

Northamptonshire County Council

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50178

Name of lead inspector: Judy Birkenhead HMI

Last day of inspection: 11 June 2010

Type of provider: Local Authority
Northamptonshire County Council
Education and Community Learning
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Information about the provider

1. Northamptonshire City Council Adult Learning Service (the service) offers courses for adults where the main aim is personal and social development. It is located in the Health and Adult Social Services division. The service's mission is to enable people in Northamptonshire to live more independent lives as active citizens, develop safer communities and promote a dynamic and prosperous economy. Adult learning in the county is funded by the Skills Funding Agency.
2. The service provides a range of informal adult learning opportunities across a number of subject areas. These include family learning (FL), community learning and neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC), specialist provision for learners with a learning disability (LLD) and personal and community development learning (PCDL). Partnerships with voluntary and community based organisations support delivery of the provision.
3. The county adult learning manager manages the provision. He is supported by three adult learning managers responsible for safeguarded learning, support services and strategy and partnerships. The service employs approximately 90 full and part-time support staff and approximately 160 full and part-time tutors.
4. Of the 7,889 learners on programme in 2009/10 a significant proportion of learners are women, 14% are from a minority ethnic group and 7% have a disability. Sixty nine per cent of learners are new to learning. Arts, media and publishing is the largest area of provision.
5. The population of Northamptonshire is 685,000. Sixty-two per cent of the population is of working age; 6.7% are unemployed; 15% have no qualifications compared with national average of 12.4%. According to the 2001 census, 5% of the population are from a minority ethnic group compared with 9.1% nationally.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for adult learners: Learning for social and personal development	7,403 part-time learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2

	Grade
Learning for social and personal development	
Leisure travel and tourism	3
Arts media and publishing	2
Community development	2
Family learning	2

Overall effectiveness

6. Outcomes for learners are very good. A high proportion of adult learners achieve their learning goals. Many successfully complete a qualification. Learner satisfaction with courses provided by the council is very high. Minority and disadvantaged groups achieve as well as their peers. Learners significantly improve their confidence, self esteem and well-being. Many develop useful transferable skills which enable them to be active in their communities. Learners feel safe and are encouraged to use safe working practices.
7. Teaching and learning are good and much is outstanding. Tutors challenge and inspire their learners to exceed their own expectations. Sessions are planned well to meet individualised learning needs. In the majority of classes tutors demonstrate and reinforce safe working practice but in leisure travel and tourism risk assessment documentation is not completed effectively. Most tutors recognise and report on progress and achievement well. In a few sessions tutors make insufficient use of individual learning plans.

8. The service meets the range of interests and needs in the community well. Strong partnership work supports widening participation and provides significant benefits for disadvantaged learners. Learner and partner views contribute to improvement. LDD learners' involvement in the planning and decision making of their programme is outstanding.
9. Leaders provide good strategic vision to meet local and national priorities. Managers work well with their teams to implement this vision. Staff are supported well to achieve a high level of expertise to support learners. Self-assessment provides a good focus for improvement planning. Good improvements have helped to raise the standard and quality of learners' experience. Managers and teams work effectively to continually improve the service for learners.

Main findings

- Learners achieve well and enjoy their learning. They attain high levels of success and achievement on their programmes and make significant improvement in their confidence, self-esteem, and ability to participate in learning. They make particularly good improvements in their health and well-being. Learners' achievement of national qualifications is good. LDD learners' success rates on vocational training qualifications are outstanding.
- Many learners significantly enhance their social and economic opportunities, such as improving their community involvement and developing the appropriate skills and confidence to move into employment. A significant number of learners from disadvantaged groups actively take part in personal and social development learning. LDD learners progress to work in local businesses.
- Teaching and learning in many sessions is good and much is outstanding. The service has implemented paired teaching observations to promote the sharing of good practice. This is working well across a number of subject areas but has yet to be established across the provision. The service recognises that overall, too much teaching and learning is no better than satisfactory.
- The service provides wide ranging provision to meet the needs and interests of learners and their communities. Learners' views are sought to support the future planning of programmes and they have a particularly good choice of subjects and levels. However, there is too little provision of music, dance and drama.
- Highly effective external partnerships benefit learners. The service and its partners provide highly innovative and successful programmes to promote health and well-being for participants. Local connections with public services, community and voluntary organisations provide good access to learning and improve community networks.
- Specialist staff, support assistants and use of adaptive technology promote particularly good support for learning. However, good practice is insufficiently shared in the use of individual learning plans and recording of risk assessments.

