

# Blackpool Borough Council

## Local authority

Inspection dates		5–8 February 2013
Overall effectiveness	<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:

- An increasing number of learners successfully achieve a broad range of personal learning objectives. They gain new skills, knowledge and self-confidence to lead fulfilling lives by establishing their own community and support structures, making friends, overcoming isolation and by helping their children and families.
- Blackpool Borough Council (the council) is very successful at providing good learning programmes in safe, easily accessible local venues for the most excluded groups such as the unemployed, homeless and those from the deprived wards. Learners feel part of the local community and many significantly raise their aspirations.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners make good progress to develop valuable skills that prepare them well for progression to further study, voluntary work, or employment.
- Strong partnerships are working very well to benefit the learners. The partners refer learners and provide extremely valuable support to help them succeed.
- Managers and staff share a common purpose. They use their well-developed knowledge and skills to successfully improve the quality of learning for people in the community.

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

- Elected representatives do not take full ownership of the provision. They do not provide sufficient challenge and support to the managers in improving the service's reach and impact across the various departments within the council.
- The poor quality accommodation and access to information and communication technology (ICT) including internet connectivity in some facilities limit learners' experience.
- Only a small proportion of teaching, learning and assessment sessions are outstanding.
- The quality of provision including initial assessment and information, advice and guidance is not consistently good.
- Some tutors do not consistently promote awareness of equality and diversity among learners in their teaching and learning.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the planning, preparation and delivery of learning to consistently good or outstanding levels by:
  - reducing the levels of over-teaching through presentations
  - promoting independent learning for all learners that allows them time to reflect
  - ensuring that all tutors routinely reflect on their practice to make improvements and share good practice with each other.
- Formalise the reporting processes to the council leaders by the head of service to ensure that they have a clearer view of the service's key strengths and areas for development. Seek guidance and support from the elected representatives as to how the impact and reach of the service could be further enhanced across various departments of the council.
- Ensure that all learners, particularly those who have had multiple achievements, benefit from a holistic, comprehensive initial assessment to identify complex learning needs. Provide high quality information, advice and guidance including better access to careers guidance for all learners at an early stage to help them plan their long-term goals.
- Promote functional skills of mathematics, English and ICT well in all lessons where and when appropriate and ensure that all learners continue to use spelling and grammar correctly.
- Working in partnership with other agencies, ensure that the provision of ICT is adequate, responsive and reliable.
- Increase the impact of learning about equality and diversity by ensuring that tutors plan lessons and use learning resources that integrate equality and diversity learning objectives and activities into learning tasks on a regular basis.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Learners achieve their personal learning objectives well, often exceeding their expectations. As well as gaining new knowledge and skills, learners enjoy learning, meet new people, develop new interests or overcome isolation. Attendance and retention rates on courses have remained high for the previous three years.
- Learners receive good help in identifying their personal learning objectives and recording these in well-considered individual learning plans. Outcomes for learners with extremely low literacy levels are outstanding as they are able to deal independently with their day to day life activities such as making a shopping list, reading bus timetables and following simple instructions.
- Through gaining good knowledge and skills in using computers and the internet, learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties feel part of their community and society and explore a variety of interests. Outcomes for learners at all 10 children's centres are often good and outstanding in some cases. They develop self-confidence, improve their self-esteem, form friendships and relationships and become good self-advocates.
- Learners gain a good variety of basic computer skills that enhances their confidence in accessing services and improve their skills. They develop meaningful curriculum vitae, write letters of application and use the internet to research information on companies where they might seek jobs.

