

Nottinghamshire County Council

Local authority

Inspection dates		11–15 May 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
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:

- a majority of study programme learners, most of whom have a very wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities go on to further education, training or employment
- the development of personal, social and employability skills is good; those on non-accredited courses achieve their learning aims well and make good progress, and employability training learners improve their work readiness
- tutors have high expectations for all learners regardless of their previous attainment; as a consequence, learners are highly motivated, enjoy learning and make good progress
- tutors provide good personal and academic support to meet learners' needs, especially on employability programmes; they know learners well and are sensitive to their needs
- learners receive high quality advice and guidance; tutors identify learners' prior attainment and aspirations accurately, resulting in learners being on the right course at the right level
- curriculum managers have maintained, and in many cases improved significantly, a responsive curriculum that meets the needs of young people not in education, employment or training, as well as those of employers in the region
- the service manages the performance of subcontractors rigorously and rightly concentrates its efforts on ensuring that learners achieve well and that any weaknesses are swiftly addressed.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- managers do not monitor sufficiently well the effectiveness of community learning and family learning programmes by gathering accurate information on the destination of leavers
- short-term target setting for learners is often weak, especially for targets related to the development of personal learning and thinking skills
- managers do not monitor sufficiently the suitability of training and development that subcontractors provide for tutors teaching on its programmes
- targets for the frequency and volume of observations of tutors working for subcontractors have not been met.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Carry out more frequent annual observations of taught sessions in subcontracted provision that include observations of a significantly higher proportion of tutors to ensure that teaching continues to be good or better. Use observations to develop an action plan, particularly where the service judges sessions to require improvement.
- Regularly evaluate the training and development provided by subcontractors for their tutors to ensure that this training is relevant, current and has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve short-term target setting so that learners have clear individualised targets to help them develop their personal learning and thinking skills and to work successfully towards their longer-term aims.
- Ensure that it gathers accurate information about the destinations of learners on community learning and family learning programmes so that it can assess how well these programmes are helping to widen participation in adult learning.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Nottinghamshire County Council's Community Learning and Skills Service (CLASS) offers a range of programmes to support the life and work prospects of county residents, prioritising those out of work and most at risk of social and economic exclusion. This is mostly through courses at entry level and level 1. The service directly delivers full-time study programmes in employability training for around 150 learners aged 16 to 18 who are not in education, training or employment, which makes up about half of the overall provision. CLASS offers the remainder of its provision through subcontracting arrangements with 11 providers across the county to provide an extensive range of courses in community learning and family learning that do not lead to a qualification. Of these, the large majority are community learning courses.
- Learners achieve well and make good progress. The proportion of learners on the employability training programmes who go on to further education, training or employment is good and has increased steadily for each of the last two years. In-year data suggests that this trend is continuing.
- Most learners on the employability training programmes, the majority of whom have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including a few with high needs, make good progress from their starting points, including in their work placement. Despite their high levels of initial disengagement and distrust of formal learning, these learners begin to enjoy learning for the first time and achieve personal and social skills that increase their employability.
- The development of personal, social and employability skills is good. Learners on non-accredited programmes achieve their learning aims well and make good progress compared with their starting points. Those on family learning courses gain a better understanding of how they can help their children with school work. Many older learners on community learning courses enjoy the social aspects of learning and develop an interest in carrying on with further learning. CLASS has been particularly successful in ensuring that the majority of enrolments on community learning courses are by new learners who have not recently participated in adult learning.

