# Norfolk County Council

Inspection date                    23 January 2009

Inspection number                  331438

# Contents

# 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:

- Health, public services and care
- Information and communication technology
- Arts, media and publishing
- Education and training
- Preparation for life and work
- Family learning

# Description of the provider

1.  Norfolk County Council (NCC) Adult Education Service (the Service) provides learning opportunities across all of Norfolk including Norwich. Funding is provided by the Norfolk LSC. The Service offers courses in 13 of the 15 subject sector areas. Almost all learners are white British or white non-British, broadly reflecting the population of the county. Around 25,000 individuals enrol each year on over 3,000 courses based in a range of venues. In 2007/08, 66% of the provision was at level 1 or below, 23% at level 2, 9% at level 3. The Service offers a programme of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and skills for life qualifications which have been funded through Train to Gain since September 2008. During the week of the inspection there were 7,863 ACL learners of whom 5,166 were taking programmes leading to a qualification. In addition, 435 were taking Train to Gain programmes.

2.  The current service budget is around nine-million pounds per annum. The Service is part of the Cultural Services Department of NCC, reporting to the Chief Officer for Corporate Resources and Cultural Services.

3.  The population of Norfolk is widely distributed and some of the smaller communities are poorly served by public transport. As well as more affluent areas, the county has areas of high deprivation. In June 2008 the rate of unemployment was 4.1%, close to the regional average, but lower than the national average of 5.2%. In the 2001 census 1.6% of the population were from minority ethnic groups, significantly lower than the national average. Recent years have seen significant increases in migrant workers from Portugal, Eastern Europe and China.

# Summary of grades awarded

| Effectiveness of provision | Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

| Capacity to improve | Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|

| Achievement and standards | Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

| Quality of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
|---|---|
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

| Leadership and management | Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

| Equality of opportunity | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|

# Sector subject areas

| Health, public services and care | Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|

| Information and communication technology | Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|

| Arts, media and publishing | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
|---|---|

| Education and training | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
|---|---|

| Preparation for life and work | Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|

| Family learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
|---|---|

# Overall judgement

## Effectiveness of provision
Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning                                           Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain                                                          Good: Grade 2

4. The effectiveness of the provision offered by the Service is good. Three of the sector subject areas inspected are judged to be good and of those not formally inspected there is evidence that standards have been maintained from the previous inspection when they were judged to be good.

5. Achievement and standards are good; success rates are good and improving. Learners develop good personal, practical and employability skills.

6. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory, with no inadequate sessions seen by inspectors. There is, however, insufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning in some lessons. The range of programmes meets the needs of learners and employers well. Courses are offered in venues across all of Norfolk including the more remote rural locations. Vocational courses are flexible around the business needs of employers.

7. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance before starting a programme and during the programme are appropriate, however, some learners do not benefit from effective assessment of their numeracy and literacy needs.

8. Leadership and management are good with a clear strategic direction and an appropriate focus on meeting both the LSC and the NCC priorities. Curriculum development is clear and well developed. Partnership working is particularly good with good working relationships with a wide range of other organisations. These partnerships benefit learners and the wider community.

9. Equality of opportunity is good. Actions to engage the most disadvantaged learners are particularly effective although tutors receive insufficient guidance about how they should promote equality of opportunity during lessons and this aspect of teaching is not sufficiently monitored.

## Capacity to improve
Good: Grade 2

10. The Service has demonstrated it has a good capacity to make further improvements. Since the inspection in May 2005 the Service has completed an organisational restructuring and has established a clear vision and direction for the provision. Over this period success rates have improved considerably. The Service has used staff training to build the service's capacity. Channels of communications with tutors have been improved as have processes to enable

tutors to share good practice, however, the implementation of comprehensive quality improvement arrangements has been slow.

11. Most key strengths in leadership and management in the previous inspection have been maintained and many of the weaknesses have been addressed. Data use is now satisfactory. At the previous inspection the monitoring of data relating to equality of opportunity was inadequate. It is now satisfactory.

12. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The compilation of the self-assessment report is part of an established business planning cycle. The Service makes appropriate use of data within the report to support its judgements. The resulting report is generally self-critical and includes a development plan that incorporates actions identified by the quality improvement group to improve the service. Many of the judgements made at inspection are identified in the self-assessment report, although some strengths in the self-assessment report are normal practice. Grades awarded at inspection were comparable to those identified by the provider; however, as noted by the provider, the compilation of the report did not include effective use of feedback from learners, tutors and other stakeholders.

# Key strengths

- Good and improving success rates
- Good development of personal, practical and employment skills
- Good strategic and operational management and planning
- Good partnership working
- Effective actions to engage disadvantaged learners
- Good aspects of equality of opportunity

# Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient consultation with employers in Train to Gain provision
- Insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning in some programmes
- Some ineffective assessment of learners' numeracy and literacy needs
- Slow progress to introduce quality improvement arrangements

# Main findings

## Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning                         Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain                                       Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

13. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates are good and improving particularly on long level 2 courses. In 2006/07, the most recent period where national averages are available, the success rates on these courses was eight percentage points above the national average of 69%. In 2007/08 they rose by a further 2%. In 2006/07 the success rate for short courses was 78%, 5% below the national average rising to 88% in 2007/08. Long level 1 courses were 8% above the national average in 2006/07 but dropped back by 3.7% points in 2007/08.