- Learners on family learning programmes develop further understanding of child development, behaviour and the up-to-date teaching methods in schools. They make particularly good use of their skills and new found confidence to listen, talk and teach their children thereby establishing a strong bond with them. This has raised children’s attainment levels in schools.
- Development of English, mathematics and ICT skills is excellent for learners on family learning programmes and appropriate for the other groups. A high percentage of family learning learners take and pass intermediate level qualifications. Although the skill development particularly in English is good, a few learners do not use spelling and punctuation correctly.
- All groups of learners achieve their learning objectives equally well. The numbers of minority ethnic groups in the local population at 1.6% are too low for any meaningful comparison. Learners feel safe in their local learning venues and are highly satisfied with the provision they receive.
- The standard of learners’ work is high and they use these skills to improve their long-term economic prospects although many are unable to enter the employment market due to their personal circumstances, high childcare costs and the seasonal nature of the local economy. Progression to other courses, volunteering and further learning is good.
- Many learners develop a broad range of skills and have developed an appetite for learning. A significant number of them undertake further courses. Individual learning plans set short-term objectives related to the particular course they are enrolling on, but do not offer a clear pathway with challenging long-term goals to raise aspirations for themselves to enter careers.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good with some outstanding features for most learners and result in good outcomes. Improvements in learners’ attendance and retention are supporting very high achievements in both accredited and non-accredited learning.
- The council has successfully improved teaching, learning and assessment from satisfactory at the previous inspection. The arrangements to observe teaching and learning are now more robust. Tutors are provided with comprehensive support and development after their observations to help them improve their skills further. However, teaching, learning and assessment have not improved so rapidly in the subcontracted provision.
- Directly employed tutors plan and prepare lessons well that include a wide range of learner-led activities. In a minority of lessons, tutors rely heavily on presentations and do not allow sufficient time to learners to reflect on their learning. Tutors take pride in improving their practice through routine evaluation of their lessons and making tangible improvements for the subsequent lessons. Managers have accurately recognised the need to share good practice and are working with the subcontractors to improve planning and preparation of courses.
- Tutors have high expectations for all learners and motivate them well. They use their skills and experience to raise learners’ interest and encourage independent learning. Learners are generally confident, develop good skills and enjoy their sessions. For example, learners on a creative writing course have been encouraged to publish their work on a dedicated website and to attend recital sessions.
- Staff use information and learning technologies (ILT) in a variety of innovative ways. For example, learners who are homeless and attending a café are encouraged to set up an email address for the first time in order to apply for jobs online. In a mathematics lesson, adults and children are encouraged to work on tablet computers to maintain high levels of interest. A few premises are unable to offer sufficient ILT resources and some locations have poor connectivity, however, the council continues to invest in ILT to enhance the learners’ experience.

- Assessment is good. Tutors use a wide range of assessment methods tailored to the needs of individuals and groups. Tutors mark work very promptly and learners are extremely clear about the standards that they have reached. Staff measure learners’ progress frequently and encourage learners to record it using a learner journal. Feedback to learners is clear and helpful on what they need to do to improve further. Learners develop skills to assess their own work effectively.
- Arrangements for initial assessment are generally effective; according to the length and type of programme; however, not all learners’ needs are assessed effectively and some do not receive equally good service and support. On mathematics and English courses, for example, initial assessment is very thorough. Learners are given detailed results that lead to challenging personal learning targets. On shorter courses, initial assessment is not always sufficient to identify functional or complex learning needs at an early stage.
- Tutors usually set targets that are relevant to each learner at the start of programmes. For those learners who have already achieved multiple learning outcomes and are starting new courses, insufficient focus is given to the learner’s longer-term aims and progression opportunities.
- Good information, advice and guidance are available for most learners in children’s centres and for those learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and on life and work skills programmes. Not all learners have the same level of service, however, and many would benefit from earlier intervention and support. The council is aware of this issue and has put plans in place to improve this aspect.
- Progression routes are clear with progression pathways for all learners. Staff are currently piloting a ‘learning passport’ with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure that a broad range of learning, employment and volunteering routes are clearly identified.
- Learners and tutors are very respectful and supportive to each other and learners are able to study in safe environments. Teaching materials are sensitive to all needs and lesson plans include references to cultural diversity in society. However, many tutors do not use opportunities to routinely include topics and issues that reflect diversity in society to further develop learners’ understanding at induction and throughout their learning programmes.

**Community learning  
Learning programmes for 19+  
Community learning**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which results in the high level of achievement of learning aims. Most learners make good progress against targets, enjoy their learning and develop strong personal, social and employability skills.
- Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods that supports learning and motivates learners to achieve. In the majority of sessions, tutors plan carefully to ensure that they are recognising and meeting the individual needs of all learners. Some inconsistency in lesson planning remains and the council is dealing with the issue through the sharing of best practice in continuing professional development sessions with the subcontractors.
- In the direct provision, initial assessment is effective, establishing learners’ starting points and supporting them well in establishing clear short and long-term learning goals. In subcontracted provision, initial assessment is less effective and does not identify individual need sufficiently. In such lessons, tutors do not use all available opportunities to promote learning and progression.
- Most tutors provide learners with constructive and detailed written and oral feedback. Towards the end of the better sessions, learners and tutors evaluate progress together and complete a learner journal. In a digital photography course, the use of peer review was used effectively to analyse and critique each other’s work.