- No significant performance differences exist between different groups of learners in non-accredited provision. CLASS acknowledges that young learners on its directly delivered employability training programmes bring with them a very wide range of barriers to learning and often a history of low achievement when compared with their peers at school. However, CLASS tutors provide particularly effective individual attention to the needs of these young people, together with personalised high quality learning support, to help ensure that they soon achieve their potential. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do just as well as, and often better than those without. Boys often have lower achievement on entry, but perform just as well over time as do girls on the programme.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills qualification on employability training programmes has risen over the last two years and is now good. CLASS has actively promoted the study of functional skills at level 2 and the number of learners studying at this level has increased significantly since the programme started in 2013. Teachers promote functional skills very effectively in non-accredited learning. They make particularly good use of real-life examples and illustrations to improve learners' understanding.
- CLASS has been particularly effective in securing accurate information on destinations of learners up to nine months after they have completed their employability training study programme. The data show that the proportion of young people in sustained employment is good. The service has limited data on the extent to which learners on community learning and family learning courses remain in learning after completing their course. However, progression from one course to another within the council's adult learning provision is good.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the good success rates on the directly delivered employability training programmes and the achievement of personal objectives on subcontracted non-accredited community learning and family learning courses. Learners make good progress in relation to their starting points. Tutors have high expectations for learners and expect them to succeed, regardless of their previous attainment or experience of formal education. They challenge learners well and as a result, learners are highly motivated, enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- Tutors provide particularly good personal and academic support to meet learners' needs. They quickly get to know learners and are sensitive to the needs of those who lack confidence in their abilities or who have significant barriers to learning. Tutors build productive relationships with learners and as a result, learners feel confident to ask for help or clarification with any problems they have. Support staff provide very good assistance to help learners achieve.
- Care, guidance and support for learners on directly delivered study programmes are good. Tutors provide learners with a high level of support that helps them to overcome significant barriers to learning and to make good progress towards achieving their learning goals and career aspirations.
- Tutors plan lessons thoroughly so that learners with different levels of ability and experiences learn well together. They use a wide range of stimulating and innovative activities in their teaching, supported by good quality resources. Learners learn to use mobile technology, such as tablet computers, to research and capture information, making learning enjoyable. Tutors create a welcoming and safe learning environment where learners feel able to learn.
- Learners on study programmes benefit from having meaningful work experience built into their studies. The work placement coordinator works with learners to help them find a suitable placement. Employers support learners well in the workplace and help them to develop successfully the basic skills they need to progress into sustainable employment, such as casket and coffin making and horticulture skills.

- Initial assessment is effective. Tutors use the outcomes of initial assessment effectively to identify the most appropriate level of course for each learner and the type of support that will best meets their needs. The large majority of tutors make good use of the results of initial and ongoing assessment when planning sessions.
- Assessment is good. Tutors make good use of a wide range of methods to assess and track learners’ progress. They provide prompt and detailed verbal feedback to learners on completed work and on their performance in practical activities. Progress reviews are thorough and provide clear guidance about what learners have to do to achieve their learning goals. Learners on study programmes make frequent use of detailed learning diaries to reflect on their progress, together with individual learning plans to review longer-term aims.
- Short-term target-setting requires improvement so that learners have clearer and more individualised targets to help them work successfully towards their longer-term objectives. Targets are too general and do not focus sufficiently on the development of learners’ personal, learning and thinking skills.
- The teaching of English and mathematics in functional skills lessons is good. In lessons other than in functional skills, tutors integrate these subjects very effectively, which encourages learners to apply English and mathematics skills at home and at work. Learners acquire new skills and knowledge successfully and the majority gain valuable functional skills qualifications. Senior managers provide good training opportunities for tutors to increase their confidence in teaching English and mathematics.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Learners receive timely and appropriate information to guide their learning. Tutors identify learners’ starting points and aspirations accurately, resulting in learners being on the right course at the right level. Well-qualified staff work productively with external organisations to increase learners’ knowledge of available progression routes. This helps learners to make well-informed decisions about progression to further training, education or employment.
- Learners benefit from a thorough introduction to equality and diversity at induction. CLASS recruits learners from a very diverse range of communities across the county and learners are respectful and supportive of each other’s differences during learning sessions. Staff are sensitive to learners’ individual needs and create a safe environment that supports good learning.

Community learning	
Community learning	Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in community learning are good because:

- most learners make good progress, successfully complete their courses and produce work of a high standard; learners also gain significantly in self-esteem, confidence and social skills, resulting in them being able to use their skills outside the classroom
- tutors provide particularly effective additional support for learners with personal and specific additional support needs such as those with a physical disability; as a result, these learners are able to participate alongside their peers
- CLASS is very responsive to learners’ requests for provision to be offered in accessible community venues; these neighbourhood centres help to reduce isolation by enabling learners to increase significantly their social contact with other people

- tutors plan high quality learning and are enthusiastic about their subject; they use their knowledge to challenge learners to work hard in class and inspire them to apply their knowledge at home and work
- tutors understand their learners well as a result of thorough initial assessment; they develop trusting relationships which encourages learners to attend regularly and become self-critical about their work
- tutors integrate English and mathematics well with learning activities; in a reflexology class for example, learners were able calculate the expenses involved in setting up a salon, as well as consider the vocabulary and correct spellings needed when filling in a client’s health and safety questionnaire
- learners have good access to information, advice and guidance throughout their course; the service’s community learning officers help learners to establish their own self-financing learning groups once they have completed the available courses run by the service
- tutors promote equality and diversity well in lessons; in a Spanish class, learners discussed in Spanish the differences in the way that people celebrate Mother’s Day in Spain compared with Latin American countries.

