

# Norfolk Probation Area

## Inspection Report

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Type of provider: Norfolk Probation Area  
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Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) works in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prison and Probation and inspects the management and provision of learning and skills for offenders across the whole range of custodial establishments and probation areas. Inspections may include those serving whole or part of their sentence in the community.

Inspectors judge the quality of the provision against the Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills 2009 (Common Inspection Framework 2009) and contribute to the inspection frameworks of Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation.

## Information about the probation area

Norfolk has eight local authority areas, with a population of 840,000, of which 1.5% have a minority ethnic heritage. Norfolk Probation Area (NPA) is the 28th largest out of 42 areas. John Boag House is the area's only approved premises. Two prisons are located in the area, at Wayland and Norwich. NPA has a case load of some 2000 offenders, of which 95% are white, 89% are men and about 70% are unemployed. Unemployment varies across the area with 10% in Great Yarmouth, five percent in Great Yarmouth and three percent in King's Lynn.

The assistant chief officer, responsible for commissioning, interventions and business development, is responsible for the learning and employability skills provision. He is supported by a Pathway Development Manager and Procurement and Contract Manager. Norfolk Probation Area funds a multi-agency employment project. Offenders access support on an individual basis from organisations including The Princes Trust and the Shaw Trust. SOVA provides mentors to support offenders in their work to address a number of issues including education and training.

Information about the offender learning and employability providers:

Lead OLASS providers and their subcontractors	Number of learners on discrete provision	Types of provision
* MOVEON East (formerly Norfolk ACRO) - Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn	70 referrals for initial assessments per month 40 starts	Information, advice and guidance Job-seeking skills Skills for Life Employability skills
Other providers		Type of provision
* F1 Computer Services and Training – Norwich and Great Yarmouth	60 referrals for community payback pre-placement work sessions per month and allocations to community payback scheme	learndirect Information, advice and guidance Pre-placement work sessions Job seeking skills Skills for Life and employability skills delivered through community payback scheme
** Mow and Grow (The Grow Organisation) - Norwich	30 allocations to community payback scheme per month	Employability skills

\* Provider of nextstep services subcontracted from Suffolk County Council

\*\* Social enterprise

The following text is Ofsted's contribution to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's offender management inspection.

## Summary report

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade: satisfactory
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Capacity to improve	Grade: satisfactory
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	Grade descriptor
Quality of provision	satisfactory
Assessment and sentence planning	
Implementation of interventions	
Achieving and sustaining outcomes	satisfactory
Leadership and management	satisfactory
Equality and diversity	Satisfactory
Safeguarding	satisfactory

### Overall effectiveness, including capacity to improve

Offenders received well structured community payback pre-placement work sessions. These sessions helped offenders effectively to identify their learning and employability skills needs. Unemployed offenders received effective enhanced information, advice and guidance services. Attendance at Skills for Life initial assessment sessions was poor and assessments of other learning needs were insufficiently comprehensive.

The range of provision was good. Providers had worked effectively to integrate learning and employability skills development into their community payback schemes. Teachers provided good support for individual learning activities. Staff made inadequate use of individual learning plans. Not all learning environments were sufficiently supportive. Offenders' attainments were good and they developed good skills. Success rates were low and attendance at learning sessions was poor.

Leaders had developed particularly innovative strategies to improve offenders' employability prospects. The provision had improved since the last inspection. Communications between offender managers and providers were insufficiently effective. Quality assurance systems were underdeveloped.

## What does Norfolk Probation Area need to do to improve further?

- improve communications between offender managers and providers
- raise expectations for the quality of the learning experience through more effective use of individual learning plans and the introduction of effective procedures for managing attendance
- improve the rigour of the quality assurance processes in learning and skills.

Offender perspective - learning and employability as confirmed by inspectors.

A total of 21 offenders were interviewed as part of the inspection process, individually or in groups. Offenders appreciated the guidance that they were given at their learning and skills induction and knew what was expected of them. They were not always made aware of the impact their offending behaviour had on the type of unpaid work they could do. They felt that they were treated with respect. Offenders valued the good and prompt support they received from their tutors, advisers and supervisors. Offenders liked the way in which they could use 20% of unpaid work for learning at the start of their court order and some would like to use more. Offenders were clear about the progress they were making and what they were trying to achieve but were not always familiar with their learning plan. Most offenders did not discuss their learning with their offender manager. Some offenders found it difficult to contact them. Many offenders described that attending learning and skills had given them another chance to change their lives and catch up with learning.

