

Gateshead Council

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51938

Name of lead inspector: June Cramman HMI

Last day of inspection: 22 October 2010

Type of provider: Local Authority
Adult Learning & Skills
Dryden Centre

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Information about the provider

1. Gateshead Council is one of five local authorities in Tyne and Wear. Adult and Community Learning, provided through the Council's Adult Learning and Skills (ALS), is part of the remit of the Raising Achievement Service, one of the five services that form the Council's Learning and Children's Directorate.
2. ALS receives government funding through the Skills Funding Agency for Adult and Community Learning, further education, neighbourhood learning in deprived communities, first steps learning, family learning, and Train to Gain provision. ALS also receives European Social Funding from the Skills Funding Agency. Government funded provision represents around 90% of ALS business.
3. In 2008/09, 9,668 learners enrolled on ALS programmes across 120 venues. Since the last inspection, ALS has opened a new learning centre and refurbished two existing venues. The provider has gained new funding for an apprenticeship contract, Train to Gain and Skills for Life programmes, as well as funding from a range of other income streams.
4. The main areas of learning are community learning, family learning, literacy and numeracy, and the growing work-based learning provision. Work-based learning and family learning were not inspected separately, although both were sampled.
5. ALS serves a population of approximately 191,300 in an area extending around 13 miles along the south bank of the River Tyne. People from minority ethnic groups make up less than 2% of the population, compared with the national average of 9%. There is a large Orthodox Jewish community, representing around 1% of Gateshead's population.
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of Gateshead Council:
 - Youth and Community Learning
 - Gateshead school teaching assistants
 - Heworth Grange
 - Gateshead Libraries
 - Gateshead Libraries Heritage
 - Gateshead Council Payroll department
 - Local environmental services
 - Kingsmeadow Community School
 - St. Thomas More Catholic School
 - Community-based services
 - ALD Academy
 - Stonham Home Group Ltd
 - Redcar and Cleveland Libraries

- Stockton Libraries
- Resources Ltd
- Gateshead College
- Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council
- Gateshead Housing Company
- North Music Trust

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2009/10
Young learner provision: Further education (16 to 18)	60 part time 40 full time
Adult learner provision: Learning for qualifications Learning for social and personal development	1,131 part time 4,412 part time
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	890 learners 57 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Learning for qualifications	Grade
Preparation for life and work	1
Learning for social and personal development	Grade
Community learning	2

Overall effectiveness

7. The overall effectiveness of ALS's provision is good. Outcomes for learners, quality of provision, and leadership and management are all good. Arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable learners, and for promoting equality and diversity are good.
8. Learners gaining qualifications with ALS enjoy success rates at very high, to outstanding rates. Learners across the provision enjoy their courses, they gain useful skills, particularly for employment, increase their health and well-being, and become actively involved in a range of community projects. Progress for learners in general adult safeguarded learning sessions is satisfactory.
9. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Resources are good, with some inspirational and motivating tutors, and some excellent new facilities. The range of provision is good, covering both community based programmes and vocational provision. ALS works well with partners to improve and extend this range. Guidance and support for learners are good.

