

## Lessons from the Foundation Learning provision for the new 16 to 19 Study Programmes

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This survey reports on the effectiveness of the Foundation Learning provision in re-engaging young people and supporting their progression to further learning and/or employment. The provision finishes in July 2013 and learners with similar needs will join the new 16 to 19 Study Programmes from August 2013.

Inspectors analysed evidence from a sample of 59 independent learning providers and community learning and skills providers delivering the Foundation Learning provision to 16–18-year-olds. All the providers had been inspected by Ofsted since the provision's full implementation in August 2010. The findings are reported in three separate resources:

- The survey findings
- Discussion materials on three critical issues identified
- Good practice case studies.

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## Introduction

This survey reports on the effectiveness of the Foundation Learning provision in re-engaging young people and supporting their progression to further learning and/or employment. The Foundation Learning provision is the successor to Entry to Employment (E2E) and was fully implemented from August 2010. Like E2E, its key outcome for learners is progression into full-time education or training, an apprenticeship or employment. Unlike E2E, it also requires learners to work towards recognised qualifications linked to their planned progression route. The Foundation Learning provision is for learners aged 14 to 18 working for entry level or level 1 qualifications to progress to level 2. It is also available for learners with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities up to 24 years old. This survey focused on the 16–18-year-old age group.

The Foundation Learning provision is funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) as part of their learner-responsive funding for provision below level 2 qualifications. The provision includes the following elements from which providers develop personalised programmes according to the learners' individual needs:

- qualifications such as functional skills, personal and social development and vocational skills
- non-accredited provision
- a work experience placement
- the opportunity for learners to be on a weekly aim programme before they move on to the more structured part of the Foundation Learning provision
- a 'wrap-around' of information, advice and guidance, effective initial assessment and ongoing review.

The Foundation Learning provision ends in July 2013, and from August 2013 learners assessed at entry level and level 1 will enrol on the new 16 to 19 Study Programmes. These new programmes also aim to support their development towards higher level qualifications and their progression towards further education, training, apprenticeships or employment with training. The findings of this survey are important for the development of this new provision.

## Scope and methodology of the survey

The survey covered Foundation Learning provision for learners aged 16 to 18 at independent learning providers and community learning and skills providers. Almost all of the providers sampled had previously delivered E2E. In colleges, much of the provision below level 2 was vocational training that often led to a programme at level 2 in that sector. As this provision did not include the other elements of the





Foundation Learning provision, it was agreed that colleges would not be part of the sample for this survey report. The survey sample did not include any specialist provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Ofsted survey report, *Progression for post-16 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities*, published in August 2011, includes findings for learners with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities in colleges and specialist independent learning providers.

The survey used data from the Ofsted Foundation Learning data form completed by the providers at inspection that included data on progression and the achievement of qualifications. Providers visited outside inspection also completed this form. The sample consisted of 26 planned inspections that included the Foundation Learning provision, and six visits to independent learning providers and community learning and skills providers with Foundation Learning provision that were not being inspected during that period. Desktop research included a review of 31 Foundation Learning provision inspection reports published since January 2011. Meetings were also held with the EFA, the Association of Colleges and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers.

Additional fieldwork took place between January and March 2013. It involved visits to 12 providers judged to be good for their Foundation Learning provision at their last inspection. The survey also included data on the Foundation Learning provision collected from 15 of the planned inspections that took place between January and March 2013.

Unless otherwise stated, the term 'providers sampled' includes the 26 providers from the planned inspections and the 18 visits to providers who were not being inspected.

The total survey sample consisted of:

- detailed evidence and data from 26 planned inspections
- detailed evidence and data from 18 visits to providers who were not being inspected
- detailed data from 15 planned inspection visits
- a review of 31 published inspection reports.

## Survey findings

### Overview

Since the full implementation of the Foundation Learning provision in August 2010, the progression of learners into full-time education or training, an apprenticeship or employment has been low. However, a very large number of learners improved their personal and social skills. Overall, most of the providers in the total survey sample had either not improved their judgement for overall effectiveness or received a lower judgement for the Foundation Learning provision compared with that received for

their previous programme, E2E. Since the introduction of payment for the achievement of qualifications, many of the providers sampled have focused less on ensuring that learners progress to further education, training and employment.