14. Learners develop good personal, practical and employability skills. On Train to Gain programmes learners develop skills which help them, and their employers, in the workplace. Learners on literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes and those taking family learning programmes improve their confidence.

## Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning                         Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain                                       Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

The quality of provision is satisfactory overall.

15. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with 44% of lessons seen by inspectors being satisfactory and 53% good with 2% outstanding. This is in line with the Service's own observations of these sector subject areas. Most learners have access to a suitable range of learning resources, however, there is insufficient access to ICT in some literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes and family learning programmes. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, though some art and craft classes are too cold or inappropriately furnished for the tasks undertaken by learners.

16. Employers are not sufficiently involved in planning Train to Gain learners' programmes or in their regular progress reviews. Assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills on these programmes is ineffective and does not lead to timely support for some learners.

17. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. Courses are offered across all of Norfolk making access easy for those in the more remote parts of the county. Train to Gain programmes meet the needs of learners as well as

employers, being delivered flexibly and in the more inaccessible parts of the county. Enrichment activities in art, media and publishing programmes are particularly good. The community development workers are effective in identifying the needs of specific communities.

18. Arrangements to provide information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. The telephone enquiry customer service centre is effective in providing information and ensuring prospective learners receive information and advice from a member of staff with specialist knowledge. The provision offered by the service working jointly with Norfolk Guidance Service ensures learners have suitable access to information, advice and guidance in group or individual sessions as identified in the self-assessment report. The introduction of arrangements to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of information, advice and guidance is incomplete.

## Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

| | |
|---|---|
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
| | |
| Equality of opportunity | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

19. Leadership and management are good. Strategic and operational planning are good. Since the previous inspection the service has undertaken a significant restructuring and roles and responsibilities have been clarified. These changes have been effectively communicated to staff. The Service has developed and communicated a clear vision and direction for adult and community learning.

20. Strategic and operational management and planning are good. The Service plan supports both the NCC and the LSC strategic priorities well. Good use is made of a wide variety of community feedback to identify needs and reduce duplication of provision. Community development workers inform this process and promote learning, however, there is insufficient use of target milestones to aid the monitoring of progress. Curriculum planning is good. Every programme offered is assessed on how well it meets the NCC and LSC priorities, success rates and what similar programmes are offered by other providers. The process has led to new programmes being offered and others, such as History, being discontinued.

21. Partnership working is particularly good. The Service actively encourages collaborative working. It has undertaken productive work with partners at the strategic level including the mapping and coordination of the provision. The Service works effectively with partners including other training providers, support agencies, community groups and volunteer organisations. Collaborative work is effective in identifying gaps in the pattern of provision and providing an adequate response. Partnerships are well used to provide a good network of learning opportunities across Norfolk. Joint working with Connexions is effective in helping to engage young people who are likely to miss out on learning opportunities.

22. The Service works well with employers. It effectively supports employee development in a range of public and private sector organisations. It has responded well to both the development and delivery of bespoke programmes. The Service has successfully secured external funding to implement programmes. These strengths have been maintained since the previous inspection.

23. At the previous inspection the use of data to support management decision making was a weakness. Analysis and use of management information is now satisfactory. The Service routinely analyses and evaluates data to monitor and assess performance. Target-setting and monitoring are effective in checking the rate of improvement.

24. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. All staff are appropriately vetted and the Service ensures that staff are not able to work unsupervised with children or vulnerable adults until vetting procedures have been completed. The Service has a named person with overall responsibility for safeguarding and all staff have been made aware of the Service safeguarding policy.

25. The Service has an appropriate literacy, numeracy and language strategy. On most programmes, the arrangements to assess and support learners' skills are satisfactory, however, assessment of support needs on some courses, particularly those funded through Train to Gain, are inadequate.

26. The Service has been slow to introduce comprehensive quality improvement arrangements. Inspectors identified this at the previous inspection and the current self-assessment report recognises that the quality improvement structure and processes are not fully established. Recently a cross-service group has been established to address the monitoring and auditing of quality. Appropriate key areas for improvement have been identified and inform an action plan for improvement. During the 2007/08 academic year the observation of teaching and learning was less frequent than required by the policy. The rate of observation has significantly improved in the current academic year and improvements to the process have been introduced, however, the process does not sufficiently focus on learning or the learners' experience. Observed tutors receive appropriate feedback and access to development opportunities to improve performance. For example, tutors whose sessions are considered unsatisfactory can participate in a peer observation of a class as part of a personalised improvement plan. Moderation of the outcome of observations is effective. Grades for observed sessions broadly correspond with those given by inspectors.

27. Using questionnaires, the Service responds appropriately to learners' feedback, however, as identified by the Service, the return rates are low. Actions to improve the rate have been recently introduced but it is too early to judge their effectiveness. As identified by the Service, there was insufficient use of learner, staff and other stakeholders' views to inform the self-assessment report's judgements.

28. Processes to recognise and record progress and achievement are not used effectively in a number of curriculum areas. The Service's self-assessment report acknowledges this. Since the previous inspection the Service has reviewed processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement and undertaken staff training although internal audit processes failed to identify shortfalls in the quality of the process for recognising and recording progress and achievement.

29. Equality of opportunity is good. The Service takes effective action to engage disadvantaged learners. Community development workers link well with organisations and individuals to identify needs and promote provision at a local level. One programme has been successful in engaging with, for example, minority ethnic groups, refugees, young offenders and young mothers, to improve their employability skills. The programme removes barriers to learning by supporting learners with travel costs, free crèche provision, and paying for a follow-on course with the most relevant provider. The Service runs a number of programmes to support adults with a sensory impairment. Reminiscence work is effective in engaging and stimulating older learners. The success of this work has been recognised both nationally and internationally.

