

# Hertfordshire County Council

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 50133

**Name of lead inspector:** Harmesh Manghra HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 01 June 2012

**Type of provider:** Local Authority

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## Information about the provider

1. Hertfordshire County Council has a contract with the Skills Funding Agency to provide first steps provision and adult safeguarded learning (community learning) throughout Hertfordshire. It also has a contract with the Education Funding Agency for a 50-place programme for pregnant mothers, aged 16-18. This project, known as the young parents project, is managed separately by the vulnerable young people's support services. The local health authority also provides some project funding to support specific priority projects.
2. The County Council department that runs the service is Hertfordshire adult and family learning service (HAFLS). The head of service, assisted by four managers manages the service. A small direct delivery team of six tutors provide 90% of the family learning. The service accountability is through the head of service to the assistant director customer services and libraries, the director of health and community service, the chief executive of the County Council and to the local executive member for the local government.
3. The provider receives funding for non-accredited programmes only. Arts, media and publishing, the subject area with the largest number of learners, was not inspected, as most of it is delivered by local colleges that hold contracts in their own right. In 2011/12 so far, 10,513 learners have enrolled on 1,811 courses.
4. Hertfordshire is a relatively prosperous county, characterised by high skills and attainment levels with some pockets of deprivation and social disadvantage. The percentage of pupils gaining five GCSEs at A\* to C including mathematics and English in Hertfordshire in 2011 was 67% compared with 62% in England. In January 2012, some 2.6% of the working population of Hertfordshire were unemployed. According to the data from the Hertfordshire Observatory, in mid 2007, the estimated proportion of people from minority ethnic groups was 16%.
5. The following organisations provide learning on behalf of the provider:
  - ASCEND (community learning)
  - Community Action Dacorum (English for speakers of other languages, [ESOL])
  - Community Learning Partnership (family and community learning)
  - Courtyard Arts (arts)
  - Dacorum Communities for Learning (Information and communication technology [ICT] and arts)
  - Hertford Regional College( all subject areas offered by HAFLS)
  - Herts Mind Network (community learning)
  - Herts Music Service (family learning)
  - Library Service (ICT)

- Mind in MID Herts (community learning)
- NextStep (ESOL, return to work courses and ICT)
- North Hertfordshire College (all subject areas offered by HAFLS)
- North Herts People First ( community learning)
- Oaklands College (all subject areas offered by HAFLS)
- Paradise Training (arts and construction)
- Volunteer Centre Broxbourne & East Herts (community learning)
- Watford Women’s Centre (ICT, ESOL and community learning)
- Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) Eastern District (all subject areas offered by HAFLS)
- West Herts College (all subject areas offered by HAFLS)
- Zincarts (arts)

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of learners in 2010/11</b>
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> Further education (16-18)	50 part-time learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Learning for social and personal development	13,741 part-time learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
<b>Learning for social and personal development</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Information and communication technology	2
Community learning	2
Family learning	2

## Overall effectiveness

6. Hertfordshire County Council is highly successful in its mission to provide affordable learning opportunities to those who are most in need. Learners include those recovering from mental ill health, single parents, unemployed people, those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, those living in poor neighbourhoods and elderly people. Through HAFLS, the council has established strong partnerships with many voluntary and community partners, who provide good learning and strong support to engage the targeted groups into learning. The arrangements for safeguarding, and equality and diversity are good. Quality improvement is robust, as HAFLS has improved all aspects of the provision since the previous inspection. It has good capacity to make and sustain improvements and continues to provide good value for money.
7. HAFLS provides daytime classes in 346 welcoming and safe venues, including schools, children’s centres, community venues, libraries and colleges. Highly experienced and committed staff work diligently to make a positive difference to the lives of learners. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Tutors use a wide range of techniques and resources to help learners to develop new skills or cultivate new interests. Many well-qualified volunteers provide invaluable

help in classes. Learners benefit from a good range of care, guidance and support to stay on the courses, achieve their learning objectives and progress.

