

# East Sussex County Council Reinspection

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Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection Report 12 May 2006

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An outstanding provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A good provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A satisfactory provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good
- grade 3 – satisfactory
- grade 4 – inadequate

## Description of the provider

1. At the previous inspection, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) managed the delivery of family learning and community development programmes, and provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities (ALDD). In 2005, a strategic decision was taken for the three lead college partners in East Sussex to manage community development and ALDD programmes. ESCC still oversee all adult and community learning provision across the county, but only deliver family learning programmes. The county council currently has 72 learners, considerably less than at the previous inspection.
2. ESCC has restructured the adult and learning skills team since the previous inspection. The team is now located within the Strategic Economic Development and Skills (SEDS) department, and managed by the adult learning and skills manager, supported by a curriculum and quality manager, family learning manager and family learning co-ordinator. Two learning brokers have been recruited jointly with the three lead college partners to identify learning needs across the region and to work with organisations from the voluntary and community sector to attract new learners.
3. Unemployment in East Sussex is slightly higher than in the south east as a whole. The unemployment rates in Hastings and Eastbourne are higher than those for East Sussex. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in East Sussex is low at 2.3%, compared with 4.9% for south east England. East Sussex has a high proportion of the population over 85 years of age, and the second highest proportion of people of pensionable age of any county in England and Wales. Levels of part-time employment are relatively high. Just over 27% of East Sussex residents aged between 16 and 74 have no qualifications.

## Overall effectiveness

Reinspection Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. ESCC's leadership and management, including the organisation's approach to quality improvement, is good. ESCC's arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The family learning programme is good.
5. The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process. ESCC has a thorough and well-established self-assessment process. Staff are fully involved in self-assessment and subsequent reviews. The text in the report is self-critical. However, the strengths and weaknesses given for family learning are the same as those in leadership and management. Sufficient reference is made to local context, benchmarking and progression data, but there are too few judgements about achievement and overall success rates. Learners' views are represented appropriately. ESCC shares their self-assessment report with partner providers, but does not yet use their

views or tutor feedback towards judgements. Self-assessment contributes to improvement. The development plan is closely monitored.

6. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. ESCC have introduced very effective arrangements for quality assuring and improving provision. Action plans are used very effectively. Most weaknesses from the previous inspection have been partially or fully rectified. Strategic decisions have a strong focus on improving the quality of the provision. All staff are fully involved in the continuous improvement process. Quality improvement is well-managed. Data is now more accurate and being used effectively to monitor enrolment and retention rates, but not yet for measuring trends in achievement and success rates. Inspection grades have improved since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, and ESCC have greatly improved their arrangements for observing and assuring the quality of the learners' experience.

## Grades

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

### Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		4
Quality improvement		4

Preparation for life and work			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i>		4	
Adult and community learning	473	4	

Family learning			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		3	
Adult and community learning	36	3	

Community development			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		3	
Adult and community learning	123	3	

## Grades awarded at reinspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		2
Adult and community learning	72	2

## About the reinspection

7. Inspectors visited ESCC on three monitoring visits in November 2006, and January and March 2007 before the final reinspection visit in May. Family learning was the only sector skills area that was inspected and reported on.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	15
Number of staff interviewed	21
Number of employers interviewed	0
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	9
Number of visits to the provider	4

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

### Strengths

- Good strategic direction
- Good support for partner providers
- Very effective quality improvement
- Good targeting of under-represented groups

### Weaknesses

- Insufficient use of overall success rate data and targets
  - Insufficiently clear equality and diversity strategy
8. ESCC has a very clear strategic direction. Adult and community learning provision is key to the achievement of objectives in the council's business and development plans. Strategic direction has been strengthened by moving the adult and community learning provision into the SEDS team, promoting effective links between the 14-19 agenda, Every Child Matters (ECM) and adult and community learning. There is very close alignment between ESCC's strategies and priorities and those of their partner colleges and providers. ESCC has maintained the strong focus on providing value for money through passing the community development and ALDD provision directly to the partner colleges. The introduction of learning brokers, in conjunction with the partner colleges, is a well-devised initiative for improving the advice and guidance across East Sussex. The county council shares information effectively with partner providers and colleges, enabling a coherent view of adult learning across the county which is helpful in planning future provision. The adult learning strategy group, judged a very effective decision-making forum at the previous inspection, has been given a clearer focus by the introduction of a more strategic adult learning and skills partnership board.
  9. Partner providers continue to receive good support from ESCC, which was a strength at the previous inspection. Communication between ESCC and their partner providers is very regular, open and effective. Partner providers are fully involved in and consulted on revised policies and procedures. New partner providers receive very good support on a wide range of aspects including curriculum planning and new ideas for courses and tutors, through frequent visits from the family learning co-ordinators. Tutor training is very effective and well-attended, particularly in improving the use of paperwork with learners. The family learning co-ordinators offer good individual and additional training for tutors where appropriate. The family learning forum continues to be a very effective mechanism for sharing information and best practice.
  10. ESCC has good management of the family learning programme. Managers and co-ordinators use data well in setting enrolment targets and planning the curriculum. ESCC now plan and commission the provision with each provider for the year, rather than for each individual course. Managers have much tighter

control over the family learning programme. ESCC has appropriate and sufficient literacy, language and numeracy provision for adults, including courses leading to accredited qualifications and national tests. Target-setting for enrolments is much more realistic and achievable.