## Key findings

**The overall judgement profile for the Foundation Learning provision was lower than that for E2E.** Around half of the 69 providers in the total survey sample were judged good or better at their last E2E inspection and none were inadequate; whereas just over half of 79 providers inspected for their Foundation Learning provision since January 2011 were good or better, but nine were inadequate.

**Nearly half of the 32 providers that provided evidence were not fully aware of the flexibilities in the funding to support their learners' development.** Communication between the EFA and providers varied too much across the regions. Not all the managers interviewed were fully aware of the flexibilities in the funding, such as the funding of weekly aims and the more recent doubling of the payment for a three-week work placement, or understood how these might benefit their learners. Only 14 of the 40 providers who provided evidence made very effective use of the weekly funding to support their most vulnerable learners and improve their retention. A third of the 18 providers sampled were not fully aware of the increase in funding for work placements.

**National data collection on the Foundation Learning provision was weak.** There are no national data on the numbers of learners on the Foundation Learning provision, or their progression to further education, training and employment. The impact of the Foundation Learning provision nationally cannot therefore be fully evaluated. The EFA collected data on the successful achievement of qualifications, but they were not comprehensively collected for learners' progression rates until the 2011/12 contract year when changes were made to the Individual Learner Record. These progression data were not sufficiently detailed to provide information on progression rates specifically for all learners on the Foundation Learning provision.

## Outcomes for learners

**Progression rates into full-time education or training, an apprenticeship or employment for the total numbers of leavers in the sample for 2010/11 and 2011/12 were low at an average of 50% and 49%, respectively.** The survey findings show that progression rates in 2011/12 varied from 8% to 87% and were below 50% for 26 of the 56 providers that provided data. Progression rates for learners on the Foundation Learning provision had dropped in comparison with those for E2E for 25 of the 48 providers who had data for this former programme.

Thirty-two per cent of learners progressed to apprenticeships from the Foundation Learning provision in 2011/12. This was an increase compared with the 21% who



progressed to apprenticeships from E2E in 2009/10. A quarter of all progressions were into employment which does not normally include training.

### **Achievement of qualifications in English and mathematics functional skills was low, especially for level 1.**

Too few learners were registered as working towards a functional skills qualification at any level and achievement rates at level 1 were unacceptable. In 2011/12, only 44 of 59 providers provided data for functional

See the DV8 Training Ltd good practice case study for ideas on how to integrate functional skills with vocational subjects and how to overcome barriers to learning and raise learners' aspirations

skills English and mathematics at level 1. For English, 52% of leavers registered for the qualification achieved level 1 and 54% of leavers achieved mathematics at level 1. Very few leavers had worked towards functional skills at level 2. Achievement in functional skills at entry level was satisfactory, but this level of qualification was not always sufficiently challenging or motivating for all learners. Achievement of the qualifications in English and mathematics was higher where they were either vocationally focused or integrated into other aspects of learners' programmes.

**Two thirds of the providers sampled offered a wide range of employability and personal and social development qualifications at levels ranging from Entry 1 to level 1.** The range and level of vocational qualifications were appropriate and, in two thirds of the providers, were appropriate to the needs of the learners and the progression opportunities available. However, two providers did not offer any vocational qualifications. Achievement rates were good for around half the providers. Just fewer than half the providers worked in partnership with other organisations and were able to offer a broader range of vocational areas and qualifications.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was not good enough.** In almost all the providers sampled, initial assessment was robust, but in about a third it was not used adequately to develop individual learning plans. Frequently, targets were not individual or specific enough for learners to understand and have a record of their progress. Too many sessions did not take account of learners' individual needs. In the better providers, diagnostic initial assessment enabled staff to identify learners' exact starting points and qualifications were available from Entry to level 2.

Too much teaching was classroom based and relied on worksheets. The level of a small number of the vocational theory sessions was too high for the learners and the materials that tutors used were not adapted for those with literacy support needs. A large proportion of the providers offered additional learning support but the quality and effectiveness of this were too varied.

**The availability, use and quality of work experience placements were poor.**

Only three of the 41 providers who provided detailed evidence offered work experience placements to all of their learners and another seven offered them to around a third of their learners. However, too few providers had a strategy for the delivery and increase of work experience placements. Five providers did not offer work experience placements and had no plans to introduce them. Many providers found it difficult to find appropriate placements and this was hampered by the competition from schools and other training providers. About a quarter of the providers did not appear to recognise the importance of work experience placements in the development of employability skills and in supporting better progression rates.