8. Learners enjoy their learning and develop skills in ICT, arts, reading and writing as well as speaking and listening. Learners, including young mothers, improve their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and use these to support their children with their school work and become better parents. They develop an appetite for learning and continue to learn beyond the classes. Inspectors learnt of many learners who have progressed to higher level courses, however HAFLS does not systematically gather data on the proportion of learners who do so.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners enjoy learning and achieve their learning objectives well. Retention rates and outcomes are good in ICT, family and community learning and in arts, media and publishing. Achievement of qualifications for an increasing number of learners in family learning is good and improving. Progression into further education, training and employment for young learners is satisfactory.
- Learners develop good personal, social, technical and employability skills. These include positive parenting skills, numeracy, reading and outstanding speaking and listening skills for ESOL learners. Learners develop sound skills to cope with stress, overcome isolation, make friends, and develop new interests to enrich their lives. Learners from all backgrounds are achieving their objectives equally well. Attendance rates are satisfactory.
- Learners use their newly acquired skills extensively to help their families and communities. Parents on family learning programmes provide good support to their children that improves their performance at school. Learners make strong contributions to their communities through volunteering activities such as becoming learning support workers. Learners enhance their employment prospects through extensive participation in job clubs.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and outstanding in ESOL. Tutors conduct thorough initial assessment and use it well to plan lessons. They provide ample challenge and pace in lessons to engage learners well and to develop or refine new skills and knowledge. Managers do not always share the good practice identified in outstanding lessons with tutors.
- The process of recording and recognising prior achievement (RARPA) is satisfactory. HAFLS has worked imaginatively to design a robust RARPA system. However, a few tutors in a minority of subcontractors do not set clear individual targets. These tutors do not use the most appropriate evidence to record learners' achievements, especially those learners with low literacy skills.
- Programmes meet the needs of the wide-ranging targeted groups well. The target groups include mental health service users, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Travellers' groups. HAFLS delivers courses during the daytime at an extensive range of learning venues. The range of courses is broad and includes family

learning programmes, taster courses in various subjects, arts, computing and programmes to develop personal effectiveness.

- Through wide ranging, strong voluntary and community partnerships, HAFLS provides learners with a genuine second chance for learning. Partners contribute to a comprehensive training need assessment and help with identifying learners in need, recruitment, hosting courses and providing timely and valuable support to learners. Highly productive partnerships work extremely well, particularly for mental health service users.
- Learners benefit from good pastoral and study support including dyslexia support. For many dyslexic learners this has increased greatly their personal effectiveness and confidence. Learners make well-informed decisions about their learning after obtaining useful information, advice and guidance before, during and after their courses. Volunteers give excellent support to help learners to complete their individual computing objectives.
- The directors and the elected members receive regular reports and provide satisfactory challenge, guidance and support to the head of the service. They recognise the need to enhance further the work of HAFLS through identifying even more opportunities to raise the profile of its work within the County Council.
- The young parents' project has satisfactory overall effectiveness. The council has committed additional resources to extend the programme of learning for young parents up to the age 24 years. Learners develop good parenting skills; however, outcomes overall are satisfactory. The quality of the provision is satisfactory. Although the management of the project has improved to satisfactory levels, the arrangements for quality monitoring need further improvements.
- Subcontractor management and support is strong and improves performance consistently. Tutors set individual learning targets and monitor them well. However, HAFLS do not monitor learner progression sufficiently although inspectors received plenty of anecdotal evidence of learners' progression. The service has an overall target for achievement. However, it makes little use of targets at subcontractor and geographic district level.
- HAFLS is good at promoting and effectively embedding equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. It is successful in its mission of improving the life chances of those who have not benefited previously from learning. Learners are trusted and respected and provided with strong support to help them succeed. Tutors discuss equality issues well during lessons.
- Quality improvement is good. The quality improvement plan is thorough with a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. HAFLS has increased the rigour in the observations of teaching and learning. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the provider. Most tutors take pride in improving their practice through ongoing staff development and sharing of good practice.

