



## North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance



### **IAG Gold Standard Assessment North East Lincolnshire Community Learning Services 16-19 Provision**

External Assessment carried out on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010

Assessor – Vince Barrett

In attendance – Paula Shaw, Curriculum Adviser

#### **Overview**

The North East Lincolnshire Community Learning Services (CLS) was formed by the amalgamation of two previous local authority departments – the Adult and Community Learning Service and the Employment Development Service. This merger was completed in October 2008 and CLS has since operated as a single entity. Consequently, it now offers a huge range of leisure, vocational and academic programmes, courses and learning opportunities and serves learners from the age of 16 to 100+ across the North East Lincolnshire area. This report, however, refers only to the provision of information, advice and guidance for young people aged 16-19 who are registered with CLS and working towards accreditation in their learning.

North East Lincolnshire is a unitary authority that has a broad socio-economic population with some affluent areas contrasting with a significant number that are manifestly economically and socially deprived. Geographically, the authority is quite isolated from the larger conurbations to the west with the result that some communities have become insular and perceive occupational choice in the area to be very limited.

Given this broad mix of population and geographical location, CLS 16-19 provision addresses the personal, social and learning needs presented by vulnerable 16 to 19 year olds living in the area who may have experienced serious challenges in their lives to date, had negative experiences of education and not achieved many or any qualifications, may have a record of poor behaviour or non-attendance at school, are on community orders, are unemployed or simply have not engaged in learning for a long time. As a result, many have low self-esteem and for some, CLS provides an environment that is safe and caring, encouraging them to develop a positive self-belief and helping them to work towards qualifications that meet their individual needs and will help them into further occupational training or employment.

CLS operates from three principal sites throughout the area. The Thrunscoe Centre is situated in Cleethorpes, Freeman Street Resource Centre is in the centre of Grimsby adjacent to the Freeman Street shopping precinct and the Scartho Centre is to the south of the town. In addition, CLS operates from a range of partners' premises including schools, children's centres and local businesses.

## Assessment

Prior to the formal assessment, Paula Shaw, Connexions Curriculum Adviser for North East Lincolnshire, worked closely with key personnel in CLS, assisting in the compilation of the self-assessment form in preparation for external assessment. A portfolio of evidence containing documented IAG policy and practice was provided to the assessor prior to the date of assessment and a planned programme for assessment prepared. During the course of the assessment, I interviewed Susan Simpson, Head of Service, Phil Hyde, Business Services Manager; Sara Meller, Quality and Staff Development Manager; Wendy Langmaid, Business Co-ordinator; Jo Carroll and Jenny Emmerson, Learner Support Officers; Garry Denford, Young Persons' Learning Co-ordinator; Michelle Munslow, Contracts and Workforce Development Manager; Caroline Spence, Curriculum Manager and Pat Humphrey, Connexions PA. I also spoke to six learners about their experiences at CLS.

The assessment procedure took a full day. In addition to the interviews listed above, a visual inspection of the available facilities for provision of information, advice and guidance was carried out and all interviews and observations were later cross-referenced against the portfolio of paper evidence pre-submitted by CLS. This, and additional evidence collected during the assessment demonstrate each Element and Component of the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance as described in summary below:

### **Element 1. Accessible and Visible information**

**Component 1: There will be one or more information areas, open at clearly displayed times, accessible to all learners and providing a range of appropriate, current and impartial information which meets all needs**

Every learner joining CLS is given a handbook containing detailed information and advice about courses, support available and procedures for accessing and using facilities. Central to this is a Learner Charter, setting out what the learner can expect and what CLS expects in return. This establishes a clear mandate for accountability and provides the foundation for effective learning.

As CLS provides for learners of all ages, there are information points in each of the main centres containing a wealth of information on a variety of topics including childcare, health, budgeting, post-16 learning options and independent living. There is excellent supported access to information to assist individual learners with any issue, difficulty or need they may have and signposting to all advice and guidance services in the local authority. Computer terminals are located in the information areas with controlled access to the internet and virtual learning environment (VLE). Regularly updated poster information on topics of interest to all learners is evident in foyers and around the centres. Information area opening times are clearly displayed.

**Component 2: All staff involved in providing information will be familiar with its content and purpose**

Business Services Manager Phil Hyde and Quality and Staff Development Manager Sara Meller maintain systems to ensure that all members of staff receive regular training in IAG procedures and are aware of the information available to learners. CLS operates a very clear policy of tailoring learning programmes to the individual and so it is seen as imperative that all staff are aware of and familiar with the range of information and resources available to them in planning and delivering programmes of learning.