Teaching, learning and assessment in community learning are not yet outstanding because:

- tutors do not adequately personalise individual learning targets; too often, targets are identical for each learner and fail to identify specifically the skills an individual needs to develop in order to progress well
- in a minority of lessons, tutors do not check learners’ understanding well enough before moving onto a new topic, resulting in less able learners making slow progress.

Employability training

16-19 study programmes

Good

Teaching learning and assessment in employability training are good because:

- a large proportion of learners progress to further education, training or employment that meets local needs; learners develop useful workplace skills such as wood working where they produce benches for use by centre learners
- pastoral support by tutors ensures that all learners are effectively supported to achieve their potential, despite the significant proportion of learners who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, many with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- learners benefit from participating in work experience that matches their job aspirations; despite their very low starting points, a high proportion of learners have participated in a work experience placement or have one planned
- tutors adapt learning well to meet learners’ needs, which enables them to make good progress, participate well in learning and develop valuable life skills
- experienced and enthusiastic tutors carefully use a range of stimulating learning activities and resources, including information learning technologies, to meet the needs of learners with different abilities and aptitudes, enabling them to improve their personal and employability skills

- learners develop their mathematical skills well, which promotes their independence and employability, for example, by being able to calculate the cost of travel to get to interviews and budgeting for independent living
- learners receive good information, advice and guidance from specialist staff that prepare them well for future employment
- learners receive detailed and supportive verbal feedback from tutors when they are working through tasks and on completion
- tutors provide a safe and inclusive learning environment where learners work well together and show a high level of mutual respect; learners understand the importance of diversity and cultural difference and they increase their awareness of diversity.

Teaching learning and assessment in employability training are not yet outstanding because:

- teaching targets that tutors set for learners do not always state clearly what learners need to do to improve their skills and understanding
- learners do not always receive sufficiently detailed written feedback about the progress they are making towards achieving their targets
- learners' daily target plans place insufficient emphasis on the skills that they have learned.

Family learning

19+ learning programmes

Outstanding

Teaching, learning and assessment in family learning are outstanding because:

- learners make excellent progress; they develop confidence and highly effective communication skills which enable them to support their children very well with their learning and development
- learners achieve challenging learning goals which prepares them exceptionally well for their next steps in learning or employment
- tutors and managers have particularly high expectations of learners and provide outstanding support to meet their individual needs; for example, one parent in a level 2 functional skills mathematics class receives Russian language support in class so that he can better understand the mathematical methods used in English schools
- learners develop highly valuable and transferable life skills in practical workshops where tutors provide innovative resources to encourage learners to explore new craft skills, cook healthy meals and to develop storytelling with their children; this enables them to make healthier choices when preparing family meals on a tight budget
- skilled and experienced tutors plan and provide highly stimulating and engaging learning activities such as 'Kung Fu Punctuation' where punctuation signs are turned into movement and sound to reinforce learning
- tutors provide an exceptionally wide range of activities to excite and enthuse learners that meet their individual needs very well, such as producing photographic tiles for gifts and discussing e-safety and how to stay safe when using social media
- the quality of tutors' feedback to help learners improve their skills is outstanding, which enables learners to become more independent in their personal learning and thinking skills, such as being able to effectively carry out independent research on a topic that interests them