## What does HAFLS need to do to improve further?

- Improve the outcomes for learners including success and progression rates by: setting learners specific targets to complete their qualifications; and setting challenging targets for retention, attendance and achievement at tutor, subject, subcontractor and geographical levels.
- Raise the standards of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by more effective sharing of good practice among tutors within all subcontractors.
- Improve the current system for collecting learner progression data. Collect and analyse information from partners such as children's centres, schools, day services and housing associations to plan progression routes accordingly.
- Improve the quality of the young parents' project by monitoring the provision more effectively against the revised targets and by sharing the good practice that exists within HAFLS.
- Strengthen the governance arrangements by identifying and better aligning all the projects that contain elements of external funding and learning in order to offer a broader range of provision and increase the impact of adult learning for the local population.

## Summary of the views of learners as confirmed by inspectors

### What learners like:

- the supportive, patient, encouraging, friendly and approachable teachers
- the knowledgeable and very skilled tutors with good range of life experiences who provide high quality individual help and guidance
- the learning environments that are friendly, safe and welcoming
- the learning in local venues
- the affordable courses
- fun activities and interesting topics
- the extensive range of support from very knowledgeable volunteers including support in the internet cafés.

### What learners would like to see improved:

- the range of courses at a higher levels
- the short length of a small minority of courses
- the extensive requirements for form filling at enrolment
- the small size and poor ventilation in a few rooms in some community learning venues.

## **Summary of the views of stakeholders/partners as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What stakeholders/partners like:**

- the strong planning to meet their learners' needs
- the good evaluation of joint working
- the flexibility of the service
- the strong partnership working with the voluntary sector
- the capacity building and support to develop their own expertise and skills.

### **What stakeholders/partners would like to see improved:**

- a reduction in the excessive levels of administration for enrolments of learners.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

9. HAFLS has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. Senior managers have driven up the quality of the provision successfully during a period of substantial reorganisation of the service and the reallocation of responsibility for the service within the County Council. HAFLS' development plans provide an effective framework for improvement and include realistic performance and quality improvement targets that managers monitor thoroughly. HAFLS is making good progress towards achieving these targets.
10. Managers use self-assessment very effectively as a quality improvement tool. They make good use of the much improved learner engagement strategy to consult with learners to evaluate and improve the provision. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection have been successful. In particular, in the past two years, managers have improved the system for the observation of the quality of lessons. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now particularly good in ESOL courses. Outcomes for learners, as well as provision in ICT and community learning, have improved from satisfactory at the previous inspection to good. Family learning provision remains good with an increasing number of learners now gaining formal qualifications.
11. HAFLS makes a positive contribution to improve the capacity of the local voluntary community sector providers through its support and staff development. The management of the young parents' project has improved and it now demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

12. Outcomes for learners are good. Achievement rates of learning objectives for learners on non-accredited programmes are high. Retention rates are high in all subject areas. Success rates on literacy and numeracy courses on family learning programmes are good. The percentage of learners, mainly from children's centres, taking the qualifications in literacy and numeracy has doubled to 12% of all learners enrolled in the last year. This is a significant achievement as many learners have very low starting points or poor experiences of learning, particularly since they did not set out to take external accreditation. Attendance rates are satisfactory. Learners on the young parents programme progress satisfactorily into further education and/or employment.
13. Learners make good progress and achieve well. Learners value the qualifications they achieve and use their literacy and numeracy skills to help them progress into work through volunteering, or into further learning. Learners engage in learning very well and thoroughly enjoy the experience. The standard of learners' work is good in almost all lessons and in all subject areas.

14. Learning impacts positively on learners' lives. Benefits include much improved confidence, acquisition of a wide range of new skills, and greater development of knowledge and understanding of the chosen topics and subjects. ESOL learners use their improved language skills to become active citizens of the community, relying less on public services such as interpreters. Family learning participants become more confident, and develop their reading as well as their parenting skills. For learners with mental health conditions, learning helps provide a framework to recovery and better engagement in daily life. Young parents overcome social isolation and develop social networks as well as useful parenting and employability skills.
15. Learners feel safe and use safe working practices. Although many learners progress from their courses, the provider has not collated this information to produce an accurate picture of progression of the learners.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

