

Nottingham City Council

Inspection date

28 November 2008

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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:

- Preparation for life and work
- Family learning

Description of the provider

- 1. Until 2006, Nottingham City Council (the council) offered a wide range of adult and community learning programmes but then took the decision to reduce the provision to enable it to focus on its priorities. The council now offers programmes in family learning, Entry to Employment (E2E) and apprenticeships. The number of apprentices is small, so the programme was not inspected. The programmes are funded by the Nottinghamshire LSC.
- 2. In Nottingham city, 34% of adults have attainment below Level 1 in Skills for Life, and 17.4% of the population have no qualifications, which is higher than the regional figure of 13.5%. At 8.6%, the level of unemployment in Nottingham is higher than the national average of 5.2%. The area is the seventh most deprived in England, with four wards in the most deprived 10% of wards in England. Fifteen per cent of the city's population are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 7.9% nationally.
- 3. In line with the broader plans of the council, the family learning and E2E programmes are aimed at vulnerable, under-represented and under-achieving groups of families, young people and adults. Family learning is a priority for the council. It is subcontracted to a range of providers, with local colleges delivering the majority. It takes place in 70 venues across the city. A part of the city council, called Learning Works for Young People, delivers E2E in nine centres throughout the city, some in deprived local communities. European social funding supports some of this provision. The management structures for the two areas of the provision are completely separate. The council has 95 learners on E2E programmes and 156 learners on family learning programmes.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject areas

Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2	
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Family learning	Good: Grade 2	

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Adult and community learning Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

- 4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievements and standards in E2E and family learning provision are good with good improvements in learners' confidence, self-esteem and skills. The level of achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications on the E2E provision is excellent.
- 5. The quality of the provision is good with good teaching and learning in both E2E and family learning. Lessons are well planned and, in family learning, tutors make the sessions fun. However, target-setting in E2E is poor. In family learning, the use of individual learning plans and of systems to record and recognise learners' progress and achievement is ineffective, with poor target-setting in some. In a small number of family learning venues, furniture is not suitable for adults.
- 6. Support for learners on both E2E and family learning programmes is good. In E2E programmes, tutors support learners on a range of social, health and welfare issues. On family learning programmes, learners have access to good information about the progression opportunities and help with the writing of their curriculum vitae.
- 7. Leadership and management are good. The council has a clear strategic direction which is understood by staff. Recent restructuring has placed family learning and E2E within appropriate service areas. Management of the two programmes is good. The monitoring of subcontractors is good and has led to improvements in the quality of delivery. The use of data is good. Processes to monitor and improve the quality of the provision, such as the observation of teaching and learning, are effective.
- 8. Promotion of equality of opportunity in E2E programmes is good. Actions to widen participation are good, particularly in E2E programmes. However, the council does not sufficiently monitor how tutors in family learning are raising learners' understanding of equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

9. The council has demonstrated it has a good capacity to make further improvements. Self-assessment is used effectively to improve the quality of the provision. The first draft of this year's self-assessment report, due for completion in January 2009, accurately identifies most of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors. In 2006, family learning and leadership and management were subject to reinspection. Since then, the council has introduced effective improvements. Leadership and management have improved and are now good. Curriculum management in family learning and E2E programme management is good. The quality of family learning and E2E remains good. The council has now effectively implemented most quality improvement activities. Monitoring and support arrangements of subcontractors delivering family learning are sound. They have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of subcontractors, which has improved the overall quality. Arrangements to observe teaching and learning are effective and the quality of teaching and learning across the provision is good.

Key strengths

- Good achievement of skills
- Excellent achievement rates in literacy and numeracy on E2E programmes
- Good teaching and learning
- Good management
- Clear strategic direction
- Good promotion of equality of opportunity on E2E programmes

Key areas for improvement

- Poor use of individual targets in learning plans
- Insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equality of opportunity in family learning

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

10. Achievement and standards are good in both E2E and family learning provision, which is a grade higher than in the self-assessment report written in December 2007. This self-assessment has been used effectively by the council to improve the achievement and standards. Learners in both areas improve their confidence and self-esteem. There is no significant difference in the achievement rates between different groups of learners. In E2E, the literacy and numeracy achievement rate is excellent. Learners also develop a good level of skills. In family learning, these skills assist learners to understand and relate to their children. In E2E, these skills enhance their employability.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