- Clear strategic vision is meeting wider community needs and supporting national and regional priorities. Communication within the service and with external partners is particularly good.
- Managers make good use of data and information, following much development work to improve systems. Training has recently taken place to enable staff in curriculum areas to use the system fully. The service has made good progress in developments to record social and economic positive outcomes and is taking steps to establish this across the provision.
- Good management support for staff development and training includes effective use of e-learning for essential topics such as safeguarding and equality and diversity. In addition, over 80 teachers have completed teacher-training qualifications since 2008.
- A strong focus on equality and diversity exists and is promoting and widening participation and is particularly effective in consulting with users to support and implement improvements. Learner representation in the planning and decision making for the 'Chefs in Training' programme is outstanding. Safeguarding is satisfactory.
- Good quality improvement has taken place across all areas. Self assessment provides a useful focus for development plans. However, in the leisure, travel and tourism subject area, progress at first was too slow with insufficient management action to support staff. Recent management restructuring has resolved this problem.
- Observation processes are systematic and rigorously monitored and moderated. The proportion of inadequate teaching has declined. However, insufficient focus is placed on the quality of learning in observations and sampling is insufficient.
- Good use is made of resources to secure value for money. Learners make good progress and achieve well. The efficient use of local community venues is prioritised in a comprehensive sustainability policy. Investment in staff training is good.

What does Northamptonshire County Council need to do to improve further?

- Continue to implement the peer observation process to ensure that good practice in teaching and learning is shared across the provision and the observation process focuses on learning as well as teaching.
- Make better use of existing tutor good practice in monitoring and reviewing learners' individual targets and learning goals and recording risk assessments to support all tutors and learners.
- Continue to support subject staff to understand the data and information systems, to help them make better use of available reports when monitoring learners' progress and to inform planning.

- Fully establish the appropriate recording of participants' economic and social well-being, researched recently during innovative project work, across the whole service.
- Review the provision in arts, media and publishing to introduce a wider range of drama, dance and music courses to reflect the service's mission to enhance participants' health and well-being.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being able to get back into learning and making new friends
- becoming confident and motivated
- feeling better and more relaxed after exercise classes
- the friendly atmosphere and welcoming centres in their local community
- gaining confidence to speak to others
- being able to help their children with writing and numeracy
- improving their English speaking through conversation
- the support of the crèche facilities
- getting support for their dyslexia
- being inspired by passionate art tutors.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the offer of more classes
- bigger classrooms for family learning in some community centres
- the fast pace of some exercise sessions slowed down.

Summary of the views of partners as confirmed by inspectors

What partners like:

- the particularly good support from the service helping resolve problems easily
- the service's responsive and supportive approach
- working together with the service and the good informal feedback on both sides
- the opportunities the service provides for vulnerable learners to attend non-threatening centres
- working together to resolve the difficulties to get a positive outcome for participants.

What partners would like to see improved:

