

# Brighton and Hove City Council

Adult Skills and Learning inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Tony Noonan HMI

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Type of provider: Local Authority

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## Information about the provider

1. Brighton and Hove is a unitary authority in East Sussex. The city is densely populated, with a total population in 2007 of 256,641. It is ranked within the most deprived 25% of all authorities in England, being characterised by pockets of severe deprivation and some areas of relative wealth. The proportion of residents of minority ethnic heritage is 5.8%, with a broad range of cultural groups represented. Although the city has one of the most highly qualified adult populations in the country, there are 15,700 residents of working age in the city who have no qualifications. Local educational attainment among school leavers remains below average, with 44.3% of pupils aged 15 obtaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C including English and mathematics in 2009.
2. Brighton and Hove City Council's Adult Skills and Learning Service (the Service) had 900 learners in 2008/09, with 3% below 19 years of age. Just over three quarters were female and around one quarter had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Around 14% of learners were from minority ethnic groups.
3. The Service is funded mainly by the Sussex Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and it operates family learning and community development programmes. The majority of programmes are taught by teaching staff directly employed by the Service, with some courses sub-contracted to local voluntary and community groups. The Service aims to 'encourage people from under-represented groups in disadvantaged communities who have not been engaged with learning previously, particularly those who do not have level 2 qualifications, into learning'.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for adult learners: Learning for social and personal development	900 part-time learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2
Learning for social and personal development	
Family Learning	2
Community Development	2

## Overall effectiveness

4. Many learners make great gains in their self-confidence and self-esteem. The large majority of learners remain on their course to its completion, attend well and they are successful at gaining a qualification where this is available. Learners attending family learning courses often feel more able to help their children with homework, and school staff report an improvement in the progress of children's school work when their parents are involved in family learning sessions. The effectiveness of the service is greatly enhanced by its outstanding partnerships.
5. This is a good service with good capacity to make sustained improvements. Managers and staff are highly committed to their vision of working with learners with the greatest needs. Consequently, they have extended the range of provision and increased the number of learners recruited from the most deprived parts of the city. This was achieved mainly by listening to what individuals and groups in the local community wanted, and organising suitable provision to meet this need. At the same time, staff have maintained the high standards that were reported at the last inspection in 2005.

6. Learners are appreciative of the helpful advice and guidance they receive from the supportive staff. Teaching staff ensure a wide range of interesting activities help learners to develop new skills and prepare them well to progress to further training, employment or unpaid work. On some occasions, teaching staff dominate the sessions and leave insufficient time for learners to carry out activities themselves.
7. Managers and staff promote equality and diversity issues well. They take the views of learners seriously, but do not involve them sufficiently in the self-assessment process. Managers have a good understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of the service. However, some curriculum management and quality assurance practices, aiming to improve teaching and learning, are applied inconsistently and carried out too informally.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for accredited courses are high. Learners make significant gains in confidence and most develop new skills that enhance their lives and prepare them for further learning or employment. Family learning programmes have a beneficial impact on learners' children and help learners to better support their children's progress in school.
- Teaching, learning, and assessment are good overall. These aspects are good in family learning, and satisfactory in community development. Most teaching is carried out by enthusiastic and supportive tutors who engage learners in a wide range of activities. Less successful sessions lack clear and shared learning objectives, and they have too much tutor input and fail to engage and actively involve all learners.
- Provision very effectively meets local needs. Most courses are developed following effective consultation and negotiation with community groups. The Service successfully places provision where it meets the greatest need. Planning for learners' progression routes is good.
- The Service has developed outstanding partnerships. Staff and managers have established highly effective collaborative links with other providers of adult learning in the city and they make excellent use of specialist agencies to provide advice on healthcare, financial and benefits-related issues and other relevant support to learners.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Tutors and outreach workers provide learners with close support and clear guidance on ways to develop and engage with further training or employment after their courses. Childcare and crèche provision, sponsored by the service, allow many learners to take up and maintain course places.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have worked effectively with staff to extend the scope and reach of provision without lowering the high standards. Equality and diversity issues are promoted well. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Learners' views are listened to seriously and acted upon by staff.