- Assessment methods are particularly effective in meeting the requirements of learners with additional support needs. Teachers, particularly in preparation for life and work, are skilful in ensuring that they embed English and mathematics effectively into all programmes. Tutors are enthusiastic, experienced and committed and have the appropriate levels of skills and qualifications.
- The curriculum is both broad and diverse and offers an exciting balance of economic and life skills, with creative and leisure programmes. The council actively targets learners who are from the most disadvantaged groups, many of whom have significant personal and learning support needs. Flexible delivery ensures that learners have access in their communities to both learning programmes and enrichment opportunities. 'Learning in later life' has offered new approaches to adult learning within the care home environment.
- The council uses well-placed community venues to deliver provision. All accommodation is accessible and most is attractive and welcoming. Not all premises, however, can provide appropriate and reliable information and communication technology resources, which does limit learning opportunities. A funded project, with international partners, has researched and promoted different ways of working effectively with learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Pastoral care and support are good and enable learners to make sustained progress. Well-qualified staff provide information, advice and guidance, with a specialist service responding to the specific needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Not all learners currently receive the same level of guidance and the council is planning actions to secure greater consistency in service levels.
- Tutors and managers promote equality and diversity very well, creating a culture of respect and inclusion. Data is used well to improve provision, dealing, for example, with issues of retention by Chinese learners. The council has been particularly effective in attracting male learners, who make up 43% of the total enrolments, well above the sector average.

**Family learning**

**Community learning  
Learning programmes for 19+**

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good which contributes to good outcomes including excellent achievement of accredited qualifications in English and mathematics. Very good planning of training and assessment encourages learners' motivation, confidence and participation. They progress well, gain understanding and skills that they use to support their child's learning and which lead to improving outcomes for them and their families.
- Much teaching is innovative and inspirational. For example, a tutor on a family first-aid course helps parents understand clearly the effects of brain injury by having them imagine that they are holding an egg and shaking or dropping it, so they can visualise vividly the structure of the brain and the damage that can occur. Learners gain confidence and knowledge to respond without panic in family emergencies and advocate the importance of the course for all parents.
- Well-chosen and varied activities lead to very active participation by learners, with many courses enriched by innovative extension activities, such as explorations of the local environment or workshops and performances in theatres. In a few lessons, tutors do not allow sufficient time for learners to reflect on, and extend their knowledge from the detailed presentations.
- Tutors are well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable. They make good use of questioning to check learners' understanding and encourage them to ask challenging questions to make their

individual learning more effective. Discussions, peer learning and working in small groups establish the challenging pace in lessons that helps all learners develop self-confidence.

- Teaching is very supportive and tutors make good use of praise and challenge to help learners progress. Staff in schools and children's centres share a good understanding of learners and provide additional support and information sensitively. Learners' progress is well recognised and recorded in learning journals. Well-written feedback from tutors encourages learners to work towards appropriate and challenging targets.
- Learners make good use of online materials. In the family signing course, learners use the virtual learning environment at home to access excellent learning materials with further games, exercises and video clips, to extend their learning and help them test each other's skills. Resources and premises are mostly of very high standard, attractive and welcoming to learners.
- On longer courses full initial assessment and diagnostic assessment are well used, helping learners to undertake the right level of accreditation and identify any additional support needs. On shorter courses, informal assessments with quizzes and descriptive writing are appropriate but do not adequately identify more complex needs.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance in children's centres is good with promotion of progression in courses. The 'Open Doors' and 'Learning Passport' initiatives provide a very effective framework to help learners move on to higher level courses and to employment.
- Tutors incorporate equality and diversity well in lessons. In one session about family signing, learners discussed how attitudes to disability and individual differences can mask the contribution which diversity can bring. This was brought to life by the children in the group teaching the adults new vocabulary and promoting better awareness of the deaf community.