- the amounts of paperwork completion, particularly for continuing learners.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. The service has maintained and improved the quality of provision since its previous inspection. The re-inspection in 2007 confirmed improvements in the quality of provision and a clear commitment to quality improvement. A focused quality improvement plan is well implemented; previous strengths in management are maintained and weaknesses improved. Good grades in subject areas are maintained and weaker grades improved. The service has a clear focus on meeting targets and financial viability. It uses research effectively to align itself with national and regional priorities. It uses partnerships well and has implemented successful innovative projects. Senior managers take appropriate action to resolve slow progress. They have successfully re-focused the service in line with national and regional priorities and the county council internal restructuring.
11. The service makes good use of feedback from its users to inform the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report provides appropriate focus for the quality improvement plan. The majority of its outcomes are realistic, accurate and based on clear evidence. The areas for improvement in the latest report are very similar to those found through inspection. The quality cycle is very clear and staff understand their contribution to improvement. The service has already identified and taken recent action to improve many of the areas for improvement identified in this report.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Outcomes for learners are very good. A high proportion of learners attending social and personal development courses achieve their learning goals. Of those who opt to take a qualification most achieve it. In 2009/10 adult learners' success rates on language, literacy and English as a second language (ESOL) are high. Success rates for learners with learning difficulties are outstanding. In 2009/10 every learner was successful on national vocational and employability qualifications. The service has made good progress in developing the recording of economic and social well-being and is taking steps to implement this across the provision.
13. Learners feel safe attending courses. Safe working practice is encouraged in most classes. Tutors are knowledgeable about health and safety and demonstrate procedures effectively. This is not always recorded well.
14. Learners on social and personal development courses make significant progress in developing their confidence, self esteem, social skills and ability to engage in learning. They produce high standards of work, particularly in art media and publishing. They significantly improve their well-being. Many are able to

contribute to community activities such as performances, exhibitions, social forums and events.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. The quality of provision is good. Inspectors observed a high proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning in many sessions across the provision. In the better sessions, tutors inspire, motivate and challenge learners to exceed their expectations. Session planning is detailed and plans for individualised learning are well implemented. Learners and tutors reflective discussions about learners' progress are effectively recorded. Tutors give positive and constructive feedback to learners and encourage them to understand and use safe working practices. In the weaker sessions learners' individual needs are not adequately met and tutors make insufficient use of individual learning plans to monitor progress. Paperwork recording for session plans and risk assessments are incomplete. A new system for paired teaching observations is helping staff to share good practice and raise the proportion of satisfactory grades.
16. The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. The service's focus on providing learning in community settings is highly effective. Adult learning provision covers a wide geographical spread and includes urban, rural and deprived communities. The service consults widely with local organisations and communities and is responsive to meeting local need. Learners' views are sought to develop future programme planning. A wide range of subjects and levels are on offer but dance music and drama are insufficiently represented. Head teachers report an improvement in parents' involvement and contribution to school activities. Learners previously disengaged from community life are more able to plan their life and daily activities. They develop additional interests such as friendship meetings, walking groups and become advocates and learning champions. Learners access the service intranet database for information on informal adult learning opportunities across the county.
17. The service's good partnership work is productive. It benefits learners and promotes widening participation. It engages and motivates hard to reach learners in deprived communities and those isolated from community activities. Local connections with public services and community and voluntary sector organisations provide good local access to learning and strengthen community networks. Partnerships are in place with community associations in Northamptonshire's most deprived wards to provide courses for adult learners of a wide age range, parents and their families. It provides a successful over 60's yoga group for Asian women with limited mobility. The service and its partners, the Mental Health Foundation, Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust and local GP's, provide innovative courses for people with mental health problems. This is highly successful in supporting learners' health and well-being and enabling previously isolated people to re-engage with their communities.

18. Specialist staff, support assistants and use of adaptive technology promote particularly good support for learning. In art media and publishing learners benefit from taking part in extensive enrichment activities. Coaching and correction of techniques is managed sensitively in exercise classes. Individual advice and guidance is constructive and positive and progression opportunities are highlighted. Support workers are used well to translate in ESOL classes. In family and community learning tutors have a good understanding of learners' strengths and weakness and support them appropriately. Peer support is encouraged in many classes. Marketing and health and safety brochures are available in five different languages. The learner charter is a well structured and accessible document. Some course information is too brief for learners attending classes in leisure, travel and tourism.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