16. The service provides a high standard of teaching, learning and assessment. The majority of tutors are well qualified and have extensive specialist skills and knowledge. They use a topical and interesting range of subjects to develop learners' skills and knowledge, and to motivate them. Initial assessment is thorough and tutors use it well to plan lessons that include a wide range of activities to interest learners. In ESOL, family learning, ICT and the observed classes in arts and crafts, most tutors keep their lessons moving at a challenging pace. The teaching and learning for the young parents are satisfactory with plenty of interactive activities and tasks. In a small minority of lessons, tutors do not have sufficiently clear lesson objectives and do not use a suitably wide range of learning resources, including information learning technology (ILT). In such lessons, tutors make satisfactory use of questioning to check learning and provide appropriate feedback to help learners to improve further. In-class support from the well trained and sensitive volunteers is highly effective.
17. The RARPA process provides a reliable means to measure learners' progress, however learners with lower levels of literacy are not always able to contribute to, or understand, the records.
18. Provision is good at meeting the needs and interests of learners and communities. The service carries out thorough research and runs many taster courses and other bespoke courses at the request of learners and community groups. A significant proportion of provision is for high priority community groups and inspectors learnt of many learners who progressed from these courses to further accredited learning. The range is excellent for mental health service users and good for meeting the needs of specific minority ethnic groups including Travellers and of underperforming primary and secondary schools. Accommodation is very accessible and community based. However, lessons are

generally offered during the day and a few classrooms are cramped and poorly equipped. The council has made additional financial commitment to broaden the scope of the provision to young parents up to the age of 24. HAFLS helps many ex-learners, who have become volunteers, to provide learning that does not attract the public funds through self-organised groups.

19. The service's partnerships with an extensive range of voluntary sector groups, libraries, children's centres, schools, colleges and the health authority are highly productive. Partners are instrumental in the recruitment of learners, needs identification and the provision of support for vulnerable learners in venues where they feel safe. These partnerships help contribute to a broad range of national and local priorities. Partners work well together to engage learners in life-long learning and to improve their quality of life. Partnerships with the other departments within the County Council are good and improving.
20. Support for learners is good. Tutors contact learners promptly when they fail to attend lessons. Learners' induction to the programmes and the service explains clearly the expectations of learners and their commitment to attend classes. However, learners are expected to complete many forms in which they are asked to repeat their personal information. The quality of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory and improving. Pre-course information is good. Learners are well informed about course content and have good opportunities to explore their options before joining. Progression advice is satisfactory. Tutors provide good subject specific and individual support to learners. Dyslexia assessment is available promptly followed by good support. Providers catering for specialist groups of learners with high-level care needs offer access to many services to support their welfare needs. The support is successful in helping learners meet their learning aims. Support from volunteers is very good as they help to make learning more relevant to learners' needs and accelerate their progress. Support for young parents is satisfactory.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

21. Senior managers have provided good leadership in all aspects of HAFLS' work since the reorganisation of the service in 2009. The purpose and vision of the service is well shared by their staff and those of partner organisations. Managers provide very strong direction through identifying clear priorities for the service, clearly linked to County Council strategic objectives. All staff, including those of subcontractors, have a very good understanding of their role in delivering and improving the service.
22. Management of subcontracted training, one of the main priorities for development, has improved significantly and is now good. Managers work well with local and regional community groups to identify, and plan, areas of growth for the service. The impact of action plans are monitored and follow-up action is taken to tackle areas of slow improvement. The management of the young parents' project is now satisfactory. Subcontracting arrangements have

improved with much clearer expectations of the contract and monitoring arrangements. However, the monitoring of the quality of the provision of this project is an area for improvement.