- the development of learners' English and mathematics is outstanding; tutors help learners develop these skills through storytelling, reading and following instructions, measuring and weighing, budgeting and comparing prices for different consumer products
- learners receive good quality advice and guidance about next steps; as a consequence a large majority go on to other family learning programmes or to further learning at other providers
- tutors are very effective in creating inclusive learning environments for all learners so that they feel valued, safe and confident to speak openly; they help learners develop a wider understanding of the world and diverse cultures through fun and enjoyable storytelling lessons.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have set and communicated a clear strategic direction that supports the achievement of high and improving standards. CLASS' operational and strategic objectives effectively align with and support those of the Council, particularly in the raising of priority groups' skill levels and promoting economic and social inclusion. Since the previous inspection, the service has carried out a wide-ranging curriculum review and organisational restructuring that has helped to improve the quality of the learning experience across Nottinghamshire. These developments continue to be subject to governance arrangements that provide effective scrutiny and oversight of the service's performance.
- Curriculum management is good. Managers have maintained and in many cases, improved the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment found at the previous inspection. They regularly evaluate tutors' performance against agreed targets and effectively secure improvement in achieving high standards. Tutors support learners well with additional learning needs and competently use initial assessment results to identify and improve learners' skills in English and mathematics.
- Managers have successfully implemented the requirements of the study programmes. Outcomes for 16 to 18 year olds are good with a high proportion progressing to employment or further learning. The quality of taught sessions is good. Given the low starting points of these learners, a high proportion is engaged in relevant work experience.
- Performance management of subcontractors is rigorous and focuses particularly well on learning and achievement to identify and resolve any shortfalls in standards. Service managers make good use of detailed data and targets at termly performance review meetings, and at the quality improvement group, to hold subcontractors to account for their performance. The service supports and develops subcontractors effectively through training and the sharing of good practice. However, the service does not routinely check the relevance and impact of the training and development that subcontractors provide for their tutors.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good and have helped to sustain the improvements since the previous inspection, particularly for learners aged 16 to 18. The service's assessment of the quality of lessons is thorough, accurate and leads to improved professional practice. Moderation of observation records involving subcontractors' representatives are rigorous and promote high standards. However, for a few subcontractors, the service does not meet its own targets for the volume and frequency of lesson observations or observe a sufficiently high proportion of tutors.
- Self-assessment arrangements are good. Subcontractors contribute to self-assessment judgements that managers validate using a robust and challenging moderation process. The quality improvement plan is thorough and very effectively monitored by service managers and subcontractor representatives to measure the impact on learning. The current self-assessment report is generally evaluative and accurate, though inspectors gave higher grades for some aspects of provision.

- Senior managers work closely with other providers and the local economic partnership for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. They plan and manage learning programmes that successfully address identified skills gaps and encourage learner progression. Managers make particularly good use of local data and intelligence to identify gaps in the provision and avoid inefficient duplication or competition. Contracting commissioning arrangements allow CLASS to act quickly in meeting identified needs. Managers monitor and achieve challenging targets for learner participation and success that makes a valuable contribution to local and national priorities.
- The management of equality and diversity is good. Managers use a detailed analysis of recruited groups compared to their representation in the wider population to support promotional activities and to raise participation. The service successfully enrolls learners with significant barriers to learning and has achieved ambitious targets in engaging learners from disadvantaged communities.
- The safeguarding of learners is good and meets statutory requirements. Managers and tutors in both direct and subcontracted provision work productively together to ensure learners' welfare and protection. Designated managers have a good understanding of safeguarding. They respond appropriately when staff or learners raise concerns, and make referrals to external bodies where necessary. Managers routinely review and improve safeguarding arrangements. Work placements are subject to an appropriate vetting procedure and actions to ensure e-safety are good. Managers have received training on how to identify and counteract radicalisation and extremism, but have yet to translate this into actions to protect all learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Nottinghamshire County Council

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2			2		1			2
Outcomes for learners	2			2		1			2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2			2		1			2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2			2		1			2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Community learning	2
Employability training	2
Family learning	1

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	9,982							
Principal/CEO	Ian Bond							
Date of previous inspection	November 2012							
Website address	www.nottinghamshire.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+
	112	4	9	0	0	2	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	10							
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	NA							
Part-time	NA							
Number of community learners	1,155							
Number of employability learners	NA							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Academy Transformation Trust ■ Vision West Notts College ■ North Notts College ■ Personal Learning Consultancy ■ New College Nottingham ■ Central College Nottingham ■ Workers' Educational Association ■ Reach Learning Disability ■ Tales from the Heartwood ■ Creative Paths ■ Life Education Centre Nottingham 							

Contextual information

At the previous inspection, the service offered foundation learning through its skills for employment division while the adult and community learning service offered family learning and community learning. As part of a major restructure, these two divisions have now merged and lie within a single council department. The head of the new service was appointed just a few days before the inspection. The remainder of the restructuring process is scheduled for completion by the summer. Nottinghamshire has a population of 785,800. A fifth of the population lives in small towns and villages with a population under 10,000. The provision operates throughout the county with a large majority of learners with low skills and qualifications from areas of the highest deprivation in Nottinghamshire. Some 20% of the working age population have a long-term illness and 35,000 people are in receipt of incapacity benefits. Some 25% of the population has no access to a car and 14% of the working age population have no qualifications.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Jai Sharda HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the service team 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, 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 relevant 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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