19. Leadership and management are good. The service is highly committed to providing quality provision for local communities. Leaders set a clear direction informed by national and regional research and priorities. Managers are set targets relating to strategic aims. Service-wide meetings framework aids communication between managers and teachers. Staff development requests are supported well and e-learning used effectively for training. All tutors are registered with the Institute for Learning and completion of their continuing professional development is carefully monitored.
20. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. All staff working with children and/or vulnerable adults have Criminal Record Bureau checks that are recorded on a central list to show that they are appropriately cleared for their work. All staff complete mandatory safeguarding training and are further supported by the safeguarding policy and guidance. The head of service has completed additional training and is the nominated safeguarding officer. Links with the local safeguarding board are well established. The service works effectively with the council health and safety committee. A venue co-ordinator monitors risk assessments for learning activity, venue and equipment. This post is currently advertised. The service has plans to improve current arrangements for individual risk assessment across the provision.
21. Promotion of equality and diversity to widen participation for under-represented groups is good. Outreach workers liaise effectively with schools and community organisations in deprived areas to engage potential learners. The service develops specific access programmes such as 'Chefs in Training' for adults with learning difficulties and with the Northamptonshire Association for the Blind to provide information technology training for people who are losing their sight. Numbers of male learners are low, although some courses are offered specifically to attract participation, such as 'Dad's at Large' in family learning. Senior managers collect data on the performance of different groups of learners but this is not used sufficiently for planning.

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22. Staff training in equality and diversity topics is prioritised for all staff and their completion of the e-learning module is monitored. Good links with the county council equalities team provides useful staff training. The service actively promotes different cultural festivals and events to staff on its intranet calendar. Staff teams reflect the ethnic make up of the local community. The service is aware that not all community venues are ideally suited for people with all disabilities, but prioritises their use to give access to otherwise isolated people and promote social inter-action. Specific and appropriate action is taken to meet individual need.
 23. Engagement of service users to support and promote improvement is good. A learner and partner engagement strategy informs future plans. Learner, tutor and partner views are regularly collated. An annual letter is sent to all users, learners and partner organisations, to inform them of the changes and improvements that have been made in response to their comments. Learner views play an important part in programme development and the location of services. Learner representation is particularly strong in community learning, neighbourhood learning and LDD where it is outstanding. LDD learner representatives are highly active in supporting and improving all aspects of the programme and are represented at key management meetings. Learner forums are used well in subject areas. External partnerships are effectively promoted to ensure the needs of learners are met.
 24. Quality improvement arrangements are good. The quality improvement plan is highly effective in maintaining and supporting improvement. The annual self-assessment process is good. It is informed by improved use of data, staff and learner views, course reviews, observations and staff appraisals. The quality improvement plans for subject areas are rigorously monitored to measure progress against targets. Teaching and learning observations are monitored regularly for trends and improvements. The proportion of inadequate teaching and learning has declined. A new system of peer observations is helping some staff share good practice in teaching and learning. Plans are in place to make this available to all staff across the provision. Quality assurance processes are satisfactory. Monitoring arrangements to identify the quality of the completion of documentation such as individual learning plans and risk assessments are insufficient.
 25. Good use is made of available resources to secure value for money. Learners achieve and progress well in their learning. They are enabled to participate in their communities and develop useful skills. The use of community venues is clearly supported by the service's sustainability policy. The service plans effectively to minimise travel for learners, ensure support for local facilities and encourage staff to use locally sourced materials for use in learning sessions. Tutors encourage learners to do likewise. Since 2009 it has invested significantly in electronic learning and staff development and training. Where appropriate it has encouraged staff to share learning materials.

Learning for social and personal development

Other social and personal development learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: LDD and a sample of other subject areas.

Leisure travel and tourism

Grade 3

Context

26. During 2009/10 1,818 learners enrolled on to 259 courses at 73 venues across the county. Most learners are female, 16% are male and 4% have a disability. Courses are non-accredited, offered in the evening, during the day and a small number on Saturdays. Most courses are ten weeks in duration. The provision is managed by two specialist curriculum leaders supported by 36 part-time tutors.