## **Element 2. Accessible Advice and Guidance**

**Component 1: Internal and external advice and guidance practitioners will collectively possess the necessary skills, knowledge, training and qualifications to identify and respond to each learner's needs.**

All the learners interviewed said they know they can speak to any member of staff who will help them access whatever support they need. The majority of CLS staff work directly with learners and, whatever their role, all are recognised as providers of aspects of information, advice and guidance. To co-ordinate IAG provision within the Apprenticeship and NVQ areas, there is a learning support team, overseen by Business Co-ordinator Wendy Langmaid, comprising two Learner Support Officers, Jo Carroll and Jenny Emmerson. As well as working with all CLS staff, this team works in close liaison with a large number of specialist agencies in the locality. These include Connexions, Social Services, Health Services, Child Protection, housing associations, JobCentre Plus, Youth Counselling and the Young People's Support Service. Learners can consult the linked Connexions PA Pat Humphrey and there is a private interview room available for all confidential one-to-one interviews. Day-to-day communication between CLS and external agencies and organisations is excellent and provides a strong basis for the partnership working so essential in addressing the wide range of often complex needs presented by learners. All staff are subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

**Component 2: Advice and guidance practitioners will know about the work of other IAG providers who may be better placed to meet learner's needs**

As stated in Element 2.1, there are many practitioners from a range of disciplines working with CLS and so the need for close liaison and sharing of the work of all IAG practitioners is greater than in mainstream education. Information on protocols and practice is shared as appropriate amongst practitioners via informal and formal meetings, briefings, multi-agency team meetings and training sessions to ensure that all are aware of precisely what each other's role is and what interventions are being made with each learner. All practitioners, internal and external, are able to raise any matters of concern and share views on who is best placed to meet each learner's needs. This is a central requirement of CLS provision and so communication systems are constantly reviewed and revised to maintain a high level of exchange of day-to-day information.

## **Element 3. Linked IAG Provision**

**Component 1: The provision of linked IAG will be part of the remit of a senior manager within the organisation or service**

Susan Simpson, Head of Service, has a key strategic role in overseeing and co-ordinating all aspects of the work of CLS, together with Phil Hyde, Business Services Manager and Michelle Munslow, Contracts and Workforce Development Manager. Important elements of their work are maintaining sufficient YPLA core funding, seeking additional external funding and securing contracts for delivery of projects to help and support learners by contributing to an enhanced curriculum that meets all needs. Currently on offer is a range of apprenticeships from Foundation to Levels 2 and 3, including Creative Arts, Media and Publishing, Preparation for Life and Work and Business Administration. In addition, there are tailored programmes for skill development in, for example, IT, construction, numeracy, literacy, creative arts and cooking.

Susan has worked hard to build a strong family ethos within CLS where all members of the team play an important role in its work and foster partnership arrangements with the many external IAG agencies that extend the information, advice and guidance available to learners.

**Component 2: Practitioners will make clear to learners the links between IAG services and where necessary support learners in their transition between these services**

As stated in the overview to this report, CLS serves a wide spectrum of need and so places a high priority on providing a rich, meaningful and yet challenging experience for all with the expected outcome that all will grow positively and go on to lead fulfilling lives as adults. Many professionals as defined in Element 2.1, are required to meet the range of learners' needs and CLS works very closely with social, health and specialist agencies to ensure matching of expertise to particular interventions. Referral procedures to external agencies are understood by all staff, evidenced by all those interviewed as a part of this assessment being absolutely clear about procedures and the protocols in place to ensure smooth learner transition between services.

**Component 3: Practitioners will recognise professional boundaries and know which alternative provision is appropriate for signposting or referral to meet each learner's guidance needs**

The procedures and protocols described in Elements 3.1 and 3.2 above ensure that all practitioners are aware of their professional boundaries. This is reflected in the thorough measures for safeguarding learners, in line with the policy and procedures set out by the local authority's safeguarding board. Learners have a formal 6-weekly review with one of the Learner Support Officers in order to ensure that all are receiving the support they need and are referred as necessary to the most appropriate agency. All internal and external IAG practitioners are kept up to date with the work of each other via regular multi-agency meetings.

