

INSPECTION REPORT

Cumbria Adult Education Service

17 March 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Cumbria Adult Education Service manages part-time adult and community learning across Cumbria. Courses are provided at 41 main centres and 150 outreach venues. All adult and community learning, apart from basic skills and family learning, is subcontracted to schools, colleges, and voluntary and private providers. Courses are offered in 14 areas of learning. Five areas of learning were inspected, comprising information and communications technology, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, visual and performing arts and media, modern foreign languages and foundation programmes.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Learning is satisfactory in information and communications technology, hospitality, sport and leisure, visual and performing arts, modern languages and on foundation programmes in basic skills. Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	4

Areas of learning	Grade
Information & communications technology	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Visual & performing arts & media	3
English, languages & communications	3
Foundation programmes	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- wide range of effective partnerships and initiatives
- successful targeting of learners to widen participation
- flexible provision which responds well to learners' needs

KEY WEAKNESSES

- unsatisfactory curriculum management in most areas of learning
- incomplete and inconsistently applied quality assurance arrangements
- insufficient awareness and application of equality of opportunity
- ineffective initial assessment
- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better sharing of good practice
- better initial information and guidance
- better access to learning resources in community venues

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 18 inspectors spent a total of 132 days with Cumbria Adult Education Service (the Service) in March 2003. They made 130 visits to adult education centres, where they held discussions with 1,146 learners. During these visits they reviewed 537 learners' portfolios, and examples of practical work. Inspectors carried out 36 interviews with staff and 241 interviews with centre heads, centre managers and tutors from the subcontracted providers. They observed and graded 181 learning sessions. Inspectors reviewed a range of policy documents including the local authority's education strategy and development plan, the local authority's corporate strategy and the Service's adult learning plan. They examined learners' work, learning materials, quality assurance documents, minutes of meetings, promotional literature and staff job descriptions. Inspectors also reviewed the Service's latest self-assessment report and development plan which was produced in February 2003.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	3	9	12	1	4	0	29
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	14	20	11	5	0	0	50
Visual & performing arts & media	4	15	16	18	0	0	0	53
English, languages & communications	5	5	10	12	3	0	0	35
Foundation programmes	0	2	5	6	1	0	0	14
Total	9	39	60	59	10	4	0	181
per cent		59.67%		32.60%		7.73%		

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. The Service forms part of the lifelong learning division of Cumbria County Council's education directorate. Until 2001, the adult education service was part of the heritage services department. Senior managers in the lifelong learning division regularly meet, and report to, the cabinet member with responsibility for education. The Service has contracted with Cumbria Learning and Skills Council (LSC) since April 2001.

3. The Service subcontracts adult learning to 41 main providers. Most are county secondary schools, but others include four further education colleges and a number of voluntary and private providers. Since September 2002, the Service has directly managed basic skills and family learning. Adult learning opportunities are offered at over 150 outreach centres across the county and cover all 14 areas of learning. Providers use a variety of accommodation, in addition to school and college sites, including church and village halls, day centres and community centres. In 2001-02, approximately 17,140 learners enrolled on programmes funded by the service, which is around 4.5 per cent of the county's adult population of 381,200. In 2002-03, 28 per cent of the enrolments were by learners over 60 years of age, and 26 per cent were by men.

4. Cumbria is the second largest county in England. The county has pockets of affluence but is also characterised by very low population density, rural isolation and, frequently, rural deprivation. The proportion of the workforce employed in agriculture and heavy manufacturing and energy is declining. Tourism is increasingly important and service industries now account for over two-thirds of all jobs. Thirty-four per cent of the workforce have a level 3 qualification, against a national target of 60 per cent. The 1991 census found 0.4 per cent of the local population to be from minority ethnic groups, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent.

Adult and Community Learning

5. Learners make good progress towards their personal learning objectives. They acquire new skills and increased knowledge of their chosen subject, and many also gain significant personal and social benefits. In most areas of learning, achievement is hampered by inadequate initial assessment. The monitoring of individual learners' progress is weak in all areas of learning. Progression routes for learners are developing but are not yet well established across the county.

6. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory. Of lessons observed, 60 per cent were good or better and 93 per cent were satisfactory or better. The only poor teaching observed was in the area of information and communications technology (ICT). On courses in visual and performing arts, achievement levels are high and learners produce good standards of practical work. In hospitality, sport and leisure, specialist facilities are good. Learners gain a wide range of health benefits from their courses but there is insufficient assessment of learners' fitness levels at the beginning of courses. Learners make good progress in modern languages classes and are confident in their use of the language studied. On basic skills programmes there is good literacy teaching, using methods which are appropriate to the learners.

7. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced, although some are not qualified to teach adults. In some classes learners receive insufficient feedback on their progress and achievements. Resources are generally adequate but access to resources is limited in some outreach centres. There is a good range of courses throughout the county in all areas of learning. Learners are given good support on most programmes but additional learning needs are not always identified and some tutors have not received guidance on how these can be met. The curriculum is not always coherently planned and managed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

8. Cumbria Adult Education Service is part of the lifelong learning division of Cumbria County Council's education directorate. The assistant director of education (lifelong learning), responsible to the director of education, is the head of the Service and is assisted by the county adult education officer, three area adult education co-ordinators, the adult learning development officer for quality and curriculum and the adult basic skills development officer. These constitute the adult education management team. Additionally there are three family learning and basic skills development workers. With the exception of the provision for basic skills and family learning, the Service offers its programme through subcontracts with 41 main providers in over 150 centres. Most providers are secondary schools and most heads of centres are school heads.

9. The county adult education officer is responsible for the day-to-day management of the service. The county council's second and latest adult learning plan, for 2002-03, is strategically linked with a number of other county council plans, including the corporate strategy, the education directorate's service plan, the education development plan and the family learning plan. The area co-ordinators are responsible for the management of the subcontracts. Centre managers are responsible for the management of provision locally. Most of them only manage centres part time, sometimes for just a few hours each week. The adult education management team meets at least monthly. The meetings are chaired by the assistant director and discuss both strategic and operational matters. The area co-ordinators meet formally, usually once a month. They meet the centre managers for their area once a term. The adult learning development officer for quality assurance and curriculum is responsible for quality assurance. She chairs the monthly meetings of the quality assurance committee which comprises the county adult education officer, the area adult education co-ordinators, the adult basic skills development officer and some centre managers.

10. The Service produced its first self-assessment report in February 2002. A further report was produced for the inspection in February 2003.

STRENGTHS

- clear strategic focus for the development of adult and community learning
- wide range of effective partnerships and initiatives
- successful targeting of learners to widen participation

WEAKNESSES

- unsatisfactory curriculum management in most areas of learning
- weak use of data to assist management
- incomplete and inconsistently applied quality assurance arrangements
- insufficient awareness and application of equality of opportunity

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more systematic planning of the adult and community learning programme

11. Cumbria County Council recognises the importance of adult and community learning in contributing to key objectives in its corporate strategy. It has committed itself to the county-wide development of adult and community learning as part of its lifelong learning activities. There is a clear strategic focus for the development of the Service. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. County councillors, chief officers and senior officers work effectively towards securing a service which meets the needs of Cumbria's varied local communities, and responds to local and national priorities for education, the widening of participation and economic regeneration.

12. The Service's management and staffing has increased its capacity to make and influence change. Its management structures reflect the needs of the developing Service. For example, managers decided that it could best respond to national initiatives to develop learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills by directly managing its basic skills programme. The adult basic skills development officer and her team work effectively to meet the education directorate's objectives, and work closely with their colleagues to ensure that community needs are met. The assistant director has produced an internal discussion document for the future of the adult education service, which builds upon the actions identified in the self-assessment report and development plan.