30. Many aspects of equality of opportunity are good. The Service has undertaken an audit of staff understanding of equality of opportunity to inform decisions about what specific training is required. All staff receive regular training in equality of opportunity at least annually. Part time staff are paid to attend these sessions. The Service has a clear equality action plan. It has clear milestones all of which have been met so far. It has recently introduced 17 equality champions and there are well advanced plans to use a mystery shopper to test the Service's response to specific equality of opportunity issues. However, tutors receive too little guidance regarding the promotion of equality of opportunity during lessons and this aspect of teaching is not sufficiently monitored. The Service is aware that this is an area for improvement and has included it in the equality action plan. Tutors receive insufficient information about what is expected of them regarding equality of opportunity during induction sessions or lessons. While there are examples of this being done well it is not sufficiently monitored by the service. The Service has an appropriate range of policies and procedures regarding equality of opportunity. It uses data effectively to identify under-represented groups and to determine any differences in success rates between different groups of learners.

## What learners like:

- 'My husband was the computer expert but after last week's lesson I was able to show him how to use a memory stick'
- 'I've enjoyed what I've done so far and I'm looking forward to the next course'
- 'This web design course will let me advertise my work on the internet'
- 'Wensum Lodge is a wonderful place for arts and crafts'
- The group support
- The chance to gain confidence
- The opportunity to meet people
- The help with dyslexia
- The opportunity to Improve skills
- 'Getting me thinking again'
- 'Improving my employment prospects'
- Being able to influence the content of the programme
- Meeting with other parents with similar problems
- The relaxed classroom atmosphere
- The supportive and enthusiastic tutors
- 'The location of this class is great – I wouldn't be able to attend otherwise'

## What learners think could improve:

- 'A crèche would be really useful'
- 'The digital photography course is expensive in fees and resources, but there is no student discount card'
- Better colour copier and printer facilities
- 'Too much paper-work'
- Having to pay for the course and then get a refund
- Only one observation of performance for some learners

# Sector subject areas

## Health, public services and care

Good:  Grade 2

### Context

31. The Service offers courses at level 2, 3 and 4 in children's care, learning and development, access to health professions and health and social care. Programmes are delivered in partnership with employers and specialist agencies. Courses take place in adult education centres and other venues across Norfolk. NVQ programmes have been funded through a Train to Gain contract since September 2008. Before that they were run through the Service's further education contract. All NVQs in health and social care are conducted in the workplace together with 28% of NVQs in early years courses. At the time of the inspection 147 learners were taking programmes in health and social care with 231 learners undertaking an early years qualification. A further 95 learners were studying for units on the access to higher education course. Most learners are aged between 19 and 65, 3% aged 16 to 18 and 1% over 65. Overall 95% of learners are female, 5% are from minority ethnic groups and 0.4% declared a disability or learning difficulty.

### Strengths

- High success rates on NVQ at level 3 early years courses
- Good development of practical and personal skills
- Good teaching, training and learning
- Good curriculum management

### Areas for improvement

- Inadequate workplace preparation for some learners

### Achievement and standards

32. Achievement and standards are good. Although not funded through Train to Gain, the success rates in 2007/08 for NVQ at level 3 early years were high at 92%. Success Rates for level 2 early years were 75% and for level 2 health and social care 84%.

33. Development of learners' practical and personal skills is good. Learners on early years courses develop skills in working with children of different ages and ensuring they have a safe environment for play. Health and social care learners develop a greater understanding of the use of care plans to identify and provide for the needs of their older clients. Access learners make good use of ICT resources to develop study, research and presentational skills which are relevant for progressing into higher education. All learners become more confident and improve their self-esteem and motivation.

34. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Portfolios contain a good range of diverse evidence sources and are well organised and presented. Many portfolios include good reflective accounts of vocational practice and make good use of relevant case studies. Feedback by tutors and assessors is clearly given and very supportive in motivating learners to develop evidence.

Quality of provision

35. The quality of the provision overall is satisfactory. The teaching, training and learning are good. Tutors and assessors are well qualified and enthusiastic. Theory and practice are effectively integrated and many of the practical activities are designed for immediate use in the workplace. In early years lessons, tutors set challenging tasks and successfully encourage learners to reflect and share their experiences in different occupational settings. Small group work is used well to stimulate peer group learning and enhance the knowledge and experiences of the whole group. Assessment of accredited learning is good using a good range of assessment methods. Assignment work is fully explained and learners are able to cross-reference their work against the standards for that level. Learning and assessment sessions are well planned with appropriate resources being used.

36. Monitoring and recording of learners' progress is good. On accredited courses reviews of progress take place regularly. Learners are invited to comment on their own progress and discuss with their assessor all stages of their individual learning plan.

37. The range of programmes is appropriate to meet the needs of learners and employers. Assessors are very responsive to the work patterns of their learners and visit workplaces at times convenient to the learner and employer often at night or weekends. Learners' individual needs and interests are taken into account in the selection of NVQ units and learners are given opportunities to either attend workshops or use workbooks with the support of their managers.

