

Isles of Scilly Council

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

■ Community Learning

The provision is small, with insufficient numbers of learners to inspect and grade sector subject areas separately. Therefore, all provision was inspected and graded under community learning.

Description of the provider

1. Adult and community learning (ACL) was established on the Isles of Scilly in 1999. The provision is managed through the lifelong learning section of the council of the Isles of Scilly, which is located in the directorate of community services. Most courses are based at the learning centre at Carn Thomas on St. Mary's. Some courses take place on the four other inhabited islands. The provision has significant importance to the community of under 2,000 adults, as there are no colleges or other providers of post-16 education on the islands.
2. Devon and Cornwall Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds ACL provision. Additional funding is provided by the council. The council works with partners to access other streams of funding. It currently holds a European Social Fund (ESF) contract for the additional costs of learning to islanders taking vocational qualifications through other providers. ACL provision is managed by the head of the lifelong learning section and a vocational training co-ordinator is responsible for ESF arrangements. They are supported by part-time administrative staff. Tutors are hourly paid. Most teach short courses. Some are bought in from providers on the mainland when specific expertise is required. Throughout 2007/08, 415 learners enrolled on ACL provision. During inspection 72 learners were enrolled.
3. The remote location of the islands adds significantly to the cost and logistical arrangements of provision. Tourism makes up over 85% of the economy, though the council is the main employer. Most islanders hold multiple-jobs. Within the next five year, a third of the current population will be aged 65 or over.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Community Learning	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision in community learning are satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The council demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. Although the inspection grades do not show an improvement on the grades of the previous inspection, the service has worked well within limited resources to provide comprehensive adult learning opportunities for this isolated community. The service has maintained and further developed the strengths identified at the previous inspection. The team has taken appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection and has made satisfactory progress overall.
6. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory, although quality monitoring arrangements are insufficiently established. The team has made significant progress in implementing the quality assurance system that was new at the time of the previous inspection. It is in the process of reviewing quality assurance arrangements with the assistance of an external consultant. New and more thorough procedures are being introduced, but it is too early to identify their impact. However, the changes underway are appropriate and demonstrate a good understanding of key quality improvement mechanisms. Reliable data is now available through a management information system that was new at the previous inspection. Effective use is made of regular data reports to monitor provision. The council has made arrangements with another provider using the system to further improve familiarity with the system and extend the range of data utilisation.
7. The self-assessment process is currently inadequate but substantial work is underway to address this. The self-assessment report dated December 2007 is descriptive and does not include strengths or areas for improvement. The council recognises the need to implement a critical, evaluative self-assessment process. The draft report for 2007/08 shows considerable improvement on the previous report. It includes strengths and areas for improvement, many of which match those identified by inspectors. The draft report includes a useful summary of actions taken during the past year to improve provision. For example, the council has appointed a new information technology manager. Technical support for the development of innovative uses of information learning technology (ILT) by the team has improved. The self-assessment process is not yet fully inclusive. Tutors only contribute to the process indirectly through end of course reviews. The council has recognised the need to involve tutors more fully, and plans to introduce self-assessment meetings for this purpose.

Key strengths

- Good progression

- Good teaching by particularly knowledgeable tutors
- Responsive course provision
- Strong partnership working to extend learning opportunities
- Highly innovative approach to minimise the impact of remoteness

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient focus on planning and monitoring individual learning
- Insufficient progress in identifying sources of external support to develop the provision
- Insufficient engagement of tutors to develop the service
- Insufficiently established quality monitoring arrangements

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Learner progression is good. Many learners progress from one course to another, and benefit from developing new skills and participating in stimulating learning experiences. Most of the provision is non-accredited, apart from some short courses such as food hygiene. Success rates on accredited courses are high, as identified in the self-assessment report. Significant pathways for learners to progress between ACL and vocational qualifications offered by other providers are now well established. The service has enabled many learners to gain vocational qualifications by accessing funds from the European Social Fund (ESF) to pay for the additional costs of learning on the islands, for example, transport and accommodation costs of assessors from the mainland. Overall, opportunities for progression and accreditation have increased significantly with a clear impact on learners' employment opportunities. Many learners have gained employment as a result of attending ACL courses, particularly those learners who have progressed from basic information technology (IT) courses. The main employer on the islands is the council which often requires IT skills of its employees.
9. Attendance rates are adversely affected by transport difficulties for learners from the off-islands. For example, boat services between the islands are cancelled at short notice as a result of poor weather conditions. During inspection, only 56 of the 72 learners enrolled attended their classes.
10. The standard of learners' work is good. Many learners find their learning useful in running their own businesses. Learners develop good understanding and skills. They develop personal and social skills which lead to increased confidence and self-esteem. Learners improve their dexterity and physical wellbeing through attending classes such as yoga and fitness through exercise.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Good teaching by particularly knowledgeable tutors benefits learning. Tutors have good expertise and experience and communicate their enthusiasm and passion for their subject to the learners. They engage in further training to keep up to date in their specialisms and to enhance learning. Learners enjoy their learning and participate enthusiastically in classes. The profile of teaching and learning grades at inspection reflects the grades awarded in internal observations. Of the five lessons graded by inspectors four were good and one was outstanding.
12. The range of ILT resources available to tutors is good as a result of successful bids for additional funding. However, many ILT resources are new and not all tutors are confident in using the full range of equipment available. An appropriate range of resources is available to support learning in a variety of subject areas, from yoga to print-making.
13. The planning and monitoring of individual learning are insufficient to meet all learners' needs. Some courses, such as yoga and fitness through exercise, recruit new learners

throughout the year. Although learning sessions are well planned, they are planned for whole group activity rather than individualised learning. Tutors do not always sufficiently measure each learner's starting point or use this information to plan individual learning. They do not sufficiently use teaching strategies which cater for differing abilities or integrate new learners.

