

Portsmouth City Council

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Family learning
- Community learning

Description of the provider

1. Adult and community learning are provided by Portsmouth City Council's Adult and Family Learning (the Council's AFL) service team operating within Community Learning Services. Family learning provision is managed and delivered directly by the Council's AFL team and includes family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning. Personal and community development learning (PCDL) is subcontracted to three local providers; Highbury College, a general further education college, Learning Links, a social enterprise and educational charity and Portsmouth Council of Community Service, a voluntary sector organisation supporting community services. Most PCDL learners follow short non-accredited programmes.
2. The funding body for the Council's AFL provision is the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Activities and courses take place, mainly during the day, in over 75 community settings. The Council's AFL team, comprised of an acting Head of Lifelong Learning, an acting Family Programmes Manager and an acting Data, Contracts and Performance Officer is based in the city council offices in the centre of Portsmouth.
3. Portsmouth is a renowned naval port, famous for its historic dockyards. The city retains strong connections with the Royal Navy and operates as a commercial port. The population, just below 200,000, has a rising minority ethnic community representing around 10% of the community. The densely populated city contains widely disparate social areas, some designated as economically and socially deprived. Unemployment is rising, but around the regional average. Recent surveys indicate that 39% of the adult population have functional skills below level 2. School's GCSE success rates, below national averages until 2006, are steadily improving.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Sector subject areas

Family learning	Outstanding: Grade 1
Community learning	Outstanding: Grade 1

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

4. The overall effectiveness of the Council's AFL provision is outstanding. The Council's AFL team has demonstrated that it has outstanding capacity to make improvements. Achievement and standards are outstanding and the quality of provision is good. Leadership and management and the arrangements for equality of opportunity are outstanding. Provision for family learning and community learning are both outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. Capacity to improve is outstanding. The Council's AFL team has successfully tackled all the five areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and a number of additional initiatives have been put in place to improve the quality of the provision further. Leadership and management are very strong and significant actions have been implemented to improve many aspects of the programmes offered, for example, where they are located and the way in which they are taught. Quality improvement action plans are detailed, well monitored and address all the areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report. Timescales are realistic and progress is reviewed at regular intervals by all concerned.
6. Self-assessment is good. The latest self-assessment report is thorough, critical and accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The self-assessment grades for the Council's AFL provision match those from inspection in all but one respect; they are lower. The process is well established and judgements are backed up by a wealth of data and relevant information supplied through the data reporting systems. The Council's AFL team's systems for formally monitoring progression to further learning, however, are still being developed. Development plans prioritise those aspects of the provision most in need of improvement. They are detailed and monitored regularly. Staff contribute to implementing improvement plans as an integral part of their responsibilities and they demonstrate a justifiable sense of pride in the Council's AFL team's achievements.

Key strengths

- Excellent achievement, standards and progression
- Good teaching and learning
- Highly responsive provision targeting deprived communities
- Particularly good operational management and strong leadership
- Outstanding strategic planning
- Outstanding partnership working

- Highly effective initiatives to widen participation
- Particularly good quality improvement planning and implementation
- Excellent promotion of social inclusion

Key areas for improvement

No significant key areas for improvement were identified.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

7. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Learners demonstrate enjoyment and enthusiasm, a willingness to learn and good skills and understanding. Achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications is very high. In 2007/08 achievement for FLLN learners sitting national certificates was 90%. Retention and attendance for family learning were very high at 97% and 98% respectively. The achievement and standards of learners on community learning programmes are outstanding. In 2007/08 achievement for community learning was 99% and retention levels were 97%.
8. In family learning, learners develop excellent personal, social and parenting skills and they make significant progress in better supporting and interacting with their children. Many parents on wider family learning programmes progress to literacy and numeracy courses and into mainstream education or training. Many parents who are learners become more involved with school activities, some as volunteer support assistants. Adults on community learning programmes increase their levels of confidence and improve their employability skills. Engagement in community learning provides good opportunities for learners to socially interact and many improve their personal effectiveness at home, within the community, and at work.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