- 11. The quality of the provision is good in both E2E and family learning. The self-assessment report judges this to be satisfactory in E2E and good in family learning. Teaching and learning are good. In E2E, the lessons are well paced, with learners concentrating particularly well on their activities. Teachers plan the course well, and praise and encourage the learners. Family learning lessons are also well planned, quickly adapted to the needs of the learners, and the tutors make them fun. Tutors create a supportive and welcoming environment for learners. However, in some family learning sessions, the accommodation, especially seating, is not suitable for adult learners.
- 12. Individual targets for learners in the E2E passports are poor. They concentrate on activities to be undertaken rather than on what is to be learnt. Similarly, some of the targets that are set in individual learning plans and the documentation used in family learning to recognise and record progress and achievement are not sufficiently detailed.
- 13. Both family learning and E2E programmes meet the needs of their learners well. The E2E provision has good links with a range of employers, which provide learners with suitable, supportive placements. Family learning programmes meet the needs of the wider community as well as learners, by being offered in schools and areas where there is most need. Some courses specifically target male learners.

14. Support for learners is good, particularly in E2E programmes. Staff support the learners well in dealing with a range of social, health and welfare issues. The information, advice and guidance given to these learners is satisfactory. In family learning programmes, learners have access to additional support, such as help with writing curriculum vitae, help in applying for jobs and information about progression opportunities. Crèche facilities are available in most centres.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

- 15. Leadership and management are good, as the self-assessment report identifies. The council has a clear strategic direction. Since the previous inspection, it has restructured its children's services to support the achievement of the five key priorities in its children and young people's plan. Family learning and E2E provision are now included within service areas that both complement and support the achievement of programme goals. Strategic planning includes detailed plans that support the strategic service plans and effectively link to relevant improvement plans. Appropriate use is made of individual professional development targets to support their aims. Targets effectively support local, regional and national priorities. The E2E and the family learning managers have used their links with other council services and other agencies effectively to plan and establish the provision. External funding has been used well.
- 16. Monitoring and support of family learning subcontractors is good. The council sets and monitors challenging targets for all subcontractors and contract review meetings effectively focus on actions for improvement. Where appropriate, the council implements very timely remedial action to address under-performance, and in the last year the council has significantly reduced the number of subcontractors. Support for family learning subcontractors is good. Training events focus well on the needs of learners. Attendance is good. Effective arrangements are in place to share good practice. The council has made appropriate use of a benchmarking initiative with a group of similar local authorities to inform developments in family learning. Communication between the council and all subcontractors is good. The council has recently introduced a newsletter to keep family learning tutors updated on individual subcontractor performance and progress on initiatives, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this and other developments to enhance communications.
- 17. The council collects and analyses a wide range of data for both programmes. Managers have access to, and use, a wide variety of informative and well presented reports. Thorough analysis and evaluation of the data within the quality task group leads to the implementation of actions for programme

- improvement. An appropriate range of programme targets are set, and are used to assess the rate of improvement. Target milestones, to assist the monitoring of progress, are not set.
- 18. The process to recognise and record progress and achievement is satisfactory. However, as recognised in the draft self-assessment report, the use of the process is not always effective. The council has a suitable Skills for Life strategy. Procedures to assess and support learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills are good on E2E programmes.
- 19. Arrangements for staff development are satisfactory. Tutors are suitably qualified or working towards an award. They have good access to a suitable range of quality learning resources. Accommodation varies but is satisfactory overall. Venues are welcoming and provide an appropriate environment for learning. However, some family learning venues do not provide appropriate accommodation for adults.
- 20. Since the previous inspection, the council has carried out much work to improve the quality of the provision. The council has suitably detailed quality assurance procedures for both programmes. They support a clearly-defined quality cycle. Internal quality audits arrangements are satisfactory. Within E2E, they provide sufficient detail on the quality of completed documents and the consistency of their use by the tutors. Within family learning programmes, audit of subcontractors is good. Service level agreements ensure that the provider has access to the data it needs to effectively monitor quality. The quality task group identifies areas for improvement that form the basis of an effectively-monitored action plan.
- 21. Actions to secure quality improvement of teaching and learning through observation are effective, although they tend to place an over-reliance on the performance of the tutor rather than the impact of the teaching on the learner. Observed tutors receive useful feedback and support to improve their performance. Moderation of the outcome of observations is effective. Inspectors agree with the self-assessment strength of good teaching in the two programmes. However, the council has not observed all of the tutors within the required timescale. Feedback from learners and other stakeholders is sought and valued by the council. Managers use it effectively to monitor and improve the quality of the provision. For example, the council identified that progression rates in E2E programmes fell in 2007/08 and they are taking effective actions to improve them.
- 22. Information, advice and guidance arrangements are satisfactory. Learners in both programme areas have adequate access to them, which helps the learners to reach realistic decisions about their futures. Information, advice and guidance is available throughout a learner's programme as well as when they leave. However, as identified in the family learning self-assessment report, links between some tutors and the provider of the information, advice and guidance are not fully effective. In addition, the council does not sufficiently monitor the uptake of