**Element 4. Quality and Delivery of IAG**

**Component 1: IAG will be targeted at the needs of learners and informed by social and economic priorities at local regional and national levels**

CLS serves learners drawn from all over the authority, all of whom have additional learning needs and who may enrol at any time in the academic year. On arrival, tutors carry out initial diagnostic assessments to identify suitable learner support and a written individual learning plan (ILP) is devised. Learners can choose from a wide range of enrichment activities and additional learning opportunities designed to develop personal, social and teamworking skills. A good example of this is the work in progress in refurbishing the learners' common room where they are responsible for design, decoration and construction of the facility, supported and advised by tutors. CLS also offers activities in music, drama, art and sport, including some residential experiences. All of these learning activities are conducive to developing a sense of physical and emotional well-being in all learners to ensure that, as far as possible, all make optimum progress. CLS is well aware of its responsibilities in building learners' self-confidence and works hard to ensure that the considerable local and national demands made of it are addressed and met.

**Component 2: A planned personal development programme based upon DfES/DCSF national recommendations will underpin IAG**

Given the variety of learners attending, it is not appropriate to attempt to provide a one-size-fits-all personal development programme but, as expressed throughout this report, the Service does all it can to provide a range of experiences coupled with relevant information, advice and guidance to help every individual make progress. As stated in Element 4.1, CLS has developed a programme of many personal development activities and wherever possible has linked these into nationally-certificated programmes to accredit achievements. There are also programmes of interest-led learning designed to develop skills, broaden horizons

and boost ambition. Examples of these are Arts and Crafts, gardening, Wii Fit and Wii Dance and photography.

### **Element 5. Diversity of IAG Provision**

**Component 1: IAG provision will recognise and reflect the diversity of learners' needs and promote equality of opportunity and access**

This element lies at the heart of everything CLS provides and Caroline Spence, Curriculum Manager and Garry Denford, Young Persons' Learning Co-ordinator ensure that all learning programmes and activities are designed so that individuals may continually build a more positive view of themselves. Given the immensely diverse backgrounds, experiences and expectations of the learners it serves, CLS places great importance on supporting all, regardless of race, creed, colour, ability, sexual orientation or social status. There is evidence of the breadth of targeted help for priority groups including those who are looked-after, are gay/lesbian/bisexual or transgendered, have learning difficulties/disabilities or those simply disengaged from learning. I was given a tour of the learning facilities available in the Freeman Street Resource Centre and it is very clear that significant investment has been made in purchasing equipment and resources that allow learners to gain hands-on experience in practical environments. From my conversations with learners over the course of this assessment, it is quite clear that the experiences provided for them and the environment in which they are learning, nurture the development of self-image and awareness of the needs of others.

**Component 2: IAG will be available in other more neutral premises whenever appropriate**

CLS learners do not usually make appointments with or self-refer to any external services. Whenever deemed to be appropriate or necessary, CLS staff may arrange or accommodate off-site consultations or appointments with GPs, dentists or other professionals as required.

### **Element 6. Impartiality of IAG Provision**

**Component 1: IAG will promote equally all options available and open to learners based on the defined needs and circumstances of each individual to ensure as far as possible, accurate matching of stated need to help and support**

This component lies at the heart of everything CLS does. Impartial information on all progression options is made available via both paper based and electronic media including the local Area Prospectus [www.lincs2.co.uk](http://www.lincs2.co.uk). All learners have access to the Connexions PA and promotional information from local employers and training providers is available.

Learners often arrive with low levels of self-esteem and confidence and so clear structures and procedures are in place to ensure accurate targeting of IAG provision. Whatever an incoming learner's needs may be, they are assessed and addressed to ensure matching those needs to appropriate help and support. The overriding goal of CLS is to make every effort to ensure that all learners make successful transitions and there is in place the Curriculum Team that has responsibility for devising learning programmes that fit each learner's requirements and supports all learners into, through and beyond their time with CLS.

**Component 2: IAG will support learners in making informed decisions and will not favour any particular learner or groups of learners in order to address institutional targets or goals**

CLS, by the nature of its client group, is less concerned than mainstream providers about meeting externally-imposed examination targets and outcomes. The personalised nature of curriculum provision, the ever-changing needs of learners and the involvement of specialist

agencies ensure that sufficient individual regard is paid to impartiality of advice and guidance in supporting learners in their transitions to their next destinations. CLS constantly encourages skill development for positive work and home behaviours. Where necessary, learners are provided with advice on personal hygiene, appearance and manners and there is a stock of clothing available, whenever appropriate, for loan to learners attending interviews. Developing these essential lifeskills is key to ensuring that learners appreciate the positive aspects of working for a living when planning their futures.