Main findings

- Overall success rates for Train to Gain are excellent. Overall success rates for learners on learner responsive certificated programmes are very high at 92% in 2008/09. Success rates for the 16% of learners in adult safeguarded learning whose programmes lead to accreditation are very high. Progress for learners in general adult safeguarded learning sessions is satisfactory.
- Learners across the provision significantly improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development. Many learners have a good awareness of safe working practices and of safeguarding issues. Learners feel safe and very welcomed into sessions. Learners are able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being, and their contribution to the community is good. However, ALS does not sufficiently evaluate the impact of projects to increase health.
- Most tutors and trainers are particularly committed and enthusiastic; they provide excellent role models. Tutors and assessors are well qualified and experienced. Resources and accommodation are at least good, with outstanding new and refurbished venues. Initial assessment is good, and induction processes are at least satisfactory.
- However, individual target setting for learners is insufficiently specific. Tutors and trainers do not always sufficiently consider the specific individual needs of the learners. Information learning technologies are insufficiently used. The observation of the teaching and learning process pays insufficient attention to learning in sessions, and individual action plans for tutors are not always sufficiently challenging. There are some missed opportunities in lessons to more effectively promote equality and diversity.
- Provision to meet the needs and interests of users is good and extensive. ALS uses its range of funding innovatively, and very well, to give provision across a very wide range of subject areas, and at a range of levels for learners of all ages. It targets provision well to reflect its priorities in reaching the most vulnerable in society.
- ALS has good partnerships. It has well established relationships with schools and children's centres through family learning, and plans provision very well. The service works very effectively with council departments, particularly the Youth and Community Learning Service, which manages a range of centres within the various communities of the borough. Relationships with employers are good.
- Support and guidance for learners are good. Tutors and assessors give good support and advice to learners, offering extra time and resources. ALS identifies literacy and numeracy support needs well, and organises support quickly. Induction and guidance are generally highly effective across the provision. However, there is insufficient formal evaluation of the quality of support provided.
- Strategic planning of adult learning is good. ALS has developed its strategic plan to link directly with council and community strategies and contribute to local and national priorities. ALS managers and staff have worked successfully to

widen participation and make an impact on vulnerable groups and those in danger of social exclusion.

- ALS has successfully managed substantial growth in its provision since the last inspection. The volumes of vocational training have grown with increased numbers of apprenticeships and Train to Gain learners. The service is active throughout the borough, offering learning opportunities in the most disadvantaged wards. The quality of resources to support learning is mostly good, and is outstanding in the newer and refurbished buildings.
- Inspectors identified the use of data as a weakness at the last inspection. It is now good. Data are routinely analysed and discussed at monthly management meetings, and at a wide range of other staff and performance management meetings.
- Safeguarding and the promotion of equality and diversity are good. ALS meets legislative requirements; learners have a high awareness of safe working practices and feel safe and welcomed into provision. ALS targets learners from underrepresented groups well, and takes effective actions to narrow the achievement gap.
- ALS has well established systems to collect and act upon learners' views. These are collected through satisfaction surveys at the end of each course. The results, and any improvements made, are well publicised by ALS. Systems to collect employers' views are not as well developed but staff are beginning to use the findings well to help identify possible improvements.
- Value for money is outstanding. Budgeting procedures and financial controls are very well established and managers closely monitor expenditure. The management and deployment of resources are excellent. ALS is extremely effective in identifying and using other funding to benefit learners.

What does Gateshead Council Adult Learning and Skills need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the monitoring and recording of progress and achievement processes so that all learners' progress can be accurately measured.
- Establish fully the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and training sessions to extend learners' understanding of diversity.
- Improve teaching and learning practices through more consistent use of varied activities and information learning technologies to meet the needs of all learners.
- Further develop the observation of teaching and learning processes to identify more accurately specific issues, concentrating more on the learning in sessions, to create active and useful action plans for individual tutors or trainers.
- Implement more qualitative systems to evaluate the effectiveness of support.
- Develop systems to measure the effectiveness of health and well-being initiatives.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**What learners like:**

- the helpful, patient, knowledgeable and above all, friendly tutors and assessors
- learning skills to become more employable and getting qualifications that are valued by employers
- meeting new people and getting out of the house
- learning new skills to keep fit and well
- the range of venues that are easy to access across the borough
- the welcoming relaxed atmosphere, and being valued no matter what your age or culture
- getting involved in lots of activities outside of the courses
- being more confident in talking to their children's teachers at school
- the regular helpful workplace assessments, and being able to learn at work
- the difference from previous experiences of learning at school.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the access to careers guidance for adult learners
- the way particular tutors move from topic to topic which they find confusing.

Summary of the views of employers and partners as confirmed by inspectors**What employers and partners like:**

- the highly responsive and flexible approach
- being able to trust that ALS will do what it says
- the successful ventures that partners and ALS have developed together
- the bespoke training packages that ALS creates
- the emphasis on high quality in everything ALS does
- the helpful and resourceful staff
- the highly inclusive approach by ALS placing a high priority on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in society
- the range of provision that meets partners' and employers' needs very well.