## Main inspection report

### The quality of provision

Grade:  
Satisfactory

#### Assessment and sentence planning

Offenders were provided with well structured community payback pre-placement work sessions. The health and safety induction was effectively linked to an assessment of the background knowledge of a relevant level 2 qualification. Offenders received an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy and initial information, advice and guidance from a nextstep adviser to improve their employability prospects. Offenders could access this service throughout their sentence. Next steps in learning were clearly discussed, placing a suitable emphasis on obtaining realistic outcomes. Similar arrangements were in place for high risk offenders and those not attending community payback schemes.

Unemployed offenders received an enhanced information, advice and guidance service through an employability project managed by MOVEON East. A seconded offender manager facilitated good communications between project partners for the benefit of the offenders. Working relations with Jobcentre Plus were effective, working jointly to streamline services and avoid duplication. Protocols provided for a Jobcentre Plus member of staff to work within the project and for a named point of contact in each Jobcentre Plus office. The range of support, including access to top-up training, was good. Developments in employer engagement were good. One in three offenders on this programme was moving into sustained employment.

Attendance at skills for life assessments was poor. Too often tutors and advisers were unable to provide offenders with appropriate support. In one Norwich centre only 55% of offenders referred by the probation area had had an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy in the last five months. Attendance was even lower for Great Yarmouth, but better for the recently opened new centre in Kings Lynn.

The assessment of each offender's learning needs was insufficiently comprehensive. Offenders' learning styles were not assessed. Specific additional learning needs were not rigorously identified or assessed and too often suitable support was not provided.

#### Implementation of interventions

Offenders had access to a good range of provision to improve their employment prospects. Literacy and numeracy were available from pre-entry to level 2. Offenders could develop their general skills for employment through team leading and business administration on community payback schemes. Opportunities were also available to improve job-seeking skills, including job applications, managing disclosure and job

searches. Advisers worked with more able offenders to promote progression in to further and higher education.

NPA had worked with its providers to effectively integrate learning and skills development into their community payback schemes. Many offenders made good use of 20% of their unpaid work court order hours to improve their skills. F1 Training and Mow and Grow also had accredited skills for employment effectively embedded into their community payback schemes. These two schemes were managed flexibly to widen access to as many offenders as possible. Supervisors made good use of pro-social modelling on more mundane unpaid work to support positive changes in behaviour. However changes in behaviour were not evaluated or recorded in a way that offenders could use to support an application for work.

Tutors provided good individual support for learning. Working relations between offenders and their tutors and advisers were good. Tutors used a good range of flexible strategies to engage learners. They were very clear about the progress offenders were making and praised them accordingly, providing them encouragement to tackle more difficult work in the weeks ahead. Tutors worked well to engage the offenders and delivered well tailored support during the computer-based learning sessions. In Skills for Life sessions, offenders concentrated on preparing for a test to achieve a qualification as opposed to learning. In some numeracy lessons, there was insufficient contextualisation. Offenders were often unable to specify how they would benefit in their daily lives from the maths they had learned. There were some missed opportunities by the tutors to extend learning during lessons by probing and engaging offenders into further development of a topic. The majority of tutors were very well qualified and possessed relevant experience of working with adult offender offenders.

Offenders at approved premises received specific support to help them identify their learning and skills needs and to improve their job-seeking skills. They had appropriate access to literacy and numeracy support and employability and life skills provision.

The learning environment at MOVEON East in Norwich was insufficiently supportive. Tutors had insufficient privacy when working sensitively with offenders. Individual tuition was carried out in small areas that were affected by disruptive levels of noise. In these areas, lighting was particularly poor. Two classrooms were resourced adequately for information and communications technology sessions and basic skills tuition. Learning was often disrupted by staff entering classrooms in search of files or similar.

Staff made inadequate use of individual learning plans to support learning. Targets placed insufficient emphasis on learning, and did not set out clearly what an offender needed to do to achieve. In some cases, offenders did not have a learning plan and in others, offenders were not aware of the content or what they needed to do to achieve their targets. Individual learning plans did not record additional support needs or any personal skill development made by the offender. Offenders did not have a copy of their learning plan and these plans were shared ineffectively with

offender managers. When offender managers were involved, learning was proportionate, relevant and delivered in line with the sentence.

