

Lincolnshire Probation Area

Inspection report

Unique reference number:	53978
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The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) works in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prison and Probation and inspects the management and provision of learning and skills for offenders across the whole range of custodial establishments and probation areas. Inspections may include those serving whole or part of their sentence in the community.

Inspectors judge the quality of the provision against the *Common Inspection Framework* for further education and skills 2009 (*Common Inspection Framework* 2009) and contribute to the inspection frameworks of Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation.

Information about Lincolnshire Probation Area

Lincolnshire is the fourth largest administrative area in England and Wales but has the fourth lowest population density of around 700,000. It has grown by 7% since 2001, mainly through inward migration. A majority of migrants are non-English speaking. The economy has grown consistently in recent years but still lags behind much of the UK. Unemployment, which is above national rates, is highest in Lincoln. School attainment is generally higher than national and regional rates. Overall crime rates in the county are the lowest in the region and are below the national average.

There are three prisons in Lincolnshire: an open prison with a specialist foreign national centre, a local prison in Lincoln and an open prison for male offenders near Boston. Lincolnshire Probation Trust runs an approved premises for men.

Lincolnshire Probation Trust (the trust) has offices in Lincoln, Grantham, Boston and Skegness. They have a number of sub-offices. From April 2010, the trust introduced two local delivery units for the delivery of offender services. They work with the Lincolnshire Action Trust who acts as a single point of reference for all offenders needing learning and employability skills support. The provider operates in local probation offices.

The east local delivery unit manages unpaid work orders. Offenders complete about 84,000 unpaid work hours per year and approximately 660 offenders are on community payback schemes at any one time. About 20 – 25% of offenders work in lone placements.

Information about the offender learning and employability providers:

Providers	Number of learners on discrete provision in 2009/10	Types of provision
Lincolnshire Action Trust	441 referrals	nextstep ; Skills Funding Agency and European Social Fund projects for offenders to improve their employability skills including job-seeking skills and referrals to other providers for vocational training; financial capability using lottery funding; support for persistent and other priority offenders supported by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
Build-A-Future	125	Literacy and numeracy qualifications and construction skills tasters

Note: Offenders requiring literacy, numeracy or language support or vocational training are referred by the Lincolnshire Action Trust to provision within local colleges and training providers.

The following text is Ofsted's contribution to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's offender management inspection.

Summary report

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade: satisfactory
Capacity to improve	Grade: satisfactory
	Grade descriptor
Quality of provision	satisfactory
Assessment and sentence planning	
Implementation of interventions	
Achieving and sustaining outcomes	good
Leadership and management	satisfactory
Equality and diversity	Satisfactory
Safeguarding	good

Overall effectiveness, including capacity to improve

The trust's plans for referring offenders to learning and employability skills activities were good. Referrals for low risk offenders on stand alone unpaid work orders, were effective. Referrals for other offenders were low. Offender managers had insufficient access to information about the availability of provision. The trust's and providers' arrangements for the assessment of barriers to learning were insufficiently effective.

Opportunities for unemployed offenders to improve their employment prospects were good. They received good information, advice and guidance and good support for their development of job-seeking skills. Offenders had good support to improve their health and life styles. Persistent and other priority offenders received good support through the drop-in centres they attended. There was insufficient provision of suitable literacy, numeracy and English language courses. Offender managers and tutors made insufficiently effective use of individual learning plans. Although offenders had good opportunities to improve their learning and employability skills on unpaid work orders, they received insufficient recognition for the improvements they made.

Offenders' achievements of qualifications were good. At 69%, the proportion of offenders who completed the Build-A-Future project was good and their achievement of literacy and numeracy was also good. Attendance at information, advice and guidance and job-seeking skills sessions was low.

Working relations between the trust and providers was good. The trust's arrangements to safeguard offenders were good and equality and diversity were satisfactory. The trust did not collect or use data effectively to track and monitor offenders' progress or their achievements. Progress since the previous inspection was satisfactory, but arrangements to be assured of the quality of provision were insufficient.

What does Lincolnshire Probation Area need to do to improve further?

- Provide access to suitable literacy, numeracy and language provision.
- Improve the quality of each offender's learning experiences through better screening and assessment of learning needs, target setting and action planning and monitoring of their progress and achievements.
- Develop and improve the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements using data analysis, aggregated stakeholder feedback, self-assessment and sharing of good practice.

Offender perspective - learning and employability skills as confirmed by inspectors.

