

# Bracknell Forest Community Learning

## Local authority

<b>Inspection dates</b>		21-23 November 2012
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- Learners' outcomes are good on Bracknell Forest's Community Learning (BFCL) community development programmes, which account for most of the programmes available and the vast majority of learners. On these programmes learners enjoy their lessons, make good progress and subsequently apply their new learning productively.
- Outcomes require improvement for the small number of learners on a programme offered by a subcontractor specifically for those with learning difficulties or disabilities, although the attendance of these learners is good and they enjoy their programme very much.
- Teaching and learning are good on the community development programmes. Skilled, well qualified and enthusiastic teachers provide interesting, stimulating and often challenging lessons in well-equipped classrooms using good teaching resources, although not all tutors use the available interactive learning technologies well enough.
- BFCL tutors are providing good support for learners' achievements within a good overall environment for learning where individual learning is generally well structured and sufficiently well planned. However, the subcontractor does not manage or plan for individual learning well.
- BFCL's service is led and managed very effectively. The range and durations of programmes have been developed significantly in a short period of time.
- BFCL has a very strong and highly effective focus on performance management, performance monitoring and quality improvement of its own programmes.

### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Some inconsistencies in practice remain in the otherwise good quality of BFCL's teaching, learning and assessment, and tutors' measurement of learners' progress is, in a few cases, not always wholly accurate.
- BFCL is not monitoring the quality and focus of its subcontractor's provision with sufficient frequency or depth.

## Full report

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

- Provide appropriate professional development and share good practice widely in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning for every tutor so that every lesson is consistently good. For example, ensure that every BFCL tutor, not just the majority, uses the outcomes of initial assessment to plan effectively for improvements in each learner's English and mathematics skills. Similarly, ensure that all tutors plan for and integrate the promotion of equality and diversity seamlessly within each lesson and that all are using questioning techniques effectively to check learning.
- Ensure that BFCL monitoring visits to subcontractors are sufficiently regular in timing and searching in practice to evaluate fully the quality of teaching and learning and to identify key areas for improvement.
- Provide support and training to the subcontractor to introduce robust planning and monitoring of individual learners' achievements based on detailed formal initial assessments which are informed well by good teaching practice and specialist knowledge in supporting learners with learning and other disabilities.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Learners' achievements on the community development programmes are good. Retention and pass rates are high and show a generally improving picture. Learners are highly motivated and understand their learning aims. Their attendance is satisfactory and punctuality good. Learners enjoy their courses and state they feel safe while learning. No discernible difference is evident in the rate of achievement between different learner groups. However, the method used by some tutors to identify each learner's starting point and consequently measure the full extent of each individual's learning is not always wholly accurate.
- Community development learners improve their personal, social, and employability skills, apply collaborative learning techniques and broaden their knowledge and horizons. Many improve their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and become more confident in using different techniques and styles in practical subjects. Parents interviewed by inspectors reported improvements in their children's attainment at school following attendance at the family learning provision, and parents described how they had applied their own improved English and mathematics skills, for example while shopping or managing household budgets.
- Community development learners make good progress during lessons, frequently progress well between courses and to successive levels of learning, including further and higher education. Learners generally maintain well-organised portfolios containing full evidence of their progress and produce good quality work including effective curriculum vitae and clearly collated research findings from the internet.
- Learners' outcomes require improvement on the multisensory audio and visual arts programme for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners demonstrate good attendance, very much enjoy the content of their programmes and the good opportunities for interaction with tutors and peers in their sessions. Most learners in sessions observed by inspectors displayed a good range of movement-based and vocalised responses to musical and theatrical stimuli, using their voices and bodies well relative to their disabilities. Learners were responding very positively to the creative environments in which they were participating. However, tutors do

not set clearly defined targets for, or systematically monitor, how well each learner is progressively developing their skills in the course of a session, or over time.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good in community development programmes and tutors' support for learners' achievement is good. However, teaching and learning require improvement in the subcontracted provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- The best community development lessons are well planned and well resourced by skilled and appropriately qualified tutors, although not all tutors are making sufficiently full use of the interactive learning technologies available in classrooms. Tutors' expectations of learners are high, as is the standard of learners' work. Lessons are interesting, stimulating and challenging and learners, including parents and children working together, often make good progress within sessions. Learners apply their learning to good practical effect in their personal lives and at work.
- Although teaching, learning and assessment are good overall, aspects of some tutors' practice are being developed and improved further so that all practice is consistently good. These aspects include routine integration of equality and diversity in all lesson planning, more thorough use of initial assessment to plan improvements in learners' English and mathematics skills and consistent use of searching questioning techniques to check learning. BFCL's managers are fully aware of these issues as a result of the very thorough and developmental arrangements for observing and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning on its own programmes. They are taking appropriate actions to support tutors' improvement.
- While the sessions in the subcontracted provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are much enjoyed by learners, they lack structure, formal planning for, or monitoring of, individuals' learning and achievement.

