Lincolnshire County Council

Local authority

Inspection dates		11–15 February 2013
Overall effectiveness	**This inspection:**	**Good-2**
	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:

- The very large majority of community learners achieve the main aims of their course.
- The increased levels of confidence and self-esteem gained by learners are high and enable them to progress confidently to their next stages in learning.
- The large majority of teaching and learning in community learning is good or better.
- Information, advice and guidance are very good, leading to a good range of further learning opportunities that meet the development needs of individual learners.
- The management of subcontractors is highly effective.
- Quality improvement including self-assessment and the observation of teaching and learning arrangements in community learning are very effective in improving the quality of the provision.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The provision in Foundation Learning requires improvement.
- In community learning, personal learning aims are not identified well and lack sufficient challenge.
- A minority of the teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement and not enough is outstanding.
- Not enough courses in community learning lead to formal qualifications.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the Foundation Learning programme by:
    - further development of the links with employers and apprenticeship providers to improve progression rates
    - increasing the opportunity for work-experience
    - improving the quality of teaching and learning by planning lessons that better meet the learners' individual needs
    - improve the use of data in order that managers can better evaluate the provision
    - better integrate functional skills throughout all learning activities.
- Use the results of initial assessment to better define personal learning aims in order that progress to achieve these can be more accurately measured.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to good and better levels in community learning by:
    - planning learning sessions that maximise the opportunities for learners' individual needs to be met
    - making better use of information learning technologies (ILT)
    - increasing the support for tutors to assist them in defining and using meaningful targets that match learners' needs and aspirations
    - ensuring that the plans to increase the availability of courses that lead to formal qualifications closely link to the requirements of local employers.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners' achievement of the main learning aims of their programme in non-accredited learning is high. However, the personal aims of learners are insufficiently defined and individualised. Success rates in courses leading to qualifications are good. The rate of progression from Foundation Learning is too low and the measurement of the achievement of key learning objectives in this programme is insufficiently accurate.
- Learners enjoy their learning, produce high standards of work and make good progress in their learning sessions. Attendance at courses is high. Foundation Learning fosters a strong ethos of respect and learners and staff work well together.
- Learners with disabilities achieve particularly well. They are very effectively supported by well qualified and experienced staff who understand their disabilities. These learners significantly improve their economic circumstances.
- All groups of learners achieve as well as each other in community learning. The service targets its courses specifically to areas of highest disadvantage in the county. There are no local variations and little difference in achievement by subject area.
- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills. Development of English and mathematics are integrated appropriately in community learning programmes. The delivery of functional skills is good in family learning but this requires further development in Foundation Learning programmes.

- Progression routes are clearly established and promoted. In community learning many learners progress to further learning, paid employment or voluntary work. The progression rates are particularly high in family learning programmes.

- For the small minority of community learners who have the opportunity to undertake a course leading to a formal qualification that meets the needs of the local labour market, success rates are good. Although plans are at an advanced stage to offer more courses that lead to qualifications that are valued by employers, too few are being currently offered.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the good learning outcomes achieved for most learners. Tutors skilfully engage learners, value everyone's contribution, and have high expectations. Tutors often support learners to progress to further training, employment or volunteering. Tutors are well qualified and knowledgeable in their specialist areas. They provide supportive and safe learning environments that enable learners to work independently.

- Learners in community learning are motivated well to develop their skills, knowledge and self-confidence. In most sessions they receive sufficiently challenging work and mostly this is of a good standard. This is not as effective in Foundation Learning programmes and while most activities are enjoyed and promote good skills development, they do not stretch the more able learners.

- The process for the recognition and recording of prior achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited courses is not implemented across all programmes well enough. Planning of learning is variable and tutors do not always demonstrate in their written plans how programmes will take account of individual needs and abilities.

- In community learning provision, targets set for learners are often too broad and lack detail which makes it difficult for learners to know whether they are on track to achieving them. The best practice is in family learning programmes. In Foundation Learning, although staff have a good understanding of the barriers learners face, individual learning needs are not formally recorded or shared across all aspects of the curriculum so it is difficult to track whether learners are making good enough progress for their needs and ability.

- Assessment across community learning programmes is used effectively at the start of courses to identify learner needs. During these programmes learners are encouraged to reflect on their progress and to support their peers in doing so. In family learning the personal learning diary is used well to review and record progress.

- Learners benefit from effective timely and verbal feedback and tutors' skilful questioning helps learners to check their understanding about how well they are doing. Tutors do not consistently give written assessment feedback about learners' work. Overall, assessment practices meet awarding body requirements.

- In the large majority of community learning programmes tutors pay good attention to developing learners English, mathematics and functional skills. Teaching of these is good and well-integrated within the main course objectives. This is less successful in the Foundation Learning programme where tutors do not ensure literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are integrated into the broader curriculum offer.