Offenders thought that staff were very friendly and that they received good support in finding work and to address their health needs. Advisers kept them motivated and on track with set targets. Offenders liked attending job-seeking activities at their local probation office as it helped keep cost down and they could have appointments with other agencies at the same visit. Staff at the drop-in centres for persistent and other priority offenders were really helpful and their support was improving offenders' confidence and self-esteem. Offenders on unpaid work felt that their supervisors treated them with respect and valued the opportunity they had to improve their employment opportunities by attending related activities. They felt that the work they were doing was appreciated by the public and it provided good job satisfaction. Offenders released from custody would have preferred quicker access to benefit payments. Offenders in approved premises felt that they had a reasonable range of learning opportunities but opportunities to learn to cook were hampered by inadequate self-catering facilities.

Main inspection report

The quality of provision

Grade: satisfactory

Assessment and sentence planning

The trust's plans for referring offenders for education, training and employment related activities were good. Lincolnshire Action Trust acted as a single point of reference. Based on good information, advice and guidance sessions, they referred offenders to either their own job-seeking skills provision or to other providers for literacy, numeracy or language support or vocationally relevant training.

Low risk offenders, on stand alone unpaid work orders, were well supported by the unpaid work team who ensured they were screened during their induction and, where appropriate, were referred to the Lincolnshire Action Trust. However, overall referrals were low. In 2009/10 referrals were 78% of the annual target, and were well below the targeted profile for 2010/11. Offender managers had insufficient access to the information that provided clarity about the availability of provision. The trust had recognised this as an area for improvement and was working effectively with Lincolnshire Action Trust to promote the provision to probation staff through conferences and training. More recently, education, training and employment champions had been appointed in each of the local delivery units, but it was too early to assess their impact on referral rates.

The courts made little use of specified court orders to ensure offenders address education, training and employment needs linked to their offending behaviour. Guidance for pre-sentence report writers and sentencers was insufficient. A significant minority of offenders were not screened for their literacy and numeracy.

The trust's arrangements for the assessment of barriers to learning were insufficiently effective. The majority of offenders, identified with literacy and or numeracy needs through screening, did not complete any further assessments. Tutors made insufficient use of the learning styles and disabilities assessments completed by offender managers. Arrangements to provide assessments of other learning needs, to support the delivery of interventions or to ensure offenders were referred to appropriate provision, were weak. Assessments of offenders who needed support with their English were inadequate. However, the trust provided these offenders with good access to interpreters.

Implementation of interventions

The provision for unemployed offenders to improve their employment prospects was good. It catered effectively for a wide range of needs, from those who were job ready to those who were disengaged and needed significant support to improve their job-seeking skills.

The trust provided a good range of services to improve offenders' health and well-being. Offenders accessed a wide range of courses on topics such as giving up smoking, diet, exercise, anxiety and mood swings, sexual health and drug and alcohol dependency. In 2009/10, some 80 workshops were attended by over 400 offenders.

Persistent and other priority offenders received a good range of support services through their attendance at the trust's drop-in centres at Grantham, Spalding and Skegness. Partners providing the support included the police, probation, education, training and employment providers and health workers. Offenders were encouraged to attend regularly. They received good support from mentors. This support was improving offenders' confidence and self-esteem and was reducing their reoffending rate.

Offenders' access to suitable literacy, numeracy and English language courses was insufficient. A significant majority of the available provision was through large main stream providers. Often this provision was unavailable to offenders because of long waiting lists, unsuitable start dates, holiday closures and unviable group sizes. Apart from Boston, the provision was only available at providers' main campuses. For offenders, who were less confident or self-motivated, this provision was inaccessible. Other offenders were unable to attend because of their offending behaviour. Offenders on unpaid work orders benefited from literacy and numeracy support through the Build-A-Future provision.

Lincolnshire Action Trust advisers provided offenders with good information, advice and guidance. Relationships between them were friendly but well focussed on progress which was well monitored. Targets were agreed and written into action plans. Next steps to be taken were agreed and future appointments were arranged during the interview. Offenders received a copy of the action plan to refer to when undertaking the actions. Many short-term objectives and next step action plans were insufficiently challenging and did not sufficiently set out what an offender needed to achieve from one week to the next.

Offenders received good help in producing an up-to-date curriculum vitae, dealing with disclosure and in applying for jobs. Advisers provided offenders with helpful prompts and tips which helped them produce meaningful end products. Offenders had good help in job-search activities. Advisers provided useful job leads and good encouragement to apply for suitable positions. They helped to motivate and encourage offenders through discussions that identified more positive aspects of their abilities. Offenders' confidence was substantially improved through this support.