38. Support and guidance for learners is satisfactory overall. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Pre-course information gives specific details about course requirements. Learners appreciate the encouragement and dedication of tutors and assessors and other staff at the centres. Good advice about progression opportunities is especially valued by learners on the access course with many previous learners going into higher education and then on to employment in the health professions. Additional support needs are identified through a detailed initial assessment process. Assessors are trained in this process. Support to learners is offered through literacy, numeracy or language classes or through a programme of individual tuition.

39. Workplace preparation for some learners is inadequate. On NVQ early years programmes assessors do not visit learners at the workplace until after completion of the first unit. There is also no initial visit to meet employers to explain the assessment process, how it might impact on the working day and the role of colleagues in gathering evidence for the learner. The initial assessment process also relies on a written statement from the employer to help determine

the level of study appropriate for each learner. Learners are required to complete safe learner risk assessments themselves in conjunction with their employer.

## Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management are good. Processes for quality assurance and assessment are particularly effective. Observations of staff are carried out regularly on all courses. Action plans are produced and monitored against stated targets. Tutors are encouraged to reflect on and share their practice during regular team meetings. The staff teams for NVQs are highly effective in managing the provision. Assessors and internal verifiers meet regularly to standardise assessment processes and ensure fairness in assessment decisions. Staff development opportunities are effective and well attended. The programme of assessor and internal verifier training is particularly successful, helping meet the growing need for staff with these qualifications as the NVQ provision expands. The Service has good partnerships in both early years and health and social care. Programmes are delivered in a collaborative way that best meets the needs of learners. There is very good communication with employers. There is increasing use of data to monitor and evaluate course provision and to set targets for achievement and retention. Resources are satisfactory. Venues are accessible in the community and most rooms are fit for purpose. On some courses there is a lack of availability of computers and this is often reflected in course design.

41. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and learners are sensitive to cultural, religious and lifestyle issues in their practical work. Early years learners use this knowledge to develop new resources for use in their playgroup or nursery.

42. The self-assessment process is satisfactory with many staff involved in relevant discussions and meetings. The self-assessment report broadly reflects the findings of the inspection team.

# Information and Communication technology

Good: Grade 2

## Context

43. During 2007/08, 2,392 learners enrolled on 480 courses. Of these, 26% were male, 8% were from minority ethnic communities, 50% were over 60 years of age and 7% declared a disability. Currently 545 learners are enrolled on 76 classes. Accredited courses mostly run for 10 weekly two hour sessions, non-accredited for five sessions. Courses run during the daytime and evenings during the week. There is some weekend provision. Eighty-one per cent of the provision is accredited. In addition to office software applications, courses are offered in webpage design. Accredited courses are provided at entry level and level 1 and 2. Sessions take place at the Service's six centres together with a range of community venues, schools and libraries. The courses are provided by 45 hourly paid tutors and two part time and one full time tutor. A full time curriculum faculty manager and two subject support coordinators are responsible for ICT.

## Strengths

- Very good success rates on full qualification courses
- Good retention on non-accredited  courses
- Good teaching and learning
- Good support for tutors
- Good programme development

## Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently systematic assessment and support of literacy and numeracy needs
- Insufficiently effective process for planning and recording learners' progress

## Achievement and standards

44. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are very good on courses leading to full qualifications. They rose to 89% in 2007/08, 20 percentage points above the 2006/07 national average. Retention is good on non-accredited courses at 97% for the last three years although this includes a significant number of very short courses. Success rates on unitised courses are satisfactory at 68% in 2007/08. Some learners on these courses decline to take the assessment.

45. Learners make good progress in lessons. They show good levels of confidence in using software tools and are quick to develop new skills. Progression from one stage to the next is satisfactory. Attendance at lessons is satisfactory, being 88% at observed classes. Tutors follow up unexplained absence by telephone.

## Quality of provision

46. Overall the quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. In the better lessons, learners make particularly good progress and show good levels of attainment. Tutors make especially good use of questioning techniques not only to check learning but also to involve learners in group learning sessions and to make learners think when giving them individual support. Tutors give clear instructions and demonstrations of software processes, frequently using interactive whiteboards when these are available. They ensure that learners have good understanding of concepts rather than simply training them to use rote learned processes. Individual coaching is effective and supportive.

47. The system for planning, and recognising and recording of progress and achievement is insufficiently effective. Some targets are poorly written. In many cases, learners have written them without sufficient guidance and they are too vague to be of value. In other cases, tutors have written them and learners have not included any of their own targets. Targets are not associated with a planned completion date.

48. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. The range of courses is good. A number of courses have been established to attract hard to reach learners and widen participation. A closed class for Muslim women is running in cooperation with the local community. Learners are recruited to classes for disengaged young people through the Connexions service. Very successful accredited courses are offered to people with a wide range of visual impairments in partnership with the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind. A number of projects specifically set up for people in deprived communities have led to learners progressing to mainstream ICT classes.

49. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners access course information from printed material or from the service's website. They also receive helpful advice from the call-centre when they enrol although some learners are unaware of this facility.

50. The assessment of learners' needs for literacy, numeracy or language support is not sufficiently systematic. Neither is the provision of this support. Some tutors identify learners' needs and provide some support. Others give some help with literacy issues as part of their planned programme for the whole group, however, initial assessment does not take place as a mandatory part of learners' induction.

## Leadership and management

51. Leadership and management are good. Tutors receive good support. Induction for new tutors is thorough. All tutors have a comprehensive handbook which is also available electronically. Standard proformas for schemes of work and session plans are available electronically. Part-time tutors are paid to attend meetings and attendance is good. There are good opportunities for continuing professional development.