- Initial advice, guidance and support are very good. Learners receive timely and thorough advice and guidance across the very large majority of programmes. They benefit from pre-course interviews, phone calls and introductory sessions with staff to ensure courses are relevant to them and that any specific learning needs can be met. Taster courses are useful in providing boosts in confidence and supporting learners well to experience new and longer learning experiences.

- During the programmes additional advice and guidance are provided very well to help learners plan their next steps to further learning, training or employment. End-of-course reviews also include effective advice and guidance with skilled guidance workers, when learners are encouraged to consider progression routes. This results in the majority good number of learners progressing into volunteering, paid employment or further learning.

- Information, advice and guidance support for learners on Foundation Learning is also very good. For example, good links with specialist services help learners overcome their considerable barriers to learning and further progression. Housing support, counselling sessions and substance misuse advice regularly enhance the learning offer for young people.

- Equality and diversity are promoted well in Foundation Learning and a strong ethos and culture of trust and mutual respect exists. Learners value the environment, the staff and the resources, and they respond well to activities where these issues are discussed and explored. Learners in community learning are also well aware of what is expected from them, trust and mutual respect are embedded and tutors ensure safe work practices are implemented and observed. However, not all learning resources and activities reflect equality and cultural diversity well enough.

Community learning **Community learning**	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which is reflected in the consistently high achievement rates. Learners enjoy their courses, attend regularly and develop skills that equip them well for further learning, volunteering and work. They improve significantly their self-confidence and benefit from safe and meaningful social interaction.

- Learners apply their newly acquired skills confidently in lessons and during extension exercises. For example, in felt making new learners produce work of a high standard in a short time. Learners are proud of their work and appreciate being able to take away high quality finished items.

- Tutors have high expectations of their learners. They are skilled at creating a relaxed and supportive learning environment that encourages learners to ask questions, contribute to discussions and share experiences. The accessibility and use of information and learning technologies (ILT) in teaching and learning is varied and not always effective in enhancing and stimulating learning.

- Tutors use their knowledge and expertise to good effect to plan sessions that are varied and ensure sustained learners' interest and engagement. In practical sessions, demonstrations and samples of work inspire learners. Learners focus well on their work in sessions. However, although nearly all lessons engage learners, most lesson plans are not sufficiently detailed and do not take sufficient account of learners' individual needs.

- All learners complete a basic initial self-assessment of English, mathematics, and ICT together with a rating of knowledge and understanding of the chosen course subject. Initial assessment is used well to produce group profiles, although while learners have personal targets, these are often too broad, resulting in insufficient detailed monitoring of progress and final achievement.

- Learners receive constructive oral feedback on their progress and how they can improve during classes. Homework tasks and extension activities are set regularly for many learners. However, tutors do not consistently mark and give feedback on written work.

- Learners in many classes develop English, mathematics and functional skills effectively. For example, in art classes learners apply scale and proportion to their drawings. However, lesson plans do not always reflect the opportunity to integrate and evaluate the skills developed.

- Information advice and guidance are very effective. Tutors provide good information and support, for example on strategies for job search and choices for progression. Courses are promoted well in the community and in many centres learners can attend taster sessions. Tutors provide very effective individual support in most lessons which ensures learners' make good progress.

- Tutors give good individual support for the different needs of learners and look for different ways to engage them. An ethos of mutual respect and courtesy exists between learners and tutors. While learners have a basic understanding of equality and diversity, and treat each other fairly and with respect, equality and diversity are not always sufficiently promoted and integrated into teaching and learning activities.

Foundation Learning **Foundation Learning**	Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement which reflects the rate of progression in 2011/12 that also requires improvement. Too few lessons fully meet the very specific needs of learners. The current system for measuring the achievement of key objectives and learners' progress in the development of their personal and social skills is insufficiently rigorous.

- Learners enjoy their learning and take part in a range of stimulating activities such as digital photography, visits from a theatre group and cooking lunches for themselves and their peers. They develop their confidence and self-esteem well and respond very positively to the attitude of respect within the centre. Staff expect, and generally receive, high standards of behaviour from the learners.

- Tutors know their learners very well and have a good range of skills to deal with barriers to learning. However they do not always use this knowledge sufficiently to plan lessons and schemes of work that focus on specific skills' development. Lesson plans focus too much on a brief outline of the activities to be completed rather than on the skills to be developed.

- All learners undertake an initial diagnostic assessment of their functional skills ability which is leading to improved target setting. However the results of these assessments are not yet used throughout all aspects of the programme to plan and measure progress. Although staff use some naturally occurring opportunities to integrate functional skills development this is not yet happening well enough. Qualification assessment practice meets the requirements of awarding bodies.

- Feedback on learning is not always specific enough to enable learners to know what they have to do to improve. Similarly feedback in progress reviews is too broad and does not detail sufficiently the improvements learners have made. Targets are frequently too broad to offer guidance to learners and staff cannot measure their achievement easily. Tutors do not refer to individual learner targets often enough in lessons.

- Currently there are very few opportunities for learners to undertake work experience. However, learners improve their employability and team working skills well through useful work they carry out in the community. For example, they helped to make decking at a local activity centre and installed flower planters in the town.