Key findings

- Learners develop a satisfactory level of skill and confidence which contribute to improvements in their flexibility, mobility and general well being. They work hard to improve their technique. They clearly enjoy their learning and their improved access to social interaction. Achievement of personal learning goals is generally good. Retention rates are high at 96%.
- Learners feel safe. They are actively encouraged to respect and care for their own health and well-being during classes. Detailed attention is given to health and safety allowing learners to develop safe working practices. Recording of risk assessment is sometimes too general. Useful information is collected through pre-course health screening but this is not always used effectively to assess individual risk and plan sessions.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In better sessions tutors' plans are detailed and planning for individualised learning is used well to promote learning. Tutors encourage safe practice and learners' progress against set targets are discussed and recorded. In the weaker sessions tutors use a narrow range of teaching and learning strategies. Resources are good and staff are appropriately qualified.
- Tutors use of individual learning plans to set targets and monitor progress is insufficient. A few learners lack challenge. Where they are used well, learners and tutors carefully reflect on and record progress made during the session. The recently introduced process for moderating learning plans has highlighted these issues. Initial assessment is satisfactory.
- The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Sessions are taught in wide range of community venues across the county. Most learners acknowledge this as a benefit. The service works effectively with other agencies to extend provision and address specific health and well being issues within communities.

- Information advice and guidance are satisfactory. A useful screening tool is used to gather important information on the learner's state of health prior to joining a class. However, standard course leaflets do not always contain sufficient information to allow learners to make informed choices. Specific detail about knowledge and experience is sometimes incomplete.
- Support for learners is good. Individual support, coaching and correction of technique, are managed sensitively by most tutors. In a few sessions opportunities to provide directed support for individuals are missed when the tutor spends too much time demonstrating at the front of the class, with their back to the group.
- Operational management is satisfactory. Communication with part time tutors is effective and take up of internal training opportunities are good. Many new systems and processes have been developed and implemented to bring about improvement but some have yet to be evaluated to ensure they are having the desired impact. Progress since the last inspection has been slow.
- Promotion of equality and diversity and social inclusion in teaching and learning sessions is good. Learners are frequently consulted through surveys, class and group discussions, and the level of satisfaction is high.
- Self-assessment is satisfactory. It is inclusive of staff and learner views. It has identified some areas common to inspection findings but generally over states the progress and improvement in standards since the last inspection. Value for money is satisfactory. Some class sizes are small and attendance during inspection was low at 77%.

What does Northamptonshire County Council need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all tutors make full use of the pre-course health screening information to address all elements of risk for individual learners.
- Continue to reinforce the use of target setting to monitor learner progress in individual learning plans.
- Ensure sufficient time is given to provide specialist leadership support to help tutors engage with new processes and increase the pace of improvement, especially in teaching and learning.
- Ensure more detailed and specific course information and guidance is available to assist learners in making informed choices, especially for learners considering intermediate level courses.

Arts media and publishing

Grade 2

Context

27. During 2009/10 2486 learners enrolled on to programmes in arts and crafts, an increase of 25% on the previous year. Eighteen per cent are male, 10% from a minority ethnic group and 7% have a declared disability. The service offers 335 courses at 109 schools and community venues across the county. The non-accredited courses are offered in the evening, during the day and on Saturdays. Most courses are ten weeks in duration.

Key findings

- Learners on arts media and publishing courses demonstrate a high level of technical skill. They gain tremendous enjoyment from their classes and develop strong personal and social skills. Ninety per cent of learners achieve their learning goals. Levels of retention and attainment are particularly good. The standard of work is exceptionally high in art with learners succeeding beyond their expectations.
- Learners' economic and social well-being is significantly improved through attending classes. Art learners exhibit and sell their work to the public. They acquire additional professional skills required to mount, display and sell their work. Learners, particularly those on the Learn2Be programme, are more able to progress to mainstream courses and their well-being is significantly improved.
- LDD learners make a strong contribution to the community through their public exhibitions of arts and crafts and performances of dance and song. Social networks are built up through the close relationships that learners develop across the provision. Learners share travel arrangements and share skills and experience. Learners feel safe and in most classes tutors reinforce safe working practice.
- Teaching and learning is good with much outstanding teaching. Most tutors recognise and record learner progress and achievement well. In better sessions knowledgeable and experienced tutors inspire learners to make excellent progress. Learners benefit from a good use and range of learning activities. In weaker sessions tutors awareness of the needs of learners is poor and safe practices are insufficiently reinforced.
- The provision meets the needs of learners well. Learners enjoy the close proximity of their local classes. Disadvantaged learners gain confidence to learn in a safe and non-threatening environment. Tutors provide learners with extensive opportunities for enrichment to extend their knowledge of their subject. However, the range of access to other art forms such as music, dance and drama is limited.
- Excellent partnerships enhance the learners' experience. Managers provide a clear strategy for the location of venues to enable good opportunities for

community development. Learners attending courses in local schools and community venues develop new social networks and opportunities to share new skills with family and friends. The Learn2Be project is highly effective in providing new creative opportunities for learners.