What employers and partners would like to see improved:

- information about off-the-job learning
- the regularity of assessments.

Main inspection findings

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. Since the last inspection, the provider has sustained consistent improvement in all aspects of provision. ALS has improved success rates well, building on previously high rates. On learner responsive programmes and Train to Gain provision, these are very high. In community learning, those on accredited provision achieve very high success rates. All of these are substantially above national levels. Learners enjoy their studies and gain significantly both socially and economically.
11. Self-assessment is largely accurate. The process is thorough and the provider uses it well to secure improvements. The quality improvement plan is rigorous, colour-coded to prioritise improvements, and is a genuine working tool used to ensure continuous improvement. However, the processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement, and for observing teaching and learning are not always effective in improving specific aspects of provision.
12. Leaders and managers set a good example and motivate staff very well. They in turn motivate and stimulate learners to succeed and aspire to higher goals. Since the last inspection, where the use of data was an area of improvement, ALS has established a data system that is understood well by staff and managers, and is used effectively as a tool to set accurate and meaningful targets for improvement. Staff ensure cabinet members are appropriately informed and involved in planning and delivery of provision. The collection of users' views is mostly well established and the information used well to improve provision. Formal systems to collect employers' views are less well established although staff make effective use of information that is gathered.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

13. Overall success rates for Train to Gain are excellent, rising steadily since the last inspection to 94% in 2008/09; 11 percentage points above the national average. Timely rates are good, rising steadily to 81% in 2008/09, 10 points above the national average. Overall success rates for learners on learner responsive certificated programmes are very high. They improved from 81% in 2006/07 to 92% in 2008/09, 15 percentage points above the national average. Learners from four subject areas all have success rates around 20 points higher than the national average. Learners on adult safeguarded learning have good retention rates. Success rates for the 16% of learners on accredited programmes are very high at 100% in 2008/09 and 83% in 2009/10. However, the recognition and recording of progress and achievement processes are insufficiently reliable to use as a measure, although learners' progress in observed sessions was satisfactory.
14. Learners significantly improve their economic and social well-being. They gain friends and networks of support. Older learners improve their communication skills and make new contacts. Younger learners in community learning, Skills for Life and employability programmes gain good skills for employment. Many

in family learning enter employment as teaching assistants. Some learners from wider adult education develop skills to set up their own businesses, for example, learners from celebration cake making courses. Those on Train to Gain programmes develop good workplace skills, work in challenging environments, and work well on their own initiative. Learners training as health assistants progress well to challenging roles.

15. Learners have a good awareness of safe working practices and of safeguarding. In family learning, learners on counselling and health care courses all have a high awareness of measures to protect both themselves and children. All learners show at least a satisfactory awareness of health and safety measures; community learners demonstrate a good understanding. Learners on Train to Gain provision have at least a satisfactory awareness of safeguarding issues. Some learners on customer service and health assistant provision have tackled some challenging workplace problems with regard to safeguarding very well. Learners feel safe and very welcomed into sessions.
16. Learners are able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being very well. ALS has active programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to encourage them to make informed choices about their own and others' well-being. Family learning has good projects to encourage parents and families to become more active. Community centres have a good range of information to encourage participants to become involved in initiatives such as community gardening projects. Learners at a sub-contractor that specialises in supporting learners with visual impairment, benefit from a range of courses in cookery, healthy eating and keep fit. A men's health group has high participation, retention and success. In Train to Gain, learners work as health assistants giving specific health services. However, ALS does not sufficiently evaluate the impact of projects to increase health.
17. Learners' contribution to the community is good. In family learning, and English programmes for speakers of other languages, learners are active in parent-teacher groups. Many learners on wider programmes take part in a range of voluntary work, both in supporting other learners through the Learning Champions scheme, and in working on management committees. Learners from a range of minority ethnic groups represent their communities on committees or forums. In conjunction with a community partner, ALS is providing a course to further develop the skills of people in the voluntary sector. In their work with schools, ALS organised a sign language course to help families with members who have hearing impairments and who felt isolated from their community. Parents from two of the families are now parent governors and take an active role in the school community.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

18. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Tutors and trainers are particularly committed and enthusiastic. They provide excellent role models and actively foster an atmosphere of acceptance and welcome in sessions. Most staff are very well qualified and have substantial relevant experience. Resources and accommodation are at least good, with new venues being outstanding.
19. Initial assessment is good, and induction at least satisfactory. The provider identifies literacy and numeracy support needs well, and organises support quickly. Planning of learning is satisfactory although tutors do not always incorporate the promotion of equality and diversity into teaching sessions. Assessment practice in work-based learning provision is appropriate in range and methodologies. Assessors have good occupational experience they share well with learners. Visits are regular, flexible, and ensure learners progress well.
20. Individual target setting for learners is not always sufficiently specific and measureable. Tutors and trainers do not always sufficiently consider the individual needs of the learners and do not always make enough use of information learning technologies.
21. The observation of teaching and learning process identifies some strengths and areas for development. However, observers concentrate too much on teaching and not enough on learning. Paper-based moderation correctly identifies over-grading of lessons but has not identified other issues. ALS is extending the moderation process with joint observations and monitoring visits. However, these have currently had insufficient effect.
22. Extensive provision meets the needs and interests of users well. ALS uses its wide range of funding innovatively and very well to offer programmes across a wide range of subject areas, and at a range of levels. It targets provision effectively to reflect its priorities to reach the most vulnerable in society. The provision now reflects learners' interests in both vocational and leisure provision and includes a number of innovative projects. For example, ALS is delivering a good pre-apprenticeship programme for 16 to 19 year olds that has been highly successful in recruiting and retaining learners with a range of very complex needs. Across all the provision, staff are flexible in meeting needs through offering courses at different times of the day, in the evenings and at weekends. In work with employers, staff are particularly flexible in working around demanding shift patterns. They successfully identify and meet employers' needs in individual workplaces and in the design of bespoke training packages.
23. ALS has a very good range of partnerships that actively benefit the people of the area. It has a long and close relationship with schools and children's centres through family learning, and plans provision particularly well. The service works very well with other council departments, especially the Youth and Community Learning Service that manages a range of community centres. In partnership, they deliver a range of programmes to cater for the young and old from different cultures and religions and for those with a disability. The service works well with private and voluntary sector partners to ensure provision is tailored to

meet the needs of individuals. For example, it works effectively with two private providers who specialise in engineering and hairdressing. The provider also has beneficial partnerships with hospitals and health-related employers.

24. Support and guidance of learners across provision are good. Tutors and assessors give good support to learners, giving extra time and resources. Needs for support are identified through the enrolment and thorough initial assessment processes. ALS quickly puts support in place where it is needed. Withdrawals for learners with support are low and success rates are at around the same level as those without this additional help. ALS has very effective arrangements for providing information, advice and guidance. Individual tutors and assessors give good advice and offer information about the full range of partners' provision. Advice offered during induction ensures learners are on the right course. ALS has trained more staff to improve the information, advice and guidance available across all centres. At enrolment, staff give good pre-course information. They deal with issues relating to equality and diversity well. However, ALS insufficiently evaluates the quality of the support that is provided.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

25. As identified in the self-assessment report leadership and management are good. Strategic planning is good. ALS has developed its strategic plan to link directly with council and community strategies. Staff have a good understanding of how their own targets contribute to the council's aims. ALS managers and staff have made a successful impact on vulnerable groups and those in danger of social exclusion as stated in their strategic plans. Adult learning plans align closely to local and national targets, for example, to increase the number of adults with qualifications at intermediate and advanced levels. The service is highly regarded within the council and by its partners. The provider plays an important part in raising the expectations and ambitions of staff and of the people within the communities it serves.
26. ALS has successfully managed substantial growth in its provision since the last inspection. The volume of vocational training has grown significantly with increases in the number of apprenticeships and Train to Gain learners. In recent years, ALS has developed the range of vocational programmes and secured significant additional funding to compensate for a reduction in learner responsive provision. It has also significantly increased its provision in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and now has an active programme of targeting provision to reach communities with the highest levels of deprivation.
27. The quality of resources to support learning programmes is mostly good, and outstanding in the newer and refurbished buildings. The provider plans continuing professional development well, focusing on council priorities such as improving staff understanding of safeguarding. A good training plan is in place for the organisation, informed by a skills audit and staff appraisal system. Team working both between, and within teams, is good and staff share good practice well. Monthly management meetings are well focused and recorded appropriately.

