

North Lincolnshire Council Adult Community Learning Services

Local authority



Inspection dates 14–17 June 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have successfully set a clear vision and strategy, well linked to local priorities, to work with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in North Lincolnshire.
- By working effectively with partners, managers ensure that the service provides a relevant curriculum which meets learners' and employers' needs and develops good employability skills.
- Learners make good progress and the proportion of learners who achieve their intended qualifications is high.
- A very high proportion of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners succeed in their studies and make very positive contributions to their local communities.
- A high proportion of learners progress from entry level to level 1 qualifications and beyond. Many learners on non-accredited programmes continue onto courses that provide them with qualifications.
- Staff provide very effective and tailored support which meets learners' individual needs; they help them build confidence and overcome problems which make learning difficult.
- Tutors use a range of well-planned learning activities that motivate learners well and help them develop new skills.
- Tutors create an inclusive atmosphere that celebrates diversity and supports equality of opportunity. Learners feel safe and enjoy learning.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Not all tutors consistently set personalised targets which meet individual learners' needs, or challenge the most able learners to do better.
- Attendance rates on a minority of courses are too low; managers and tutors are failing to reinforce the importance of attending regularly to learners.
- Too many ESOL learners fail to achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Information on destinations of learners after their courses is incomplete; therefore the council cannot judge the long-term effectiveness of its work.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The North Lincolnshire Council area sits on the south side of the Humber estuary and includes a number of market towns and rural areas. The authority is divided into five localities with a population of 169,247, 62% of whom are of working age. The unemployment rate is lower than that in Yorkshire and The Humber. In North Lincolnshire, pupils' achievement of five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the national average.
- Learning takes place in three dedicated centres as well as community venues and children's centres. The provision is funded by the Skills Funding Agency and consists of adult skills, community learning, including family learning, and a very small apprenticeship provision. Apprenticeships were not inspected separately. Judgements on apprenticeship provision are included in this report.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning targets set by tutors so that they are personalised to meet learners' individual needs, and ensure that the most able learners are given additional targets that challenge them further.
- Improve the low attendance on a minority of courses; ensure that managers promote the importance to learners of good attendance for learning and work.
- Ensure that all tutors enable learners, especially those on ESOL programmes, to develop and apply their English and mathematical skills and to achieve their functional skills qualifications in these subjects.
- Review and strengthen the procedures for collecting and collating information on the destinations of learners, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the current curriculum and plan further improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and managers ensure that adult and community learning programmes make a positive contribution to the area's economic development by meeting the learning and skills needs of local people. In October 2015, leaders and managers repositioned the service to sit within the council's planning and regeneration team; senior officers and elected members have allocated resources to demonstrate their commitment to sustain and develop the provision.
- Managers successfully plan the location, timings, levels and frequency of courses to match council and local enterprise partnership (LEP) priorities. Managers ensure that the courses contribute to the development of a skilled workforce to meet the needs of existing and new businesses in sectors such as health and social care and marine energy.
- Determined managers and dedicated staff are ambitious for the success of all learners. They collaborate very effectively with a wide range of partners such as Jobcentre Plus, schools, children's centres and voluntary sector organisations to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged people and those who do not normally seek education or training. Managers and staff use their good skills and resources effectively to support learners to overcome problems which make learning difficult.
- Staff provide a good range of effective, impartial advice and guidance at a wide variety of community venues throughout North Lincolnshire, including the highly visible 'Action Station' in Scunthorpe town centre. Learners receive good advice and encouragement to ensure that they enrol on the right courses, choose the most appropriate career paths and consider the best employment opportunities. Learners also receive useful information about training, volunteering, health support and financial advice.
- As at the previous inspection, the inclusive character of adult and community learning service is very evident through the behaviour and values of senior leaders and the thought-provoking images and information leaflets on display. Learners with additional needs and those facing multiple difficulties with learning because of disadvantage and ill-health account for a significant proportion of the learners. Staff provide highly effective individual support that ensures these learners are as successful as others.
- The most recent self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Managers gather and analyse information from a wide range of sources, including learner and employer surveys, and use it effectively to identify the strengths and areas for improvement of the service. They use the quality improvement plan derived from the self-assessment report well to ensure that the provider continues to improve.
- Managers make thorough and effective use of information derived from observations of teaching, learning and assessment and data analysis, together with feedback from learners and tutors about their courses. From this overview, they successfully ensure that the provision continues to improve. Managers effectively monitor the quality and effectiveness of the courses provided by the subcontractor.
- Leaders and managers have made good progress addressing the areas for improvement identified from the last inspection but have not yet fully resolved one of them: attendance across the provision is still not high enough despite concerted efforts, including the implementation of new systems to record and identify low attendance in lessons.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - A senior council officer and an elected member with cabinet responsibility for employment and skills provide appropriate challenge and increasingly effective scrutiny, to ensure that the adult and community learning service meets its targets and performance measures.
 - Senior leaders are well informed about how efficiently and effectively the programmes offered provide good value for money and meet the needs of the communities they serve.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Learners have an appropriate awareness of e-safety, particularly where they are on courses that make use of the internet as a resource. Parents attending family learning courses know how to keep their children safe.
 - Staff responsible for safeguarding keep detailed records and carry out thorough investigations of all safeguarding incidents. Their timely and effective interventions promote the welfare of learners, ensure learners feel safe and minimise the risk of harm.