52. The development of the programme is good. Managers liaise with local employers, charitable organisations and voluntary groups. They objectively grade previous years' courses to judge their success. They are aware of what is offered by other providers in the area and avoid duplication. The rate of cancellations of planned courses has been reduced from 60% in 2007/08 to 24% in 2008/09.

53. Resources are satisfactory. Much of the ICT equipment is good. Many rooms are bright and airy, with air-conditioning, and many are equipped with interactive whiteboards. In most, learners have sufficient desk space, however, inappropriate chairs are in use in some outreach centres. The provision of laptops is effective in allowing ICT lessons to be delivered at outreach venues which do not have their own computers. Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced.

54. Some quality improvement processes are incomplete. The self-assessment report is insufficiently analytical and the evidence upon which the judgements are based is not always clear. It contains insufficient judgements on teaching and learning. Inspectors agree with the broad trend of the judgements but there are some differences. The reports on observations of teaching and learning pay too little attention to learning. While there is a space on the standard proforma for a comment on learning, it gives insufficient emphasis and observers rarely include a judgement about the standard of learners' work.

55. Equality of opportunity is satisfactorily addressed. Learning resources are adapted for learners with a variety of special needs. All course information sheets give learners information about the Service's policy, however, there is insufficient promotion of equality and diversity within lessons.

## Arts, media and publishing

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

56. The Service offers a range of full-time and part-time courses from level 1 to level 4. Courses include visual arts, photography, textiles and music. In 2007/08 823 learners made 924 enrolments on accredited programmes. In non-accredited programmes 9,870 learners made 10,021 enrolments. Nineteen full-time learners are currently working towards a foundation diploma at level 3 with some units at level 4. Other learners enrol on part time courses at levels 1 to 4. Unaccredited beginner intermediate or advanced programmes are offered. Most learners are female. The provision is managed by a curriculum faculty manager who is supported by subject support co-ordinators. Courses are taught in schools, community centres, libraries and remote venues throughout Norfolk by 99 tutors.

### Strengths

- Good development of practical techniques and understanding
- Inspiring enrichment activities

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient responsiveness to initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- Insufficient management of teaching and learning environment

### Achievement and standards

57. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Learners develop good practical techniques and understanding of the subjects they study. In life drawing they improve their accuracy quickly throughout the lesson where they are taught to measure the ratio of one part of the body with another and improve the accuracy of their observation. Learners in digital photography significantly improve their accuracy in adjusting colour intensity and tone using industry standard software. Learners who attend critical studies sessions extend their vocabulary during debate on sustainable and unsustainable art and their understanding of terms such as grass roots. They become competent in making mind maps to plan ideas and present them to others. Success rates have improved steadily and are now satisfactory. In most locations punctuality is good although in one centre where there are insufficient parking facilities many are late. Retention is improving since the rationalisation of the courses offered.

## Quality of provision

58. The quality of the provision is satisfactory. The planning of teaching and learning is adequately recorded. Most sessions include a variety of learning activities although a small number of tutors use a narrow range of teaching methods. The skills learners acquire are appropriately recorded and used to inform progression. Individual and group tuition are effective. Well-lit painting and drawing rooms and specialist facilities for pottery and silversmithing are available at one centre. Other venues have adequate teaching rooms for activities such as sewing and textiles. Thorough observational assessment records are completed for learners working towards qualifications.

59. Learners are inspired by the enrichment activities they attend. The digital photography provision has good links with the Norfolk Coast partnership also making use of interesting local buildings and areas of natural beauty. Learners on the foundation diploma are strongly encouraged to study other artists' work at local and London galleries. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report.

60. Learners benefit from a wide range of arts and craft programmes that meet their needs and interests. More unusual classes such as stained glass are fully booked and sometimes have a waiting list. Some learners travel in excess of 20 miles to their preferred classes. Learners use good opportunities for progression from level 1 to level 4. Beginner, intermediate and advanced classes are offered for learners on non-accredited courses. There is good progression from the foundation diploma course to higher education degree courses.

61. Learners receive appropriate guidance and support. Most choose their courses from the brief descriptions on the website and receive further information when they follow this up with a telephone enquiry.

## Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The service uses effective strategies to improve success rates. Unsuccessful courses have been discontinued and more appropriate accreditation and higher level courses have been introduced. New awards offered by other supportive awarding bodies are now included.

63. Communication within the faculty is satisfactory. The Service uses an Intranet, a virtual learning environment, email and termly information bulletins. This is reinforced with meetings, telephone calls and hard copies for those tutors without access to electronic messaging. Meetings are followed by tea and cake to encourage tutors to discuss and exchange ideas.

64. The faculty's response to initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning has been insufficient. The observation of teaching and learning programme failed to meet its targets in 2007/08. The pace has increased in 2008/09 and there is some evidence of success. All tutors use schemes of work

and lesson plans, although the quality of many of these documents is inadequate. Aims, objectives and content are often unclear. The return rate of course reviews is insufficient. Observation of teaching and learning records do not focus sufficiently on learning. A small number of tutors do not have, and are not working towards, teaching qualifications. This area for improvement is identified in the self-assessment report.

65. A small number of teaching and learning environments are insufficiently managed. Some rooms are often cold. Some are untidy reducing the working area, particularly in schools where other work, resources and furniture are pushed to the edges of the room. Seating for learners in some teaching rooms is inappropriate. It is not adjustable to ensure that learners are working at a safe height in relation to the work bench or desk. Printers and copiers used in digital photography produce insufficiently sharp clean copies of learners' work.

