



# Self-Assessment Report

1<sup>st</sup> September 2023

**Alt Valley Community Trust**



## **Introduction.**

The self-assessment report and Quality Improvement plan have been compiled as part of our annual cycle of monitoring the quality of provision. The Education manager is responsible to an Education Board made up from AVCT's Chair of trustees, CEO & Deputy CEO and an external Consultant who acts as a critical friend. Monthly meetings provide insight into challenges and progress towards continuous improvement in securing successful learner outcomes. A range of data sources are examined at these meetings and feed into the SAR judgments. Throughout the year surveys are distributed to learners, staff, employers and partners, these inform the SAR narrative which is drawn up by the Education Board then a summary is distributed to stakeholders.

## **How we have addressed weaknesses from the last inspection (November 2016)**

AVCT continued a process of self-evaluation and senior leaders identified staff capability issues as a significant barrier to further improvement. We judged data management as inadequate because Education Board members were unable to obtain relevant reports to demonstrate key performance indicators to assess the quality of education for learners. A revised staffing structure was introduced and two new appointments ensued: Education and Data Managers. These new appointments have led to an overhaul of internal systems and we now have insight into all aspects of the learner journey and are able to monitor standards and progress more effectively. The new Education manager has expanded apprenticeship, loans and traineeship programmes to meet local priorities. Experienced tutors are now available to deliver Early Years, Beauty, Sport, Creative, Customer Care, Digital and functional skills provision.

## **Overview of Alt Valley Community Trust**

AVCT is a community-based charity in The North East of Liverpool. It serves several electoral wards experiencing significant social and economic challenges. Originally founded as an Educational charity in 1987 it has since developed into a multi-faceted anchor organisation contributing to Individual and community well-being.

**Vision: Sustainable communities where everybody achieves their full potential and leads happy, healthy and fulfilled lives.**

**Mission: We bring about positive change in Alt Valley and the wider community by developing innovative partnerships to maximise opportunities in education and training, sport and wellbeing, community engagement, business and employment.**

**As an inclusive, values-driven organisation we seek to actively engage with individuals to create opportunities for learning, development and change.**

**Our work has the sole purpose of improving the lived experiences of local community members. An IPPR report once identified Alt Valley Community Trust as a key factor that had influenced improvement in the North East of Liverpool.**

**'This social enterprise (AVCT) was credited by many as a key reason for the improvement in Croxteth. This is partly for its education, training and employment programmes but also for the leadership it provides within the community, challenging other service providers to use their resources for maximum local benefit'**

**IPPR 'Rebalancing Local Economies' (2010)**

## **Context**

**Alt Valley Community Trust serves electoral wards in the North East of Liverpool with significant social and economic challenges, targeting wards that are identified as within the 10% most disadvantaged in the UK by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019). Our Learning provision extends through the Croxteth, Norris Green and Yew Tree communities where;**

**Educational achievement is 22% lower than the England average and 9% lower than the Liverpool average**

**32.6% of children live in poverty households**

**Unemployment is amongst the highest in Liverpool at 10.6% and Universal Credit Claimants represent more than 35% of adults, of which 35% are in work. Unemployment rates are above average and the available employment is manual and service based. There is a lack of confidence and knowledge of employment opportunities in the area.**

**This is an area with one of the lowest household incomes in the city, and around 20% of working age adults are on minimum wage, zero hours contract**

and have lost their jobs. They are waiting up to 5 weeks for a payment from Universal Credit, falling into rent arrears, and have no income.

More than 19% of households are in fuel poverty

More than 40% of households live in Registered Social Landlord accommodation

Residents have the highest incidence of cardiovascular disease, cancer and obesity in Liverpool.

35% of young people are classed as overweight and 24% as obese

16% of the local population is 65+, and more than 11% of the population has a long-term illness or a disability, and identified as clinically vulnerable.

Life expectancy is 72.25, more than 6 years lower than the England average and amongst the lowest life expectancy in Liverpool

The population is predominantly from White British backgrounds. There are a significant number of 'compromised' family units which are difficult to quantify or compare nationally.