23. Partnership working is a very strong feature of the service. HAFLS makes particularly good use of the wide range and large number of partnerships to provide an extensive range of good quality training and development opportunities for the county. Communication is very effective. Managers meet frequently with the subcontractors to maintain a close focus on improving outcomes for learners and ensuring that those with significant barriers to learning receive the support that they require. HAFLS also provides highly valuable additional support for subcontractor staff on topics such as the use of information technology in learning, teaching and assessment.
24. HAFLS' safeguarding arrangements are good. All staff, including those providing administrative and support services, have undergone a successful Criminal Records Bureau check. Managers use the service procedures on safeguarding very well to ensure the most vulnerable learners are very safe. Tutors have a good understanding of their role in implementing the policy and ensure learners' safety. Learners have a clear understanding of issues such as bullying, discrimination and using the internet safely and know how to protect themselves or who to contact if needed.
25. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. HAFLS uses a wide range of community activities and projects to reach out successfully to local groups, including Gypsies and Travellers, users of mental health services and learners from areas of socio-economic deprivation. Managers monitor the progress and outcomes of all groups of learners routinely and have taken appropriate action to close the previous achievement gap successfully for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities on ICT courses. Other successful action has been to improve the comparatively lower retention rates for Bangladeshi and Pakistani learners. All teaching staff receive a good induction and have a sound awareness of issues and appropriate equality of opportunity policies and procedures. Schemes of work and lesson plans have been revised for all courses to ensure that equality and diversity topics are included clearly. Learners develop a good understanding of how equality and diversity issues relate to them.
26. HAFLS makes good use of self-assessment to improve its provision. The process is effective as the core component of HAFLS' quality improvement procedures. Managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning very effectively. They use the outcomes of observations of teaching and learning and other monitoring procedures effectively to assess the quality of their programmes and plan appropriate staff development for all teaching staff.
27. Managers have developed good arrangements to engage with learners and partners to support improvements to the service. They use group learner interviews and regular forums very effectively to develop and evaluate the

provision. Learners make very good use of the systems to provide feedback to HAFLS and its partner organisations on their experience. HAFLS also makes good use of learners' views and performance data. The most recent self-assessment report is comprehensive, sufficiently self-critical and broadly accurate. Managers have used the resulting quality improvement plans effectively to maintain good outcomes for learners and improve the quality of the provision.

28. HAFLS manages its resources well and provides good value for money. Managers use robust strategies for performance and quality improvement. Collaborative working and subcontractor staff development promotes value for money well through effective sharing of good practice. Staff and learners use an appropriate range of learning resources, although not all teaching staff use ILT effectively to support learning. HAFLS manages risk well. It carefully monitors the effectiveness of its provision and reacts promptly and effectively to increased likelihood of risk. Outcomes for learners are good and improving.

## Learning for social and personal development

**Other social and personal development learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: *sports and recreation, arts, media and publishing, business administration and law, community development***

## Information and communication technology

**Grade 2**

### Context

29. Hertfordshire County Council provides a range of ICT courses across the county. All the courses are non-accredited and range from entry to intermediate level in subjects such as word-processing and using the internet. During the current year, learners have made 3,577 enrolments, compared to over 6,000 enrolments in 2010/11. During the inspection week, 193 learners were in learning in the voluntary and community sector providers.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Retention and achievement rates for personal objectives are well above the national averages. Attainment and progress in lessons are good, especially since most learners have had little previous experience of using computers or the internet. The service has closed the gap successfully in achievement between all learners and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Learners gain good skills in the use of computers and related activities, such as using the internet and sending and receiving e-mails. They work confidently and improve their efficiency. The skills that they develop, such as how to use spreadsheets for financial management, equip them well to manage their personal lives better and take further classes.
- Learners enjoy their learning very much. They engage promptly in lessons, working well with the tutors and support volunteers to extend the pace and speed of learning. Learners challenge themselves and their peers well to further their knowledge, both as a group and as individuals. This is the main reason for their rapid progress.
- Learners feel safe. They have a good knowledge of how to use ICT safely including protecting their identity and avoiding cyber-bullying. They apply this knowledge well to keep themselves safe. They have a satisfactory understanding of safeguarding and know who to contact in case of any difficulties.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors make good use of a mix of activities to maintain learners' interest. They follow the briskly paced demonstrations with well-managed and supported practical work. Tutors use skilful questioning and discussion to involve most learners in developing knowledge and understanding. Learners develop good levels of skills.