## Achieving and sustaining outcomes

Grade:  
Satisfactory

Most offenders who completed their learning plans gained a qualification, or recognition for their attainments in non-accredited learning. For example, over 90% of offenders, who took the health and safety level 2 background knowledge test as part of their induction, passed. Attainment rates in literacy and numeracy were high at 94%.

Offenders' development of personal and employability skills was good. Offenders grew in confidence through their experiences of learning and were motivated to progress. They took pride in their work. During community payback sessions, offenders developed good team-work skills including the appropriate use of language and showing respect and positive attitudes. In schemes that provided training leading to qualifications, the quality of work was good. Offenders recognised how their work was of benefit to the local community. Offenders felt safe and attention to health and safety was satisfactory.

In 2008/09, success rates were low, although in line with other probation areas. NPA's data returns for 2009/10 indicated improvements in performance.

Attendance at learning and skills sessions was poor. On one site visited by inspectors, only seven of 25 offenders on the register attended. On other visits, offenders with appointments for individual learning sessions often failed to attend. These low attendance rates had a particularly negative impact when the preferred method of working was on an individual basis.

## Leadership and management

Grade:  
Satisfactory

NPA had used particularly innovative strategies to ensure that learning and skills could be used to improve each offender's chances of employment. All NPA's pre-placement work sessions were conducted by F1 Training, in an arrangement benefiting both parties. NPA made very effective use of 20% of unpaid work orders, enabling offenders to complete their learning at the start of their sentence. For some offenders, this was a strong incentive for further learning. Both Mow and Grow and F1 Training had integrated effectively employability skills development into their community payback schemes. The employability project managed by MOVEON East used good co-working arrangements between NPA, Jobcentre Plus and the provider to add value to the project.

Communications between offender managers and providers were insufficiently effective. Providers and their information, advice and guidance advisers did not always have access to sufficient information to provide offenders with appropriate advice and guidance of suitable work opportunities. Detailed feedback from initial assessment and information, advice and guidance interviews were often not available to offender managers to help them effectively manage an offender's progress. Providers did not share offenders' individual learning plans with offender managers. The learning and skills that licenced offenders achieved in prison were not effectively shared with providers. In some cases, offender managers were not sufficiently aware of the community payback scheme their offenders were taking, or the progress they were making. Providers had insufficient opportunities to meet to share practice to improve the provision, or solve common problems.

NPA's quality assurance arrangements were underdeveloped. NPA had service level agreements with most providers regardless of whether they were providing funding support for the service. NPA held regular meetings to monitor these agreements. For one provider this was not the case and NPA had insufficient information to be assured of the quality of that provision. NPA had further strengthened two of the key strengths identified at the last inspection in 2007 and improved two of the areas for improvement effectively.

All providers undertook self-assessment with differing levels of success. Some providers' self-assessment processes were insufficiently embedded or were insufficiently rigorous. In the better report there was detailed analysis of performance and useful evaluative information. NPA made insufficient use of targets and benchmarked data to support quality improvements. NPA's new data recording system was providing new opportunities to monitor performance. NPA made insufficient use of aggregated feedback from offenders to support improvements.

Equality and diversity were satisfactory and safeguarding arrangements to support offenders as vulnerable adults were satisfactory. NPA had a single equalities scheme and action plan, which was regularly monitored. Suitable arrangements were in place to ensure all offenders, regardless of their risk assessment, could complete an assessment of learning needs and have access to learning and employability opportunities. Working relations between staff and offenders were good and offenders were treated with respect. Staff role modelled positive behaviour and attitudes with offenders. MOVEON East had a diversity officer who provided beneficial support for female offenders. Providers promoted a rigorous code of conduct with offenders whilst attending learning or carrying out unpaid work. Not all premises used for learning had suitable facilities for offenders with restricted mobility. Specialist support for offenders with additional learning needs or learning difficulties or disabilities was unsatisfactory. Some providers undertook an analysis of performance by different groups of offenders, but this was not promoted by NPA and they did not effectively evaluate it. NPA required its providers to complete enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks on all staff. NPA provided its providers with suitable training on the protection of vulnerable adults. All providers took their duty of care responsibly.



## Information about the inspection

1. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), assisted by Norfolk Probation Area's Assistant Chief Officer, responsible for commissioning, interventions and business development, as co-ordinator, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of provider most recent self-assessment reports and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, previous inspection reports, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
2. Inspectors use a range of methods to gather the views of learners including group and individual interviews. They looked at questionnaires learners had completed on behalf of Norfolk Probation Area and its providers. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

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