**This socio-economic area profile with multi-layered challenges is the context for AVCT's remit.**

AVCT has developed into an anchor organisation with 4 key delivery sectors;

**Business & employment  
Community Engagement  
Education and Training  
Sports & Well Being**



## Current contracts

AVCT delivers learning and training programmes based upon the following contracts:

- DFE Apprenticeships
- Advanced learner loans
- 16-19 Education (Traineeships ESFA, in occupational studies & Children's workforce)
- Sub-contractor to Liverpool City Council for the delivery of non-accredited community adult education (Adult Learning Service)
- Sub-contractor to VOLA for UKSPF IIM Include IT Mersey programme
- Digital Boot Camps.

## Enhanced provision

The unique status of Alt Valley Community Trust as an anchor organisation secures significant value-added provision;

The Education sector makes use of all AVCT premises and services to support learners. These include facilities such as 3 libraries, 3 community hubs, a Sports Centre plus youth hubs in each base. This extensive infrastructure supports the delivery of Vocational and Community Learning activities. Provision is designed and planned to meet the needs of identified target groups. Thus, learner and stakeholder views inform our planning processes. During the pandemic we responded to crisis issues and provided food bank services as well as sign-posting community members to bespoke support to meet their needs. Community Champions develop outreach and community engagement activities to sign- post learners onto relevant programmes of study. AVCT's 3 Community Libraries also act as hubs for engaging the Community and supporting an individual's well- being and progression.

**AVCT works closely with Neighbourhood Services Company (Liverpool) as a partner. They operate 2 children's nurseries, 2 Farms, Catering company, Environmental sector, and an Adult Care project so work placement/employment opportunities are available.**

**Identifying needs to inform the curriculum intent.**

**We aim to link all of our courses to employment opportunities working with Liverpool City Region, Liverpool in Work, DWP & local employers and through preparation for work projects. We promote partnership working as a means to build capacity and capability through mutual support. Our existing partnership network consists of over 60 local agencies.**

**Our learner offer meets the requirements of the skills priorities identified in the Liverpool City Region Local Skills Action Plan 2022-23, LCR Local Skills Report 2022-23, LCR Skills Strategy 2018-23 and Sector Skills Strategy documents. It is also in response to the impact of Covid on employment, in particular the disproportionate impact on 19-24-year-olds and the increasing demand for digitisation in the workplace and higher level skills. We also identify skills needs through:**

- Attendance and presentations at sector events organised by the LCRC, Chambers of Commerce, business support agencies, local authorities, DWP, Liverpool in Work and other sector agencies.**
- Awarding organisations information and guidance**
- Sector skills councils & Industrial Partnership reports and presentations**
- Analysis/review of existing training provision**
- Sector business link events in our business network of Employers**
- Staff conduct training needs questionnaires with individual Employers to identify employee KSB gaps. We also get feedback questionnaires from employers and destination data is used to inform and improve our delivery.**
- Our Community champions collate an assessment of need by working with local partners and agencies. Courses are then provided to address barriers to work with vulnerable clients such as families from Children's Centres, Kinship Carers, and Special guardian's carers. These include mental health, first aid, SEN /autism support, parenting, Safeguarding, Prevent awareness, IT and similar courses that relieve emotional pressures on adults and encourage them to seek employment opportunities. Learning activities are tailored to the needs of learners and aim to create a positive climate for learning which consolidates self-belief and self-esteem. A key factor in our drive to develop and retain qualitative Tutors is their appreciation of how emotional intelligence can be harnessed to promote an individual's sense of positivity and self-worth. We work with local agencies such as Addaction, The Beacon Trust and Mersey Care to provide additional support for well-being, Positive Directions, Youth and elderly hubs.**

- **Adult Learning Service (ALS) courses can act as an introduction/progression to higher-level accreditation. Many beneficiaries have enrolled on full-time Education programmes over the past 2 years.**
- **AVCT is a Matrix-accredited organisation (to be re-assessed December 2023)**
- **Progression routes are well established and we access hard-to-reach residents. All teaching and learning activities embed core skills. The systematic development of functional and employability skills is a foundation stone of courses and an integral component in all learning programmes. Courses are based on local demand, interest and relevant to local employment progression opportunities. We work with local agencies & partners, who work directly with residents in the Strategic Output Areas to provide courses that resident's request, as a hook into further progression.**
- **Many AVCT learners face barriers to learning or significant personal challenges, thus teaching is learner-centric. A key aim is to provide disengaged individuals with pathway opportunities through to employment. All learners undertake an individual Initial assessment which informs a learning plan to identify their starting points, monitor progress, and set challenging targets. Our learning programmes support the needs identified in the Individual Learning Plans to improve self-efficacy, achieve accreditation then progress to further education or employment.**