- The self-assessment report accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses of the Service, but learners and staff are not involved sufficiently in its production.
- Certain aspects of curriculum management and quality assurance procedures are too informal and lack consistency. Development plans contain targets, but these are neither sufficiently specific nor measurable. Not all permanently employed staff undergo performance reviews.
- The observation of teaching by managers provides helpful guidance, but no grades are awarded, making it difficult to measure progress and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Areas for improvement identified during observations are not linked to staff training.

### What does Brighton and Hove Adult Skills and Learning Service need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching and learning consistently meets fully the needs of all individual learners and involves learners more actively in lessons.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning by grading lesson observations and linking the findings explicitly to staff training plans.
- Involve staff and learners more fully in the self-assessment process.
- Ensure all development plans have specific and measurable targets for improvements.
- Extend management procedures for reviewing staff performance to all permanent employees.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- the wide range of courses on offer
- the beneficial impact that courses provide in developing their confidence
- their gains in skills and understanding
- the very approachable and supportive staff
- the opportunities to progress to other courses, training and jobs
- the chance to work more closely with their children
- the benefits brought by family learning to their children as well as themselves
- the accessible, local venues
- the availability of childcare and crèche provision.

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- the cramped accommodation for some courses
- the narrow range of advertising and publicity about courses

- the organisation of sessions to meet the needs of a wide range of learners' levels and abilities in some groups.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. Since the previous inspection, the Service has continued to work successfully with learners living in the most socially deprived areas of the city. The Service has increased the number of learners and broadened the range of provision, whilst maintaining the high quality. The progression of learners to other forms of training and paid and unpaid work has improved. A high proportion of courses now lead to accredited outcomes and success rates are high.
9. The self-assessment report identifies accurately the key strengths and weaknesses of the Service. Management information is now used more effectively to monitor performance and for curriculum development. Lesson observations are carried out by managers to evaluate and improve teaching and learning. However, some key challenges identified at the previous inspection remain, including a lack of overall consistency in some processes for curriculum management and quality assurance.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Achievement and success rates are high across all programmes. The overall achievement, retention and success rates in 2008/09 were 95%, 94% and 90% respectively. This is a strong performance in the context of the rising numbers of learners, many of whom were disengaged from learning and have complex and multiple support needs. Learners' attendance rates were good at 88% in 2008/09. The amount of provision leading to nationally recognised qualifications is increasing yearly and programmes provide good opportunities for partial certification and full awards for family learning participants.
11. The proportion of learners who progress into further learning or employment at the end of their courses is high. Progression is particularly good for learners on community development programmes, where more than half move into education, training and either paid or unpaid work. Learners from all courses report a gain in self-confidence which encourages them to make job applications and gives them more purpose in deciding future career choices. Learners have good opportunities to engage in volunteering work, work experience and work shadowing placements.
12. Learners develop a broad range of skills and improved personal effectiveness during their courses. Family learning programmes are particularly successful in giving learners the skills and confidence to become involved more successfully with their children's schooling. Headteachers and teaching staff readily identify ways in which children's performances at school improve as a result of their parents' involvement with family learning. Many parents are now working as volunteers in their children's school and a number are training to become teaching assistants.

13. Staff pay good attention to health and safety issues for both learners and their children. Learners feel safe at course venues. Risk assessments are carried out carefully for all venues and for all activities involving off-site visits or trips. A broad choice of programmes includes healthy eating, first aid, children's and babies' safety, and individual health.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

