

# The Learning Partnership Bedfordshire and Luton Limited

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 58290

**Name of lead inspector:** Maxine Mayer HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 20 January 2012

**Type of provider:** Voluntary organisation

**Address:** Calibration House  
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## Information about the provider

1. The Learning Partnership Bedfordshire and Luton (TLP) is a limited company with charitable status. It holds a Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) contract with the Eastern Region of the Skills Funding Agency. NLDC funding is designed to support the development and delivery of learning opportunities for people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and to build the capacity of voluntary and community organisations to undertake this work. Each year TLP invites prospective and existing partners to tender for delivery of the fund on its behalf through project-based sub-contracting arrangements. On average, eight are successful and are chosen for their ability to meet the criteria of the funding. The head office of TLP is in Bedford and most of its income is from government funds.
2. Both accredited and non-accredited programmes are offered at a range of learning venues based within the local communities. During inspection week, 61 learners were following programmes for social and personal development.
3. According to the census for 2001, 28% of the population in Luton were from minority ethnic heritage and 10% in Bedfordshire. The proportion of the population that is unemployed and without any qualifications is lower in Bedfordshire and significantly higher in Luton than the eastern region as a whole.
4. TLP provides an adult information, advice and guidance service on behalf of the following provider:
  - Suffolk County Council Next Step (preparation for life and work)
5. The following organisations are providing training on behalf of the provider at the time of inspection:
  - The Prince's Trust (community development)
  - Diverse FM (community development)
  - Luton Rights (community development)
  - Luton Community Arts Trust (community development)
  - Bedfordshire and Luton Minds (community development)
  - The Polish School (community development)
  - Bedfordshire Training Group (community development)
  - Groundworks Luton and Bedfordshire (community development)

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of learners in 2010/11</b>
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Learning for social and personal development	278 part-time learners

## Summary report

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	1
<b>Learning for social and personal development</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Community development	2

## Overall effectiveness

6. The provision is good. The majority of learners achieve qualifications and their course and personal learning aims well. Courses aimed at those who are unemployed develop employment related skills well. Learners progress while they are on their courses but TLP does not record sufficiently the proportion of learners who progress to employment, further education or voluntary work. Learning programmes are designed for those who have complex social and personal needs and the provider uses its government funds exceedingly well to develop a range of partners who assist and develop those at most disadvantage.
7. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Learning sessions are well planned, enjoyable and meet the needs of individual learners well. Learners benefit from good informal initial assessment which enables staff to show learners what they need to do to make progress during their course. Programmes are very responsive to the needs of the community. They are flexible and offer opportunities for taster sessions to help develop interests and inform work choices. Support for learners is good and includes specialist and long term support.
8. The management of the programmes is excellent. Trustees, managers and staff work hard to ensure that learning programmes are of high quality and learners achieve their goals and are successful when undertaking qualifications. TLP

provides excellent support to its partners who work exceedingly well with those at most disadvantage. The arrangements for the safety of learners and the respect of their culture are good. Managers are excellent at evaluating the services they provide in order to improve continually.

## Main findings

- Success and achievement rates for learners on accredited and non- accredited programmes are high. The majority of learners achieve their course and personal aims. One third of programmes are accredited and support learners in developing good employment related skills. Learners enjoy their learning and feel safe.
- Progress in learning activities is good. However, TLP recognises difficulties tracking learners' progress at exit in order to measure progression to employment, further education and volunteering. Learning logs record exit interview outcomes but these were not developed sufficiently to capture a full range of progressions. TLP has made recent improvements and early indications are that recorded progression rates are improving.
- TLP's impact on economic and social well-being is highly effective. Learners develop skills to improve self esteem and increase levels of confidence. They gain good communication skills. The excellent targeting of funds supports community cohesion and building independent living skills. Since 2008, almost all of the partners who have received funds are still engaged in capacity building activities and/or delivering learning and skills training.
- Teaching and learning are good. Well planned learning sessions meet the individual needs of learners from a diverse range of backgrounds. Learning environments and teaching resources are good. Good informal initial assessments recorded in learning logs establish individual levels of skills. These are scored on entry and revisited at the end of the programme to determine progress achieved.
- The provision is highly responsive to partners and learners. Partners meet the needs of learners very effectively by delivering programmes that break down barriers to learning. Non-accredited programmes are flexible in terms of duration. Taster opportunities develop learners' interests and help them make vocational choices. Much of the provision is delivered within the communities where individuals live and feel comfortable.
- The development needs of voluntary and community organisations are met extremely well. Partnership work is strengthened through meetings where common interests are shared and networking establishes good links with other providers. These meetings are valued highly and raise awareness to provide high quality projects with a strong impact on learners' outcomes.
- Support for learners is good. This is pre-planned at the bid stage to anticipate the needs of learners. Since 2011, TLP has provided advice and guidance by qualified practitioners for all learners. Signposting is used well to find alternative support where necessary and maintain contact with services after learners have left their courses.