## QAR RATES

### 2020/2021

LEVEL	LEARNING AIM TITLE	AVCT QAR	SUM OF QAR ACHIEVERS	SUM OF QAR LEAVERS	SUM OF QAR EXCLUDED	SUM OF QAR COMPLETERS
Level 3	Diploma in Gym Instructing and Personal Training	95.1 %	39	41	1	39
Level 3	Diploma in Hairdressing	83.3 %	5	6		5
Level 4 or Higher	Diploma in Advanced Beauty Therapy	83.3 %	5	6		5
Level 3	Diploma in Make-Up Artistry	66.7 %	8	12		10
Level 4 or Higher	Diploma in Salon Management	63.6 %	7	11		7
Level 3	Certificate in Hairdressing	50.0 %	1	2		1
Level 3	Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools	50.0 %	5	10	3	5
Level 3	NVQ Diploma in Beauty Therapy Massage	40.0 %	2	5		2
Level 3	Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement	33.3 %	1	3		1
Level 4 or Higher	Certificate in Education and Training (RQF)	0.0 %	0	5		1



Overall QAR Educ & Trg	72.50%				
Overall Achievers v Leavers	74/102				

## 2021/2022

LEVEL	LEARNING AIM TITLE	AVCT QAR	SUM OF QAR ACHIEVERS	SUM OF QAR LEAVERS	SUM OF QAR EXCLUDED	SUM OF QAR COMPLETERS
Level 3	Diploma for the Early Years Workforce (Early Years Educator)	100.0 %	1	1		1
Level 3	Diploma in Gym Instructing and Personal Training	100.0 %	45	45		45
Level 3	Diploma in Sports Massage Therapy	100.0 %	6	6		6
Level 4 or Higher	Certificate for the Early Years Advanced Practitioner	100.0 %	1	1		1
Level 3	Diploma in Dog Grooming	90.0 %	9	10		10
Level 3	Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools	85.7 %	6	7		6
Level 3	Diploma in Personal Training	77.8 %	14	18		15
Level 3	Diploma in Make-Up Artistry	72.7 %	8	11		8
Level 3	Diploma in Nail Technology	69.2 %	9	13		10
Level 4 or Higher	Diploma in Advanced Beauty Therapy	63.6 %	7	11		7
Level 3	NVQ Diploma in Beauty Therapy Massage	60.9 %	14	23		16
Level 3	Diploma for the Early Years Practitioner (Early Years Educator)	50.0 %	1	2		1
Level 3	Diploma in Supporting Teaching and Learning	50.0 %	2	4		2
Level 4 or Higher	Certificate in Education and Training (RQF)	50.0 %	1	2		1
Level 4 or Higher	Diploma in Salon Management	40.0 %	6	15		6
Overall QAR Education & Trg		76.90%				
Overall Achievers v Leavers		130/169				

## 2022/2023

LEVEL	LEARNING AIM TITLE	AVCT QAR	SUM OF QAR ACHIEVERS	SUM OF QAR LEAVERS	SUM OF QAR EXCLUDED	SUM OF QAR COMPLETERS
Level 3	Diploma in Dog Grooming and Salon Management	100.0 %	7	7	2	7
Level 3	Diploma in Sports Massage Therapy	100.0 %	7	7		7
Level 3	Diploma in Personal Training	87.5 %	7	8	1	7
Level 4 or Higher	Diploma in Advanced Beauty Therapy	83.3 %	5	6		5
Level 3	Diploma in Gym Instructing and Personal Training	82.6 %	19	23	1	19
Level 3	NVQ Diploma in Beauty Therapy Massage	71.4 %	5	7		6
Level 3	Diploma in Supporting Teaching and Learning	28.6 %	2	7		2
Level 3	Diploma for the Early Years Workforce (Early Years Educator)	0.0 %	0	1		0
Level 4 or Higher	Diploma for the Early Years Senior Practitioner	0.0 %	0	2		0
Level 4 or Higher	Diploma in Salon Management	0.0 %	0	2		2
Overall QAR Educ & Trg		74.30%				
Overall Achievers v Leavers		52/70				