See these good practice case studies for ideas on how to develop effective work experience opportunities:


The Bassetlaw Training Agency; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130163](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130163).  
 Community Training Services; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130158](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130158).  
 Economic Solutions (Skills Solutions); [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130162](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130162).  
 Roots and Shoots; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120177](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120177).

The better provision included close partnership working with local employers, the local authority and other local organisations. The range of opportunities for learners included visits, tasters, work shadowing, work trials and a well-planned work experience placement. The providers prepared both the learners and employers well and reviewed progress regularly. The benefits included: increased confidence for the learners; the opportunity to assess skills in the workplace for both employability and vocational qualifications; a reference for the learner and the opportunity for progression into an apprenticeship or employment.

**Learners received good care and support, and providers placed a high emphasis on learners' welfare.** Almost all the providers had well-organised pastoral support systems with excellent links with outside agencies and around half of the providers used these very effectively to enable learners to stay with the provision. Support covered a wide area including: housing; physical and mental health; drug and alcohol counselling; advocacy; input from the careers service on a regular basis; and the availability of staff to sit and listen. There was a high level of respect between learners and between learners and staff.

**Access to and quality of impartial advice and guidance on progression opportunities for learners varied too much.** Systems for advice and guidance were underdeveloped in just under half of the 18 providers visited. Even in the better providers, staff involved in information, advice and guidance did not always have sufficient expertise or qualifications. Where providers had good partnerships,





information on progression opportunities was better. Too many providers did not make adequate arrangements to support learners' decision-making about career options.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

**Too few providers used data effectively to analyse performance and inform business planning.** A large proportion of providers had not systematically recorded learners' destinations since the start of the Foundation Learning provision, when they no longer received payment when learners progressed to further education, training or employment. Six of the 59 providers who supplied data were unable to fully complete the Ofsted forms on progression data, although they all had good records of learners' achievement of qualifications to support their funding claim to the EFA. In nearly half of the 18 providers visited, managers did not routinely analyse data on attendance, retention, achievement or progression to identify which areas of the provision or groups of learners were underperforming. Too few providers set targets for areas or individual staff to improve performance.

**Providers worked very effectively with partners and other local organisations.** Almost all the providers had developed a very wide range of partnerships to add breadth and depth to their provision. In some areas, the local authority had reviewed the available provision and encouraged providers to specialise in certain vocational areas where there was a shortage in training programmes. This was especially effective for multi-skills in construction, health and beauty and catering where specialist equipment and facilities were needed. Partnerships with the local authority and other organisations supported the development of work experience placements. Links with welfare organisations often enabled providers to offer a good level of care and support to learners at work. Many providers attended the local or regional providers' group and found the sharing of information and support very useful. This continues to be particularly useful for planning the transition to the 16 to 19 Study Programmes. Some networks provided training for providers' staff and productive opportunities for providers to work together.


**The planned number of hours for learners to attend the provision varied considerably from around 12 hours a week up to 30 hours.** In some providers visited, learners started on a lower number of hours and had an appropriately planned increase to develop a more realistic working week. In other providers, the hours of attendance remained at a low level and only increased if learners had a work experience placement. Not all providers saw a link between the number of hours that learners attended and their development of employability skills.



## Moving to 16 to 19 Study Programmes

At the end of July 2013, the Foundation Learning provision finishes and the new 16 to 19 Study Programmes begin. The framework for the Foundation Learning provision will be especially relevant for learners joining the new 16 to 19 Study Programmes.

The table below shows where key findings from the survey link into the three objectives of the 16 to 19 Study Programmes.