- The management of the NLDC funding is outstanding. The tendering process for partners to join the contract delivery is high quality. Prospectuses are clear with transparent grading criteria. The judging panel is fully representative of the community and funding body. The process is very supportive to those organisations that are inexperienced in this activity.
- Resources to support the partners are outstanding. TLP is a strong advocate for the work and sustainability of its partners. It makes available excellent advice and guidance which enable the partners to meet their contract and organisational objectives. Excellent initiatives promote the sharing of good practice and celebrate success.
- Safeguarding arrangements are prioritised well and are good. TLP requires that its own and partner staff who are in contact with learners are criminal record bureau checked. This is monitored and audited frequently through strong quality assurance processes. All venues are risk assessed and safeguarding is sufficiently well promoted and understood in lessons.
- TLP's approach to equality and diversity helps a significant proportion of adults who are not traditionally represented in learning programmes to participate. The partners are required to identify specific groups of learners for whom programmes are designed and it is a requirement that these learners are the most difficult to reach within the partners' communities.
- Quality assurance and improvement arrangements are outstanding. The observation of teaching and learning is thorough and is leading to improved teaching and learning and wider programme improvements. The current self-assessment report is an accurate account of the provision. However, it underestimates the outstanding aspects of the provision and was not sufficiently circulated to stakeholders for comment.

### **What does The Learning Partnership Bedfordshire and Luton Limited need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure the strategies for recording learners' progression at the end of their programme are improved further by ensuring that planned formal information and guidance sessions take place for all learners and the outcomes are accurately recorded.
- Improve the accuracy of the self-assessment grades by widening circulation, particularly to external stakeholders, by providing a summary statement for their comments.

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

#### **What learners like:**

- the very good induction
- the enjoyable teaching
- the non threatening assessment process
- the excellent support

- that staff never given up on them
- the improvement and gains in life chances.

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

- nothing reported.

**Summary of the views of stakeholders and partners as confirmed by inspectors**

**What stakeholders and partners like:**

- the professional service provided by TLP to develop voluntary sector groups
- the excellent support in developing and understanding bidding opportunities
- the very good networking opportunities to share good practice
- the excellent communications.

**What stakeholders and partners would like to see improved:**

- the opportunity to view or comment on the final self-assessment report.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

9. TLP has good capacity to make sustained improvements. Very strong evaluation and impact assessments are undertaken for each project. These processes are used very well to inform how future projects will be run and developed. Sound feedback mechanisms are used to inform TLP about the quality of the provision and to make adjustments and appropriate responses in order to improve. The self-assessment report and the narrative is an accurate account of the provision. However, the report was not sufficiently circulated to partners for comment and underestimates much of the outstanding work. TLP has identified where it needs to improve and good development planning is bringing about programme improvements.
10. Governance is strong and trustees set high standards and provide high levels of support to staff. TLP uses its management and staff resources very well to ensure programme improvements. TLP has a track record of ensuring that outcomes for partners in the community and voluntary sector are high and that these are sustained. Most learners achieve their learning aims and successfully gain qualifications. However, the achievement and success rates do not exceed expectations for this type of provision. While TLP is improving the tracking of progression into employment, further education and volunteering, this remains an area for improvement.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

11. Outcomes for learners on accredited and non-accredited programmes are good. Learners with a diverse range of needs are recruited from socially deprived backgrounds. Many experience multiple barriers to learning and employment including drug addiction and poor social circumstances. The majority of learners achieve their course and personal aims. One third of programmes are accredited and support learners in developing employment-related skills. Accredited courses for 2010/11 have a high 84% success rate and non-accredited achievement was also high at 85%. All groups of learners succeed and achieve as well as each other, enjoy their learning and feel safe.
12. Progress in learning activities is good. TLP recognises that it has difficulties in tracking learner progress at exit and in 2010/11 can account satisfactorily for 28% of progressions to employment, volunteering and further education. Learning logs record exit interview outcomes but these were not developed sufficiently to capture the full range of progressions until recently. Strategies to improve this have been developed and early indications are that recorded progression rates are improving.
13. The work of the partnership is highly effective in improving the economic and social well-being of the local community. Partners work well to widen participation and engage learners with complex social and personal needs. They



develop learners' skills to improve self esteem, increase levels of confidence and gain good communication skills. Good strategic direction and targeting of funds support community cohesion and build independent living skills. Good local knowledge of the labour market needs helps TLP to anticipate the skills required to prepare people for employment. Since 2008, 23 of the 24 partners who have offered projects through the fund are still engaged in capacity building activities and/or delivering learning and skills training.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