11. Internal communication is effective. ESCC has developed appropriate policies and procedures to support staff and tutors in their job roles. Appraisal systems are effective, and link into strategic and curriculum targets and objectives.
12. ESCC has significantly improved the accuracy and timeliness of enrolment, retention and achievement data since the previous inspection. Definitions of achievement and success rates are much more appropriate and reliable. Managers collect and analyse data systematically, but do not share the outcomes with partner providers. Managers do not monitor trends in retention, achievement and success rates. They are unable to analyse achievement and success rates until the end of each year, as this data is based on starters rather than leavers. ESCC and their partner providers have targets for enrolment, but not for retention, achievement or success rates. ESCC recognise this, and plan to introduce these targets in the next academic year.

## Equality of opportunity

## Contributory grade 3

13. ESCC's targeting of under-represented groups is good and has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Staff work well with a wide range of partners to identify need and increase participation in learning. ESCC has a good partnership with an external group in the Hastings area that has a focus on widening participation, where resources are maximised through the sharing of expertise. Family learning co-ordinators network effectively, using innovative initiatives to engage new learners. Staff make good use of local data, including postcode analyses, for identifying and targeting economically disadvantaged areas of the county. A high proportion of current learners are from particularly disadvantaged areas of East Sussex, including areas of rural deprivation. The proportion of learners from black and minority ethnic groups has increased this year, but there are few men participating in learning. ESCC has put appropriate measures in place to attract more men on to learning programmes, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness. ESCC's courses are held in locations which learners find convenient and accessible. Free childcare is provided at most venues and some partner providers make funding available for externally-provided childcare.
14. ESCC's promotion of equality and diversity is now satisfactory. Tutors now have a better understanding of equality and diversity, having attended training sessions on these issues. There is a handbook for tutors, which covers equality, and ESCC's system for observing teaching and learning incorporates equality and diversity. Family learning co-ordinators discuss equality of opportunity during their monitoring visits to partner providers. Learners discuss equality and diversity at



the start of each course. Physical access to buildings is satisfactory. Tutors make suitable adjustments and relocate classes, where appropriate, to meet individual learners' needs. However, the promotion of cultural diversity in the classroom is insufficient. Where satisfactory promotion of diversity is happening, for example in one class where cultural awareness was raised amongst learners by discussion of different ingredients, this practice is not widespread or shared.

15. Since the previous inspection, much work has gone into establishing an appropriate range of equality and diversity policies and statements which are clear and readily available. The county council's ACL policies are now relevant to adult learners. However, the anti-harassment policy is still only in draft format, and learners are insufficiently well-informed of what to do if they feel that they are being harassed. ESCC's managers now check partner providers' equality policies to ensure that they are appropriate and up-to-date.
16. ESCC does not have a coherent equality and diversity strategy for adult and community learning. Too few equality and diversity targets and actions for adult and community learning are set. There is too little synthesis between adult and community learning's and the county council's overall development plans.

## Quality improvement

## Contributory grade 2

17. ESCC has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. Most weaknesses from the previous inspection have been totally or partially rectified. Quality management is now good. Staff meetings have a strong focus on quality improvement. Leaders and managers regularly monitor progress towards the achievement of action plans. Despite considerable restructuring in ESCC, the quality of teaching and learning has been maintained, and improved. Policies and handbooks, and paperwork relating to teaching and learning, have been revised, and are now being used well. Family learning co-ordinators have introduced improvements and new initiatives sensitively and effectively. Tutors are fully consulted and thoroughly trained. They understand the rationale behind new initiatives. Family learning co-ordinators carry out useful, regular visits to providers during which they monitor the quality of learning programmes. They observe learning, meet with learners and tutors and check that paperwork is being completed appropriately and the service level agreement complied with. Tutors and partner providers are set appropriate and timely actions for improvement, although it is not always made clear that these have been carried out. During a recent monitoring visit, a group of learners expressed their desire to work towards an external certificate. ESCC became an accredited centre for literacy and numeracy, and these learners recently gained a qualification. Monitoring visits are used well to informally share best practice. External good practice has been sought and successfully adapted to suit the nature of ESCC's provision.
18. ESCC has introduced a quality framework and timetable, which clearly details the arrangements for improving provision. The observation of teaching is now carried

out by an external organisation. This has greatly increased the proportion of family learning tutors who have been observed. ESCC analyses the results of observations and provides group and individual training to address problems. Managers check the appropriateness of observation grades, the quality of tutors' feedback and the external moderation process, and challenge these where necessary. ESCC now recognises that the external observation process does not fully meet their needs, and has trained five staff to be observers for a new, in-house system, which starts in September 2007.