13. Clear line management responsibilities and well-structured team meetings are encouraging effective teamwork across the Service. The adult education management team meetings provide a valuable forum for the debate and resolution of key operational issues and the discussion of strategy and budgets. They also maintain good communication between managers. The area co-ordinators meet separately to ensure consistency in their operations. There is a complementary structure of meetings for family learning and basic skills. Area co-ordinators hold useful termly meetings with centre managers for their area, but some managers do not have time to attend. The budget for adult education programmes is appropriately managed and monitored. Historically, much of the planning has relied upon repeating established courses, with too little reference to objective criteria. Planning arrangements are now satisfactory. Greater weight is attached to priority and target areas for development. Area co-ordinators are more fully involved and consult locally with centre managers and partners.

14. A wide range of partnerships has been established both by the Service and by centres. Partnerships are put to good use, to help develop a more rational and complete provision of adult and community learning. At the strategic level, the education directorate has established effective working relationships with the local LSC. There are effective county-wide partnerships with primary and secondary schools,

further education colleges, Connexions and the Workers Education Association. Most centres have numerous partnerships with private, public and voluntary sector organisations. Often, they reflect the particular circumstances in their own communities. One centre offers computing courses for the employees of a nuclear fuels company. Some centres work with mental health agencies and with residential homes to provide stimulation to otherwise isolated learners. Successful partnership working is at the heart of a number of initiatives, for example, the training and learning facilitators project, which aims to introduce prospective new learners to adult and community learning. Partnerships also enable learners to be referred to specialist agencies for additional classes or support. The basic skills provision offers workplace basic skills courses to employees of a major steel manufacturer.

15. Curriculum management and leadership are often unsatisfactory. Some aspects of this weakness were identified in the self-assessment report. The recent appointment of five part-time curriculum development workers is an initial attempt to provide some central curriculum leadership to the large number of centres and their tutors. They are making some useful contributions in some parts of the county in their own areas of expertise. However, in most curriculum areas there are significant weaknesses in the use and application of initial advice and guidance, individual learning plans and assessment, and progress monitoring and recording. While tutors often feel well supported by their centre managers, they rarely have access to professional support in their specialist teaching areas, or opportunities to meet regularly together. Communications with managers outside the centres can be poor. A range of new procedures has been introduced to improve quality, but the procedures are sometimes applied inadequately and inconsistently.

16. Some centres have effective local systems to gather and record information on learners and staff, but there is no county-wide management information system. As the self-assessment report identified, data gathering is often poor, slow and incomplete. Data are collected on learners' registrations and withdrawals, learners' achievements and the performance of centres against agreed plans and targets. They are not systematically analysed and used as an aid to management. Operational targets are incomplete, and it is difficult to obtain data to help set them. There is insufficient information on which to base improvements in quality assurance or equality of opportunity initiatives. In some centres, staff cannot use the full range of computer applications available because they have not had training. The Service is involved in national initiatives to develop suitable information systems for adult education.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 4**

17. The Service has developed a range of learning opportunities to meet the needs of many of the isolated rural communities in the county. Courses are run in village halls, community centres and workplaces. Some funding is available to meet transport costs and classes have been located in areas where public transport is poor. The Service also supports new initiatives and provision for hard-to-reach learners. Targeted groups include adults with low literacy and numeracy skills, unemployed adults, older learners and carers. An adult learners' facilitators project recruits members of local communities to encourage those with barriers to learning to attend classes. Enrolment of new learners into the concessionary fee category for the most disadvantaged has increased from 11.8 per cent of all enrolments in 2000-01 to 17.4 per cent of all enrolments in 2002-03. Enrolment data also show that of the 27 per cent growth in this concessionary fee category, 75 per cent are directly attributable to targeted work. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is small, but reflects the local population.

18. The Service is taking steps to implement the most recent legislation on equal opportunities. There has been staff training on the 'Disability Discrimination Act 1995'. The Service has completed an audit of premises to identify those with poor access and facilities. Bids have been submitted for funding to improve access in some buildings, and some courses have been relocated. However, some centres are not able to provide access for wheelchair users or learning materials to support learners with specialist learning needs. One centre provides pre-course information sheets which describe the access and facilities learners can expect.