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

Good

- The council has a clear strategy in place which is responsive to national developments and aligns closely with identified local priorities. It focuses on maximising the impact of community learning on the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities. The council has responded remarkably well to alleviate the high levels of social deprivation in Blackpool by improving the employment prospects and overcoming social isolation of the learners.
- The governance and accountability arrangements within the council structure are satisfactory. Elected representatives receive selective reports on the performance of various projects run by the council. However, there is insufficient challenge or discussion about the effectiveness of this work. They do not evaluate the overall impact of the various projects run by the council and do not offer any suggestions on how the work could be further enhanced by providing family learning in all schools and closer working with the health service.
- The quality and impact of staff performance management procedures are mainly good. A high level of commitment to and investment in staff development has added significant value to the quality of the provision. Managers utilise the internal lesson observations well to assess the quality of teaching and learning, to identify staff development priorities for staff and to recognise and promote the sharing of good practice. However, the quality and impact of internal lesson observations, staff review and development are not consistently good across all subcontracted providers.
- The council uses up to 60 community venues, including subcontractors' premises, across Blackpool. The diverse spread of local venues is of particular benefit as it helps create a range of environments where hard-to-reach learners feel safe and willing to study. It does, however, lead to inconsistencies in the overall quality and suitability of some of the teaching spaces. For example, a proportion of the accommodation lacks sufficient computer facilities or internet connectivity. The council recognises that this limits learning opportunities, particularly for the

learners who are seeking jobs and those who will be claiming universal credit from April 2013 and is developing appropriate strategies to deal with the issues.

- Self-assessment is good. The council has further enhanced the quality improvement process that underpins the self-assessment process. Managers now make good use of data, detailed feedback from learners and tutor course reviews to inform the self-assessment report. Managers accurately identify the majority of key strengths and areas for development of the provision and produce a focused action plan. The level of data and course analysis that managers receive from the subcontracted provision is not as consistent and timely as for the direct provision.
- The council offers an impressive and evolving range of provision that makes a significant contribution to fostering and promoting social inclusion. It provides real developmental opportunities and a second chance for the individuals who have had poor learning experiences and marginalised groups within the local community. Managers accurately identify and establish suitable new courses. The council has continued to exceed the targets for overall number of learners and enrolments, despite negligible increase in funding.
- Managers and staff help learners identify good progression opportunities. The council works closely with other local advisory services such as employment services, drug dependency and mental health services to increase referrals and provide a wide support infrastructure to learners. Learners have good opportunities in many areas to acquire Functional skills of English, mathematics, ICT and employability skills.
- Curriculum management is highly effective for the direct provision. All staff have a clear sense of direction and purpose and work well to achieve the aims of the council. However, the quality of curriculum management of some of the subcontracted provision is variable.
- All staff are well aware of their responsibilities for equality and diversity. Arrangements to encourage participation from different learner groups are very good including tailored courses for men and Traveller families. Not all tutors are confident in developing a wider appreciation of equality and diversity in learning sessions through the choice of learning topics, materials and activities. The council pays suitable attention to the health and safety of learners and meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

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

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Community learning</b>	2
<b>Family Learning</b>	2



## Provider details

<b>Blackpool Borough Council</b>	
<b>Type of provider</b>	Local authority
<b>Age range of learners</b>	19+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: N/A
	Part-time: 3979
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Sue Harrison
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	February 2010
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Services/A-F/AdultandCommunityLearningCourses/Home.htm">http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Services/A-F/AdultandCommunityLearningCourses/Home.htm</a>

<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A	779	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	779							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Blackpool and the Fylde College</li> <li>■ Volunteer Centre Blackpool Wyre and Fylde</li> <li>■ URPotential Community Interest Company</li> <li>■ British Sign Language Centre of Excellence</li> <li>■ Claremont West Family Centre</li> </ul>							

## Additional socio-economic information

Blackpool, with the population of 142,000, is the sixth most deprived area and the most densely populated local authority in England. Seasonal tourism is the single largest employment source with significant numbers of transient community. Some 67% of the population live in the 30% most deprived wards nationally. Of the working age population, 52% have no or low qualifications; one in four consider them to have a disability of some form and a similar number are economically inactive. Approximately 37% of residents are claiming some form of benefit, while the unemployment rate within Blackpool is 6.5% compared to 5.4% in England. Teenage pregnancy is the second highest in England. Incidence of long-term mental health and drug abuse is one of the highest in the country.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Harmesh Manghra HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the skills, education and employment team leader 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, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the 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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