14. Teaching, learning, and assessment are good for family learning and satisfactory for community development. The most successful sessions are carefully planned and include a broad range of activities to involve learners well and to develop their skills and understanding. Tutors are approachable and supportive, and they encourage learners enthusiastically to attempt new tasks and build their self-confidence. Less successful sessions are often characterised by ineffective starts, with delays resulting from repetition of material as learners arrive late. In others, tutors fail to share the planned learning outcomes with learners and do not involve learners actively in tasks.
15. The Service is good at meeting the needs and interests of users. Very effective use of outreach workers and family learning contacts ensures that courses are held in a wide range of local venues within communities where learners' needs are greatest. Programme development follows close discussion and negotiation with potential learners. Planned progression from taster sessions and short workshops into longer family learning courses takes place and many learners move from community development courses onto identified progression pathways at local colleges.
16. Partnership work is outstanding. The service plays a key role in the city's adult learning strategy. Cooperative work with statutory and voluntary bodies benefits learners greatly. Managers lead on, or contribute successfully to, curriculum planning, production of funding applications, fee agreements and the development of bespoke progression pathways for learners. The Service carries out excellent negotiation and collaborative planning with community groups established in deprived areas of the city. Successful partnerships with health services ensure that learners extend their understanding of health issues. The Service generally serves those furthest away from employment, by using experienced voluntary sector partners to establish links with employers to secure work tasters and work experience opportunities for learners.
17. Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners receive strong encouragement from supportive staff who know learners, and often their families, very well. Effective recruitment and advice services are provided by a team of knowledgeable and approachable outreach workers. All learners taking longer programmes have individual information, advice and guidance sessions toward the end of their course. Crèche and childcare provision enable many learners to attend classes.



## Leadership and management

Grade 3

18. Highly committed and enthusiastic managers and staff have a clear vision and aim for the service. They have worked well to extend the employability skills of adults and improve community cohesion, particularly for individuals who are most disadvantaged and those with few or no qualifications. The scope and reach of the Service has expanded greatly over the last three years whilst continuing to provide high quality provision. Partnership work is extensive at strategic and operational levels. The Service plays an integral role in the local authority's overarching adult learning strategy, having a key role in coordinating adult learning across the city.
19. Communication between managers and staff is good and morale is high. Staff feel well supported by managers and they work well as a team. However, the level of administrative support is not always sufficient and this has led to pressure on managers. There is inconsistency in curriculum management. For example, although staff teams meet regularly, records of agreed actions are not always minuted, and not all permanent staff receive their entitlement to formal performance management reviews.
20. The Service is meeting government requirements regarding the safeguarding of children aged up to 18 and vulnerable adults. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out for all relevant staff and volunteers and these checks are recorded appropriately. Comprehensive safeguarding policies cover child protection and vulnerable adults. Staff work closely with staff from social services and other agencies to safeguard learners. Extensive contact and referral details are maintained for vulnerable adults, such as teenage parents. The Service has a designated safeguarding officer who is trained for her post. Staff training in safeguarding procedures has taken place. Appropriate risk assessments, covering accessibility and other health and safety matters, are carried out as part of planning for provision at new venues.
21. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. It is given a high profile in all planning and strategy and staff engage with learners in a fully inclusive way. A detailed single equality scheme is in place and an equalities impact assessment has been made. The proportion of learners of minority ethnic heritage is over twice that of the local community. Similarly, the number of learners with learning difficulties and/or a disability is high and increasing. No significant difference is found in attainment between different groups on the basis of their gender, ethnicity or disability. The service is responsive to the needs of specific minority ethnic groups. For example, it has organised programmes in outreach locations to improve the English-speaking skills of groups of learners newly arrived in the country. The Service has also developed men-only courses to increase the participation of males. Teaching staff raise important equality and diversity issues in sessions. These issues are considered carefully by learners and they promote much lively discussion. Although recent staff training to consider equality and diversity issues took place, it did not involve all staff.

