

Luton Borough Council

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53201

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Type of provider: Local Authority
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Information about the provider

1. Luton Borough Council adult and community learning service (LACL) is one of the services within the council's housing and community living directorate. Its offices are located in its main community education site in the northern part of the borough. LACL offers courses in over 100 community centres, schools, libraries and employers' premises throughout Luton. The service has a contract with the Skills Funding Agency for the provision of courses leading to a qualification as well as for social and personal development courses. The service offers courses in 11 of the 15 subject areas. At the time of the inspection, some 1,121 learners were on courses leading to a qualification and 482 on a social and personal development course. The service's budget in the current year is around £2 million.
2. The service manager, who reports to the council's head of service for community living, has overall management responsibility. He is supported by two senior managers and four curriculum coordinators/managers. The service employs 17 full-time or fractional tutors and 63 sessional tutors.
3. Approximately 35% of the town's population of 200,000 are from a minority ethnic heritage. There are large Pakistani/Kashmiri, Bangladeshi, Indian and African and Caribbean communities and also small communities of migrants from Eastern Europe. The local unemployment rate of 9.2% is higher than the national rate of 7.7%. In 2010/11, some 6.2% of the working age population were claiming incapacity benefits, compared with the national figure of 6.6%. In 2011, 16% of the local population had no qualifications, compared with 12% nationally.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
 - Active Luton (Leisure, travel and tourism)
 - Lady Zia Wernher (Languages, literature and culture)
 - Barnfield College (Engineering and information and communication technology)
 - Oaklands College (Construction crafts)
 - Institute of Groundsmanship (Agriculture)
 - Kaplan (Business, administration and law)
 - Association of Building Engineers (Construction crafts)

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: Further education (16-18)	27 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Learning for qualifications Learning for social and personal development	1,301 part-time learners 3,080 part-time learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	128 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Learning for qualifications in employment	Grade
Business, administration and law	1

Learning for qualifications	Grade
English for speakers of other languages	3
Literacy and numeracy	3

Overall effectiveness

5. LACL is a satisfactory provider of adult learning. Business administration apprentices perform particularly well, with very high success rates. However, success rates for learners studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and literacy and numeracy were low in 2010/11, although current learners are making satisfactory progress. Learners enjoy learning and gain good skills which help them to improve their prospects of future employment. Many go on to further study. Learners say that they feel safe at learning venues.
6. Most lessons are satisfactory. The best lessons show evidence of good planning. Teachers make learning lively and interactive by using examples and materials which are relevant to learners' home and work life experience. A few lessons are dull because teachers do not use a wide enough range of learning activities or appropriate real-life examples to make the subject interesting and relevant. Training for business administration learners is excellent. Assessment

and reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory and help learners to achieve their learning goals. Training for business administration learners is excellent.

7. The service offers a wide range of courses at around 100 venues. LACL works very well with partners to offer provision in areas where few adult learning opportunities exist. Managers are committed to widening participation in learning for all of Luton's diverse communities. Learners are often new to adult learning. Many progress from one level to the next. Staff provide good personal support to help learners complete their course.
8. The service's senior managers and curriculum teams manage the provision effectively. The service recognises that many learners performed poorly in external tests in 2010/11, but it has worked hard to improve provision this year. Managers now make much better use of management information to monitor how well different courses are performing and to set appropriate targets for improvement where there is evidence of under performance.

Main findings

- Business administration apprentices perform very well, with high success rates for the last three years. However, success rates on ESOL and literacy and numeracy courses are low. Actions taken by LACL to improve success rates have not yet had an impact. At the time of inspection, learners were making satisfactory progress, and retention and attendance were improving. Few differences exist in the performance of different groups of learners.
- Learners enjoy learning and develop skills which help to improve their employability. Many go on to further education, training or work. ESOL learners make good progress in their ability to communicate with neighbours and work with colleagues. Literacy and numeracy learners are better able to help their children with school work. Business administration learners gain valuable skills that their employers value.
- Teaching in ESOL and literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers use examples and activities that learners can readily identify with. These lessons are lively and interactive. In less effective lessons, information and learning technology (ILT) is rarely used, the pace is often slow, and learners do not have sufficient opportunity to interact with each other or to practise the skills they are learning. On-the-job training in business administration is outstanding.
- Assessment and progress reviews are satisfactory. Initial assessment ensures that learners are on an appropriate programme and that any specific learning needs are identified and met. Targets in individual learning plans are realistic and help learners to make progress. The quality of assessment, target setting and reviews in business administration is particularly high.
- The service meets users' needs well through its successful promotion of employability skills and participation in learning for disadvantaged groups. It offers provision in areas where few other learning opportunities exist and at times that suit learners. Progression opportunities for learners are good and