- Tutors make good use of assessment to inform learners regularly about their progress and offer guidance to improve further. Both learners and tutors use individual learning plans well to establish group and learning goals for the course. Tutors use robust procedures to monitor and verify the learners' progress and achievements against specific goals.
- The programmes meet the needs of individual learners well. Drawing on the local knowledge of the subcontractors, HAFLS provides a highly effective demand-led service for those learners who do not regularly use ICT. However, the service does not analysis countywide ICT skills needs for commerce, employment or individual development and progression opportunities are limited.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Support during lessons is swift, sensitive and highly effective in meeting learners' individual needs. Outside of the lessons, many volunteers in the community cafés provide individual support to learners, dealing with their queries thus ensuring that learners consolidate their skills further by practicing skills outside of the classroom.
- Equality and diversity are good. Knowledgeable tutors embed equality and diversity topics fully into the curriculum. The subcontractors make provision accessible to the most marginalised groups of learners and provide them with support to gain skills and develop a passion for learning. Staff are well trained and ensure that learners have a clear understanding of behaviour and courtesy.
- The promotion of safeguarding is satisfactory. Training materials include well-produced sections on e-safety. Tutors promote safe use of ICT in all lessons. However, venue and activity risk assessments do not always contain sufficient detail or include subsequent action to reduce the levels of risk.
- Subcontractors manage the programmes well and always focus on individual learners' achievement. HAFLS has been highly effective in improving provision from satisfactory to good. However, it does not set targets at subcontractor and geographic district level. The self-assessment report for ICT is brief but the quality improvement plan covers most aspects of ICT.

**What does HAFLS need to do to improve further?**

- Set and monitor targets at subcontractor and geographic district level to further increase achievement rates.
- Ensure the provision meets countywide ICT skills needs by strategic analysis and working with partners to ensure clear progression options for all learners.

## Community learning

## Grade 2

### Context

30. During the current year, 1,750 learners have participated on preparation for life and work courses with 322 learners on courses during the inspection. Most of these courses are non-accredited. These include programmes such as skills for work, personal development, citizenship, literacy and numeracy, ESOL and provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. For ESOL learners, who have poor prior attainment, outcomes are excellent, particularly in developing speaking and listening skills. Learners attend satisfactorily, stay on their programmes and achieve well. Retention and success rates are consistently high.
- Learners make significant gains in confidence and self-esteem that help them in a wide range of domestic, social and employment settings. Many learners have better awareness of the employment market and they plan to enter it through volunteering or further study. Learners with mental health issues develop successful strategies to manage life and make new friends.
- The recording of learners' achievement based on a system of RARPA is now much improved and working satisfactorily. However, in literacy lessons, many of the targets in individual learning plans are not specific and tutors do not monitor learners' progress thoroughly nor measure their progress accurately.
- Teaching and learning is good, with outstanding practices in most ESOL lessons. Tutors conduct a thorough initial assessment of all learners' needs and use it well to plan interesting and varied tasks. They use technology well to make learning productive and enjoyable, reinforcing prior learning through meaningful, topical content. Relationships in lessons between tutors, volunteers and learners are excellent.
- In a few lessons, tutors pay insufficient attention to adapting learning resources, including reading and audio material, appropriately to maximise the benefit for all learners. For example, some reading materials are too dense with a small font. Some tutors do not use questioning sufficiently to enhance further learners' knowledge and understanding.
- Good partnerships with a diverse range of voluntary and community organisations enables the most disadvantaged learners to participate in learning. Subcontractors have a very thorough understanding of learners' needs and their barriers. They provide considerable additional support to help all learners, including those with mental health support needs, to gain skills that improve their life and employment prospects.
- Support for learners is outstanding. Excellent use is made of skilled and trained volunteers to help support learners in highly appropriate ways. Learners benefit from easy access to a range of other support services such as counselling,



benefits advice and job seeking activities as well as information, advice and guidance services. Highly skilled tutors provide sensitive individual support to learners.

- Leadership and management are good. Teaching and learning resources, including ICT, are of a high standard and staff development is good. The preparation for life and work curriculum promotes national priorities well. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the report is accurate. Quality improvement measures improve the provision.
- HAFLS have made good progress to improve the quality of learners' experience since the previous inspection. Many effective and improved systems work effectively, most clearly demonstrated by significant improvements to ESOL provision.
- The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity are good. Courses are located conveniently to provide easy access to disadvantaged individuals and diverse groups within the community. Tutors use high quality visual materials frequently to challenge stereotypes. Learners develop a sound understanding of equality and diversity in lessons and develop assertiveness skills.