22. The engagement with learners by staff is good. End-of-course questionnaires are analysed and issues identified by learners are acted upon. Learners feel well supported by their tutors, knowing that staff treat any concerns they may have seriously. Much provision is organised as a direct result of staff listening to learners in their community and arranging specific programmes to meet their identified needs.
23. The self-assessment report identifies accurately the Service's main strengths and areas for development. Staff are consulted on the report, but they are not involved sufficiently in its production. Similarly, the views of learners are well known, but they do not inform, or feature sufficiently in, the self-assessment report. A development plan is compiled to address the issues identified by the self-assessment process. This plan is time bound and allocates responsibilities for actions, but the targets set are not specific enough.
24. Quality assurance processes have overseen improvements in learners' outcomes, but they still lack the focus to measure progress accurately. Managers observe the quality of teaching and learning and written comments on strengths and areas for development from observed lessons are comprehensive and accurate. However, areas for development are not linked to staff training plans, nor are lessons graded, and there is limited moderation of observation outcomes. Currently, it is difficult for managers to analyse or assess the quality of teaching and learning effectively from year to year.
25. Managers have made improvements in data and trend analysis since the previous inspection. They analyse data appropriately to track learners' retention, achievements and progression rates. A great deal of effort is made when bidding for additional funds and managers have maximised the amount of funding available to carry out their work. These funds are monitored carefully and courses are only delivered if enough learners are attending. The Service offers good value for money.

## Learning for social and personal development

### Family learning

Grade 2

#### Context

26. In 2008/09, 555 learners attended family learning courses. At the time of inspection, 183 learners were attending courses in 12 schools, a children's centre and two community venues. Ten courses cover family language, literacy and numeracy, five are wider family learning programmes and seven are family learning initiative funded. In 2008/09, 94% of learners were female and 11% were of minority ethnic heritage. A family learning manager is supported by a development officer and an administrative assistant. Courses are taught by a team of nine directly-employed tutors and the staff of subcontracted providers.

#### Key findings

- Learners' outcomes are good. Learners are very engaged, motivated and they participate well in class. They work well in activities with their children, sometimes whilst also dealing with complex personal issues. Many develop the confidence and skills to contribute their own ideas, opinions and experiences within groups.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Retention and success rates for all accredited and non-accredited courses are high. Learners have good opportunities to achieve accreditation, with two thirds of courses offering units of accreditation or full awards. Much of the provision attracts learners that are traditionally reluctant to participate, such as teenage parents.
- Procedures to track the progression of learners on to further training and employment were set up recently. Progression of learners from family learning programmes is increasing and is satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teaching staff often appropriately organise learners to work in pairs or small groups. They carry out skilful demonstrations for parents, for example showing how toys and games can be made for their children using everyday items.
- Less effective lessons are dominated by the teacher and information is given to parents without sufficient explanation. Also, in such sessions, a relatively narrow range of activities is planned and not all learners become sufficiently involved.
- Course and lesson planning are good. Learning materials are very well prepared and presented. Teachers make good use of locally produced leaflets and catalogues. They set useful and interesting homework tasks which parents share with their children. Learners have good opportunities to reflect on their learning and that of their children. They receive constructive and positive feedback on their performance from teaching staff.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The Service widens participation for hard-to-reach groups, such as teenage parents and fathers. Teaching staff encourage animated discussions amongst learners on interesting

topics, such as the stereotyping of children within advertising. Well trained and experienced bilingual support workers work very effectively with teaching staff to support those learners who experience difficulty in understanding English.

- The initial assessment of learners' needs and interests is carried out effectively at the beginning of courses. However, teachers do not always use this information well to plan learning activities that meet the needs of all learners. On accredited courses, learners appropriately identify their individual learning goals and they monitor their own progress towards these goals.
- Very effective collaboration by family learning staff leads to outstanding partnerships. Staff often have potential learners recommended to them for recruitment through their close contacts with individuals working in the local community. These individuals also contribute their specialist knowledge in lessons.
- Information, advice and guidance are a fundamental part of all courses. Specialist guidance workers discuss further study or employment opportunities with learners. Those learners on shorter courses receive an information sheet on further learning opportunities within family learning.
- The leadership and management of family learning programmes are satisfactory. Communication between staff is good, including contact with those working for contracted providers. Staff are supported well through monthly team meetings, informal email contact and training.
- Judgements from the observation of teaching and learning by managers are helpful and supportive. However, teachers are not given an action plan to drive forward and monitor their improvement. No lesson observations are carried out for subcontracted providers. Self-assessment is accurate, but the process does not involve all staff sufficiently and the resulting development plan lacks specific and measurable targets.