clearly signposted. However, the service does not currently offer enough ESOL provision in the evenings.

- The service's collaboration with a good range of partners ensures that it continues to meet effectively the needs of the community as well as the council's priorities. Partners comment very favourably on LACL's flexibility and commitment to widening participation. In business administration, however, the service recognises that it needs to engage more effectively with a wider range of employers.
- ESOL and literacy and numeracy learners receive good support overall to help them achieve. The service deploys learning support assistants in class particularly effectively. Careers' information and general advice and guidance are good. Many learners benefit from the service's subsidy of childcare costs. Business administration learners receive outstanding support to help them achieve their learning goals.
- Senior managers provide clear strategic direction for the service. LACL uses its funding carefully to ensure that provision meets the needs of the community as well as corporate objectives. It has improved the accuracy and reliability of management information systems to enable managers to make informed decisions about curriculum and performance. However, many tutors lack the confidence to use this information fully for improvement purposes.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Staff identify vulnerable learners early so that they can take appropriate actions to ensure their well-being. Managers handle safeguarding issues sensitively. All staff and volunteers receive relevant training and a Criminal Records Bureau check. Staff and learners understand safeguarding arrangements well. Specialist health and safety practitioners pay good attention to the risk assessment of venues.
- LACL's promotion of equalities is particularly effective in raising awareness and strengthening community cohesion, as recognised in its self-assessment report. The service's curriculum offer meets well the needs of Luton's diverse communities. A large majority of learners are from areas of high deprivation. Many have not previously attended adult learning provision. Learning centres are located in areas where the service has identified the greatest need.
- Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. LACL makes effective use of stakeholder feedback to improve the provision. The new management information system has been instrumental in helping managers to identify poor performance and to take appropriate action. The pace of management action planning for improvement is mostly good, although a few actions have yet to be implemented. Self-assessment is inclusive and accurate.
- The service deploys resources carefully to maximise opportunities for learners. Most staff are well-qualified. The service has taken appropriate actions to tackle the poor performance on some courses in 2010/11. Managers and staff are committed to sustainability and they incorporate sustainability concerns when planning the curriculum.

What does LACL need to do to improve further?