- sessions or fully analyse data to identify trends. Quality assurance arrangements for information, advice and guidance are not yet fully effective.
- 23. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. Staff and learners understand the policy and there are regular training events to ensure that all staff understand the broader aspects of safeguarding. Vetting checks are carried out for all staff. For subcontracted provision, the council takes steps to ensure that all tutors have also been vetted. In the E2E provision, tutors help learners to safeguard themselves by ensuring that they understand those situations that might be unsafe and those that are safe.
- 24. Equality of opportunity is good. The council takes effective actions to improve E2E learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is covered in some depth during induction, with a particular emphasis on bullying and learners' responsibilities as well as their rights. Programmes regularly cover equality and diversity to challenge learners' assumptions and prejudices.
- 25. The council is very effective in widening the participation of a range of vulnerable and under-represented groups, in line with the council's children and young people's plan. The E2E provision is particularly good. Programmes include those to raise the aspirations of pregnant teenagers and programmes for learners from Traveller Communities. Where necessary, the council seeks other sources of funding. The family learning provision targets effectively those areas most in need by the careful selection of locations and providers.
- 26. The council uses data well to identify under-represented groups. In E2E, it compares the profile of its learners, not with the local population, but with the profile of young people in Nottingham who are not involved in employment, education or training.
- 27. The council has appropriate policies covering equality of opportunity, harassment and bullying which are modified to meet the needs of learners. All staff, including subcontractors, receive training on equality of opportunity at least once each year. The council checks that the equality of opportunity policies and practices of its subcontractors are appropriate.
- 28. The council does not sufficiently monitor the promotion of equality of opportunity in family learning. Tutors receive little guidance on how they should raise learners' understanding of equality of opportunity in sessions, although there is some evidence that this takes place. Learners' induction covers equality of opportunity relatively briefly and concentrates on ensuring that learners' understand the council's equality of opportunity policy and what the learner can expect from the council. Little is done to ensure that they understand their responsibilities as well as their rights.

What learners like:

- Working on the learners' magazine
- The friendly atmosphere
- The opportunity to gain qualifications
- The teaching staff 'Tutors are good and make it fun'
- The venues 'Isn't like school'
- The acquisition of skills 'Prepares you for real life well'
- The chance to share their child's experience 'Helps me understand what my child is learning at school and how different it is to when I was at school.'
- The opportunity to support their children 'I can help my child with homework'
- The potential for socialising 'I meet other parents in the same situation as me'
- The development of employability skills 'I have gained the confidence to get a job'
- The support 'It kept me going when I was homeless'

What learners think could improve:

- The availability of courses 'More courses please'
- The variety of courses 'Can we have more fun courses in between the others'
- The scheduling of courses 'I don't like English and mathematics taking place on alternate weeks'

Sector subject areas

Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

Context

29. Ninety-five learners are currently enrolled on the E2E programme at the council. Of these, 51% are male, 17% are from minority ethnic groups and 23% have a disability or a health problem. Most learners are referred to the council by Connexions and are aged between 16 and 18. They attend one of 10 centres. The average length of the programme is 22 weeks. Learners are able to join the E2E programme at any time of the year.

Strengths

- Excellent achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications
- Good development of personal, social and employability skills
- Good teaching and learning
- Good support for learners
- Good management of the programme

Areas for improvement

- Poor setting of targets for learners in many E2E passports
- Poor monitoring of trends in attendance

Achievement and standards

- 30. Achievement and standards are good. Achievement rates in the literacy and numeracy national tests are excellent at 95% and 94% respectively. In 2007/08, 87 learners sat the national test in literacy and 65 learners sat the numeracy national test. Learners' achievement of a wide variety of other qualifications is good at 73%.
- 31. Learners make good progress in developing personal, social and employability skills. Many learners make significant gains in the skills they need for working life, for example in dealing with customers and in time-keeping skills.
- 32. Progression from E2E programmes is satisfactory. In 2007/08, 55% of learners progressed to positive outcomes, a fall from the previous year. Of these, 11% progressed to work-based learning, including apprenticeships, 20% to full-time employment and 24% to further education. Of those learners who did not progress to a positive outcome, 18 learners attended a programme for young expectant mothers. A further six learners, who did not progress to positive

outcomes, attended a programme managed by a subcontractor, whose contract has now been terminated. In the first four months of 2008/09, 68% of those learners who have completed their programme have progressed to positive outcomes.