What does Brighton and Hove Adult Skills and Learning Service need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by more effective use by teachers of initial assessment information and by teachers employing a broader range of learning activities and teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual learners.
- Ensure quality improvement processes are applied rigorously to subcontracted providers, including the observation of teaching and learning.
- Develop the self-assessment process and ensure the associated development plan contains specific and measurable targets.

## Learning for social and personal development

### Community Development

Grade 2

#### Context

27. Learners' enrolments on community development courses in 2008/9 totalled approximately 380. To date there are 250 enrolments in 2009/10. One third of learners are men. The Service provides short, non-accredited courses in over 55 community settings in areas of high social deprivation. The Service targets adults without qualifications and those with additional needs, such as mental health issues. One full-time manager is supported by two part-time and two full-time outreach workers and several peripatetic teachers. Administrative and financial management support are provided by a part-time member of staff.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners experience significant growth in their confidence and their ability to speak out in a group. Many learners greatly enjoy their learning, often for the first time. They start to believe in their ability to succeed on further courses and to find employment. Progression to further learning, voluntary or paid work is good, particularly from the Breakthrough project.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching staff plan lessons well and make use of good resources. They understand learners' differing needs and provide effective individual teaching. Feedback on learners' progress is encouraging and helpful.
- Teachers do not always share learning outcomes with learners at the start of sessions, or review them at the end, to evaluate the progress made by learners. Learners sometimes have insufficient time to complete tasks. Some discussions are not managed well by teachers.
- The Service offers very responsive provision in areas of high deprivation. Skilled and experienced outreach workers very successfully link with community groups. Good consultation with these communities allows managers and tutors to plan short courses that meet locally identified needs.
- Partnerships are outstanding. Staff work highly effectively with a wide range of statutory and voluntary providers, including education, health, social services and childcare providers. Long-term strategic plans are collaborative and inclusive. At an operational level, staff have excellent networking arrangements with local community organisations to plan programmes and to recruit and help learners progress.
- Advice, guidance and support are good. The successful Breakthrough project provides effective individual support to help learners back to work. Good practical support for learners includes free learning provision, free childcare, and payment of bus fares to courses in city centre locations. Outreach workers

provide good personal and learning support to learners by attending sessions for learners they have recruited.

- Equality and diversity are promoted strongly. Provision is targeted at learners with the greatest need. Programmes are located in the most deprived areas and local residents are consulted on the design of programmes and courses. Men-only groups for confidence building have begun to increase participation by males.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff, however, do not use management information data sufficiently to monitor and manage programmes. For example, quantitative data on success, attendance, progression and participation rates are not readily available to teachers. Data are stored in a variety of different systems and these systems are not fully comprehensive.
- Quality improvement systems are under developed. Classroom observations accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement. However, they only started in September 2009 and there is insufficient sharing of the good teaching and learning practice that exists.
- Staff use learners' opinions to inform programme improvement through frequent local consultation and the use of findings from end of course evaluations. However, the results of their analyses are not easily accessible. The self-assessment report lacks detail and involves few staff in its compilation.

What does Brighton and Hove Adult Skills and Learning Service need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring all teaching staff plan sessions more thoroughly, including the time spent on tasks. Better arrange procedures for the sharing of good practice between teachers.
- Improve the collection and use of management information data for all aspects of the provision.
- Extend quality improvement systems to involve all staff, learners and partners and use their views as an integral part of self-assessment.

## Information about the inspection

28. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's family learning programme manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the service's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the Sussex LSC, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
29. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed. They also observed learning sessions and assessments. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the two subject areas the service offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Brighton and Hove City Council**

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners Full-time learners Part-time learners	900				900
Overall effectiveness	2				2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2				2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?	2				
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?	2				
Quality of provision	2				2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	3				3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?	NA				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				



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