- Identify the reasons for learners' poor performance in ESOL, literacy and numeracy and take corrective actions to ensure that overall success rates increase.
- Provide more challenging and interactive learning activities to extend learners' knowledge and understanding, and to engage them fully in learning.
- Ensure that teachers use a wider and more exciting range of teaching and learning methods and that they make better use of good quality ILT resources to support learning.
- Raise tutors' awareness of the benefits of the new management information system by ensuring that they have a full understanding of the information that is available to them and of how they can use it for performance monitoring and target setting.
- Accelerate the current pace of management action planning for improvement by ensuring that challenging targets are set and met within planned timescales.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the friendly, safe environment of the council's learning centres
- the excellent support from all involved
- the advice and guidance received from LACL staff
- the very good workplace experience gained
- being able to study at a centre close to home
- gaining enough confidence to be able to help children with homework
- achieving formal qualifications
- the accessibility of LACL staff.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the number of ESOL classes offered during the week
- the availability and accessibility of ILT and computers for ESOL, literacy and numeracy learners
- the slowness with which LACL's assessors sign off units at the start of the apprenticeship programme
- the insufficiently clear explanations provided by LACL staff during learners' induction of the amount of work required for an apprenticeship.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the good working relationship with LACL's adult learning team
- seeing apprentices grow, gaining confidence and doing well in their job
- the supportiveness of the adult learning team, who always go the extra mile to help learners
- the very thorough recruitment and interview process
- the careful matching of apprentices to job roles
- the successful outward bound course and the presentations that learners gave afterwards evaluating their experience
- the good communication with LACL staff
- the continuity provided by the service, even where staff changes have taken place.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the amount and quality of information that they receive about learners' progress and achievement during off-the-job training
- the timely communication of information about learners' attendance at off-the-job training sessions.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. The service has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Leaders set a clear strategic direction and provide a coherent curriculum offer. The council substantially restructured the service about 18 months after the previous inspection. The overall quality of provision subsequently deteriorated for about a year. The service is now recovering, but the lower inspection grades reflect the generally poor performance in 2010/11, particularly in respect of success rates on learner responsive provision. Provisional data for 2011/12 shows signs of improvements. Many aspects of the provision, such as the extent to which the service meets learners' needs, partnerships and care, guidance and support are good. The service's focus on quality improvement during the last 18 months has helped it to make a number of improvements. Aspects of leadership and management are now good. Senior managers know well the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Managers use data effectively to monitor performance and to set improvement targets. They use a wide range of information, including the views of staff, learners and partners, to support judgements about the quality of provision. The self-assessment process is inclusive and critical and provides an honest and accurate reflection of the provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

10. Success rates for business administration apprentices are outstanding and have remained consistently high for the last three years. However, success rates on courses leading to a qualification in literacy, numeracy and ESOL were below national rates in 2010/11. Service managers have implemented a range of appropriate initiatives to tackle this weakness, but it is too soon to assess the impact of these actions. Current learners are making satisfactory progress. Retention is rising. Attendance is satisfactory. Achievement of goals for learners on social and personal development courses is good. The provider has taken effective actions to narrow identified performance differences between different groups of learners.
11. Learners gain confidence and develop skills which improve their employability and which enable them to make a positive contribution to the community. They enjoy the many social and economic benefits that participation in a learning programme brings. Many learners progress into further education, training or employment. ESOL learners develop language skills which help them to communicate with health workers, teachers and neighbours. Literacy and numeracy learners report that they are better able to help their children with homework. Learners on business administration apprenticeships develop high levels of confidence and good skills in communication and team work which their employers value.

12. Learners report that they feel safe. They know who they should speak to if they feel unsafe or vulnerable. Learners' induction covers all aspects of health and safety. Staff apply safe working practices during learning sessions. They conduct regular and thorough risk assessments of learning venues. Learners enjoy learning in safe and accessible venues.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

13. Learning and teaching in ESOL and literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Most teachers are well qualified and experienced. However, a small minority of new teachers in ESOL do not currently hold an appropriate teaching qualification. The most effective lessons are those where learners engage fully with the learning and where the teacher uses examples and illustrations that reflect learners' experiences. In these lessons, learning is lively and interactive. The less effective lessons are characterised by slow pace, insufficient use of ILT to enhance learning and limited opportunities for learners to contribute to discussion or to practise speaking and listening. Numeracy tutors do not always provide enough opportunities for learners to use numeracy skills in real life situations. Teaching and training in business administration are outstanding. Trainers plan learning extremely well. The quality of on-the-job training in particular, is excellent.
14. Assessment and review of learners' progress and achievement are satisfactory. Initial assessment is effective in identifying learners' individual needs. Most learners are on a programme that matches their ability and aptitude. Teachers work well with learners to provide well thought out and personalised targets on individual learning plans. They review learners' progress regularly and provide helpful and constructive feedback to help them improve. Assessment in business administration is regular and planned well. Business administration assessors encourage learners to complete units ahead of planned target dates. However, they do not always sign off completed units sufficiently promptly to help motivate learners further.
15. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. The service has successfully aligned its curriculum offer with Luton Borough Council's priority of promoting employability and participation in learning for the most marginalised groups. LACL offers provision in 103 venues throughout the borough at times that suit learners. The overall range and breadth of provision meets local needs well. Opportunities to progress from one level to the next are clearly signposted. Learners comment very favourably on the quality of provision they receive. However, the service offers few ESOL classes in the evening and, in literacy and numeracy, too many classes contain learners with widely differing ability levels. In these classes, teachers struggle to meet effectively the individual needs of all learners.
16. LACL works productively with a range of local schools, children's centres, libraries and with the Job Centre. Collaboration with these partners is particularly effective in promoting learning in communities where few other