### **Visual arts**

### **Community learning**

Requires improvement

- Learners with a wide range of learning and physical disabilities participate well within the multi-sensory theatre workshop sessions developed by BFCL's subcontractor, Innersense, for example during group, music-based improvisations involving percussion, instruments and voice. The learners play a key role within these sessions involving movement-based and vocalised responses to live music and singing. Learners particularly enjoy the content and wide range of creative themes they encounter in the workshop programme.
- Innersense tutors place strong emphasis on encouraging and enabling the participation of each learner. Tutors closely support learners to experience different stimuli and to be involved in the range of individual and group work. Tutors have a good appreciation of each learner's personality and use this appreciation well to promote a positive experience for each learner. Imaginative learning activities, good accommodation and extensive resources are combined well to create good opportunities for learners' exploration and creative development.
- Learners actively improve the use of their voices and bodies in response to the creative environment of the theatre space. Learners work well in taking turns and interacting directly with tutors. In the most successful sessions, all learners work together as an ensemble, for example using percussion to produce multiple layers of improvised rhythms. A smaller number of learners are able to experience in-depth interaction with their peers during creative play, for example using puppets. Interactive learning technologies are used very imaginatively, for example to compose unique soundtracks in combination with creative theatrical lighting.

- Learners display a good level of trust and connection with tutors. Tutors regularly use praise and encouragement and celebrate learners' efforts during sessions. The provider has some arrangements in place for sharing feedback on what learners think works well in sessions using a 'graffiti wall', but this is still in development and not impacting on learners' progress or achievement.
- Tutors are skilled in the performing arts, highly enthusiastic and committed and most have extensive experience of working with learners with one or more severe disabilities in a variety of settings. However, the vast majority of tutors do not have any teaching qualifications or specialist qualifications in disability to fully inform initial assessment and the planning of learning for people with a wide range of learning and physical disabilities.
- The provider's planning for tracking and recording of learners' initial assessment and gauging their subsequent progress is predominantly an informal process. Tutors do not set specific individual targets for learners' incremental or overall progression or achievement and the overall and specific learning aims of sessions, over and above enjoyment and interaction, are unclear. Tutors' session evaluation notes focus too much on sets, props and the generally perceived success or otherwise of activities, rather than on learners' development.
- Innersense management has made some moves towards considering more rigorous methods of initial assessment and in seeking advice about how to plan for individual learning effectively but this is at too early a stage to impact on improvement.

## Community development

### Community learning

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good on community development programmes and this is clearly reflected in good learner achievement. Tutors are well qualified, enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and set high standards. Tutors generally manage the learner groups and the learning environment well, ensure that a productive approach to learning is maintained and that all learners remain fully engaged throughout the sessions.
- In the best lessons tutors use a wide range of learning strategies successfully to challenge learners to achieve above their personal expectations. Learners contribute fully to the varied activities and work collaboratively. In a well-attended and lively family learning lesson themed as a treasure hunt, parents and children had great fun as they improved their reading, writing and communication skills. Following a lengthy guided visit to a local supermarket, another group of learners had gained a good understanding of how the retail sector operates and how to gain employment in it. They subsequently took part in a well-informed discussion about the most effective interviewing techniques for retail roles.
- Tutors are very experienced and provide skilled demonstrations and clear guidance that learners then use productively in their private and work lives. For example, in family learning sessions involving parents and children, tutors provide very useful and stimulating illustrations and activities showing some of the best ways of encouraging and supporting children's learning in and out of school which parents were applying successfully. Flower arranging learners develop their confidence and skills well, learning to produce arrangements for others, for themselves, their children's weddings and for displays in their local community halls and churches.
- Tutors pay good attention to meeting the individual needs of learners during lessons using a good range of additional activities for the more able and adaptive equipment for those who need it. Learners who have progressively developed in confidence are invited to come to the front of the class and write answers or key points on the board, and learners who have a good understanding of a subject are invited to help support their peers if needed. Learners enjoy

sharing their learning strategies and different ideas with peers and tutors, are eager to develop their communication skills and broaden their horizons as fully as possible.