| <b>Foundation Learning provision survey findings</b>   |   | <b>Study Programmes objectives</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>The range and level of qualifications were satisfactory, and in two thirds of the providers were appropriate to the needs of the learners and the progression opportunities available. Almost all the qualifications were at level 1. The progression rate into full-time education or training, an apprenticeship or employment for 2011/12 was 49%.</p>   | <p>Discussion materials 1</p>  | <p>To improve the value of post-16 vocational qualifications so that higher numbers of learners achieve high quality and valuable vocational qualifications which enable progression to higher levels of study and skilled employment.</p>    |
| <p>Achievement of qualifications in English and mathematics functional skills was low, especially for level 1, and achievement rates for level 1 were unacceptable. Of the total of 15,488 leavers in 2011/12, only 8% achieved the functional skills qualification in English at level 1 and only 7% achieved it in mathematics at level 1. Fewer than 100 leavers had worked towards functional skills at level 2.</p> | <p>Discussion materials 2<br/>DV8 Training Ltd good practice case study</p>  | <p>To raise standards in post-16 English and mathematics so that higher numbers of learners study English and mathematics at level 2 and work towards achieving GCSE A* to C in these subjects.</p>   |
| <p>The availability, use and quality of work experience placements were poor. Only three of the 41 providers in the sample offered work experience placements to all of their learners and another seven offered them to around a third of their learners. Too few providers had a strategy for providing work experience placements and five providers did not offer them and had no plans to introduce them.</p>       | <p>Discussion materials 3<br/>Good practice case studies:<br/>The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited<br/>Community Training Services Limited<br/>Economic Solutions Limited (Skills Solutions)<br/>Roots and Shoots Limited</p> | <p>To improve young people's employability skills by increasing the number of learners who gain direct experience of the world of the work and participate in other activities of value, which enables their progression into employment.</p> |





## Characteristics of effective provision

Characteristics of effective provision in the Foundation Learning provision that can be built on for the 16 to 19 Study Programmes included:

- comprehensive diagnostic initial assessment identifying the specific areas of need for individual learners
- an individual programme based on clear progression routes
- a wide range of qualifications from Entry levels to level 1, and level 2 for functional skills
- well-planned learning sessions with short, varied and active learning activities
- functional skills embedded in personal and social development, vocational and employability programmes
- a high degree of mutual respect between learners and staff
- good support and guidance by staff and external agencies which were very effective in enabling young people who had been disengaged from learning to return to study
- effective partnership working to develop and share good practice and develop work experience opportunities.

## Weaker aspects of the provision

Weaker aspects of Foundation Learning provision that should be improved to support learners' achievement and progression in the Study Programmes included:

- poor attendance and retention leading to low progression rates
- too much classroom-based teaching with an over-reliance on worksheets; little differentiation for individual needs and too much theoretical teaching in some vocational areas
- low planned attendance of between 12 and 15 hours a week for the whole programme which was only increased if the learners went on a work experience placement
- insufficient integration of functional skills in other areas
- insufficient impartial advice and guidance on progression opportunities
- little or no opportunity to take part in a work experience placement
- insufficient use of funding flexibilities, such as the weekly aim, to support disengaged and vulnerable learners.

## Discussion materials on three critical issues in the Foundation Learning provision

Ofsted is publishing three sets of discussion materials – one on each of three critical issues identified in this survey. The individual sets contain summary findings of each of the three critical issues identified in the survey and suggest specific questions for discussion. These are of course not exhaustive, but it is hoped that providers will use the questions as prompts to evaluate their current Foundation Learning provision and what they plan to offer on Study Programmes. This may lead to identifying and sharing good practice, as well as priorities for improvement. You can take the issues in any order and spend as long as you like on each one. However, we suggest that at some time you find time to look at all three.

*Issue one: Attendance, retention, achievement and progression*

*Issue two: The development of English and mathematics skills*

*Issue three: Developing effective work experience opportunities*

## Good practice case studies

Five examples of good practice in the Foundation Learning provision have been published on the Ofsted website:

**DV8 Training Limited** – ideas for how to integrate functional skills with vocational subjects and how to overcome barriers to learning and raise learners' aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

**The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited** – all learners have mandatory work placements regardless of their background, barriers or job-readiness. They can start the placement from the beginning of the programme and work for as little as half a day to up to three days per week.<sup>2</sup>

**Community Training Services Limited** – shows how very effective partnership working on the City Stewardship Programme in Sheffield provides substantial work experience in construction and horticulture.<sup>3</sup>


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<sup>1</sup> DV8 training; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120136](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120136).

<sup>2</sup> The Bassetlaw Training Agency; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130163](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130163).

<sup>3</sup> Community Training Services; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130158](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130158).





**Economic Solutions Limited (Skills Solutions)** – ideas for how to offer a wide range of work experience opportunities including work tasters, work placements and work trials.<sup>4</sup>

**Roots and Shoots Limited** – ideas for how to use partnership working, particularly community groups and volunteers, to offer individualised and rigorous provision that helps disadvantaged young people gain skills, self-respect, work experience placements and the possibility of future employment.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Economic Solutions (Skills Solutions); [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130162](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130162).

<sup>5</sup> Roots and Shoots; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120177](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120177).

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