learning opportunities exist. Partners comment very favourably on LACL's flexibility and resourcefulness in setting up programmes and opportunities for learners in deprived communities. In business administration, LACL works very effectively with a range of internal partners within the borough council, but the service has yet to widen its pool of employer partners.

17. Learners in ESOL and in literacy and numeracy receive good support overall. Learning support assistants are particularly effective in supporting learners in class. Careful monitoring has successfully helped to improve attendance. Learners receive good quality information, advice and guidance. The provision of childcare for ESOL and literacy and numeracy learners is effective in enabling women with young children to attend classes. For those on business administration programmes, support from assessors and line managers in the workplace is outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

18. Leaders and managers provide a clear strategic direction for the service, which staff understand. The service has prioritised well its use of informal adult learning funds. It has identified the needs of the community well and matched its curriculum offer to reflect local requirements and the council's corporate objectives. Since the last inspection the service has significantly improved its management information system. It is now much better able to identify trends in performance and achievement of ambitious targets. However, the service experienced delays in the implementation of this improvement owing to staff restructuring following the previous inspection. Many tutors lack confidence in using the available management information to monitor learners' performance and to set challenging course level targets.
19. Governance is good. Senior leaders and elected members have a very good understanding of the work of the service. They provide particularly effective challenge and support. They ensure that the provision meets the strategic priorities of Luton Borough Council.
20. The service ensures that its safeguarding arrangements support all learners very effectively. Vulnerable learners are identified early and good actions are taken to protect them. Managers deal with any issues swiftly and sensitively. All staff and volunteers receive a CRB check and training relevant to their job roles. Staff awareness of safeguarding is good. Staff and learners understand reporting procedures and responsibilities. Senior managers have received appropriate training in safe recruiting. The service pays very good attention to the risk assessment of venues. Specialist health and safety practitioners monitor health and safety action plans well.
21. Promotion of equality and diversity in the community and in learning sessions is particularly effective in improving cultural awareness and community cohesion. The service is a champion of 'Luton in Harmony,' an initiative developed to promote improved community relations and tolerance. The service has

successfully re-designed its curriculum offer so that programmes effectively meet the needs of Luton's culturally diverse community. LACL's programmes successfully recruit learners who have not previously participated in adult learning. The service has been highly successful at positioning the large majority of its programmes in the areas of most disadvantage and enabling good access to learning for those in most need. LACL has carefully designed the curriculum offer and delivery so that the achievement gap, particularly for those seeking work, is closing.

22. Quality improvement arrangements have significantly improved since the last inspection. LACL's learner voice strategy is good. The service uses a range of methods to collect learners', employers' and partners' views. It is very responsive to feedback from internal and external stakeholders. Managers carry out improvement actions promptly. The introduction of a quality journal publication for each curriculum area is beginning to ensure that relevant course information, curriculum guidance and performance data are accessible to tutors. Development planning is satisfactory. Managers monitor improvement targets regularly but achievement of some targets in ESOL and literacy and numeracy has been slow. The service's self-assessment report accurately reflects the key strengths and areas for improvement.
23. The service makes effective use of its resources and provides satisfactory value for money. Resources are carefully deployed in curriculum areas and at venues where need is greatest. Most staff are well qualified and experienced. The service acknowledges the significance of the poor performance of some of its courses and has taken decisive management actions to make improvements. It is actively committed to promoting sustainability and works closely with the council's environmental department to develop programmes and courses that promote a better environment for all.