The trust and providers' use of individual learning plans were insufficiently effective. Where offenders receive information, advice and guidance or attend job seeking sessions, learning plans were insufficiently shared with offender managers and their use in sentence planning was insufficient. Tutors paid insufficient attention to long-term targets when working with offenders.

Offenders had good opportunities to improve their skills on unpaid work orders. Offenders were well informed about the opportunity for them to use up to 20% of

their order to participate in learning and employability skills activities. Programmes had successfully provided offenders with taster courses in construction skills. Offenders on the Build-A-Future programme also had their English and maths skills assessed and had the opportunity to gain a basic skills certificate. Inconsistencies in funding had adversely affected referrals to these programmes, although the Build-A-Future programme had been temporarily revived through short-term funding.

Offenders on community payback projects often demonstrated good generic work skills such as good attendance and time keeping, working well with others, good attention to health and safety and following instruction. However improvements in these skills were not accredited or recorded in a way which offenders could show potential employers. Many of the lone placements provided good opportunities for employability skills development but offenders did not take sufficient advantage of these opportunities.

Achieving and sustaining outcomes

Grade: good

In 2009/10, achievements at 78% were very good. However these included a significant number of short entry level 3 health and safety related qualifications which were no longer available. Of the 125 offenders who attended the Build-A-Future project, 69% successfully completed all elements of their programme. Achievements of numeracy and literacy qualifications, and improvements in motivation were good.

In 2009/10, the trust met its target for the number of offenders who gained sustainable employment during their sentence and 48% of offenders achieved employment on termination of order.

Offenders' attendance at information, advice and guidance and employability sessions was low. The overall attendance rate was 61%. It ranged considerably between offices. For example attendance rates at Gainsborough were 68% and at Skegness 47%.

Leadership and management

Grade: satisfactory

Offenders benefitted from the good working relations between the trust and providers. The majority of provision was delivered on the trust's premises. This enabled the trust to provide appropriate multi-agency support for offenders. Communications between the trust and providers were good, especially in smaller offices where providers, offender managers and the unpaid work team worked in close proximity. Providers had good access to relevant information and keep offender managers regularly updated on each offender's progress, both informally and through shared use of computer based offender management information systems. All staff were highly committed to help offenders succeed. However, working relations across the county with Jobcentre Plus were inconsistent.

Safeguarding arrangements to support offenders as vulnerable adults were good and equality and diversity were satisfactory. The trust worked effectively with providers to complete enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks on all relevant staff. These were regularly refreshed. Offender risk assessments were effectively shared with providers and management arrangements put in place. Trust and provider staff had good opportunities for relevant training, including mental health, suicide and self harm and conflict resolution. Staff placed a strong emphasis on health and safety requirements on community payback schemes. They provided clear information about manual handling and the control of substances hazardous to health. Offenders had ample opportunities to ask questions and were encouraged to do so. Offenders were reminded of their responsibilities to equality and diversity at their induction. Relationships between offenders and staff were respectful and offenders valued the help they received. Offenders were required to agree to appropriate codes of conduct in lone work placements. They benefitted from the provision of services on probation premises. This enabled them to have multiple appointments during the same visit, reducing travel costs and improving access to services for those who lived in more remote areas.

The trust's data collection strategies were weak. Arrangements with providers to track and monitor offenders' progress, education, training and employment outcomes, and the performance of different groups of offenders were insufficiently effective. The trust received insufficient feedback especially when an offender was referred by Lincolnshire Action Trust to another provider, or when a course did not finish until after termination of an offender's court order.

The trust confidently raised quality improvement issues with providers using both monthly operational and quarterly strategic meetings. This was leading to improvements in the provision. The trust's strategy to be assured of the quality of provision was insufficient. It made use of a wide range of performance targets to measure performance, however incomplete collection of data reduced their effectiveness. Although individual offender feedback was collected, the trust made insufficient use of aggregated feedback to improve performance. Self-assessment reports did not provide the trust with a clear picture of the provision to which they referred offenders and some self assessment was neither sufficiently evaluative nor sufficiently rigorous. The trust's arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice were insufficient.

Information about the inspection

1. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) assisted by the trust's director of the eastern local delivery unit, as co-ordinator, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of provider most recent development plans, previous inspection reports and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
2. Inspectors use a range of methods to gather the views of learners including group and individual interviews. They looked at questionnaires learners had completed on behalf of the trust. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the main programmes offered to offenders.

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