9. The quality of adult and family learning is good. Teaching and learning is good. Tutors prepare lessons well to contain a variety of interesting topics relevant to learners' needs and experiences and this contributes to learners' enjoyment, good attendance and involvement in the class. Tutors pay particular attention to ensure good understanding by learners and they routinely evaluate the effectiveness of lessons.
10. Learners are assessed, supported and signposted to alternative and higher level programmes with the minimum of disruption and bureaucracy. Tutors complete detailed profiles of learners' academic history, social and domestic factors and barriers to learning and use these well to plan learning. Learning targets, for example those related to specific literacy skills, were noted on the personal learning plans. Tutors create friendly and supportive learning environments and many lessons are delivered with enthusiasm, helping to motivate and engage the learners.
11. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory and the quality, availability and suitability of learning materials support learning well. Community venues generally provide good quality learning environments, although some

classrooms are small and noisy making teaching difficult at times. The Council's AFL team is developing an accommodation improvement programme.

12. Provision is highly responsive to the needs of learners, with many sessions held at the request of learners. The courses are tailored to meet the needs of the learners and provision is placed in community locations, often in deprived areas, providing good access for priority, target groups. The Council's AFL curriculum offers a selection of free, short tasters and introductory programmes to engage learners and provides the opportunity to progress to an impressive choice of courses run by colleges, training providers and community groups. Learners are given detailed information, advice and guidance before starting programmes and after they finish. Advice and guidance are very effective in signposting learners to the most appropriate programmes for their particular needs.
13. Support for learners is good. Staff respond promptly and appropriately to requests from learners for support across a wide range of issues including social, domestic and learning matters. The Council's AFL staff are particularly effective in developing partnerships with external providers and specialist support organisations to provide an effective multi-agency approach to advising and supporting learners.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

14. The leadership and management of the Council's AFL provision are outstanding. Operational management is particularly good and leadership is strong. The three highly experienced managers who plan, deliver and monitor the provision have developed it to be fully inclusive and focusing on learners. All the Council's AFL staff are well supported and given many opportunities to develop new skills and manage different projects. The Council's AFL staff carry out joint teaching observations with subcontractors and share training events and good practice with them. The Council's AFL team has developed an e-learning programme supporting staff to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) very effectively in the classroom. The training and e-learning events are well attended by providers across the city and have been shared across many Council services. The Council's AFL team collects, uses and interprets data well to manage performance and set recruitment, retention and achievement targets. The process for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement (RARPA) is sound and good practice is being shared. Communication is excellent throughout the service and the management of subcontracted provision is particularly responsive and effective.
15. Strategic planning is outstanding. The Council's AFL provision has moved from its former focus on curriculum areas to prioritising engagement with hard to reach learners. The overall budget is small but the Council's AFL team makes good use of external funding streams to support new initiatives. Subcontracted provision

provides a good spread of locations and programmes. The Council's AFL objectives are highly responsive to local and national priorities and agendas, and support a number of key city and regional priorities around achievement. Strategic planning overall is highly responsive to local community needs and is aligned closely to the school improvement agenda and the Every Child Matters themes.

16. Partnership working is outstanding. The Council's AFL team facilitates regular meetings of PCDL providers within the community, including Women's Wisdom, Action for Communities, Workers' Education Association, Portsmouth Race Equality Network Organisation (PRENO) and Portsmouth Council's Community Service. The Council's AFL team is particularly proactive and successful in identifying partnership opportunities. Resources are shared very effectively to support partners. Such support includes helping providers to set up quality systems and data bases; explaining how to source funding and prepare submissions; and offering training and support. The Council's AFL team respects the professionalism of their partners, shares their objectives, devises common strategies and gives them the autonomy to develop provision in the most appropriate way to meet learners' needs.
17. Initiatives to widen participation are highly effective. The objectives of the Council's AFL provision are sharply focused on increasing access to learning for disadvantaged groups in deprived and isolated areas and offering a choice of progression opportunities through accredited and non-accredited courses. The Council's AFL team's multi-agency approach to engaging with learners is very successful and has resulted in many community initiatives. These include joint camping ventures with offenders, their families and the Youth Offending Team; joint family learning activities with naval families; working with schools for pupils with special needs in deprived areas; and a project for parents of children with learning disabilities to work together, culminating in an exhibition of the children's art work in the city library. The Council's AFL team has introduced good arrangements to deflect learners' worries and inhibitions, often carried through from learning at school, by providing mentors for those nervous of approaching formal teaching institutions and by enrolling learners at outreach centres with 'buddies' to provide mutual support and encouragement.
18. Quality improvement and implementation are particularly good. The Council's AFL team has established a thorough cycle of quality improvement activities for all its staff and subcontractors. Key procedures, documents and processes are audited regularly and action taken where good practice is not being followed. Planned improvement priorities are clear and based on the findings of self-assessment. The frequent observation of teaching and learning is highly effective and staff welcome the very detailed feedback and support they receive. Groupings of four tutors within a 'teaching squares' system provides a less formal opportunity to observe peers and identify and share good practice. The Council's AFL team provides good support to partner providers to build capacity and establish thorough quality assurance and improvement processes. The evaluation and monitoring of improvement activities is systematic and recommendations are swiftly implemented. The Council's AFL team has a well planned action schedule