19. The county council has policies and procedures for equality of opportunity that cover race equality, recruitment, harassment, bullying, grievance, complaints and disability. However, at local level there is insufficient awareness and inconsistent application of these policies and procedures. For example, equal opportunities policies are not applied consistently in all centres in the recruitment of staff. Some centres do not display their equal opportunities and disability statements. There is a simple complaints guide in course pamphlets, but it does not clearly link to the grievance, bullying or harassment policies. This guide has been produced following consultation with learners, but learners are still not all aware of their entitlements. Data on learners' gender, ethnicity, age and disabilities have not routinely been analysed to help plan programme developments.

20. There is a lack of awareness of diversity and equality of opportunity among tutors, and limited promotion of equal opportunities in course development. Some staff show little awareness and make judgements based on stereotypes. There is little guidance for tutors on support for learners or the identification of additional support needs, and many staff are not sufficiently aware of the implications of equality of opportunity in the classroom. For example, some tutors have not received guidance on meeting the needs of learners with a hearing impairment.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

21. There has been a strong focus on improving quality over the past 18 months. However, managers recognise that considerable progress still needs to be made. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

22. The Service has a clear strategy for quality improvement and knows where improvements should be made. Staff work closely with centres, to provide an external and objective focus for challenge and support. Centre managers find this helpful and value the effort to develop consistent and effective quality assurance arrangements. Three centre managers are members of the Service's quality committee, which is beginning to be a valuable forum for debate and action. The strategy is supported effectively by increased resources. A quality assurance and curriculum manager and three area co-ordinators have been appointed.

23. There are a number of quality improvement initiatives. A well-designed scheme for the observation of lessons has recently been introduced. Tutors have attended good practice workshops, and observers have received suitable training for their role. More regular feedback is sought from learners through surveys conducted during courses. The feedback forms are easy to complete and simple to analyse by course and curriculum area. The information they provide is beginning to be used by most centres and by the Service, for planning improvements. A standardised approach to learners' induction has been successfully introduced, improving its quality and consistency. Tutors are given useful guidance, training and information, including a tutors' handbook, to help them teach effectively. Communications with centre managers about quality assurance are generally good. There is a regular quality assurance bulletin for staff, and county and area meetings frequently focus on quality assurance.

24. The Service's quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Appropriate quality standards are being developed with policies and procedures for their implementation. Some have already been introduced. However, there are no policies and procedures for monitoring subcontracted provision, internal auditing, self-assessment and setting targets and performance indicators. Targets are now set, by centre and course, for achievement and retention rates. Service level agreements have been introduced but not all agreements are complete and not all centres have signed them. While there are some examples, largely informal, of the sharing of good practice, there are too few structured means to encourage this.

25. There are inconsistencies in the implementation of quality assurance, both within and between centres. The Service's monitoring of quality assurance is mainly informal, although it is developing some more systematic approaches. The present arrangements do not effectively ensure the quality of learning or support continuous improvement. For example, there is no moderation of the outcomes of observations of teaching and learning. The reviews and audits of subcontracted provision are inadequate. The Service monitors the assessment and internal verification of accredited programmes by requesting copies of internal verification reports annually. Few centres provide this

information and when they do it is not sufficient to identify issues or good practice.

26. Not all centres have detailed self-assessment arrangements. Some do not produce a self-assessment report. Although centres have started to obtain feedback from learners, most did not have this information available when they carried out their current self-assessments. Some did not survey the 15 per cent of learners required by the Service. Although most centres work with local partners, these are not involved in self-assessment. There is also little involvement of tutors. Some self-assessment reports are insufficiently evaluative. Centre development plans are monitored by the area co-ordinators twice a year, but there is no agreed procedure for this. The Service's self-assessment report is thorough and self-critical. There is a clear development plan to remedy weaknesses and maintain strengths, but some of the success criteria are vague and difficult to measure and monitor effectively.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