Learning for qualifications in employment

Other learning for qualifications in employment provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded:

Business, administration and law

Grade 1

Context

24. At the time of inspection, 26 learners were following a business administration programme at intermediate level and 12 at advanced level. LACL also provides training for three intermediate-level customer service apprentices, one accountancy learner at intermediate level, two at advanced level and one at level 4. In addition, four learners are following an advanced NVQ only programme. Most of the learners work for Luton Borough Council.

Key findings

- Success rates are very high and have remained significantly above national rates for the last three years. The proportion of learners who complete within the planned period of study is also very high. Learners significantly improve their confidence, communication and teamwork skills. They are highly motivated and demonstrate professionalism in the workplace.
- Young apprentices aged 16 to 19 improve their job and future employability skills particularly well. They gain many skills, covering a wide variety of business and customer service tasks and responsibilities. More experienced learners gain a very good understanding of the theory that underpins their professional practice.
- Learners feel very safe in their workplace and during off-the-job training, and demonstrate safe working practices. LACL staff check their understanding very well throughout the programme, including through the completion of a high quality and relevant NVQ project. They carry out effective individual risk assessments related to the learner's job role.
- Learners receive excellent on-the-job training and supervision. Employers provide learners with good quality experience of working in different departments to broaden their knowledge and understanding. Trainers plan off-the-job sessions very well, and use a very good variety of learning activities. Learners are attentive and participate very well. Reviews of progress are extremely thorough, covering all aspects of the learners' experience.
- Assessment is good. Learners take ownership of their portfolios and produce good quality evidence with clear referencing. Assessment planning and recording is effective and detailed. Feedback to learners is constructive and helpful. However, assessors do not always make full use of individual learning plans to set unit target dates. They are sometimes slow to sign off units, often leaving it to the end of the programme.

- Provision meets the needs of learners and employers very effectively. The initial recruitment process is excellent. LACL matches apprentices very carefully to job roles. Initial assessment is thorough and ensures that planning for learners' individual needs is effective. Employers and line-managers are actively involved in planning and reviewing training. Employment opportunities for apprentices after they have completed their training are good.
- Partnership arrangements are very good. LACL staff work very effectively with line-managers to support learners. Productive partnerships with other training providers ensure that the provision meets learners' learning needs. LACL has established very effective working relationships with employers who recruit apprentices. The provider is implementing an employer engagement strategy to develop further its work with local employers and this is a good initiative.
- Learners receive excellent care, guidance and support to help them achieve. Additional learning support is very effective and provided during off-job training and in the workplace. Staff provide accurate and timely information, advice and guidance throughout the learner's programme. They place a particularly strong emphasis on support to help learners progress into further employment.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The provider is maintaining very high success rates and has very successfully introduced functional skills qualifications. Operational management is strong, with good use of data, a clear focus on continuous improvement and high quality support and development of staff. Internal and external communications are very effective. Everyone has a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The provider analyses performance data well. No significant achievement gaps exist. Learners receive excellent initial training to raise their awareness of equality and diversity. LACL trainers subsequently reinforce this during off-the-job training sessions. Learners have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and of harassment. Staff challenge discriminatory behaviour well.
- Quality improvement arrangements, including self-assessment, are particularly effective in raising standards. Self-assessment is rigorous and inclusive. Managers use quality logs well to record actions and plan for improvement. The use of learners' views to make improvements is excellent. Observation and verification activities are rigorous. The self-assessment report identifies accurately the main strengths and areas for improvement.

What does LACL need to do to improve further?

- Use individual learning plans more effectively to set unit target dates and ensure that assessors sign off units promptly to further encourage and motivate learners.

Learning for qualifications

Other learning for qualifications provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: *Childcare and personal development, Arts and crafts, Health and wellbeing, Languages, humanities and science, Foundation learning*

English for speakers of other languages

Grade 3

Context

25. LACL offers 81 ESOL courses for 634 learners in 26 primary schools, children centres and community centres across the borough. Some 65% of learners are on a programme leading to a qualification. Almost all learners are female and very few have a learning difficulty and/or disability. Most courses are taught part time over 30 to 34 weeks. The Skills for Life and family learning manager is responsible for a team of 22 ESOL teaching and support staff.

