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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 July 2017

Ms Denise Edghill
Head of Economic Development and Skills
Southampton City Council
Municipal Block
Civic Centre Road
Southampton
SO14 7LY

Dear Ms Edghill

Short inspection of Southampton City Council

Following the short inspection on 27 and 28 June 2017, 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 May 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your team have worked effectively to make sure that a very high proportion of learners on courses that do not lead to qualifications achieve their course objectives and personal learning goals. This enables a similarly high proportion to move on to positive destinations and/or next steps, which include employment, volunteering, community work, improving their own health and well-being and improving family life.

Your learners are supported very well by your staff and by those who work for your subcontractors. They receive very clear and appropriate advice on their choice of course and this helps to make sure that the vast majority of learners are on a course appropriate to their starting points and aspirations and that they have high rates of attendance at lessons.

Your managers have set clear and high expectations to your subcontractors to make sure that learners are safe. Most of them know how to keep themselves safe in the wide range of learning venues across the city and in their daily lives.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, and managers ensure that subcontractors, who all have a designated lead manager for safeguarding, work effectively to make sure that learners feel safe and are safe in the wide variety of learning locations which they use. On the rare occasions when safeguarding

incidents arise, council managers investigate these thoroughly and sensitively and take appropriate actions.

Managers' expectation, and contractual requirement, that subcontractor staff are up to date with their safeguarding training is monitored at least annually through the contract review process. However, records for safeguarding training are not complete for all subcontractors, despite training having taken place. Safeguarding is discussed at the bi-monthly provider meetings and good practice is shared effectively.

Learners are developing a sound understanding of British values and how these relate to their daily lives. Teachers are using British values well to help the majority of learners understand how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. For example, learners on a course for English for speakers of other languages talk confidently about how British values relate to living in their new community in Britain, while also practising their spoken English skills. However, learners who learn online or who do not have allocated teaching sessions are less confident about how to keep themselves safe from these dangers.

Inspection findings

- Teachers on courses that do not lead to a qualification have high aspirations and ambitions for their learners. They set them specific learning and personal goals that raise their aspirations and ambitions to do well on their course and move on to a positive destination. As a result of this, most learners improve their confidence, develop much enthusiasm for learning and make good progress. The majority move on to positive destinations, such as employment, further learning or improved health and well-being. For example, learners on family cooking courses learn to cook healthy dishes to a budget and with unfamiliar ingredients for their families; they share recipes and cooking tips through social media during the course and once the course has finished.
- The majority of learners on courses that lead to qualifications, which form a small minority of your provision, achieve these. However, about a fifth are not successful and either leave the course early or do not pass their examinations or assessments. In a few cases, teachers do not have sufficiently high aspirations for what their learners, particularly the most able, can achieve, and I find the course too easy or they do not fulfil their potential and excel.
- Managers work very effectively with subcontractors to ensure that the range of courses offered meet the skills needs of learners and the council's community priorities very well. Through their frequent contact with and monitoring of subcontractors' performance, managers are able to reallocate funding for new courses through the contract year to meet changing local priorities for learning. While managers work closely with subcontractors' staff and provide them with good support to help improve areas of underperformance, they have yet to set targets and actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for them.

- Learners receive very good advice, guidance and support to help them make a suitable choice of course when they first enquire about the opportunities that adult learning can achieve. Managers have improved recently the access that learners have to high-quality careers guidance while they are on their course, particularly for those on courses that lead to a qualification. However, this has yet to extend to all subcontractors.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a larger proportion of learners on courses that lead to a qualification achieve these, by monitoring closely their progress and intervening swiftly where learners are at risk of not achieving
- teaching, learning and assessment improve further, particularly on courses that lead to a qualification, with emphasis on making sure that the most able learners have challenging targets and that teachers are highly ambitious for what these learners can achieve
- they set subcontractors actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and that managers monitor and support them to achieve these
- all subcontractors, particularly those who offer courses online or by distance learning, make sure that they have appropriate methods of training to help learners understand how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation
- records of safeguarding training and refresher training for all relevant council and subcontractor staff are up to date and reflect the training that they have completed.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Pemble
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector. We were assisted by the community learning manager as nominee. We visited subcontractors' sites to observe teaching, learning and assessments and to look at learners' work. We met with learners, senior leaders, managers and teachers. We reviewed key documents, including the services' most recent self-

assessment report and development plans, and documents related to safeguarding. We also analysed data on the performance of learners currently on programmes and considered the views of learners, staff and leaders.