- Staff provide very good levels of support to address barriers to learning. For example they attend college open days with the learners even during times of staff shortages when they are working under pressure. They have very good links with specialist support agencies to benefit learners. Counsellors attend the centre regularly to deal with personal issues affecting learning. Breakfast and lunch is provided daily for the learners, some of whom have housing issues.

- The main Foundation Learning centre is well-equipped, bright and welcoming and has good displays of learners' work. A new pilot centre has very few resources and poor heating

arrangements. In practical lessons, such as cookery and photography, resources for learning are good. However, in some theory lessons learning resources are insufficiently varied and stimulating.

- Tutors promote an ethos of mutual respect and tolerance. A visiting theatre group explores issues with the learners surrounding stereotyping through role play relating to a popular television programme. Staff encourage learners well to become more understanding of other cultures and ways of life.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good

- Governance of the provision is strong. Portfolio holders take a close interest in both parts of the provision and sit on appropriate boards where they and senior council officers monitor the delivery and supply appropriate challenge to those managing the delivery. The council exercises further financial governance through its scrutiny committees.

- The management of subcontractors is highly effective. Arrangements for commissioning are comprehensive and result in strong guidance toward meeting the provider's priorities for target groups and locations. The subsequent monitoring arrangements are comprehensive, frequent and sufficiently timely to allow in-year adjustments to maximise delivery against the targets for the overall provision. Well written service level agreements clearly define the relationship between the provider and subcontractors and detail what they are expected to do.

- Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are robust and drive improvements in teaching learning and assessment. Managers use trained observers to observe the direct provision in community learning. All tutors are observed at least once a year. The provider's observers observe a sample of each subcontractor's teaching staff with the subcontractor's own observer. All observations are moderated twice a year and are accurate. Representatives from all subcontractors attend the moderation process.

- The self-assessment process is robust. It draws on reports produced following the moderation of observations that include overarching strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning and action plans for overall improvement. Council staff and subcontractors within community learning are closely involved. They each contribute to the process and receive good feedback as to which elements of the largely accurate resultant report apply to their work.

- Staff involvement in the self-assessment process in Foundation Learning is also good and managers have a thorough understanding of their programme. However their self-assessment report gives too much weight to recent actions taken to rectify identified areas for improvement. In addition, unreliable data in this area have adversely affected management judgements with regard to outcomes and the associated quality improvement plan is incomplete.

- The provider leads a good initiative to identify and capture good practice across local authority provision of community learning. It collects a wide variety of data from some 40 local authorities. Managers produce and disseminate a complex analysis of the data, which they and other members of the group then scrutinise to identify and investigate areas that may indicate good practice. However the lack of common definitions and interpretations of RARPA limit the accuracy of the comparison of learner achievement data.

- Learning programmes meet the needs of the council's priority groups well. The curriculum offer includes largely unaccredited classes in a wide variety of subject areas to attract learners from the council's priority groups with much of the provision concentrated in the areas of highest deprivation. Plans are well advanced to introduce more accredited provision in the next academic year. Within Foundation Learning, plans are also well advanced to introduce further elements into the programme to improve learners' employability skills.

- The provider actively promotes equality and diversity. Staff receive regular mandatory training with opportunities to revise or update their knowledge through on-line programmes. The

requirement to promote equality and diversity is articulated in subcontractors' service level agreements and handbooks and is monitored through observation of teaching and learning.

- Instances of bullying or harassment are dealt with quickly and appropriately. The provider's commitment to equality and diversity is also well promoted in the learners' handbook. In the Foundation Learning programme learners' understanding of this topic is deepened through presentations by a visiting drama group.

- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children build on council policies. Staff have a good awareness of safeguarding issues.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Lincolnshire County Council									
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2							3	2
Outcomes for learners	2							3	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2							3	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2							3	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Community learning	**2**
Foundation learning	**3**

Provider details

Lincolnshire County Council	
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 40
	Part-time: 4,339
Principal/CEO	Head of Enterprise, Justin Brown
Date of previous inspection	June 2009
Website address	www.lincolnshire.gov.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	**Level 1 or below**		**Level 2**		**Level 3**		**Level 4 and above**	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	4,339	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	**Intermediate**		**Advanced**		**Higher**	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A
Number of community learners	4,339
Number of employability learners	40
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	▪ Robert Pattinson ▪ Lincoln College ▪ Boston College ▪ TaylorITEX ▪ CG Partnership ▪ Live and Learn ▪ New College Stamford ▪ Grantham College.

Additional socio-economic information

The service offers community learning programmes throughout the county through a range of subcontractors and direct delivery. It is directed from within the Economy and Culture Division. Foundation Learning programmes are offered from two sites and directed from within the council's Children's Services Division.

The population is predominantly white British but has a growing migrant population. The proportion of the population that is unemployed and the percentage of the population that do not have any qualifications are around the national rates.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Maxine Mayer HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the learning and skills manager 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 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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