

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Gloucestershire County Council  
Date of visit: 30 May 2007

### Context

The monitoring visit follows the inspection in February 2005, at which Gloucestershire Local Authority (LA) was graded as satisfactory for leadership and management and equality of opportunity and unsatisfactory in quality assurance. Provision was judged to be good in visual arts and care. The provision in information and communications technology (ICT), hospitality, languages, foundation programmes and family learning was satisfactory. Following an unsatisfactory inspection grade in sport, this area was reinspected in May 2006, when it was judged to be satisfactory. At the previous inspection and reinspection, the LA held a contract with the Gloucestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for adult and community learning provision. With the introduction of personal and community development learning as a replacement for adult and community learning funding in 2006-07, most of the provision has become community development learning. The provision is managed by Adult Education (AdEd), which is part of the lifelong learning section of the community and adult care department of Gloucestershire County Council. Most of AdEd's courses are delivered through contracting arrangements with five colleges and 19 community based organisations. Gloucestershire County Council has enrolled 7822 learners onto 11794 courses in the year up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

### Achievement and standards

What improvements have been made to retention and achievement rates since the previous inspection?	Reasonable progress
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Retention rates were judged to be good in family learning, ICT, care, visual arts and foundation and satisfactory in hospitality, sport and languages at the previous inspection and retention rates continue to be good, being 97% in 2005-06 on the short accredited courses. The retention rate for long accredited courses, which have very few learners, is low at 57% in 2004-05 and 68% in 2005-06. AdEd has recognised why these rates are so low, and is working with one of their providers to improve their retention rates. AdEd has maintained the satisfactory overall achievement rates since the previous inspection. Data for non-accredited courses is insufficiently reliable as some tutors are not yet setting sound enough targets for monitoring non-accredited achievement. The achievement rate for short-accredited

courses is excellent at 96% in 2004-05 and 97% in 2005-06. Achievement rates are low, but have improved significantly, on long accredited courses from 47% in 2004-05 to 68% in 2005-06.

### The quality of the provision

How well has Gloucestershire County Council developed their arrangements for initial assessment, target-setting and recording and monitoring of learners' progress?	Reasonable progress
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AdEd has made reasonable progress in setting up appropriate systems for initial assessment, target-setting and recording and monitoring of progress, which was generally weak and not well understood by tutors at the previous inspection. Initial assessment and target-setting has improved, although this is not always carried out in a consistent way. Learners' individual needs are discussed and used well towards target-setting on most courses. In the best examples, tutors set clear targets that are linked well to learners' personal goals, learning and employment. In literacy and numeracy, languages, arts and crafts and adults with learning difficulties and disabilities (ALDD) courses, tutors use innovative methods of recording progress and achievement, using video and digital photography. However, some tutors continue to set and monitor targets that are too focused on the planned group outcomes.

### Leadership and management

How effective is the use of management information to monitor performance, which was poor at the previous inspection?	Insufficient progress
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AdEd has made some improvement to the quality of the data that is now collected and analysed about their subcontractors. AdEd has held training sessions with tutors and providers, which have increased the understanding of retention and achievement rates, however, some achievement data is still unreliable on non-accredited courses. Service-level agreements do not include targets for retention and achievement rates. During termly contract review meetings, enrolment and retention rates are discussed, and action taken where appropriate. However, the monitoring of retention and achievement rates continues to be too late in the year to be used for timely improvement. Attendance is still not monitored or discussed in contract review meetings. AdEd are still at the early stages of developing a system for gathering progression information. Managers make sufficient use of Gloucestershire County Council and learner data to identify gaps in provision and develop the curriculum. The collection and analysis of data on disability, ethnic background and gender is now being used effectively to target new groups of learners, particularly in sector subject areas.

What arrangements have Gloucestershire County Council implemented to make quality assurance and improvement satisfactory?	Reasonable progress
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Quality assurance was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection. Since then a new post has been developed for quality assurance. AdEd has taken steps to set up some appropriate quality assurance procedures (monitoring health and safety, complaints and tutor qualifications). Some of these are at too early a stage to demonstrate effectiveness or improvement. The new system for collecting learner feedback has been introduced quite late, and it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

AdEd has reviewed and improved the process for observing teaching and learning. A dedicated team of 27 trained observers has increased the proportion of tutors who have been observed. AdEd's profile of graded teaching and learning sessions shows a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, with a stronger profile of good teaching. Tutors who deliver sessions that are graded as being inadequate are given particularly effective support before a timely re-observation. AdEd now collects the college's own observation profiles and uses this in contract review meetings. The sample of observation of tutors delivering development projects within the observation system is low, which is recognised in self-assessment.

How effective has staff development and training been?	Reasonable progress
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Staff and tutor development and support were strong at the previous inspection and this has been maintained. The curriculum specialists are having a significant impact in giving individual and subject specific training for tutors. There are very effective links between steps identified for improvement during the tutor observation system and the training and development plan. AdEd recognised the need for staff and tutor training in the assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' needs, progress and achievements and has provided training throughout the year on this. Tutors have attended a series of road shows and received a new CD to further support them. Attendance at 'Start the Year' training is mandatory for all tutors and is supplemented well with additional training sessions, which are provided in community venues. AdEd now analyses all training sessions and takes good account of tutor feedback in planning subsequent training.

What steps have been taken to strengthen the self-assessment and action-planning process?	Reasonable progress
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The current self-assessment report (SAR) process continues to be an established part of the quality assurance arrangements. The SAR is more evaluative than at the previous inspection and uses a broader range of evidence to make judgements,

including data. Subcontractors attend a very useful annual self-assessment training event, but tutors have not yet been directly involved in the process. A revised procedure, which is being used towards the next self-assessment report, attempts to incorporate greater use of tutor and learner feedback. AdEd's regular monitoring of the self-assessment report and action plan contributes to improvement.