### Key events in the last 2 years.

Clearly, the impact of the pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges which required swift responses, flexibility and new direction setting to ensure that high standards of provision were maintained. Prior to March 2020, we had 20,000+ footfall into our Education, Sports, Libraries and Community Centres but the global pandemic drastically reduced these statistics. Numbers are now building up again.

Staff worked indefatigably to respond to immediate learner needs. Given the tumultuous consequences caused by the public health crisis managers recognised the need to review all services and prepare an appropriate strategic response. The senior leadership team conducted a thorough appraisal of educational provision, use of premises and financial forecasting. It was recognised that the modus operandi from March 2020 was no longer relevant. Having experienced such a seismic shift in society it was clear that innovative new approaches were required in order to 'build back better'.

Two key approaches were identified; firstly, the staffing structure was rationalised in order to secure greater efficiency and effectiveness. Secondly,

plans were devised to 'repurpose' some of our learning bases as practical subjects such as hairdressing and construction were no longer viable.

The Vocational Skills Centre was closed temporarily whilst we devised a future-focused educational strategy which is responsive to community and employer needs. Educational provision was transferred to the Communiversity building which has undergone a major refurbishment and is due to be fully operational by September 2023. A successful application to The Liverpool City Region Skills fund secured £470,000 to redevelop the Communiversity as a vocational learning base. Recently some significant problems were identified with drains, broadband, internet and electricity supply so these are being addressed as a matter of urgency as they were having a detrimental effect upon the quality of learning.

Having worked in partnership (June-December 2021) with Class of your Own, four local secondary schools and the Local Authority to design a level 3 Built Environment programme of study, it was bitterly disappointing to have the Housing development postponed and plans suspended for this innovative digital learning curriculum.

We are confident that effective action has been taken to provide a good quality of educational provision in the current circumstances and a proactive response is evident in terms of the challenges associated with encouraging learners to return to face to face delivery following long periods of remote education. A concerted effort has been made to ensure that the increased numbers of out- of- funding learners are supported in order to complete their learning programmes.. At one stage there were concerns that minimum standards may not be met in some areas but intervention prevented this scenario. QAR outcomes are good overall (30% apprenticeships rate in 2021-22 due to decision to suspend a whole cohort of learners following quality concerns with the employer. DFE contract manager supported the decision).

#### Key improvements in the last two years

- Wider curriculum offer, new tutors delivering relevant programmes of study.
- Education team's swift response to introducing and complying with new data management systems and processes. More effective use of data to inform Education Board of key performance indicators.
- Learners were encouraged to remain engaged and secured qualifications despite significant challenges.
- Individual student's needs addressed through adaptive teaching and pastoral intervention.

- Learning bases refurbished to upgrade resource provision (learner voice prioritised this) Established sector- specific learning provision by re-purposing current premises

### **Strengths**

- Strong and stable Governance with a wide skill set offering support and challenge to improve outcomes. Board members, leaders and staff committed to securing positive outcomes for all learners.
- Tutors have good knowledge, understanding and experience in their vocational field. Teaching and Learning is good and leads to sustained progress for learners particularly those from relatively low starting points and with additional learning and social needs.
- Affirming and supportive learning environment encourages retention and achievement rates. Good personal and social development for vulnerable learners with a focus on increasing confidence, self-esteem and aspirational employment pathways. Effective delivery and progression model ensures that learners are registered for programmes which best meet their needs. The learner is at the centre of all decision making and progression to employment is prioritised.
- Data is used effectively to track learner progress and instigate intervention strategies when the need arises. Contract management and compliance is good. ESFA loan data portal identifies AVCT at 4<sup>th</sup> best performing organisation out of 120.
- Effective partnerships and signposting to the organisation's extensive infrastructure provides high-quality support and enrichment to meet the needs of learners.