14. The range of programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. The provision is very responsive. A well organised lifelong learning brochure outlines all learning opportunities available to adult learners, including those available through other providers and other sections of the council such as leisure and health. Within the ACL funded provision, learners have access to a wide range of courses including archaeology, emergency first aid, IT, step aerobics and power-boating. The range of courses on offer provides good progression routes. The service has a very inclusive approach to making learning accessible. This year, the course brochure does not include fixed dates and times of courses. Instead, courses are organised around expressions of interest from learners. Course times are agreed in response to learners' and tutors' availability. Once the dates are fixed, further recruitment activity, such as posters publicising individual courses, promotes the availability of classes. Classes arranged at weekends enable those with family and work responsibilities to attend. A creative pilot project is underway to introduce distance learning incorporating video conferencing. A beginners' course in Spanish is planned to begin in January in collaboration with the Cornwall adult education service. If successful, the service plans to extend the range of courses using distance learning and ILT.
15. Support for learners is satisfactory. Well qualified staff provide information and guidance on course choices and signpost them appropriately to other provisions. However, guidance materials are not always sufficiently detailed and learners are sometimes referred to the tutor for further information. Good facilities are available to meet the needs of learners with sensory impairments. Premises are accessible to learners with restricted mobility. Appropriate financial support is available to learners, including the costs of travel between islands. The new learner handbook contains useful information on arrangements to support learners, but is not yet distributed to learners or used by tutors at induction. Induction is variable in quality and some tutors do not pay sufficient attention to introducing new learners to the provision.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

16. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strong partnership working extends learning opportunities for the community, as identified in the self-assessment report. The council has a strong commitment to lifelong learning and the service benefits from partnership working with other departments. Strategic partnership work through membership of the learning partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is good. The service has developed good links with providers on the mainland, especially through collaborative working on ESF projects which have proved invaluable to the sustainability of the island workforce. The projects have provided vocational qualifications for those employed in a range of occupations, in particular tourism, council employees and young people who would otherwise not be in education, employment or training. An advisory group which includes elected members representing community interests is developing an action plan to further improve the provision.
17. The service adopts highly innovative approaches to minimise the impact of remoteness. Complex travel arrangements between the islands optimise access to learning. Regular boat services are used where possible, and additional boats are arranged for learners so that they can attend classes. The service has increased provision on the off-islands through training tutors resident on these islands. For example, one group to tutor fitness courses has been trained and another is being recruited. The current project to use ILT to infill on a language course taking place on the mainland has considerable potential for increasing the provision available to the islanders.
18. Arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language support are appropriate. Although the service does not have a skills for life strategy, procedures are in place to ensure that learners with identified needs are supported.
19. The council has made insufficient progress in identifying sources of external support to develop the provision. The operational management of the provision is complex and time-consuming. The council has identified that external support is required to provide additional expertise and keep up to date with developments in ACL. The service has benefited from recent external consultancy but has not identified longer term arrangements for external support to ensure that the provision continues to improve.
20. Tutors are insufficiently engaged in developing the service. A small core of tutors is regularly employed by the service, most tutors are employed intermittently throughout the year. Although regular training events are held, attendance is variable. Tutors do not meet to discuss the effectiveness of the service or to share good practice. Many do not have a clear understanding of key issues such as recognising and recording progress on non-accredited courses. Tutors complete end of course reviews which feed into the self-assessment process, but are not otherwise included in self-assessment activity. The service recognises the need to involve tutors more effectively, in particular in the self-assessment process. It intends to hold at least two tutor meetings a year, but has yet to make the appropriate arrangements.

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21. Quality monitoring arrangements are insufficiently established. A recently introduced quality assurance system is in the process of implementation. For example, learner and tutor handbooks, class visits and a more thorough process of observations of teaching and learning are in the early stages of implementation. It is too early to identify the impact of these changes. The use of data has improved. Data is now accurate and reliable. Data reports are now informing management and monitoring processes. However, the use of data to monitor all aspects of the quality of provision is still under development.
22. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The service has a good focus on ensuring that all members of the community, especially those that live on the off-islands, can access provision. Arrangements to cover transport, childcare costs and subsidise course fees for those on means-tested benefits are appropriate. They extend opportunities for learning throughout the community. Although the service has identified the under-representation of men and those aged over 65 years, it has not implemented any strategies to address this. The learner and tutor handbooks contain clear information to promote equality of opportunity, but are not yet distributed to all learners and tutors. After the previous inspection, the service required tutors to include materials to promote equality and cultural diversity within their courses. However, it has not monitored the continued implementation of this initiative. Tutors have not received recent relevant training in promoting equality of opportunity, especially at induction. The council has appropriate policies and procedures relating to equality of opportunity and complies with equalities legislation. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. All staff and tutors are CRB checked. The Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Adult Safeguarding Board is providing training for the council in safeguarding vulnerable adults. Some tutors have attended training and the rest are to be trained in the near future.

What learners like:

- 'They do a great job, we're so lucky'
- 'It's completely changed the atmosphere on the islands'
- 'We are not only learning, but having fun'
- 'I never feel intimidated'
- 'They are so approachable'
- 'Great opportunities for someone like me'
- 'The IT course will help me to get work'
- 'Walking through that door can change your life'

What learners think could improve:

- 'I'm not always able to take part, as I work'
- 'I wish we had a proper sports hall'