

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of provider: North Lincolnshire Council Adult Education Service
Date of visit: 30 April 2009

Context

North Lincolnshire Council Adult Education Service (the service) is situated in the Yorkshire and Humber Region, and is an integral part of the Learning, Schools and Communities Service area within the local authority. North Lincolnshire Council is a unitary authority, established in 1996 upon the abolition of Humberside. The area is largely agricultural apart from the substantial urban area of Scunthorpe together with the adjoining town of Bottesford.

The Humberside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds the service to provide vocational and non-vocational provision through a comprehensive programme of community based adult learning opportunities covering the whole of the local authority area.

At the previous inspection in September 2008, provision was inadequate. Specifically, leadership and management, including contributory grades of quality improvement and equality of opportunity were inadequate. The service's capacity to improve and the quality of provision in Skills for Life, education and training and family learning were also inadequate. Information and communication technology was good. Health and public services and arts, media and publishing were satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve learners' achievement and standards in all sector subject areas?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The service has made reasonable progress in improving achievement and standards for learners. The management re-structure now allocates clear roles and responsibilities to all staff, including curriculum managers and tutors. Curriculum managers communicate with, and manage, tutors in their team/s more effectively.

Sector subject area staff have analysed the reasons for low success rates and identified a number of key areas of concern such as retention, class size, tutor confidence and mixed subject and levels in some sessions. Curriculum managers and tutors are taking appropriate action to tackle these concerns. Curriculum managers now monitor the retention rate of individual courses more closely. A clear policy is in place to manage non-attendance that requires withdrawal after four unexplained

non-attendances. Staff promote and apply the learner contract that explains learners' and tutors' roles and responsibilities more forcefully to learners.

Managers now set individual sector subject area targets making good use of a range of national rates including LSC minimum levels of performance. Managers have implemented a traffic light warning system to monitor progress against targets. It is too early in the academic year to assess the affect of these actions.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The service has made reasonable progress to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Changes to the system for observation of teaching and learning have resolved the previously identified gaps. The revised process identifies staff training needs effectively at both curricula and service wide levels. Managers ensure that training needs are met. The standardisation of the observation process is more thorough. Observers receive good training in evaluative writing to assist them in recording observations effectively.

The revised observation of teaching and learning strategy is now more effective and includes more frequent teaching and learning observations and joint observations. The documentation used includes adequate space to record tutor actions for development and an agreed review date. Curriculum managers maintain a record of outstanding tutor action points and follow these through to ensure completion by the agreed date.

The service has developed good links with other local providers in the region. These links include peer observations and sharing resource development. A regular course monitoring process supports the observation of teaching and learning system. This focuses on completion of required documentation and the application of principles to recognise and record progress and achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited learning.

What progress has been made to improve the process of recording individualised learning?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

The service has made insufficient progress in improving the process of recording individualised learning. At the time of the previous inspection, staff had not implemented RARPA processes adequately. The new documentation, introduced at the time of the previous inspection, is now used for all non-accredited provision, except in preparation for life and work. The identified main learning aim and learning outcomes are insufficiently specific on some completed documentation. The service provided staff development on writing learning outcomes, although not all tutors on

non-accredited programmes attended this. The RARPA document does not form an effective individual learning plan or record of learners' progress.

The service has no overall RARPA strategy. Some tutors use their own processes, which provide appropriate records, such as learner diaries, portfolios and photographic evidence to monitor and record learners' progress. Currently, learners are recorded as successfully achieving the programme when they achieve 80% of their planned learning outcomes. However, there is no requirement for learners to achieve specified key learning outcomes that ensure that the main learning aim has been achieved.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to improve inadequate provision?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The service has made reasonable progress to improve the provision graded inadequate at the previous inspection. The management re-structure now gives line management responsibility to curriculum managers, clarifying their roles and responsibilities and placing them in an increased strategic role in managing the curriculum. They are now responsible for tutor allocations and the location of the curriculum offer. The council's human resources department assisted them in their new roles by providing good, supportive training.

The service has individual quality improvement plans for each sector subject area that include actions from the previous inspection and the most recent self-assessment report. These plans highlight key actions for improvement in most cases. Curriculum managers use the traffic light system effectively to monitor progress in achieving the actions. Pairs of sector subject areas are allocated to a member of the senior management team for guidance and support. Managers are currently developing individual curriculum strategies.

The Skills for Life and family learning quality improvement plans deal with all of the key areas for improvement from the previous inspection, but actions plans for education and training do not identify key areas to meet learners' needs or provide learner vetting systems to enable access to teaching practice.

What progress has been made to improve quality improvement systems?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The service has made reasonable progress in improving the inadequate quality improvement systems. At the time of the previous inspection, the weak quality assurance arrangements did not promote improvement. No quality improvement manuals or documented processes were in place. All staff now clearly understand the need for thorough quality assurance arrangements. The new strategic priorities

include a clear commitment to providing good quality provision. A new quality policy states the service's approach to quality improvement clearly. Staff are developing a quality calendar but it is not yet finalised. Communication throughout the service has improved significantly.

Improvements in the self-assessment process support quality improvement. The new management structure includes the appointment of a quality manager. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning have improved. Good use of tutor course review and evaluation supports self-assessment and improvement planning. Managers and staff use targets well to monitor the performance of courses, using retention, achievement and success data. The service uses a new system to record compliments, complaints, and learner feedback that leads to improvement actions.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made to ensure the self-assessment report and post-inspection development plan resolve key areas for improvement?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The service has made reasonable progress in ensuring that the post-inspection development plan is effective in dealing with the key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. At the previous inspection, the self-assessment was insufficiently accurate or judgemental, supporting evidence was not clearly identified and staff had an insufficient understanding or awareness of the self-assessment process. The self-assessment process has now improved. Staff are more involved in contributing to self-assessment and updating the development plan through team meetings. Curriculum areas produce termly interim self-assessment reports that will contribute to this year's self-assessment. Managers have identified that the current self-assessment report is insufficiently judgemental or evaluative and that links to evidence are insufficient. Managers have attended staff development on evaluative writing.

At the time of the previous inspection, quality improvement planning was superficial. Many actions were not completed within appropriate timescales and the monitoring of actions was insufficiently thorough. Post-inspection action plans for leadership and management and sector subject areas are much improved. They now identify appropriate actions. Managers review performance against these and update progress towards them monthly. Staff are making good progress in tackling the identified areas for improvement. Managers and staff now use the plan effectively to promote quality improvement.