## **Element 7. IAG for Learning and Work**

**Component 1: IAG for learning and work will support learners in exploring the implications of possible career choices when planning their futures**

As indicated throughout this report, the entire ethos of, and the curriculum provided by CLS is about developing the skills, personal attributes and qualifications necessary for learners eventually entering the world of work. All are encouraged to be aspirational and priority is given to ensuring that all have opportunities to gain accreditation (See Element 4.2) in order to broaden progression routes. The Connexions Personal Adviser is available to support the work of CLS in providing specialist and impartial information, advice and guidance regarding all possible routes for progression.

**Component 2: IAG practitioners with a careers focus will work closely with local employers to ascertain up-to-date LMI**

Although LMI is not identified as a discrete element of learning programmes, CLS works very closely with Connexions to ensure that all learners are kept up to date with job vacancies, can explore the type of work that they may eventually like to do and find out what opportunities may be open to them.

**Component 3: IAG provision will ensure that all learners have access to a common 14-19 prospectus from the end of key stage 3 in order that they are made aware of opportunities and qualification requirements for study and training from the age of 14 and for further study, training or employment from the age of 16.**

The Area Prospectus [www.lincs2.co.uk](http://www.lincs2.co.uk) is now well established and CLS has listed all its adult learning provision on the site. Learners may browse learning and training opportunities and register on the system to make applications, supported by tutors and Connexions PA.

## **Element 8. IAG responsiveness to the needs of clients**

**Component 1: IAG practitioners will liaise with each other and all external agencies and services that provide support for learners**

CLS policies are clear and were included in the portfolio of evidence presented prior to this assessment. As indicated in Element 3.2, there are detailed mechanisms for ensuring liaison between IAG practitioners and these include robust systems for information sharing, child protection and data protection. CLS reviews all its provision on an annual basis through a Self-Assessment process and there are stringent performance checks, including procedures through which response to learners' needs is measured against targets and key performance indicators.

**Component 2: IAG provision will ensure that available information is acknowledged and incorporated into advice and guidance sessions**

One of the central functions of CLS is to recognise and praise achievement, develop the confidence and skills for life and to introduce learners to positive role models and cultures.

Increasing self-worth is crucial for many learners whose experiences may range from living in dysfunctional families, to bullying or being bullied or lack of a framework for positive behaviour as they move through adolescence and into adulthood. Developing positive behaviour, social skills and outlook on life are keys to ensuring that learners appreciate the merits of employment and independent living. CLS ensures that all teaching and learning practitioners incorporate into their roles the giving of information, advice or guidance to help each individual. This can include matters regarding conduct, personal hygiene, skills for independent living, securing work and accommodation and planning for the future.

### **Element 9. Evaluation of IAG**

**Component 1: All IAG practitioners and learners are able to feed back their views on the provision within the organisation**

All staff and learners are encouraged to feed back their views on all aspects of CLS and these are incorporated into evaluations set against business plan targets. There is an active Learner Council to ensure their views and opinions are heard and there is strong evidence of learner suggestions being acted upon, for instance in the range of enhancement activities on offer and the facilities on the three main sites. Learners report that they are very happy with the information, advice and guidance available to help and support them and would not wish to change the systems already in place.

### **Recommendation**

CLS is a young organisation in terms of its operation as a single entity; it is continuing to develop through several recent appointments of key staff members and reorganisation of roles and responsibilities. It has been successful in achieving the national Matrix award for information, advice and guidance services in 2010 and was recognised in its last (2008) Ofsted report as good in all aspects of its work. This Gold Standard assessment recognises these positive judgements and seeks to provide more detail with regard to its IAG provision. It is very clear that CLS offers comprehensive systems, programmes, procedures and specialist practitioners in providing proactive help for all its learners and especially those who are particularly vulnerable or at risk. The evidence portfolio provided before the assessment was detailed and the policies, protocols and practice contained within it were all amply demonstrated during the assessment day.

Having taken into consideration all aspects of the information, advice and guidance provision, I recommend that North East Lincolnshire's Community Learning Services' 16-19 Provision be awarded the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for IAG.

Vince Barrett  
External Gold Standard Assessor

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