- Managers responsible for safeguarding have a good knowledge of their responsibilities with regard to the 'Prevent' duty. They have developed a comprehensive risk assessment and have ensured that all staff have a good understanding of how to identify learners who may become vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Staff are confident in their understanding and responsibilities for the promotion of modern British values, but learners' understanding of these important topics is not yet at a consistently good level.
- Managers conduct rigorous recruitment checks on all staff and keep detailed records. These checks include all volunteers and contractors who visit the centres. The buildings used by staff are safe and well maintained.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Tutors quickly develop excellent relationships with their learners, many of whom have significant problems which make learning difficult, thus helping learners to settle into their courses, feel well supported and develop confidence in their own abilities. Learners make good progress, often from low starting points. Learners value the support they receive and speak highly of the commitment of their tutors. Learners enjoy and develop their information technology skills well in lessons with a range of interactive information and learning technology (ILT).
- Tutors deploy learning support assistants and volunteers effectively to help support learners to overcome their individual difficulties with learning, for example by encouraging, guiding and checking their contributions. In many lessons, the number of learners is small, so that tutors are able to give much well-targeted individual support, ensuring that all get appropriate help. For learners with imminent examinations, tutors provide plenty of help on examination technique, and guide individuals to focus on their own weaker areas.
- Tutors include good opportunities for the promotion of equality and understanding of diversity in lessons. In one lesson, the tutor skilfully managed a discussion about different types of religion and places of worship that had arisen as part of a wider but unrelated topic. In an entry-level English class, a good discussion was held by learners where they shared information about Ramadan and Eid that developed further non-Muslim learners' understanding of different cultures and religious beliefs.
- Resources for learning, including accommodation, ILT facilities and learning materials, are good and support learning well. Many rooms have appropriate displays to reinforce key aspects of learning. Learners use ILT resources well to aid recall and check important features of their written work.
- Tutors plan a wide range of effective activities that help learners to make good progress in lessons. Learners enjoy the activities and all take part with encouragement from the tutor. In an ESOL lesson, learners developed their vocabulary and grammar when talking about jobs and employment. Tutors give helpful verbal feedback, so learners know how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Some tutors pick up quickly on learners' errors in spoken English, but they do not all provide this feedback consistently. Learners are able to identify what they have learned, and tutors regularly give time to the review of learning.
- Tutors assess learners' starting points effectively, making sure that they are placed on the right course at the right level. Discrete mathematics and English lessons leading to functional skills qualifications are well planned and taught and learners generally make good progress, although this is less the case for ESOL learners. Not all tutors in other subjects ensure that sufficient development of learners' mathematical and English skills is integrated into their lessons. For example, tutors do not ensure that ESOL learners taking functional skills mathematics courses have the necessary English language skills to tackle mathematical problems expressed in words competently.
- A few tutors do not do enough to reinforce the relevance of particular topics to employability. This is most notable with regard to punctuality and attendance, where tutors often accept reasons for absence or lateness that would not be acceptable to an employer.
- In a small minority of lessons, tutors' questioning skills are poor. For example, tutors do not direct questions at individual learners, so that many call out answers at once, or quieter learners are not involved. On occasion, tutors accept learners' brief, simplistic or vague answers at face value without further exploration or supplementary questions to encourage better explanations or deeper thinking. Not all tutors provide consistently detailed and helpful feedback on written work to help learners to improve.