### **In need of improvement**

- Further develop the curriculum offer and link this to Industry facing opportunities to support recruitment (Intent).
- There is a pressing need to establish qualitative IT provision for all class and home learning (Implementation).

- **Support tutors in their promotion and delivery of a holistic curriculum (Implementation)**
- **Strengthen the learner journey by improving Quality Assurance processes and blended learning provision (Impact).**
- **Improve partnerships with employers to support learner progress and attainment (Impact).**

## Quality of Education

## Grade 2

### Intention

AVCT has developed a curriculum offer aimed at re-engaging and re-motivating people who have found life more challenging than most. This often has a negative effect on their successful transition and engagement into adulthood and the community at large. AVCT prioritises community-focused provision with a swift and proactive response to Community needs.

As previously outlined the impact of Covid 19 necessitated rationalised provision as we moved through a transitional period with a reduced curriculum offer. The current applied Vocational learning programmes of study focus on 4 main areas;

- Business & Administration
- Early Years & Educational support
- Creative & Digital
- Health, Sport & Well-Being

These practical subjects act as a 'hook' to reintegrate learners and they are delivered in conjunction with a raft of personal development initiatives as a means of improving the participant's self-efficacy.

The future strategy is based upon broadening the curriculum in alignment with Liverpool Inclusive Growth plan, Liverpool City Region local skills strategy and the Local Enterprise Partnership board data. These publications informed the curriculum offer as the following pathways were identified as requiring development;

Public Service & the Care sector

Digital learning skills with a built environment specialism (Stonebridge Cross development cancelled so currently on hold)

Personal services (Health & beauty/ Well-Being)

Preparation for life and work

## **Implementation**

**Many AVCT learners have complex needs and poor experiences of mainstream schooling, hence the manner in which our programmes are delivered must be relevant to this specific cohort and not just rely upon 'more of the same' traditional classroom-based delivery. Obviously, delivery is based upon a planned, well-sequenced curriculum which incrementally builds upon knowledge and skill development. Meaningful and ambitious work is set and learners receive regular feedback to help them improve upon previous best. Most taught sessions have personal development opportunities embedded with the overall aim of helping the learner to develop a positive, employment-focused future pathway. Learners appreciate the way the organisation adopts a flexible approach to delivery by offering blended learning. Vocational knowledge and skills are developed alongside improved personal qualities and a broadening of their horizons. Soft skills and outcomes are crucial components for successful progression so self-esteem, confidence, aspiration and general belief in themselves are all developed. Tutors work relationally with students to encourage positive role modelling and to inculcate a work ethic.**

## **Impact**

**AVCT sets out a range of anticipated outcomes for the bespoke delivery of the applied vocational learning programmes so in this way final impact can be measured and evaluated. These include hard outcomes such as; retention, course completion, successful progression rates and routes, attendance/punctuality, achievement plus improvement in confidence, self-esteem, work ethic, aspiration and general well-being. The latter soft outcomes will be measured in the future through the application of an outcomes star tool as well as being recorded in the individual learner's portfolio.**

## **Strengths**

- The quality of teaching has improved so 100% of TLA is good or better. No lessons were graded unsatisfactory in 2022-23. OTAL monitoring and collaborative professional learning via staff meetings led to improvement in this essential aspect of sustained improvement.**
- All tutors have excellent subject knowledge and provide relevant support to secure learners' positive outcomes. All are competent practitioners with relevant Industry experience.**
- 50% of Tutors hold an IV qualification.**
- A positive, affirming and aspirational learning environment is well established within AVCT. All learners are encouraged to make good progress irrespective of their starting points and are stretched and challenged to achieve additional Learning goals .98% of learners indicated that lessons were well planned and engaged all in the learning process. Tutors work relationally with their students and provide motivation and encouragement.**

- **Moral purpose and integrity are important to all staff and this ensures that learners' needs are always at the centre of our work.**