#### **What does HAFLS need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the identification and recording of literacy targets on learning plans to ensure they are individualised and used to monitor learners' progress and assess their achievements more accurately.
- Improve teaching and learning by sharing the good practice demonstrated in many of the ESOL sessions. Encourage tutors to check learners' understanding more frequently and ensure all reading material is at a level and in a format that is easily accessible to all learners.

## Family learning

## Grade 2

### Context

31. The HAFLS direct delivery team, along with three subcontractors, delivers the programmes during daytime at 30 children's centres, 90 schools and a range of community venues including women's refuges, leisure venues and family intervention projects. The courses include family literacy and numeracy, play and talk classes, fun with numbers, creative crafts, funky computing, healthy eating and digital families. During the inspection week, 310 learners were on programmes.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners and their children make good progress and achieve well. Learners' achievement of their individual learning goals is good. Success rates for the small number of learners that take formal qualifications in literacy and numeracy are high. The standard of learners' work is good and very good during discussion and conversational activities.
- The development of learners' skills and confidence is good. Learners sharpen their numeracy and literacy skills, often learning the ways in which their children learn at school. Through learning new ways of parenting, parents enjoy learning alongside their children. Attendance is satisfactory as a few learners combine their learning with hectic life events.
- Parents make highly effective use of the skills they learn to stimulate their children's communication and language skills, resulting in greater progress and achievement at school. They use literacy, numeracy and computer skills well in their daily lives. Many become volunteers after developing these skills. They take pride in helping their communities and improve their chances of securing employment.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors plan their lessons very well to deliver creative and imaginative lessons. They use comprehensive initial assessment to support learners exceedingly well in classes. Tutors make excellent use of questioning to test learners' understanding and direct further learning. However, they do not use technology sufficiently to improve learners' computer skills.
- Assessment of learners' progress is good. The RARPA process has improved and is now a reliable means of measuring learners' progress. However, learners with low levels of literacy skills find it difficult to contribute to the formal recording process.
- HAFLS provides a good range of courses to engage learners. It promotes the value of qualifications successfully by doubling the percentage of those enrolled to take and pass the qualifications. Some rural communities and working parents are unable to attend lessons during the day. A few classrooms are cramped and poorly equipped.

- The service makes very good use of longstanding, strong and effective partnerships to reach more learners and inform service provision. Support for learners on various issues such as dyslexia is good. Pre-course information is good. Learners are well aware of the course content and have good opportunities to explore their options before joining.
- Curriculum management is good and improved from the previous inspection. Flexible and responsive management supports tutors very well. Strategic objectives are well understood and managers and tutors demonstrate them in their work. Good strategic links with schools and children's services have increased the number of enrolments steadily and improved the targeting of family learning provision.
- Safeguarding is good. Learners develop a positive sense of self-awareness and take good care of their family and personal wellbeing. Courses successfully attract learners who are socially isolated through cultural and mental health barriers. A high degree of trust between learners and their tutors enables them to share and plan for issues affecting personal matters including their safety.
- Equality and diversity are good. HAFLS recruits its target groups and individuals very effectively. Family learning classes improve the life chances of children significantly, giving them increased opportunities to achieve and succeed in education. Provision for learners with mental health conditions is excellent. Staff make good use of learners' views to monitor the quality of courses and plan improvements.

**What does HAFLS need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the skills and knowledge of teaching staff in the promotion and use of ILT. Focus on developing greater levels of confidence and skills among the parents to promote life-long learning and enable them to use basic computing skills as well as their children.
- Review the scheduling of courses, to improve accessibility and to widen participation further, particularly for working parents and those with caring responsibilities. Increase the quantity and variety of partnerships, so that learners from rural areas have access to courses and accreditation.
- Develop appropriate ways of recording the achievement of learners with low levels of literacy so that they can understand and contribute to the records.

## Information about the inspection

32. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Hertfordshire County Council's head of service as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
33. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and partners had completed on behalf of the Hertfordshire County Council. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Hertfordshire County Council**  
**Learning types: 14-16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships. **Social and personal development:** all adult safeguarded provision

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	Social and personal development
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>			
Full-time learners	0	0	0
Part-time learners	2,277	46	2,231
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2		
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
Do learners feel safe?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2		
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2		

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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