to include further development of the curriculum to fully reflect the cultural diversity of the city.

19. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are outstanding. The promotion of social inclusion is excellent. Managers have developed a very strong ethos of social inclusion within the service. Learner inductions include discussion of the learner charter, complaints procedures and learners' rights and responsibilities. Comparative data is collected on the outcomes of different learner groups and satisfaction rates are analysed to compare performance and inform improvements. Staff have attended training events provided by the City Council on aspects of equality and diversity and safeguarding. Staff are encouraged to keep training logs reflecting on their teaching practices and the integration of equality and diversity topics. Lesson plans are evaluated with specific reference to equality, diversity and inclusion. The Council's AFL team has effectively promoted equality and diversity to wider audiences in community settings by showing DVDs on the minority cultures and religions represented in Portsmouth and on disability which have been produced in partnership with PRENO and the Portsmouth Disability Forum respectively. Learner achievements are celebrated across the city by all partners and providers in prestigious venues. Marketing materials are provided in accessible formats for all learners and emphasise the inclusive approach learners can expect to experience in the Council's AFL learning venues.
20. The Council's AFL service has procedures for safeguarding learners that meet government requirements. All the appropriate staff, including the subcontractor's staff, are vetted and checked to the highest level and trained in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

What learners like:

- 'The taster courses which motivated me and introduced the idea of learning'
- 'The course has been a lifeline for me'
- 'They just give that extra touch that shows you are an individual'
- 'I was never any good at art at school and now somebody bought one of my prints'
- 'If they didn't come to me, I wouldn't be able to get to them' (disabled learner)
- 'Everything is explained simply and clearly which is what I need'
- 'It is so good to have learning on our doorstep'
- 'Being taught with my children has led me to do other courses and get a job'
- 'My children really enjoy mummy coming into school'
- 'I really enjoyed ticking the 'I feel confident' box at the end of the course'
- The family learning event at the end of the course

What learners think could improve:

- Over-crowding in some rooms
- Waiting lists for courses
- Access to more courses which are longer

Sector subject areas

Family learning

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

21. At the time of inspection, 99 learners were enrolled on to 15 family learning courses; 62 on FLLN programmes and 37 on wider family learning programmes. To date in 2008/09, 794 learners, making up 1056 enrolments, have attended 84 family learning courses at 37 venues. Of these learners 12% were male, 9% were from minority ethnic groups and 2% declared a learning difficulty and/or disability. Typically family learning courses have durations of between 10 and 60 hours. Wider family learning provision includes a range of programmes designed to enhance parental involvement with children's learning, development and behaviour. The family learning curriculum is overseen by an acting programmes manager, supported by two senior tutors, five tutors on annual contracts, and one contact worker.

Strengths

- Outstanding achievement and standards
- Very good teaching and learning
- Highly responsive provision
- Very high level of support for learners
- Outstanding curriculum management

Areas for improvement

No key areas for improvement were identified.

Achievement and standards

22. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Learners develop excellent personal, social and parenting skills in family learning programmes. Most learners make very good progress in developing their skills to support and interact with their children, for example, in dealing with their children's behaviour problems and in helping them with their reading and number skills. Learners develop their own skills very well and they gain substantially increased levels of confidence. Many parents and carers progress to other family learning programmes, such as higher level literacy and numeracy, and into mainstream education or training. Many have become more involved with school activities, acting as volunteer readers and support assistants.

23. Achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications is very high. Standards of learners' work are outstanding. Accreditation is available to all learners and they make very good progress in working towards qualifications. In 2007/8, 90% of learners entered for national certificates in literacy and numeracy were successful.

Retention and attendance in 2007/08 were very high at 97% and 98% respectively.

Quality of provision

24. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are very good. Well-qualified and highly motivated teachers provide sessions that are well paced, interactive and challenging. Sessions are generally well planned to include clear and appropriate learning objectives and tutors make good use of different activities to cater for the range of learners' experiences. Learners' interest is well maintained by tutors' frequent use of humour and anecdotes. Tutors encourage learners to reflect on the implications of course activities for their own learning and that of their children. Learners are able to make use of a wide range of stimulating resources, including ICT. In a few sessions, however, tutors use insufficient questioning to explore learners' experiences to stimulate discussion and insufficiently review learning at the end of sessions.
25. The range of family learning provision is outstanding and is highly responsive to need. Programmes and activities successfully meet the needs and interests of learners, schools and communities. Collaboration between tutors and teachers at venue schools is effective in planning sessions in which learners and their children participate. The Council's AFL team routinely consults parents and carers, schools and other partners in developing programmes. Partnership working is strong and effective in providing programmes suited to need. In one instance the team worked with a school and a 'travelling' farm to attract learners to a "Fun at the Farm" event leading to the development of a range of wider family learning and FLLN programmes negotiated with the learners and the school.
26. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Support is responsive and comprehensive across a range of social, domestic and learning issues. Arrangements for recording learners' progress and achievement are good and tutors use a variety of methods to capture learners' progress against agreed targets. Learners receive detailed and comprehensive information, advice and guidance before starting programmes and after they finish. Tutors and managers respond quickly and effectively to requests from learners for support, for example, in managing challenges at home, including coping with difficult behaviour by their children. The service is adept at providing a supportive and inclusive environment for learners and children with learning difficulties. The Council's AFL staff encourage and provide opportunities for learners to support each other.

Leadership and management

27. Curriculum management of family learning is outstanding. Strong partnerships with schools and a range of partners, including the Navy, community improvement partners and children's centres, contribute to very effective planning. For example, the family learning team is working with the Navy in developing parenting provision for naval staff and their families. The Council's AFL

team has a clear strategic vision of the potential role of family learning within the skills agenda and in contributing to the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.

28. Standards are consistently high across the family learning curriculum area. Tutors findings from regular formal observations are used well to identify agreed action points. Actions are monitored and tutors receive appropriate support in implementing these actions. Session observations are thorough and demonstrate a sound understanding of the teaching and learning process. The management team use information collected from the observation process to plan continuous professional development. Information drawn from teacher and learner course evaluations is used well to improve the quality of provision, for example, in revising arrangements for monitoring learners' progression.
29. Communication across the family learning service is particularly good, with regular staff meetings between managers and tutors taking place. Staff feel well supported by managers and all staff receive annual appraisals linked to professional development. Staff engage in a range of professional development opportunities, such as training in child protection procedures and in developing skills in e-learning. Staff are suitably qualified and all FLLN teachers have, or are working towards, a level 5 literacy and/or numeracy subject specialist qualification.

Community learning

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

30. At the time of inspection 248 learners were attending 32 programmes in PCDL and neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC). To date in 2008/09 1197 learners, accounting for 1777 enrolments, have attended 153 community learning programmes. Of these learners 30% were male, 12% were from minority ethnic groups and 16% declared a disability and/or learning difficulty. Community learning provision is designed to encourage adults back into learning and courses are targeted at identified priority adult groups, disadvantaged learners and those living in deprived wards. Few community learning courses are accredited and learners work towards agreed learning goals on programmes providing pathways to further learning. Courses are delivered through subcontract arrangements in a wide range of community settings. Community learning providers are managed by the Council's acting head of lifelong learning.

