases tutors use their expertise well to plan and teach effectively;
 - Learners with SEND and/or disabilities develop the confidence and social skills for living independently;
 - Social interaction, a sense of accomplishment, and physical activity helps to improve learners' mental health and wellbeing;
 - Governance arrangements are effective.

Areas for improvement

- 30 Areas for improvement included:
- Careers advice for adults enrolling on tailored learning courses;
 - Quality assurance to ensure effectiveness across all areas;
 - Teaching practice across ESOL and apprenticeship programmes.

Actions to address areas for improvement

- 31 A quality improvement plan (QIP) has been developed to address the specific areas identified for improvement and is attached to this report as Appendix B.

- 32 The QIP includes specific actions to increase the rigor of quality assurance across ESOL and the apprenticeship provision using good practice from other areas of the service with consistently high performance.
- 33 Improvement priorities will be monitored through the established monthly (officer) Quality Board, curriculum performance reviews each academic term, and regular Cabinet Lead Member briefings. Progress will also be monitored through the annual self-assessment report, with the next report due to be submitted to Ofsted in January 2026.
- 34 According to the current guidance the next LALS Ofsted inspection is expected within the next five years. This will use a new inspection framework which is currently available for public consultation.

Comments from Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 35 The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the LALS Ofsted findings at its meeting on 3 March 2025. The Committee noted the findings from the inspection and was supportive of the actions set out in the quality improvement plan to monitor improvement.

Conclusions

- 36 The Ofsted report findings confirm that LALS continues to provide a good quality of education. Learning programmes support adults to achieve positive outcomes, including progression in employment, further learning and/or benefit improved health and wellbeing. Learning activities are aligned to the Council's strategic outcomes demonstrating good use of the external grant funding. Effective governance and performance monitoring across most areas of the provision results in good standards and extremely high levels of learner satisfaction.

Equality Implications

- 37 The proposed quality improvement actions do not include a significant change to the service offer that could affect protected groups.
- 38 The learner achievement rates and outcomes for different demographic groups will continue to be monitored through the service self-assessment process and QIP.

Human Rights Implications

- 39 The proposed actions within the QIP do not affect individual human rights.
- 40 The Council must show how it has paid due regard in respect for human rights in its decision-making.

Health Implications

- 41 Adult education plays an important role in supporting the delivery of health and wellbeing priorities. Measures proposed are designed to improve standards from good to outstanding and this will further improve health outcomes that engagement in learning supports.
- 42 The impact on health and wellbeing is captured within course evaluations completed by adult learners. This information is used to help inform programme planning and drive forward continuous improvement.

Background Papers

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>
- Ofsted Inspection Framework July 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework/education-inspection-framework-for-september-2023>
- Delivering Wellbeing and opportunity in Leicestershire – Adults and Communities Department Ambitions and Strategy for 2020-24 - <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/resource/files/field/pdf/2020/9/30/Vision-and-Strategy-for-Adults-and-Communities-Department-2020-2024.pdf>
- Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26 - <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/council-plans/the-strategic-plan>
- Report to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 5 June 2023 – Performance and Accountability Statement - <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1040&MId=7108&Version=4>
- Report to the Cabinet: 21 June 2024 – Outcome of the Consultation on the Future of the Transitions Learning Programme - <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1040&MId=7452&Version=4>
- Report to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 3 March 2025 – Leicestershire Adult Learning Service Ofsted Inspection Findings <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1040&MId=7852&Version=4>

Appendices

Appendix A – Findings from Ofsted Inspection
Appendix B - Quality Improvement Plan