66. Tutors have an adequate understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity although learners' understanding of equality and diversity within sessions is not sufficiently reinforced. Curriculum programme administrators consult tutors when potential learners disclose disabilities. Tutors request support that will be needed to help learners. For example note takers are used to help dyslexic learners on the foundation diploma and a signer/communicator was used for a hearing impaired learner with additional learning needs who joined a pottery course. Support for vulnerable adults is appropriately managed. Safeguarding is discussed at regular staff meetings and tutors are made aware of the Service point of contact for safeguarding issues.

# Education and training

## Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

67. The Service has offered NVQs at level 2 and level 3 in supporting teaching and learning in schools for some time, but through Train to Gain funding since September 2008. Learners are volunteers or employed in primary and secondary schools. During the week of the inspection a total of 341 learners were following the level 2 programme and 139 the level 3. There are 30 assessors that support learners. The service offers training at 28 centres throughout Norfolk. Learners attend sessions during the day or evening. A majority of learners attend these centres for off-the-job training. A small number of learners receive this training in their workplace. All learners complete a pre-course interview with training staff. Assessors visit learners in the workplace to carry out observations of learners' performance. All learners have a named mentor in their workplace.

## Strengths

- Good employability skills
- Very flexible opportunities to access the programmes
- Good progression routes

## Areas for improvement

- Insufficient employer involvement in planning learning
- Ineffective initial assessment

## Achievement and standards

68. Achievement and standards are good. The Service has been offering Train to Gain programmes in the Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools qualification since September 2008 and it is too early to make a judgement about the achievement of the qualification. However, when NVQs in this area were offered under another funding strand, success rates were significantly higher than the national average.

69. Learners are developing good employability skills. Head teachers and learners' mentors confirm that learners on the programme have increased self-confidence. They demonstrate a greater awareness and understanding of school policies and procedures. Learners are now considered to be valued team members. They demonstrate skills in organising learning activities and take specific responsibilities contributing to learning outcomes. They have improved time management and organisational skills and an increased awareness of strategies for class management and in dealing with pupils with specific learning needs.

## Quality of provision

70. The quality of the provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Off-the-job training sessions are well planned and lesson aims and objectives are shared and clarified with learners at the start of the lesson. In the better lessons learners are encouraged to work in pairs or small groups on practical activities relevant to their role. In some lessons, however, a narrow range of teaching strategies are used and learners are not sufficiently challenged. There are limited learning resources available for learners. Lists of suitable textbooks are provided for learners by tutors and handouts are produced to a professional standard, however, learners are not provided with details about useful websites and other available sources of information to support them in developing independent study skills. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessors provide learners with detailed verbal and written feedback following assessments. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets the requirements of awarding bodies. Verifiers follow a clear verification plan. Tutors are well qualified with appropriate experience of school management and working in the classroom.

71. Employers are not sufficiently involved with the planning of learning. Few employers are involved in the selection of learners' option units to ensure that the learners' programme meets the needs of the school. Assessors do not routinely meet with the employer to discuss learners' progress. They do not always receive copies of action plans agreed between assessors and learners. Most employers are unaware of the content of the off-the-job training sessions and are not able to advise the learner about opportunities within the school for the learner to develop and demonstrate their skills. There is an over-reliance on learners to communicate information about their qualification and learning needs to the employer. The Service is aware of this area for improvement and has started to take action to address it.

72. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners. Opportunities for learners to access the programmes are flexible, being offered at 28 centres across all of Norfolk including city centres, towns, villages and industrial estates. Many centres are community based and most provide a welcoming environment for learners. The Service responds well to the needs of minority groups, providing bespoke courses where necessary. Learners can attend classes at times that accommodate their domestic and personal commitments.

73. There are clear routes for learners to progress. Some of the current learners have progressed from other child-related courses to the NVQ at level 2 programme and are encouraged to do so by course tutors. There is also evidence of progression from the level 2 programme to the level 3.

74. Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners are assigned an assessor who is also their tutor for off-the-job training. In each workplace, a mentor is appointed to each learner to provide ongoing support and guidance. Assessors have regular contact with their learners at off-the-job training sessions, tutorials, by mobile

phone and email. Assessors respond rapidly to learners' requests for additional information or advice. Initial advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners receive information about the courses from a variety of sources. This includes the internet, their workplace, local authority publicity and friends.

75. Initial assessment procedures are ineffective. While learners complete a pre-course interview with tutors their literacy and numeracy needs are not assessed until they have been on the course for up to three months, however, support for learners with identified literacy and numeracy needs at this stage is in place. This support is provided by the Skills for Life tutors.

## Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have a strong commitment to ongoing improvements. Staff are kept well informed about developments within the curriculum area. There are regular formal curriculum development meetings, which all tutors attend. There is an appropriate agenda and action points are agreed and minuted. Staff are clear about their job roles and have access to appropriate regular training such as equality and diversity and Every Child Matters. Self-assessment processes are appropriate and many of the identified strengths and areas for improvement are similar to those found by inspectors. Monitoring of learner progress is satisfactory. A new monitoring system has been introduced in recent months to improve quality of monitoring, however, it is too early to make a judgement about the effectiveness of this. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Assessors ensure that learners are not subjected to harassment or bullying and are made aware of the service's equality of opportunity policy, however, there is insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity issues with learners.

# Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

## Context

77. The Service offers accredited and non-accredited courses in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from entry level to level 2. A small Train to Gain provision is also offered.

78. Courses are taught at six main sites as well as community venues across the county. Most courses are taught for two to three hours over periods of 10, 20 and 30 weeks. Courses are available during the day or evening and on Saturdays. A curriculum faculty manager, supported by Skills for Life managers in each of the six centres, leads the department. In addition there are six subject support coordinators, with two for literacy, two for numeracy and two for ESOL. There are also three staff members with specific responsibility for quality assurance, embedding Skills for Life and workplace development. Seventy part-time tutors are also employed. Around 84% of the provision leads to national Skills for Life qualifications. Of the 1646 learners enrolled on the programme, 34% are male, 34% come from a minority ethnic background and 3% have declared a disability. Five hundred and seventy one learners are following ESOL courses, with 500 on literacy, 460 on numeracy and 115 on combined literacy and numeracy courses. Within the total figure, 51 learners are on Train to gain programmes, with 43 learners attending tailored courses and the remainder accessing general ones.

## Strengths

- Good gaining of confidence and employability and social skills.
- Well structured and varied lessons that motivate learners.
- Wide range of diverse provision.
- Good operational management.

## Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of task related targets.
- Inadequate provision for technology aided teaching and learning.

## Achievement and standards

79. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Learners are achieving greater levels of confidence and employability and social skills. They are able to progress at work and apply themselves to further or vocational education. Other learners now feel confident to help with homework and take part in school and social activities. Learners for whom English is not their first language are able to integrate more fully into a wide variety of activities. Numeracy learners are able to plan journeys and balance their budgets to a greater effect. They are able to work out for themselves the true value and potential savings on supermarket and other retail offers.

80. The rates of success for learners are satisfactory. On literacy and numeracy courses the success rate in 2006/07 was at the national average of 76%. In 2007/08 it rose to 78%. At 71% the success rates in 2007/08 for ESOL are satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

81. The quality of the provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well structured and varied and motivate learners. They are well planned and often imaginative. They contextualise learner interests and goals, making lessons enjoyable and motivating. Examples include healthy living and lifestyles, health and safety and comparative literature. Many lessons are based on economic needs such as timing, travel arrangements and budgeting. Individual learning needs are accurately identified and recorded and used well in both the lesson planning and supportive individual or mini group teaching. In whole-group sessions, learners often work on the same topic but from different work sheets. Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods and strategies to change the mood and pace of lessons and maximise learner attention and participation. The recording of learner progress is good with learners keeping their own learning logs. Most target-setting is satisfactory although many targets are based on the curriculum and not enough use is made of ongoing or interim targets that are related to learners' social or vocational needs. The internal moderation process fails to identify this.

82. The wide range of diverse provision meets the needs of learners well. The six area offices coordinate provision on a countywide basis. Many new courses have been created to attract harder to reach and marginalised learners. Recent examples include childminding for ESOL migrant workers and ESOL courses in care homes. Work has also been done with refugees that included crèche and travel facilities. To encourage learners referred from a mental health charity, a literacy course was designed to incorporate shanty singing. A singing group has now been formed. To engage young mothers, an established literacy and numeracy course focusing on cookery and wellbeing was organised. In one area Dads and Lads courses have been run embedding Mathematics and English into enhanced activities. Courses have also run featuring the construction safety card for parents, computers for writing and an in-house course for offenders in a secure establishment.

83. Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate pastoral and learning support. The language, literacy and numeracy needs of all learners are accurately assessed and appropriate support given where needed. Information, advice and guidance for learners is thorough and detailed.

## Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management are good. In particular operational management is good with effective communication throughout the six offices. Specialist support staff for literacy, numeracy and ESOL work with all staff to improve the provision. A comprehensive lesson observation plan is now in operation and tutors identified as needing further development are receiving targeted help. The Skills for Life Learning managers moderate each other's individual learning plans to ensure consistency. The self-assessment report fully recognises that target-setting needs to be more task-focused. Safeguarding is appropriately dealt with. Managers have a good understanding of the vulnerability of their learners. All tutors are checked against the Criminal Records Bureau. ESOL assessment arrangements have been restructured and key documents are now translated into six foreign languages. The level of overall staff qualifications and experience is appropriate with many staff having a good range of qualifications. A small number of staff do not have the needed level of qualification, but this has been recognised and staff development is taking place.

85. Provision for technology aided teaching and learning is inadequate. Few classrooms have ICT equipment. Although laptops are available little use is made of them. Learners and tutors do not benefit from the many computer exercises available or access to the internet. This is impeding learning and in one instance learners had to work on paper printouts of web pages to simulate a web experience. This lack of available information technology in many teaching areas has been recognised and steps are being taken to improve the situation. Although management is using available data to identify trends the system only produces headline data and detailed course data with no interim management information.

86. The self-assessment process although generic is an accurate reflection of the current situation.

# Family learning

Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Context

87. At the time of inspection, 255 learners were enrolled on family learning courses at 46 venues. In 2007/8 4444 learners attended family learning programmes. 1,432 learners attended Family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) programmes, while a further 3,012 attended wider family learning programmes. Of these 12% were male, 3% were from minority ethnic groups and 0.4% declared that they have learning difficulties or disabilities. FLLN courses include programmes of up to 60 hours. Wider family learning provision includes a range of programmes designed to enhance parental involvement with children's learning, development and behaviour. The family learning curriculum faculty manager, supported by three subject support coordinators, four learning managers and a crèche manager oversees the Family Learning curriculum. A team of 40 staff, comprising adult and pre-sixteen teachers, parenting facilitators, development workers and teaching assistants, delivers the curriculum. The service also includes a team of 24 crèche supervisors and assistants.

