

# Leicestershire Adult Learning Service

## Focused monitoring visit report

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## FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Leicestershire County Council Adult Learning Service (LALS) is one of the services within the council's Adults and Communities Service Department. Its offices are located in the Glenfield district of Leicester. LALS contracts with the Skills Funding Agency, Easy Midlands region. Currently, approximately 8,000 learners are attending programmes. Of these 5,288 are adults undertaking courses for personal and social development, 2,572 are adults on courses which include qualifications and 65 are young people. The service also offers a small employer responsive programme for apprentices and Train to Gain learners.

At the last inspection, preparation for life and work was graded outstanding. All aspects of the provision, equality of opportunity, arts, media and publishing and family learning were graded good. Languages, literature and culture was satisfactory. Currently, the service is developing and expanding its employer responsiveness provision.

The inspection focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

<b>What progress has the provider made in its self-assessment and quality improvement planning to drive improvements since the last inspection?</b>	<b>Insufficient progress</b>
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At the last inspection LALS's capacity to improve was judged as good. The self-assessment process is fully inclusive. However, it is inadequately informed by confirmed, valid and accurate data. Overall grades awarded by the service are at least good with some outstanding aspects but published success rate data would not support these judgements. The narrative in the self-assessment report does not sufficiently identify the decline in performance in 2009/10 of adult learner responsive provision or the subsequent actions currently being taken to address this. Quality improvement planning is satisfactory. Each curriculum area has an individual improvement plan which informs a whole organisational plan. Plans are monitored at appropriate intervals against targets which have been previously set.

## Outcomes for learners

### **What progress has the provider made in improving learners' outcomes since the decline in success rates in 2009/10? Reasonable progress**

Achievement and standards at the last inspection were judged to be good overall. Outcomes for learners in employer responsive provision continue to be good. Since 2006/07 success rates and their completion within their planned duration have continued to be consistently well above national averages. For the period 2006 to 2009 all adult provision was well above national rates and typically around 86%. However, overall success rates for 2009/10 have deteriorated to 79% and are now around national rates. The service has recognised this. LALS has made reasonable progress since the publication of the data for this period to improve rates. Managers have undertaken a detailed analysis of the under-performing courses and wide ranging actions for improvement are in place at curriculum levels and central data collection services. The service is working closely with the Learning and Skills Improvement Service to further identify issues which may be affecting success rates. Improvement actions are significant. Current in-year overall retention is 82% and has not further declined since the same period in 2009/10. Early indicators are that short course success rates are much improved in 2010/11.

### **What improvements has the service made to monitor learner progression data? Reasonable progress**

At inspection in 2008 incomplete arrangements for monitoring learner progression were a key area for improvement. They were still a key area for improvement in the provider's self assessment report for 2009/10. Until 2010 the service was able to monitor learner progression data in each of the county's districts but the methodology used in each was inconsistent and there was no overview at county level. In 2010 the provider introduced common standardised data collection and reporting in this area. Managers now have a service-wide view of learner progression and are able to monitor this within their own provision well. This includes monitoring of progression within subject areas, onto other courses at the same level within the same subject area or into other subject areas. This information is now a valuable tool in planning the curriculum offer and as an indicator in making judgements on learner outcomes.

Data on learner progression into employment or education outside the service is gathered through end-of-course information advice and guidance (IAG), through learners' feedback and telephone surveys. The service has plans to improve further the capture of such data in order to strengthen and monitor this aspect of learner progress.

## Quality of provision

### **What progress has LALS made in developing the planning and monitoring of individual learning targets?**

**Significant progress**

At inspection in 2008 underdeveloped planning and monitoring of individual learning targets (ILTs) were a key area for improvement. Since this time all curriculum teams have been trained in differentiation and in the writing of specific and measurable targets. This is enabling better production of individual learning targets which are used in combination with the results of initial assessment in the planning and delivery of courses and sessions. Particular attention is now paid to these aspects in quality assurance processes. The improved, measurable ILTs allow for increasingly robust performance data for non-qualification courses. The detailed format of ILTs is tailored to the different subject areas. Tutors monitor and agree progress toward these targets formally at mid-course and end-of-course reviews with learners and continuously more informally. In all areas targets are subject to deletion, amendment or addition as the courses progress and contribute to the live nature of individual learning plans.

### **What improvements have been made to the lesson planning in language provision?**

**Significant progress**

Poor lesson planning to meet individual needs was a key area for improvement in language provision at the last inspection. Since then the service has produced revised and improved session plan guidance and shared this with tutors during tutor briefings. The new plans guide tutors to include differentiation and better use of individual learning targets and the results of initial assessment in the planning and delivery of sessions. Additional material to support learners' individual learning outcomes is accessible to them through a virtual learning environment (VLE). Tutor training and guidance notes have also improved their consideration of learners' preferred learning styles, support needs and other equality and diversity issues.

Managers monitor the implementation and impact of these new plans successfully through observations of teaching and learning and other visits. The 2009/10 data indicate that success rates in modern foreign languages are now much improved since the previous inspection. There have been particular issues in the delivery of British Sign Language courses. Although similar improvement measures had been taken, quality improvement in this area has been inconsistent. However, early indicators in the current academic year are that success rates are also improving in this area.

### **What progress has the service made in the programme design for the significant increase in apprenticeship programmes?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection employer responsiveness provision was a relatively small part of the service's overall offer. LALS is making reasonable progress in expanding this provision to meet national and local priorities. Plans are at an advanced stage to

much improve employer engagement and an officer responsible for this has been recently employed. Teaching, learning and assessment activities are well planned, using and developing existing service resources. Good arrangements are in place to deliver functional skills on new adult apprenticeship programmes. Arrangements to share good practice in order to develop the provision are in place both within the service and with other providers. The monitoring of learners' progress and aspects of the review process are areas requiring further development and these remain under consideration.

## **Leadership and management**

### **What progress has the service made in developing the ILT strategy?**

### **Significant progress**

At inspection in 2008 insufficient implementation of the ILT strategy was a key area for improvement. After the inspection the provider produced an ILT strategy to cover the period 2009 to 2011. This was further up-dated and revised in 2010. The service has made significant progress in implementing the strategy and made good progress in the acquisition of more IT equipment for its centres and in the development and use of its VLE. Tutors have received extensive training in how to make best use of the VLE and comment favourably on the impact this has made on their teaching. It also supports advances made in the introduction of e-learning and blended learning for some courses. E-champions and cross curricular work between the ICT subject area and others support tutors well in learning to use ILT in their sessions. Tutors are now well trained in the use of interactive whiteboards and other technology to enliven and improve teaching and learning sessions. In some areas tutors are using the technology to engage more directly with the learners through greater interaction and through enhancement of the presentation of learning materials.

### **What improvements has the service made to the monitoring of key aspects of family learning provision?**

### **Significant progress**

LALS has made significant progress in the improvement to the performance monitoring of key aspects of family learning provision which was an area for improvement at the 2008 inspection. Detailed service agreements with service partners are reviewed frequently. Prior to partners joining the family learning programme a detailed risk assessment is undertaken and regular monitoring and observation of teaching and learning visits are undertaken. Family learning partner conferences are held each year in order to share good practice across the provision. Managers and family learning co-ordinators frequently review performance data both formally and informally and set targets for improvement. Attendance, retention and achievement rates are very high across the provision. Recently, the service has much improved the collection and analysis of learners' and stakeholders' feedback

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