- Tutors use a good range of interactive and stimulating activities and well-designed and well-presented materials to enliven and inform learning. However, the available information and learning technology is not always used well enough by all tutors to enhance the depth of learning.
- Thorough initial assessment clearly identifies learners' English and mathematics skills. The results are used well by tutors on the family learning programmes to plan and monitor subsequent learning, but the results are used less well to plan and monitor learning by tutors on community learning programmes. More generally, a few tutors had not systematically planned how to maximise opportunities to integrate equality and diversity within lessons, and questioning techniques to check learning were not always effective.
- Tutors' support for learners is good. Tutors understand their learners' needs well and are readily available to provide additional support when needed. Learners involved on work-related programmes are supported particularly well to progress into employment, education and training and a good number secure sustainable employment or gain volunteering opportunities. Careers or learning advice and guidance are offered towards the end of courses, but sometimes too late to fully inform learners about the range of progression options.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

**Good**

- During a period of great uncertainty between 2011 and 2012 BFCL's service was nevertheless managed and led well. In this period the ultimate direction and provision of community learning in Bracknell Forest were unclear but it seemed likely that the service would be transferred to another provider; the provision was being carefully managed to move out of the local authority's control.
- However, the service was subsequently retained by the local authority and, since then, good, purposeful leadership and management on the part of BFCL senior managers have been at the heart of a rapid and successful expansion of the community development programmes and appropriate changes to its staffing structure. A more stringent approach to the planning and development of the curriculum has seen the number of cancelled courses decrease substantially compared with 2011/12, but the cancellation rate remains high.
- BFCL's well-considered development plan for 2012 to 2013 includes very focused action and improvement plans, elements of which are already being achieved, although much is work in progress. A strategic plan for the further development of family learning is well advanced and the effectiveness of previous community engagement strategies has been evaluated fully by BFCL with lessons learnt and applied. The service's management board provides effective oversight and direction using a sufficient range of management information, although it has only recently begun to take appropriate account of achievement data.
- BFCL's tutors are well qualified, suitably experienced and have good access to professional development. BFCL has a very sound, accurate and highly developmental system for observing and evaluating the quality of its teaching and assessing its impact on learning. Written and verbal feedback to tutors from the well-trained and perceptive observers is clear and constructive, with good associated action planning for individual improvement and professional development. BFCL is well aware that the consistency of its otherwise good teaching and learning can be further improved and is taking appropriate action. The link between tutor observations, individual appraisals and performance management is strong.
- BFCL has good arrangements for its own quality improvement planning based on a very sound foundation of inclusive, evaluative and broadly accurate self-assessment. Self-assessment takes appropriate account of learners' views about what is working well, and what is not, and consequent improvements to the provision are evident. Formal quality improvement action

planning is ongoing, well structured and effective; improvement in the various areas of concern BFCL has identified can be charted clearly over time. BFCL has made sufficient improvement in respect of the areas for improvement identified at its previous inspection.

- BFCL managers provide very effective performance management and monitoring of the programmes through a well-structured series of regular meetings and review sessions throughout the year. Performance data are extensive, timely and accurate. However, BFCL's monitoring and quality development of the subcontracted provision are not sufficiently regular or thorough, for example it has not identified that the subcontractor undertakes little or no effective individual assessment and planning for learning or that all of the subcontractor's tutors have opportunities for further professional training.
- Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners well. BFCL has reviewed the range and length of programmes and has introduced many more long and short family learning courses and a greater range of community learning programmes. Overall, the profile of courses offered shows a significant decrease in the predominantly very short taster courses available, offered at the time of the previous inspection. Sessions are offered at times and in locations which are accessible to learners.
- The promotion of, and attention to, equality and diversity is generally very sound throughout BFCL, but requires further improvement within the curriculum. Tutors' seamless and effective integration of equality and diversity in learning sessions is increasingly evident but not yet consistent across all learning programmes.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Where disclosures of any kind have been made by learners, appropriate actions have been taken and referrals made. In the subcontracted provision tutors have either received training in child or adult safeguarding aspects, but not both, and this omission is now being rectified. BFCL was not aware of this omission before the inspection.

## Record of Main Findings

### Bracknell Forest Community Learning

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Community learning
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Visual Arts</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Community Development</b>	<b>2</b>





## Additional socio-economic information

- The population of Bracknell Forest in Berkshire is around 114,000. Only 12.5% of the population is of pensionable age, compared to 16.3% nationally.
- The percentage of adults with qualifications at level 2 or below is around four percentage points higher than nationally. Earnings by male and female workers in full-time employment are around 15 to 20% above workers in the south east and nationally.
- The 2001 Census showed that 90.6% of Bracknell Forest's population was White British, but official 2007 estimates indicate that this percentage has fallen to 85.2% of the local population. Bracknell Forest is one of the least deprived areas of the country. The number of people claiming Job Seekers' Allowance is low at 2%, compared to 3.8% nationally.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Nicholas Crombie, HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the Lifelong Learning Officer as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed a wide range of learning sessions. The inspection took into account the majority of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the two sector subject areas listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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