- Learners are supported well in classes. They receive good individual advice and guidance which motivates them to work hard. Tutors provide constructive and appropriate feedback. They engage learners in reflective discussions about their work. Learners receive good signposting for progression and additional subject learning opportunities. Additional support is sensitive to the need of learners.
- Quality improvement planning is good. A significant number of systems and actions are in place to improve the quality of provision and these are impacting positively with benefits to learners. Managers are very clear about the strategic direction of the provision but this is less clear at tutor level. Identified training has not yet taken place for tutors working on the Learn2Be programme.
- Equality and diversity and safeguarding are strongly promoted across the provision. Tutors provide excellent use of personalised care and attention in class and make good use of health and safety assessments. Learners are encouraged to understand the cultural aspects of their work. The programme enables many learners of different abilities and backgrounds to develop their creative and practical skills.
- Tutors have insufficient opportunity to share good practice. Staff are positive about the recent introduction of peer teaching and evaluation to share good practice. However not enough tutors have access to this opportunity. Observation action plans are rigorously monitored and moderated and some grades have improved. The process focuses too much on teaching and not enough on learning.

What does Northamptonshire County Council need to do to improve further?

- Provide learners with a wider curriculum offer to include music, dance and drama subjects, especially within the well being and mental health programmes.
- Ensure managers help tutors to understand the relevance of the strategic aims and how they relate to their area of work through team meetings or staff training.
- Ensure effective training to enable tutors to better understand and meet the needs of learners with identified mental health problems takes place.

Community Learning

Grade 2

Context

28. During 2009/10 675 learners in community development enrolled on 29 courses at 23 venues. In neighbourhood learning in deprived communities 716 learners enrolled on 93 courses at 43 locations in community venues across the county. Courses are planned and managed by one curriculum specialist and four curriculum co-ordinators. They vary in length from one to ten sessions. All the courses are non-accredited. The majority of learners are female, 16% have a declared disability and 18% are from a minority ethnic group.

Key findings

- Retention and success rates on all courses are good. Retention is high at 96%. Success rates are good at 87%. Attendance is very good. A high proportion of courses are new. Learners work is of a good quality and learners feel safe.
- Learners' achievement of personal goals and learning outcomes are high. Learners previously distanced from community activities make new friends and join social groups. They significantly improve their well-being. Their self esteem and confidence are much improved and they are able to apply for work. One group of learners created an education forum to further engage the community.
- Teaching and learning are good. Classes are lively with challenging tasks to enable learners to demonstrate new skills effectively. Learners work at a pace that enables them to develop new skills. Tutors use a wide variety of well-prepared learning activities and resources to promote learning. Tutors provide good explanations and plan lessons around the individual needs of learners.
- Tutors take particular care in marking learners' work. They provide learners with constructive feedback and suggested areas for development. Learners actively use these skills to help their children.
- The service provides a good range of courses to meet the needs and interests of learners. Courses are held in schools, nurseries and community centres in identified areas of the county where traditionally learners are difficult to engage. Courses enable learners to progress from family learning into community or neighbourhood learning. They progress further to mainstream courses offered by the service or local colleges.
- Support for learners is excellent. Tutors understand learners' needs well and support them accordingly. Peer support is encouraged. Learners' access a good range of specialist equipment. Highly experienced and qualified staff provide a range of advice and guidance for learners. They use their specialist expertise to train external organisations. Additional support is well managed.
- Operational management of neighbourhood learning and community development is good. Strategic direction is strong, with local plans that effectively implement national and local strategies. A highly committed curriculum team works closely to develop the provision. Communication between all areas of adult learning and community learning is particularly good.