14. The overall quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Well planned learning sessions meet the individual needs of learners from a diverse range of backgrounds. Learning environments and teaching resources are good. Good informal initial assessment recorded in learning logs establish individual levels of skills. These are scored on entry and revisited at the end of the programme to determine progress achieved. However, summaries of achievement are not sufficiently detailed at exit interviews to inform the next phase of learning. TLP's teaching and learning observations demonstrate that most teaching and learning are good or better.
15. The provision is highly responsive to partners' and learners' needs. Partners work very effectively to meet the needs of learners by delivering programmes that break down barriers to learning. Non-accredited programmes are flexible in terms of duration and range from three to thirty hours of learning. Taster opportunities develop learners' interests well and help them make appropriate vocational choices. Much of the provision is delivered within the communities where individuals live and feel comfortable.
16. The development needs of voluntary and community organisations are met extremely well. Partnership work is strengthened through meetings where common interests are shared and excellent networking establishes very good links with other providers. These meetings are valued highly and raise awareness to provide high quality projects with a strong impact on learner outcomes.
17. Support for learners is good. This is pre-planned at the financial bid stage to anticipate the needs of learners. For example, learners enrolling on vocational taster opportunities can refer themselves to confidential counselling opportunities and receive specialist dyslexia support. Since 2011, TLP has provided formal advice and guidance by qualified practitioners for all learners. Signposting is used well to find alternative support and maintain contact with services. Progression mentors work with young disadvantaged adults to sustain support over a long period of time.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 1

18. Strategic and operational management are excellent. The trustees of the board are leaders of business and education within their communities and provide high quality challenge and support to the operational management. The leadership and management of the NLDC funding are outstanding. The tendering process for partners to join the contract delivery is excellent. Prospectuses are clear and the grading criteria are transparent. The judging panel represent the community and funding body fully ensuring that projects meet local and national priorities. The process is very supportive to those organisations that are inexperienced in this activity.
19. Resources to support the partners are outstanding. TLP is a strong advocate for the work and sustainability of its partners. It makes available excellent advice and guidance that enable the partners to meet their contract and organisational objectives. Excellent initiatives that promote the sharing of good practice and celebrate success throughout the partner network are valued highly. Pre- and post-tender support are excellent, providing high quality feedback to partners.
20. Safeguarding arrangements are good and prioritised. TLP requires that its own and partners' staff who work with learners are criminal record bureau checked. A central list is held for staff and through the service level agreement with partners, suitable records are kept of these checks for partners' staff. All venues used for learning are risk assessed for health and safety compliance. All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training relative to their responsibilities. Records and compliance are routinely checked, monitored and audited frequently through the strong quality assurance processes. All venues are risk assessed and safeguarding is sufficiently well understood and promoted in lessons. Links with external agencies are satisfactory.
21. TLP's approach to equality and diversity is outstanding. The provision is highly targeted. All projects at the tendering stage must identify clearly which groups of learners the project will support. For example, these groups, must be from people living in wards of most disadvantage, be from identified vulnerable groups or be from potential volunteers seeking development. Tenders submitted by partners identify clearly that projects prioritise helping adults who are not traditionally represented in learning programmes. Partners must identify specific groups of learners for whom the programmes are designed and it is a requirement that these learners are the most difficult to reach within the partners' communities. In 2010/11, two thirds of learners were from minority ethnic groups, the majority were workless, and a significant proportion had low educational achievement and had not undertaken any recent learning activity. The promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. In 2010/11 TLP facilitated the training for equality and diversity for over 200 staff from partner organisations and this training is further reinforced through capacity building visits and other events held by TLP. Equality and diversity are well promoted to learners and are key within teaching activities.

22. Quality assurance and improvement arrangements are outstanding. Risk assessment is used very thoroughly to identify areas requiring improvement. Visits to partners are frequent and ensure that learners receive high quality learning experiences. The observation of teaching and learning is thorough and is leading to improved teaching and learning and wider programme improvements. TLP undertakes strong analysis of its programmes. All projects are measured for their impact and partners are required to attend and contribute to good practice and dissemination events. The collection and analysis of learners' and partners' feedback is thorough.
23. The self-assessment process is informed fully by the use of data, impact assessments and learners' and partners' views. The current report is an accurate account of the provision. However, it underestimates the outstanding aspects of the provision and was not sufficiently circulated to stakeholders for comment. Development planning is thorough. It is based on evidence and the findings of self-assessment. It identifies clearly areas for improvement, who is responsible, how success will be measured and timescales.
24. Value for money is outstanding. Financial planning and stability are given a high priority. TLP has significantly exceeded the numbers of learners that it is contractually required to support for several years. Ample resources are given to projects to ensure that they are sustainable when the funding ends. The vast majority of partners continue with further development activities or go on to secure their own government funded contracts. TLP has a satisfactory environmental policy.

## **Information about the inspection**

25. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the executive director as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans and data on learners and their achievement.
26. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and partners had completed on behalf of the provider. They also visited learning sessions and undertook visits to partners.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**

**The Learning Partnership Bedfordshire and Luton Limited**

**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. **Social and personal development:** all adult safeguarded provision

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Social and personal development
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	61	61
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
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	
Do learners feel safe?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1	
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1	
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?	1	

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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