Key findings

- Success rates on courses leading to a qualification were poor in 2010/11. The service has correctly identified the reasons for this poor performance and taken appropriate corrective actions. Provisional data for 2011/12 show a marked increase in in-year retention. Achievement on social and personal development courses is good. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is particularly good and tutors suitably challenge the occasional lateness.
- Learners develop appropriate language skills and apply them in everyday life. They become effective communicators with health and social workers, with teachers during school parents' evenings and in helping children with homework. Learners improve their knowledge of life in the United Kingdom. They improve confidence and self-esteem and are well motivated. Most progress well from one level of learning to the next.
- Learners enjoy their learning activities and develop useful employability skills. A small minority of those who left their programme early in 2010/11 did so because they had gained employment. Learners say they feel safe and that teachers and other learners treat them with respect and courtesy.
- Most teaching is satisfactory. In the best sessions, tutors demonstrate good subject knowledge. Learners contribute fully and remain focused in class. Tutors make good use of stimulating and meaningful topics that help learners, such as current affairs and health and citizenship. Most tutors ensure that learning proceeds at a challenging pace.
- In less effective lessons, tutors do not sufficiently promote speaking and listening practice to enhance accuracy in pronunciation and usage. They do not always provide extension activities for the more able learners. Although the service's ILT resources are not always of good quality, tutors do not always make use of what is available to enhance learning. A small minority of tutors have yet to achieve a full ESOL teaching qualification.

- The service provides a satisfactory range and breadth of ESOL provision. Although LACL offers good progression routes and a wide range of accessible venues, little provision exists for evening classes or for ESOL learners to improve their employability. Although classes recruit well, the number of male learners on ESOL programmes constitutes a very small minority. The service recognises these deficiencies and is developing a revised curriculum offer for 2012/13.
- Partnership working with schools and children's centres is productive. The service has increased its recruitment of learners from disadvantaged communities and worked with partners to provide them with good access to childcare to enable them to participate in learning. In 2011/12, the very large majority of learners were from the poorest areas in Luton. The provision continues to attract a large number of new learners.
- Learners receive good care, guidance and support. In-class support is particularly effective. Staff contact learners who miss class to encourage them to complete their work. Learners receive appropriate guidance on progression routes and good pastoral care and referral to appropriate services. A large number of learners receive financial support with course fees and help with childcare.
- Management of the curriculum is satisfactory. Recent action to tackle problems with the service's management information system has been successful. However, some staff lack confidence in using management data to monitor, analyse and improve performance. Managers support staff well. The mentoring system continues to support new tutors to improve classroom practice.
- Teachers promote equality and diversity well in the classroom. They make effective use of resources to celebrate Luton's diverse communities. Learners' experiences and viewpoints are positively valued. Tutors pay good attention to learners' support needs.
- Quality improvement systems are mostly effective. The observation of teaching and learning process identifies actions for further staff development. However, observers do not sufficiently focus on learning and on the development of learners' speaking and listening skills. The self-assessment process is inclusive and rigorous. The service correctly identified most of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors.

What does LACL need to do to improve further?

- Provide good quality ILT resources and ensure that tutors are trained and confident in using these resources to enhance learning.
- Further develop the use of mentors to support new tutors to develop their professional skills in the classroom.
- Raise staff awareness and confidence in using the available management information to help them to analyse, monitor and improve learners' performance.

- Ensure that classroom observers help teachers to improve their practice by focusing more closely on learning in the classroom and on the development of learners' skills in speaking and listening.

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 3

Context

26. LACL offers programmes leading to a qualification from pre-foundation level to intermediate for 202 learners in literacy and 149 in numeracy. Most learners attend for four hours each week for 34 weeks. Some attend classes in both literacy and in numeracy. Courses run during the day and evening in main centres and community venues across the borough. A curriculum manager, supported by two advanced practitioners, manages the programme. The service employs 14 part-time tutors.