28. ALS's use of data was a weakness at the last inspection. It is now good. Data are routinely analysed and discussed at monthly management meetings. Curriculum managers discuss retention and success rates with staff, and set challenging targets to improve or maintain the very high success rates. ALS uses data well to monitor performance. Staff use data on equality and diversity well to identify issues such as low recruitment of males or low success rates amongst the minority ethnic community. The provider has taken highly effective actions to improve both these aspects.
29. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that managers keep directors of council services and cabinet members informed. The council is strongly committed to ensuring the success of adult learning in contributing to key council themes. Senior council officers and relevant portfolio-holders continue to take a keen interest in the development of the service.
30. ALS's arrangements for safeguarding are good. They meet government legislative requirements. In addition to this, staff and learners are strongly aware of health and safety. Learners feel safe and appreciate the arrangements that ensure their welfare. They have confidence in the sensitivity of staff and know how to report concerns. Detailed risk-assessments are routinely completed. ALS liaises closely with appropriate agencies to ensure and support learners' health and well-being. All staff have completed appropriate training in safeguarding and five managers have undertaken further training. Staff keep emergency contact details on file for all learners. ALS deals with incidents and safeguarding issues efficiently and with sensitivity. Staff introduce internet safety practices during learners' induction and these are reinforced throughout their studies. The designated responsible officer sits on the panel for the local safeguarding board.
31. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers target provision to reach those in greatest need. Learning is widely available throughout the borough with a great deal of the provision located in areas of high economic deprivation. In family learning, 55% of all learners are from the most deprived wards of the borough. ALS has effectively worked to involve learners from groups traditionally underrepresented in learning. The numbers of men taking part has grown from 23% to 31% following promotion aimed specifically at increasing male participation. All staff apart from a few part-time staff have been trained in the promotion of equality and diversity and in incorporating equality and diversity into teaching and learning sessions. However, the extent to which equality and diversity are promoted in the curriculum is variable.
32. Quality assurance is satisfactory. Managers monitor a comprehensive, colour-coded, quality improvement plan (QIP) well at monthly meetings. Self-assessment is accurate and leads to improvements. The views of learners and partners are taken into account. Staff contribute well to the self-assessment report. Internal and external peer groups moderate the judgements and check the QIP actions. The self-assessment report reflects many judgements made by inspectors but failed to recognise areas for improvement in the observation of the teaching and learning process. The monitoring of subcontractors is

satisfactory. A new manager has responsibility for the quality of subcontracted provision and has implemented a schedule of quality monitoring visits; however, it is too early to judge the impact of this work.

33. ALS has good systems to collect and act upon learners' views which are collected through end of course satisfaction surveys. The results, and actions taken to improve the provision are well publicised. For example, learners' comments on the effectiveness of pre-course advice and guidance led to improvements in course literature and training for key staff. Systems are in place for learners to provide feedback by email and all learners have managers' contact telephone numbers. Focus groups are held twice each term. ALS trained 30 community-learning champions to help ensure programmes meet the needs of users. Specific employability skills programmes are now available following feedback from disability groups.
34. ALS's systems to collect employers' views are not as well established as those for learners, and are being further developed. Staff collect the views of employers twice a year through telephone interviews and use the results to identify actions needed to improve provision. ALS identifies employers' needs effectively through an organisational needs analysis and has recently amended the process in response to employers' comments.
35. Collaborative working between ALS, other council services, and external partners is good. ALS works with 10 subcontractors within the council and a further 10 external subcontractors. Working relationships are good but formal arrangements to monitor the quality of subcontractors' work are insufficiently developed.
36. Value for money is outstanding. Financial management is excellent. Budgeting procedures and financial controls are well established and managers closely monitor expenditure. The management and deployment of resources are highly efficient. ALS is extremely effective in using a wide range of funding streams to benefit learners.