## Strengths

■ Good success rates for accredited learning
■ Good development of learners' skills in supporting their children's learning and behaviour
■ Very flexible and responsive learning and crèche provision

## Areas for improvement

■ Insufficient development of ICT skills to support learning.
■ Slow progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

## Achievement and standards

88. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are good for learners taking the national certificates in literacy and numeracy, at 94% and 90% respectively.

89. Learners develop good skills in supporting their children's learning and managing their behaviour. Learners also develop their personal and social skills, for example by becoming more active within their children's school, or interacting effectively with other learners. Standards of learners' work are satisfactory and learners' progress in achieving their learning goals is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

90. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better sessions learners undertake a good variety of well paced activities. They are motivated and enjoy their learning programmes. Tutors make effective use of praise and encouragement and students engage well in discussions and respond appropriately to questions. In joint sessions adult learners and children work well together, while adult and pre-sixteen teachers collaborate well both in planning and delivering sessions, however, in some sessions the curriculum is not related sufficiently to the needs or interests of learners as parents or carers. Planning to meet individual learners' needs in some sessions is insufficient.

91. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Most FLLN learners complete appropriate literacy, ESOL or numeracy assessments, although in a small number of instances these skills are not sufficiently checked or assessed. Learners on wider family learning programmes complete self-evaluations of their skills, in many cases relating to their ability to support their children's learning or manage their behaviour, however, in a small number of programmes initial assessment insufficiently identifies suitable starting points for learners.

92. Most tutors negotiate appropriate targets with learners and record their progress to a satisfactory standard. However, some targets do not adequately reflect the results of assessment or are too vague to be of substantial use in guiding learning.

93. Tutors make insufficient use of ICT to improve learners' skills and support learning. While some learners benefit from using ICT to enhance their own and their children's learning, in some sessions learners have few opportunities to use ICT. Not all learners are able to use ICT to develop their own literacy, language and numeracy skills; neither do they have the opportunity to support their children's development of these skills.

94. Provision to meet learners' and community needs is good. The Service offers a flexible and responsive learning and crèche provision. The family learning team respond flexibly to learners', schools' and community needs. Learners appreciate the opportunity to influence the contents of their programmes. The service responds promptly and efficiently to requests to develop or adapt provision. The crèche team provides an effective service for all family learning courses, in some cases supporting aspects of the family learning curriculum.

95. Support for learners is satisfactory. Provision of initial information and advice is satisfactory. Learners clearly are aware of the contents and purpose of their programmes before they join, including the opportunities to work towards qualifications. Most learners receive appropriate information about progression opportunities. Tutors and learning support assistants provide good levels of personal support for learners.

## Leadership and management

96. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Partnership arrangements are particularly effective. Head teachers and other partners speak highly of the Service. Communication with partners and support for them is highly effective. The Service works in close cooperation with schools and other partner organisations such as the health service, libraries and social services in targeting hard-to-reach learners

97. Communications and other support for staff are effective. Staff participate in regular team meetings. An induction system is in place for new tutors that includes the opportunity to shadow more experienced colleagues. Staff comment favourably on the recent reorganisation of responsibilities within the team.

98. The self-assessment report covers many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during the inspection, however, the self-assessment report does not analyse teaching and learning in sufficient detail.

99. Arrangements to promote equality and diversity are satisfactory. The service targets those learners who have not traditionally attended family learning programmes, for example fathers and male carers.

100.    Learners on FLLN programmes focusing on literacy delivered through the medium of ICT are not sufficiently clear that they are working towards improving their literacy, language or numeracy skills. Some wider family learning programmes linked with ICT do not have a sufficiently clear focus on family learning.

101.    Tutors and managers use end-of-course reviews and trends in data effectively to inform planning and monitor quality. Staff routinely share good practice, including that identified from observations of teaching and learning. Family learning managers have a clear understanding of actions necessary to improve the quality of provision and have developed appropriate action plans, although some recent improvements are too new to have had any impact.

102.    The Service has responded slowly to improving the quality of teaching and learning. This was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. The observation of teaching and learning process has only fully been implemented in the current year and is now satisfactory. Actions identified during observations are followed up, and staff development opportunities are identified. Observers make detailed and informed judgements about teaching although most observers do not sufficiently evaluate learners' standards of work.

# Annex

## Learners' achievements

Success rates on accredited entry and level 1 (combined) and level 2 qualifications, by length, expected end year and age.

2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for GFE colleges.

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 19+ | | | | Diff |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Starts - Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | | |
| 1 long | 06/07 | 2084 | 78.7 | 70.5 | | 8.3 |
| | 07/08* | 3111 | 75 | N/A | | |
| 2 long | 06/07 | 1235 | 77.2 | 69.0 | | 8.1 |
| | 07/08* | 1282 | 79 | N/A | | |
| Short** | 06/07 | 2912 | 77.9 | 82.9 | | -5.0 |
| | 07/08* | 2710 | 88 | N/A | | |

\*    ACL provider data not validated (use where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)
\*\*    Courses over 5 weeks long

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