**In need of improvement**

- **IT systems require significant investment and application of a consistent digital platform. This will enable all students to access suitable devices and connectivity for class and home-based learning.**
- **QA processes need strengthening with more robust monitoring of the quality of learning via triangulation procedures.**
- **Understanding of the holistic curriculum offer available to learners with integration of qualifications, work experience and personal development.**
- **MIS to be used more effectively to support planning to meet individual learner needs, record intervention strategies and destination data.**



## **Behaviour & Attitudes**

## **Grade 2**

### **Strengths**

- **Staff set high expectations and encourage aspirational standards of behaviour amongst learners.**
- **Relationships among learners and staff are positive and respectful.**
- **By working relationally with learners a positive learning environment is developed which encourages a good climate for learning**
- **Staff ensure that learners understand the expected code of conduct within work environments and society at large.**

### **In need of improvement**

- **Independent and autonomous learning to be further developed and improve the application of British Values/Equality/Diversity/Safeguarding & Prevent in the workplace.**
- **Staff training required around the impact of ACE (adverse childhood experiences) SEND support for learners with an EHCP and evidence-informed pedagogical practice.**
- **Attendance and punctuality are sometimes a cause for concern and require more robust procedures to secure improvement.**
- **More proactive work with employers is needed to consolidate behaviour for learning strategies and to encourage improved rates of attendance/retention and a positive work ethic amongst young people.**

## Personal Development

## Grade 2

### Strengths

- Many Learners commence with significant barriers to learning yet effective intervention results in improved levels of engagement, confidence and self-worth. Intensive support was provided during lockdown periods with signposting to food banks, mental health support and bereavement counselling. Daily monitoring to ascertain engagement levels and 1 to 1 support provided regularly.
- Effective CEIAG provision supports learner progression. Strong personal relationships enhance motivation and a positive outlook towards the future.
- Personal efficacy is promoted extensively and resilience is becoming embedded within the climate for learning.
- Learners are well prepared for life in contemporary British society as they understand British values, equality, diversity and the importance of making a positive contribution to society.

### In need of improvement

- Enrolment processes require Improvement to ensure that all learner needs are identified at an early stage. Additional support is to be recorded, intervention tracked and personal development outcomes evaluated.
- Staff to further develop effective sign-posting skills to support students' personal, social and emotional development
- Learners need to be actively encouraged to participate in enrichment activities. These extended opportunities provide important cultural capital development so greater emphasis to be placed upon their importance, particularly as so many young people identify social isolation as a concern.
- An outcomes star tool needs to be designed and introduced to capture the progress of salient soft skills such as resilience, confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.

## Leadership & Management

## Grade 2

### Strengths

- **As a values- based organisation AVCT promotes integrity by responding to the breadth of learning needs within the whole community. In this way good retention and achievement rates are secured with many vulnerable individuals. Learners from low starting points are supported well within a positive learning environment. Personal development activities increase confidence and self-esteem.**
- **A revised staff structure has been introduced with a strategic Education Manager responsible for all aspects of Education and Training. She is supported by the Deputy CEO and a highly experienced Data Manager. This core Leadership team are supported by the Education Board which is charged with providing calibrated support and challenge in order to secure continuous improvement.**
- **Managers ensure that as many learners as possible complete their programmes of study. Flexible arrangements are organised in order to support those who face personal challenges which put completion in jeopardy.**
- **The leadership team promote Safeguarding, personal safety and relationship working. A culture of Safeguarding is well established throughout the setting. Staff are vigilant and proactive in identifying learners in need of help and support.**
- **Leadership at all levels is encouraged and exploited to empower staff and build capacity.**

### In need of improvement

- **Further review & development of the curriculum offer linked to Industry facing opportunities. Keep abreast of the changing educational/employment landscape to ensure that learners secure positive outcomes and successful futures, particularly in relation to the Early Years sector which is facing significant challenges.**

- **Marketing, recruitment, contract augmentation & QAR rates require significant development and improvement.**
- **Establish reliable, cloud-based IT to improve the quality of learning for students and communication within the staff team.**
- **Continue to strengthen the effective use of data. MIS system to be fully exploited to support personalised provision, and monitor learner attendance, punctuality and progress in achievement and personal development.**
- **Strengthen relationships with employers to enable robust tracking of learner progress and reduce drop out rates.**