- Tutors do not all consistently set well-focused learning targets for their learners across all courses. For example, learners taking nationally recognised qualifications have targets related to the weaker areas of their English and mathematics, but these are not personalised enough and do not take into account learners' personal aims. Tutors do not consistently challenge the most able learners so they can achieve more.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

- Learners enjoy their learning and grow in confidence and this helps them to achieve and progress. Learners contribute in class, voice their opinions confidently and support each other. They take a great deal of pride in their achievements, particularly when gaining qualifications. Learners develop wider social skills, and many report benefits from social contact, meeting others on courses, and working with them in pairs or groups.
- Learners receive effective advice and guidance on their next steps, and as a consequence, many learners progress from non-accredited programmes into accredited learning.
- Most learners improve their verbal communication skills through speaking and listening activities. For example, ESOL activities encourage learners to use and apply their learning in the classroom and demonstrate effective use of these skills. In community and family learning classes, speaking skills and confidence are extended through frequent discussion. In a creative craft session, learners with a variety of learning needs improved their English through using technical words and applying mathematical skills, for example when measuring ribbon.
- Learners develop good skills in practical techniques such as pottery and sewing. The standard of practical work produced in arts and crafts sessions is good; written work is generally to a good standard. In creative writing classes, learners produce a high standard of descriptive writing and poetry.
- Some former learners take up opportunities to volunteer with the service, which contributes to their development as well as benefiting current learners and the wider community.
- Learners feel safe and are safe across centres; they like the locations of these and their accessibility. Family learning programmes focus well on the promotion of healthy living and the development of life and basic skills, including confidence building. Classes for parents help develop knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with online grooming and sexual exploitation of children.
- Staff and learners respect each other. Learners of different ages and from diverse backgrounds cooperate effectively. In ESOL and English language classes, learners value each other's varied cultural backgrounds and what they learn from each other.
- Attendance rates on some courses are low, with the lowest attendance on functional skills and ESOL provision. Tutors do not always challenge low attendance or poor punctuality and do not take quick enough actions to improve attendance. The importance of attending regularly is not always sufficiently reinforced to learners.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Staff have high expectations of learners and successfully build learners' confidence so they make good progress. Many learners have previously faced significant problems which made learning difficult. The vast majority overcome these and complete their programmes successfully. The proportion of learners who achieve their intended qualifications has risen steadily, and is high. The service's data for 2015/16 shows that most learners are predicted to achieve their qualifications. The vast majority of adults on courses that do not lead to external qualifications achieve their learning goals, develop in confidence, and increase their self-esteem.
- Arrangements to recognise and record progress and achievement (RARPA) of learners are generally effective. The majority of individual learning plans build on the findings of initial assessment and enable progress towards appropriate learning outcomes; they provide a clear focus on achieving individual learning goals. As a result, learners increasingly take responsibility for setting and monitoring their own targets. Tutors give encouraging verbal feedback, particularly in practical sessions. As a result, most learners enjoy their learning and improve their skills.

- Tutors give helpful advice and guidance to enable learners to achieve their learning goals. As a result, many of them make good progress from their different starting points during sessions. The standard of learners' work is generally good, demonstrating clearly that learners are continuing to develop new skills and knowledge, which they successfully apply in their lives and in gaining employment.
- Learners on ESOL programmes achieve well. The vast majority of these learners continue with training; for example, they progress into accredited volunteering awards. Many of these learners make valuable contributions to their local communities by volunteering in schools and children's centres and with community groups.
- Currently, no significant differences exist in the achievement of various groups of learners. Learners on employability and vocational programmes who have declared a disability or health issue achieve at a slightly better rate than their peers. Family learning staff recognise that male learners are under-represented on some of their programmes and have tried a number of initiatives to recruit more men, for example, through family football sessions and fire safety at the local fire station. So far, these initiatives have met with limited success.
- A high number of learners progress from entry-level programmes to level 1 and beyond. Many of the learners on community learning courses move on to accredited courses and successfully gain employment. Staff make every effort to continue to track the destination of learners once they have left the service. Despite their efforts, the destination of some learners remains unknown, which hampers staff in evaluating the longer term effectiveness of the service.
- Most tutors of other subjects strive to promote English and mathematical skills within their courses and ensure that these skills are relevant to everyday life and work. Learners participate well and understand the importance of developing these skills, particularly to support their future success in gaining employment. However, ESOL learners are less successful in developing and applying English and mathematical skills as they do not receive sufficient support from all tutors.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics has declined and is too low. While many learners progress successfully from ESOL programmes, too many of them leave the functional skills programme without successfully completing the qualification. Managers are taking appropriate actions to bring about the necessary improvements. Current learners are making good progress. Adults who take GCSEs in English and mathematics achieve well, with a high proportion of them achieving grades A*–C.
- The proportion of the very small number of apprentices on business administration programmes who achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales is too low. However, current apprentices are making good progress and are developing a wide range of personal and work-related skills. All remain in employment and are benefiting from being given additional responsibilities and promotion at work.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,540
Principal/CEO	Louise Baxter
Website address	www.northlincs.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	781	N/A	222	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	6	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ North Lindsey College 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Dr Pamela Blackman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ruth James	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dr Daniel Grant	Ofsted Inspector
Jean Webb	Ofsted Inspector
Beverley Cross	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of service as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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