27. There are 2,097 enrolments on almost 200 information technology (IT) courses. Over two-thirds of enrolments are by women and over a quarter by learners over 60 years of age. Courses take place in more than 50 venues, including school premises, community centres and residential homes for the elderly. Over 60 per cent of the courses lead to a recognised qualification while the remainder provide learners with a wide range of basic computer skills. The range of courses includes short taster courses, introductory courses, short specialist courses in specific applications and 30-week courses leading to accreditation. Almost two-thirds of courses are at an introductory level or at level 1. The remainder are at level 2 or 3. Approximately one-third of courses are free of charge to learners. Most courses are run in the evening but about a third take place in the daytime. There is also some twilight provision. Some provision is targeted at older learners and those living in isolated communities. All the tutors work part time, most for between two and nine hours a week. Centre managers are responsible for curriculum planning and quality assurance.

STRENGTHS

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- flexible provision which responds well to learners' needs

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient attention to safe working practices
- ineffective initial assessment
- weak monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better sharing of good practice
- better initial information and guidance

28. Learners make good progress towards achieving their personal learning goals. They gain significant skills in basic computer applications including word processing, spreadsheets, databases, use of the Internet, e-mail and digital imagery which they use in the workplace and at home. Most learners gain personal and social confidence and many have progressed from very elementary courses to higher-level programmes. One learner is currently writing a book using her desktop publishing skills, and another has

set up his own business in web page design. More than 60 per cent of learners are enrolled on courses which lead to nationally recognised qualifications, and in 2001-02, 79 per cent of this group achieved an award. Retention rates are good on all courses. In the same period, 81 per cent of learners completed their courses.

29. A good range of courses is offered. Provision has been planned effectively to meet the needs of a wide range of learners, including single parents, unemployed learners and older learners. Courses are offered across a wide geographical area. Learners can attend daytime or evening courses as well as some twilight and weekend provision. Laptops are used to provide effective outreach provision in centres including residential homes and a hospital café. One centre combines a playgroup for children with introductory computer skills courses for parents. Many centres arrange taster sessions to help learners select an appropriate course. There are effective partnerships with job centres and guidance services to develop programmes to meet local employment needs. Many centres offer introductory courses in the use of digital cameras, e-mail and the Internet.

30. In larger centres, there are good routes for progression and learners can move from basic or introductory courses to accredited courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. Learners can develop more advanced skills within specific software applications or broaden their range of skills by taking different modules at the same level, for example, in mail merge and legal or medical text processing. Work produced independently is of a high standard. At one large centre there are structured routes for learners to progress from introductory level courses into higher education. Learners who started with a level 1 course have now progressed into teaching careers, private business and higher education.

31. There is insufficient attention to safe working practices at many centres. In several observed lessons, learners were working continuously at visual display units without taking a break. Few learners are shown how to personalise the settings on their screens to minimise eye strain. Many learners are working at the wrong height on chairs which are not adjustable, and their posture is poor. In one session, learners had to use stools with no back support. Some centres are well equipped with a wide range of resources including digital projectors, cameras, scanners and printers in appropriate, purpose-built accommodation. However, some schools have limited Internet access for adults and there is a lack of technical support in some centres.

32. There is insufficient initial assessment of learners' needs. Initial assessment is often informal and is not recorded. The results of initial assessment are seldom used to design an individual learning plan, and insufficient account is taken of learners' prior experience. There is little formal setting of objectives for individual learners to enable tutors and learners to monitor and assess their progress. Many sessions involve frequent informal assessment with detailed verbal feedback, but this is not recorded. In some centres, individual records of learners' progress are completed. Registers are sometimes used to record the achievement of objectives set for the class. No targets are set for individual learners. There is no formal assessment of additional learning

support needs.

33. Some centres provide good initial advice and guidance, with clear leaflets and brochures outlining their provision. Some centres have open days staffed by course tutors who can give timely information to prospective learners. Learners obtain information from prospectuses produced by centres, from newspaper advertisements and from friends. However, some learners do not receive sufficient information and guidance on the suitability of courses before enrolment, resulting in some inappropriate initial choices being made.