Strengths

- Outstanding achievement, retention and progression
- Good teaching and learning
- Excellent range of community provision and targeting of deprived groups
- Outstanding strategies to promote confidence and motivation
- Outstanding management of subcontracted provision

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory accommodation in some community settings does not fully support learning

Achievement and standards

31. Achievement and standards of learners are outstanding. In 2007/08, achievement for PCDL programmes was 100% and 97% for NLDC programmes. Retention levels are very high at 99% for PCDL and 89% for NLDC programmes. Attendance is good at 87% across all community learning programmes. Progression to further learning and higher level courses is very good. In 2007/08, 65% of learners progressed to further learning with many progressing to accredited learning with the Council's partner organisations.

32. Learners develop high levels of confidence and improved employability skills. Learners' make good use, for example, of their newly acquired computing skills and they speak enthusiastically about how they have gained the knowledge and skills to email friends and produce posters and cards. For many isolated learners, attending the learning centres provides good opportunities for social interaction. They acquire improved personal effectiveness and greater wellbeing in many aspects of their lives at home and work.

Quality of provision

33. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors plan learning well and use a wide range of teaching strategies with learners to provide interest and motivation. Learning goals are clearly identified in the personal learning plans and goals are used well by tutors to encourage learners to progress. Tutors make good use of searching questioning techniques to help learners explore course topics. Frequently learners work together to share experiences and enrich their learning by making it more relevant to everyday life. Tutors check frequently on learners' levels of understanding and they use learners' feedback routinely to plan learning. They generally adopt supportive and effective coaching techniques.
34. The Council's AFL team has developed an excellent range of community learning provision which targets difficult to reach learners and deprived groups. Priority is given to learning in deprived locations with greatest social and economic need, for example, at the heart of Council-owned urban estates. Such venues give convenient access to local learners otherwise unlikely to engage with learning. Staff at the community centres provide welcoming environments and learners feel comfortable being there. Planning for community learning is highly responsive to feedback from learners. This is reflected in the increase in shorter duration and day-time programmes and includes introducing sessions to meet learners' needs. For example, a session on problems that arise with personal computers was arranged as part of a basic computer course at the request of learners. Adequate opportunities for learners to gain accreditation are made available. Partnerships have widened participation in learning. For example, an arrangement for tutors to work with staff at a drug rehabilitation centre has resulted in a 15% improvement in learners completing the rehabilitation programme since the introduction of community learning courses.
35. Guidance and support for learners is outstanding. The Council's AFL team uses outstanding strategies to promote confidence and motivation. Learners are respected and they take confidence from being treated as individuals. Care is taken to assess each learner's level of skills, their aspirations and potential barriers to learning. Findings are used well to advise on appropriate courses for learning and possible progression routes. By using a course information matrix which lists courses clearly under headings such as those that develop skills and confidence or improve employability, learners are helped to make choices suited to their needs. Learners gain confidence and motivation to learn through the Council's AFL stepped approach to learning, often beginning with a taster course before progressing to higher level community learning courses. Learners' pride and satisfaction are enhanced by public celebration of their successes. Use by staff of displays in centres, with photographs of learners and details of their progress and achievements, are particularly effective in raising learners' morale and confidence.

36. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory. Generally the quality, availability and suitability of learning materials support learning well. Computer courses in community settings are enabled and enhanced by the provision of laptop computers and computer projectors. Many community venues provide good quality learning environments, although some classrooms are cramped and noisy and these do not fully support teaching. For example, some small classrooms make the introduction of new e-learning techniques difficult and not all rooms used for computing are suitably furnished. The Council's AFL team is aware of this and managers are working on an accommodation improvement programme.

Leadership and management

37. The management of subcontracted provision is outstanding. The monitoring of the performance of learning centres by the Council's AFL team's managers is routine and thorough. Data on enrolment and achievement in relation to priority learner groups is used well to evaluate performance and guide strategy. Findings are discussed with partners and formal provider meetings are held each term, to set actions and to audit learner files. Communication with partners is good and frequent and partnerships are strong.

38. The Council's AFL team has developed good procedures for tutors to record learners' achievement and progress on non-accredited programmes. Arrangements for assessing learners are applied thoroughly and these provide reliable achievement data for most programmes. Arrangements for promoting equality of opportunity within learning are well established. Tutors frequently include equality and diversity topics in sessions and make reference to the Every Child Matters objectives as part of teaching schemes.