Learning for qualifications

Other learning for qualifications provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: *health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise, leisure, travel and tourism, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, education and training, business, administration and law, and family learning.*

Preparation for life and work

Grade 1

Context

37. Currently 142 learners are enrolled on learner responsive Skills for Life courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, ranging from pre-entry to intermediate level. All courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications and the majority of learners are working towards foundation and intermediate levels in literacy and numeracy, and entry levels in ESOL. In addition, courses are offered from other funding sources, which account for half of ALS's Skills for Life provision. The manager has a team of five full-time and two part-time tutors.

Key findings

- Success rates are outstanding. Overall success rates in 2008/09 at 94% were well above the national rate. ALS also maintained excellent success rates for all qualifications in 2009/10. Some Skills for Life courses achieved success rates of 100% with courses for ESOL having overall success rates in 2009/10 at 98%, which is outstanding.
- Learners make excellent progress towards their individual learning goals. They enjoy learning and are well motivated to succeed. Learners find the courses highly interesting and challenging. They increase significantly their self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Learners develop well relevant literacy, numeracy and language skills, which contribute to improving their employability prospects. Learners have progressed into paid or voluntary work. Many learners continue with further study and some progress to higher-level education and training courses.
- ALS provides a particularly welcoming and friendly learning environment at each of the centres. Learners feel safe and have a good understanding of safety and security practices. They value the social interaction with staff and their peers, and feel well respected.
- Tutors inspire learners to achieve. They have high levels of commitment and energy, which encourage learners to succeed. Lessons are highly productive. Most are well paced with tutors planning effectively to meet individual needs and using a good variety of interesting activities.
- Resources are good overall; many learners use the excellent resources in the new buildings to help them learn. Tutors provide a good range of well prepared activities. Worksheets and workbooks are good quality offering learners topical, interesting and varied material. However, in some sessions, learners do not

have sufficient access to interactive activities and many tutors do not use technology sufficiently.

- Learners benefit from particularly thorough initial and diagnostic assessments, which inform well their individual learning targets. Most learners benefit from good individual learning plans and progress records. They are clear about what they have achieved. However, tutors do not apply effective targets consistently.
- The good range of Skills for Life provision meets the needs of learners well. ALS provides a good choice at various levels across the borough. The provider uses its multiple funding streams well to enhance the range of courses, enabling the service to engage with a wide range of learners, including those whose first language is not English.
- Partnership working to develop the provision is excellent. The provider works highly effectively with a significant number of organisations, community groups and voluntary agencies, which has clear benefits for learners. ALS works very effectively at local and regional levels to develop Skills for Life programmes and widen learning opportunities. The service has responded excellently to community requests, designing good, bespoke provision.
- Learners benefit from excellent information, guidance and support. Advisers and tutors are highly sensitive to their individual needs and learners benefit from particularly good in-depth individual interviews. Very good pre-enrolment information ensures that they register on the correct programme. Tutors provide particularly effective individual support in classes and learners access a range of good support facilities.
- Staff manage the Skills for Life provision particularly well. The team ethos is excellent. Staff are well informed, attend productive team meetings, and communication is very good. Demanding targets are set. Staff make good use of data to monitor performance and learners' progress. However, key quality improvement measures do not always identify improvements needed in teaching and learning.
- Tutors are particularly well qualified and experienced. They hold at least one subject specialist qualification in numeracy, literacy or ESOL, with many holding more than one. They all have qualified teacher status. They are deployed effectively across the provision. Staff are well supported by the service through the staff development programme.

What does ALS need to do to improve further?

- Make better and more consistent use of technology and interactive learning materials in teaching and learning to make lessons even more visual, interesting and varied.
- Refine quality assurance processes so that they identify more clearly actions needed to further improve the provision.