Quality of provision

- 33. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Learners participate in sessions, work well together and many of them concentrate particularly well on their work. Learning activities are well paced and varied. Teachers praise and encourage learners effectively; most of them are skilled in asking questions that stimulate discussion and reflection. Course and session planning is good.
- 34. Progress reviews are satisfactory. The workplace coordinator, employers and learners participate in thorough reviews set in the workplace. Teachers monitor learners' progress against targets regularly. Learners understand their targets and are aware of the progress they are making. Staff record learners' progress in developing personal, social and employability skills. Initial assessment is satisfactory.
- 35. The targets for learners in many E2E passports are poor. They are expressed as actions, or as whole or parts of qualifications, rather than as skills or knowledge appropriate to the learners' needs or interests. The council has recognised this and there has been some recent improvement.
- 36. The provision meets the needs of the learners well. They work on activities and sessions appropriate to their needs and interests. They attend a taster programme before beginning their course. Learners and staff negotiate suitable start dates for work-placements, while those who are not yet ready are given the opportunity to work on other programmes. The council has good links with employers. Staff work hard to secure learners suitable, supportive placements. Staff take care in establishing that employers follow acceptable health and safety procedures and in preparing employers to take on the learners.
- 37. Support for learners is good. The council supports learners on work-placements well with regular visits. Employers support learners well, many of whom have emotional, behavioural or other personal difficulties that can hinder them from settling smoothly into their placements.
- 38. Staff give individual learners effective support on a wide range of personal, social, health and welfare issues, including with mental health. The council invites speakers from external agencies to talk to learners about issues such as sex and drugs awareness and mental health. Identification and support of learners with additional support needs is good.
- 39. Provision of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. Learners receive satisfactory information and advice relating to progression in the latter stages of

their programme and when they leave. Learners receive sufficient initial information and advice about the programme from both trainers and Connexions personal advisers. However, some agencies and services, which refer learners to E2E programmes, are insufficiently informed about the content of the E2E programmes.

Leadership and management

- 40. Leadership and management are good. Programme management of the E2E programmes is good. Staff in the E2E programme promote equality and diversity very well. Learners discuss equal opportunities issues at induction and before attending work-placements. Learners attend sessions intended to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues. Teachers promote equality and learners celebrate diversity very effectively in many aspects of the curriculum.
- 41. The council offers particularly effective initiatives to increase participation by socially excluded learners, for example young expectant mothers and learners from traveller communities.
- 42. Managers and staff communicate well with each other and with learners. Regular team meetings complement more informal sharing of views, concerns and ideas. E2E staff are highly committed to the programme. Staff feel valued, and able to contribute to the decision-making process throughout the organisation. Staff at all levels attend a good range of training and development programmes or activities. The council encourages staff to work towards training qualifications.
- 43. Many aspects of quality improvement are good. Managers and staff pay particular attention to learners' views in evaluating and planning changes to the programme. Learners are represented on some working groups, for example the health and safety working group. The self-assessment process captures many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during inspection.
- 44. Monitoring of trends in learners' attendance is poor. The council does not gather information on attendance, or analyse trends over time for use in planning and decision-making.

Family learning

Good: Grade 2

Context

- 45. Family learning in the council is intended to be is a first step into learning for parents. Family learning courses are offered for parents under the names of keeping up with the children and family literacy and numeracy. Wider courses are offered in family, social and emotional aspects of learning, stress-free parenting, getting ready for nursery, story sacks, law and order, computers don't byte, being healthy and family arts and crafts.
- 46. Courses vary in length from 10 to 60 hours, with most sessions lasting two hours. All take place during the day, at times to fit in with school. All courses are free of charge and are accompanied by free crèche facilities. In many courses the children in school join their parents for part of the session.
- 47. At the time of inspection, 156 learners were attending 23 different courses in 22 venues, mainly primary schools.
- 48. Fifteen tutors both hourly paid and full time are employed by five subcontractors to deliver the courses. The main target groups are parents and other family members with children at the school where the provision is based. National accreditation is offered at Levels 1 and 2.