Key findings

- Success rates in 2010/11 were below national rates. Provisional in-year data for 2011/12 indicate that retention and success rates are improving. Attendance rates have significantly improved but remain low overall. Service managers have implemented a good range of strategies to improve performance monitoring and to raise success rates but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.
- Learners gain confidence and make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. They gain general knowledge from discussions and topics covered in class. They are better able to help their children with homework. Learners improve their overall communication skills and expand their vocabulary. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory.
- Learners enjoy their courses. They are well motivated and progress onto further study to enhance their prospects of employment. They gain useful information about writing letters of application and employment interviews. Learners meet new people, make friends, feel less isolated and are better able to support their children's education and contribute to life in the local community.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The better lessons are planned well and incorporate a range of interactive learning activities. A few tutors respond to learners' needs particularly well. Learners make valuable contributions and draw on examples from their work and home life. In less effective lessons, tutors fail to provide practical, meaningful tasks for learners. A few tutors fail to explain spelling rules sufficiently clearly.
- The use of learning resources is satisfactory. A few tutors provide topical and colourful materials to prompt classroom discussion and writing practice. However, too many tutors rely heavily on dated paper-based materials and fail to provide learners with sufficient opportunities to apply numeracy skills in real-life situations. Learners and tutors do not make sufficient use of the available ILT to support learning.
- Initial assessment is thorough and identifies effectively learners' individual support needs. Learning targets on individual learning plans are mostly clear and well-written. However, a minority of tutors fail to provide learners with clear short- and long-term targets which will help them to understand the

progress they are making. Learners and tutors record learning activities but do not regularly review progress. However, a few numeracy tutors give learners very detailed and helpful feedback.

- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. LACL offers courses in local and accessible centres and in community venues. However, too many classes have learners with mixed ability levels. In these classes, some learners fail to make sufficient progress either because they find the learning too easy or too difficult. Opportunities for learners to progress onto further study are well signposted.
- LACL has good partnership arrangements with local schools, children's centres, libraries and the Jobcentre. All staff work very effectively to recruit learners and to encourage progression. School teachers, family workers and family learning tutors work well in teams to provide courses which meet the needs of children and parents.
- Learners receive good information, advice and guidance about progression to further training or employment. Tutors and learning support assistants work together well and offer good support in the classroom. LACL organises specific exam preparation workshops and extra sessions for those learners who have missed classes owing to shift patterns at work. Access to childcare is good.
- The recently reorganised staffing structure provides effective leadership and curriculum management. Tutors receive good support. Managers are accessible to tutors and learners. Professional development for tutors is satisfactory but insufficient opportunities exist for tutors to share good practice. Teaching staff do not effectively use the new management information system to monitor in-year performance, set targets and for improvement planning.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners from a wide range of backgrounds work harmoniously together in the classroom. Tutors engage learners in challenging topical discussions which increase their understanding of British culture and citizenship. Tutors' understanding of equalities, health and safety and safeguarding are good.
- The self-assessment process is inclusive and judgements are largely accurate. Managers have identified and implemented a range of appropriate improvement actions. The service's observation of teaching and learning is robust and accurate. Tutors receive detailed action plans to help them to improve. However, managers do not monitor these action plans sufficiently regularly to ensure that teaching and learning improve.

What does LACL need to do to improve further?

- Help tutors to make better use of a wider range of learning resources, including ILT, and provide more opportunities for them to share good practice.
- Further develop the processes for measuring and recording learners' progress and achievement by clearly identifying learners' short- and long-term goals on individual learning plans and using these when planning lessons.

- Ensure that all learners receive individual support based on their abilities so that they can achieve their full potential. Consider reducing the number of mixed ability level classes.
- Make better use of management information to analyse and monitor learners' performance and to set challenging improvement targets.

Information about the inspection

27. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's service manager as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, Framework for Excellence indicators, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
28. 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 the provider. They also visited learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in six of the subjects the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Luton Borough Council
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	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	0	0	0	0
Part-time learners	1,272	938	64	263
Overall effectiveness	3	3	1	3
Capacity to improve	3			
Outcomes for learners	3	3	1	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			
How well do learners progress?	3			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2			
Do learners feel safe?	2			
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a			
Quality of provision	3	3	1	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2			
How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
Leadership and management	3	3	1	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3			
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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