Community learning

Grade 2

Context

38. ALS has 5,091 learners on community learning programmes. Provision takes place in 40 venues across Gateshead and is managed by the curriculum and community learning manager in partnership with the centre managers. Courses are delivered by 112 sessional tutors and take place in the morning, afternoon, evening and weekends.

Key findings

- Learners enjoy learning and develop good personal and social skills. Progress in sessions is at least satisfactory. Some learners start their own businesses, improving their order books by increasing their skills. Other learners become community volunteers and are positive role models. Sixteen per cent of provision is accredited, and success rates are very high at 100% in 2008/09, and 83% in 2009/10.
- Learners' understanding of health and safety is good, with learners being highly aware of safe working practices. They feel safe and welcome in their centres, classrooms or studios.
- Initial assessment is very effective. However, the recording of learners' progress during their training is inconsistent. Individual learning plans are not always for the individual but are written for the whole class. Tutors do not always complete records consistently and planning for individual learning and target setting is insufficiently specific and measurable.
- Learning resources and accommodation are excellent, motivating and inspiring learners. Classrooms and studios offer a professional level of resources and provide pleasant, stimulating and welcoming environments. Many staff are practising artists and specialists in their field and have a high level of expertise. Tutors use well executed demonstrations with learners although they do not always make sufficient use of information learning technologies.
- Tutors do not always pay sufficient attention to the needs of individual learners. Some sessions are not challenging for the more able learner and some sessions are too tutor-led with learners not having enough opportunities to express themselves. Learners are also not encouraged to keep photographic records of their work, or keep logbooks for reference.
- The curriculum offer is extensive and meets the needs and interests of the learners very well. The courses on offer are wide and varied and spread across the geographical area. Some subjects offer courses for beginners, intermediate and advanced level studies. Some sessions cater for learners at a range of abilities. ALS also targets specific provision such as employability courses in areas of economic deprivation.
- Partnership work is very effective, with learners from hard-to-reach areas getting good learning experiences that they otherwise would not have. Partners provide extra resources and specific expertise as well as premises across the borough.

- Support and guidance for learners are good. Tutors give good individual support with specific support organised in a timely way. Learners receive good pre-course information. All the learners are aware of what is on offer in centres and many take more than one subject. ALS makes good use of learners' views to improve the service.
- Leadership is strong. Senior managers offer clear direction and promote high standards throughout the service. Operational management is good. Tutors and staff in centres feel included in decision making. Staff training in the implementation of recognising and recording progress and achievement is insufficient and recording learners' progress is inconsistent.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff use data and management information well to recruit and retain learners from a wide range of backgrounds. Learners participate well in multi-cultural events arranged outside of classes. However, in many teaching sessions staff do not sufficiently promote equality and diversity.
- Systems to improve the quality of provision are satisfactory. The self-assessment report for this area recognises most strengths and areas for improvement found during inspection. However, not all teaching and learning observation records are sufficiently precise and evaluative and they do not concentrate sufficiently on learning.

What does the service need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of the individual learning plan so that it provides a sufficiently precise measure of progress to stimulate and reward learners.
- Improve teaching so that all learners, from the least able to the most, benefit from planned activities that stimulate and challenge them and meet their individual needs.
- Increase the use of information learning technologies by staff in both teaching sessions and in the recording of learners' progress, through more staff training and development and increased monitoring in the observation process.
- Further embed the promotion of equality and diversity in the lessons across community learning provision to extend learners' understanding of the multi-cultural society in which they live and the circumstances of others such as those with disabilities.

Information about the inspection

39. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by Gateshead Council's Principal Adult Learning and Skills Manager as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Skills Funding Agency or other funding bodies, the previous inspection reports, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
40. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council. They also visited learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Gateshead Council Adult Learning and Skills

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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	97	40	0	57	0
Part-time learners	7172	60	1131	890	5091
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2				
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2	1	1	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1				
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	3				
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
A3. Do learners feel safe?	2				
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2				
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2				
B. Quality of provision	2	2	2	2	2
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
C. Leadership and management	2	2	2	2	2
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
C7. 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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