Strengths

- Good learner achievements
- Good teaching and learning
- Good curriculum management

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of systems to plan learning and record achievement
- Some unsuitable accommodation for adults

Achievement and standards

- 49. Achievement and standards are good. Many learners with little positive experience of compulsory education gain confidence, self-esteem and a range of skills. They enjoy the positive effects of the group interaction and support. The new skills they gain are used effectively when relating to their children. Learners understand how children learn, and they feel more confident about working with school staff. Where sessions include parents and children working together, parents value the time they have with their child on an individual basis without the distractions of home life. Craft work is good and relates well to the subject area. Many learners progress onto other courses and gain accreditation, or they progress into employment, volunteering at the local school, working as governors or teaching assistants.
- 50. Learners' success is celebrated at special events held in schools, in the city hall or major local centres. Learners in the family learning group of the year all received an attractive prestigious glass trophy.

Quality of provision

- 51. The quality of the provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Classes are well planned and are quickly adapted to meet learner needs with an appropriate and well managed range of activities to include individual, small and whole group work with practical activities. Lessons are well paced to meet the needs of the learners. Learners are focused on work in the sessions and are actively engaged throughout them with a sense of enjoyment. At the start of lessons, learners receive the outline and aims of the lesson and at the end they comment on what they have learnt and its impact, with comments and feedback from the tutor. Learners value this. Accommodation in a small number of centres is unsuitable for adult learners with only child-sized chairs.
- 52. The environment for learners is supportive. Tutors are skilled at creating a learning environment where learners feel comfortable and confident to express their views. Tutors make learning fun and frequently relate activities to the learners' home experiences. They use questions and responses to learners' comments to reinforce learning points. In many sessions, the teaching assistants employed at the school work with the group and act as an effective contact with learners during the week.
- 53. Handouts and resources are appropriate with easy to read text and illustrations. Nationally-produced course materials and resources are adapted to suit the needs of learners. Resources and materials for craft work are appropriate.
- 54. The family learning provision meets the needs of learners. The links with extended schools is effective and contributes to the appropriate range of courses offered. Many courses are open to the public as well as the parents of children at the school. School staff comment on the positive benefits to the parents and children. Venues and subcontractors are chosen carefully to ensure that the

- provision is available for those in the city who most need it. The council works with other partners to broaden its offer. For example, it has worked with the Isle of Wight service, the police and justice systems in the development of a successful course in law and order.
- 55. Learners have access to additional support when necessary. Crèche facilities, usually sited close to the learning area, are available in almost all centres. Support and information about progression to other courses or help in writing curriculum vitae is available.
- 56. Documents associated with recognising and recording progress and achievement and individual learning plans are used inconsistently, with some being used poorly. Targets are sometimes not set or are insufficiently detailed. Where targets are set, learners use them to record the progress that they have made.

Leadership and management

- 57. Curriculum management is good. A development officer linked to the extended schools initiative effectively supports the full-time family learning manager. The council sets enrolment targets for each subcontractor and a detailed service level agreement is in place. Effective monitoring visits are carried out and provide useful feedback to inform decision-making. Tutors value the observation of teaching and learning as a supportive process leading to improvements.
- 58. Marketing of the family learning programmes is effective. Leaflets and flyers are mainly delivered to parents via the schools. Posters are bright, colourful and eye-catching.
- 59. Staff are experienced and well qualified, and are well supported by the family learning manager. They meet regularly to review priorities and share good practice. A newsletter, email contact and the monitoring visits promote effective communications between staff. Tutors have access to a range of resources, lesson plan templates, marketing materials, training events, and photographs of celebration events on a website. Tutors are supported and paid to attend staff development events, some of which are shared with staff from the Nottinghamshire County's provision.
- 60. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The council works well to widen participation. For example, some programmes are for teenage mothers and there are well advanced plans for the introduction of family learning activities in a local prison. However, the council does not sufficiently monitor the promotion of equality of opportunity in lessons.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by Nottingham City Council 2005 to 2009

Year	Number of leavers in the	Achieved objectives rate*	Progression rate**
	year	(%)	(%)
2006/07	157	38	61
2007/08	187	54	55
2008/09 (4 months)	19	79	68

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of four months of the LSC contract year

Note: E2E 'achieved objective' and 'progression' rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection

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^{*} These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

^{**} Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period.