19. Self-assessment processes are well-established and satisfactory. The process is inclusive of all staff but does not yet fully involve partner providers' or tutors' views.
20. Family learning co-ordinators regularly collect learners' and tutors' feedback through a wide range of initiatives and methods. This is used effectively to identify new provision and deal with individual issues. Although analysis of evaluations shows a high level of satisfaction from learners, little useful information is collected to help ESCC improve the provision. Learners have too few opportunities to provide anonymous feedback, with end of course evaluations being returned to their tutor before going to ESCC for analysis.

## Areas of learning

### Family learning

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		2
Adult and community learning	72	2

21. ESCC provides family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning courses. During 2006-07, 439 learners enrolled on wider family learning and 199 on FLLN courses. FLLN courses cover topics including 'Language and Play' and literacy and numeracy. Cookery, drama, preparation for the move from nursery to primary and primary to secondary school, and film making are included in wider family learning. Most courses are held in schools, although children's centres, community centres and a study centre are also used. ESCC locates programmes in areas of high social and economic disadvantage and pockets of rural deprivation. Most courses last between 10 and 20 hours. ESCC also offers two-hour tasters and workshops. The programme is managed by a family learning manager, who shares the co-ordination of the two regions of East Sussex with a part time family learning co-ordinator. The provision is commissioned through partner providers, who deliver the courses and employ the part-time tutors.

#### *Strengths*

- Good development of learners' confidence and skills
- Good teaching and learning
- Strong management of family learning

#### *Weaknesses*

- Inappropriate recording of progress on some courses

#### Achievement and standards

22. Many learners improve their understanding of grammar and mathematics, and develop a sound understanding of how literacy and numeracy are taught in school. They become more confident in helping their children with schoolwork. On wider family learning courses, learners use their newly developed confidence productively in their home and personal lives. They develop good technical skills, like chopping correctly in cookery and apply these well by cooking with their children and experimenting more with different types of recipes, herbs and spices. Learners are well motivated by the skills and strategies they learn to manage their children's behaviour and development. Parents of challenging children are more able to express their feelings. Learners with low self-esteem gain confidence through joining group activities.

23. Most learners attend regularly. Retention rates are good at 96%, and have been consistently high over the past three years. Learners' progression within wider family learning and onto longer FLLN courses is satisfactory. ESCC's data for 2006-07 so far shows a good overall success rate of 91%. Learners' achievement in national tests is satisfactory.

#### The quality of provision

24. Learning sessions are well-planned, and all those observed during the inspection were graded good. Tutors use a wide range of well-structured activities which challenge learners and allow them time for reflection. Learners participate in well-managed discussions, where their views and feelings are explored. Tutors who are covering sensitive topics use successful and appropriate techniques to encourage learners to share their knowledge and experiences. Tutors have good subject knowledge and appropriate skills for teaching in a family-learning setting.

25. The standard of learning resources and accommodation is at least satisfactory, and good in some venues. FLLN learners make appropriate use of computers to reinforce their learning and prepare for national tests. ESCC has some newer, very attractive learning venues. In one school the tables and chairs are inappropriate for adults.

26. The range of family learning provision meets learners' needs. ESCC has given careful consideration to the timing of classes. ESCC has included information, advice and guidance sessions on all courses, giving learners appropriate information about progression opportunities.

27. ESCC's arrangements for guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners, including those on wider family-learning courses, have sufficient opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and language skills. Tutors are aware of the range of help and support available to them and their learners, and use this appropriately. Where needed, learners receive additional support from interpreters. Learners gain information on courses from a wide range of sources, including leaflets, news and television items, partner organisations and local networks. Partner providers have useful crèche and childcare arrangements. ESCC makes a positive contribution to ECM themes, particularly through the development of healthy eating courses.

28. Initial assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Tutors use a good range of tools for initial assessment and monitoring of learner progress. Learners negotiate appropriate group and individual learning outcomes. They receive an appropriate induction to their programmes.

29. On some courses, the recording of learners' progress is inappropriate. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Learners on longer FLLN courses are regularly tested to assess their progress, but do not receive sufficiently specific or detailed feedback. Tutors do not routinely record the progress made by learners

during learning sessions. On other courses, tutors and learners complete too much paperwork for the duration or aim of the programme.

### Leadership and management

30. The management of family learning provision is strong. ESCC has a good number and variety of partners from within the county council, schools, community groups, and children's centres. Family learning co-ordinators work effectively together and are proactive and innovative in seeking new partners. ESCC works very productively with partners to identify and target new areas of provision. The provision is well-planned. Enrolments on each partner provider's programme are carefully monitored. ESCC's expectations of partner providers and tutors are high. Good progress has been made to improve and assure the quality of the provision. The county council supports partner providers and tutors well through frequent monitoring visits, good communication, an informative family learning tutor handbook and appropriate training opportunities. Training for tutors focuses on areas identified for improvement. ESCC's arrangements for the sharing of best practice have improved and are now satisfactory. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

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