- The use of progression data is underdeveloped. Although progression is recorded it is not used effectively to further develop programmes. The service recognises the need to collect the data and plans are in place to formalise its use in July 2010.
- Staff access to professional and personal training and development is good. New staff are effectively mentored into the service. Many are highly qualified with specialist qualifications such as level 3 and level 4 in initial advice and guidance. Service and peer observations routinely take place and good practice is shared at team meetings. However, there is too much focus on teaching and insufficient focus on learning. The process is not formally linked to the appraisal process.
- The service successfully promotes equality and diversity and gives learners good opportunities to develop their potential. Many learning activities promote cultural awareness effectively. The service has developed a wide range of high quality multicultural resources and they share these with tutors across both subject areas.
- Self-assessment is inclusive. All staff and learners are involved in the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment grade. The self-assessment report provides an effective focus for improvement activities.

What does Northamptonshire County Council do to improve further?

- Continue to implement the use of progression data to inform future programme planning.
- Improve the observation of teaching and learning process to focus on learning rather than teaching and ensure this links formally to the appraisal process.

Family Learning

Grade 2

Context

29. In 2009/10 1,092 learners enrolled on wider family learning (WFL), family learning language and numeracy (FLLN) courses. New learners are recruited through the family learning impact funded (FLIF) programme. Both FLLN and FLIF offer literacy, numeracy and English as a second language (ESOL) qualifications as well as joint parent and child activities. Parents attend from one to four hours per week from five to 17 weeks. The programme is delivered by a team of 26 tutors and 11 support workers assisted by a full-time manager.

Key findings

- Learners develop good personal and social skills. First step courses help learners to support their children at school. School staff report improved communication with parents and better school attendance. Learners are enthusiastic and gain confidence to try out new activities with their child at home. They use their improved awareness of healthy eating at home. Sessions are welcoming and safe and foster close friendships.
- Success rates are high on family learning programmes. Retention is very high. In 2009/10 87% of learners successfully completed their learning goals. Literacy, language and numeracy success rates at 90% are particularly good. The proportion of learners taking qualifications has increased by 26% in the last year. Several ESOL learners significantly improved their skills to become volunteer support tutors.
- Teaching and learning are good. Sessions are well planned and effectively linked to Every Child Matters themes. In the best sessions tutors prepare extremely well both for the adult learner and for activities to use with their child. Tutors use a variety of activities and explain objectives clearly. They challenge learners well, encourage group discussion and give helpful feedback.
- Initial assessment is thorough and appropriate to the courses. Individual learning plans are adapted well for different course levels and include relevant individual and group targets. Tutors use these plans as working documents in all classes. Tutors have a satisfactory knowledge of health and safety and safeguarding procedures but these are insufficiently reinforced during classes.
- Family learning courses offer a wide range of courses to meet the needs of learners. Short courses and tasters are popular and progress to sessions with a focus on health, well-being and money management. The provision is located in rural, urban and in deprived communities. The programmes attract few men and opportunities for learners to join classes in the evening or weekend are too few.
- Strong and effective partnerships are established with a number of partners including schools, library services, children's centres, community centres and

voluntary organisations. Good relationships have been built up with health visitors who are regularly used to speak to groups.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. FLIF funding has enabled managers to successfully target learners from deprived communities with a substantial minority ethnic population. Good use is made of support workers to translate in ESOL classes. Marketing and health and safety brochures are available in up to five different languages.
- Management of family learning programmes is good. Staff communicate regularly through team meetings. Tutors contribute to the self-assessment report and are aware of the development targets. The inspection grade agrees with the self-assessment grade. Staff undertake appropriate training and new tutors are well supported by mentors. Safeguarding and health and safety policies are well developed and promoted. Data is not used sufficiently to analyse trends in achievement and progression.

What does Northamptonshire County Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of data to systematically analyse and measure trends in achievement and progression to better record learner outcomes.
- Ensure that the health and safety and safeguarding procedures are reinforced during classes.
- Continue the development of more flexible opportunities to improve the recruitment and involvement of fathers in family learning.

Information about the inspection

30. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's strategy and partnership manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and partners had recently completed on behalf of the service. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Northamptonshire County Council Adult Learning Service

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	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	5323	5323
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?	3	
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 do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	3	
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?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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