34. The standard of teaching is inconsistent. Some sessions are well planned and engage learners in a variety of challenging activities and learning styles, using a range of resources. Some sessions make good use of individual learning plans to enable learners to progress at their own pace. In other lessons, a narrow range of teaching methods is used and little attention is given to individual learning needs or individual styles of learning.

35. The Service's monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is weak. The observation of teaching and learning has started, but not all tutors have been observed and the quality of feedback given to tutors is not consistent. Some centres provide good support to tutors. They meet frequently and share resources. However, tutors at some centres feel they are isolated, receive insufficient information and have few opportunities to share good practice.

36. Learners enjoy their courses and most are keen to progress to higher levels. Many use their new skills at work and in their personal and social lives. Parents are able to help their children with school work. Several learners spoke of the benefits of using e-mail to communicate with friends and family, as well as using the Internet for research and shopping. Learners with young children were especially appreciative of the crèche facilities or playgroups in some centres, without which they would not be able to attend. Learners spoke of difficulties encountered with equipment in some schools and inadequate printing facilities in outreach centres.

Good Practice

In one centre, learners' feedback forms had been evaluated and the results posted on the noticeboard in the foyer for all to see. As a result of the feedback, new, adjustable chairs were purchased for the IT suite.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 3**

37. Sport and leisure courses are offered at 91 locations across Cumbria, including secondary schools, sports halls, gymnasiums, church and village halls, youth and community centres and colleges. Learners participate in a range of non-accredited sport, martial arts, leisure and exercise classes that include swimming, aerobics, keep fit, badminton, golf, circuit training, bridge, badminton, tennis, volleyball, fencing, chi kung, tai chi, and yoga. Most courses are open to all learners, but some exercise classes are targeted at specific groups. A programme of outdoor education activities offering accreditation is provided in the south of the county. Two-thirds of classes take place in the evening, the remainder during the day. There is some weekend provision. Some courses offer progression from beginners to intermediate and advanced levels. Most classes are between one and two hours long and are run for between 20 and 30 weeks of the year during school terms. There have been 3,431 enrolments in 2002-03. Over a third of all enrolments are for yoga classes. Eighty-two per cent of enrolments are by women and a quarter by learners over 60 years of age. Tutors are employed part time, and most teach for two to six hours a week. Tutors are managed by centre managers who are responsible for recruiting staff, managing the programme of courses and quality assurance. A part-time curriculum development worker has recently been appointed to support tutors. She is managed by the area co-ordinator for the west of the county.

STRENGTHS

- wide range of health and social benefits for learners
- good range of courses to meet local needs
- effective partnership links to extend learning opportunities
- good outdoor education provision

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient attention to individual learners' needs
- weak assessment of learners' readiness for activity
- inadequate curriculum planning and development

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more celebration of learners' achievement
- better sharing of good practice
- increased progression opportunities
- better accommodation in some centres

38. Learners in all classes gain new skills, broaden their knowledge, and maintain or enhance their general levels of fitness. Many speak confidently about the health and social benefits they gain as a result of attending classes and the effect this has on their everyday lives. Older learners are being helped to maintain their independence through fitness classes. In yoga, tai chi and pilates, learners use the techniques they learn to help them overcome or alleviate health problems such as back pain, arthritis, sciatica, rheumatism and stress. Confidence levels, communication skills and social interaction are developed in all classes. Several learners on outdoor education courses have used their qualifications to gain employment. Learners' achievements are not consistently recognised or celebrated in all centres. Although overall attendance rates are satisfactory, averaging 78 per cent in the autumn term, attendance in some classes is erratic. Non-attendance is not routinely followed up. Retention rates across all centres are satisfactory. In 2000-01, the average retention rate was 77 per cent.

39. There is an extensive range of sport and leisure courses available throughout Cumbria. Most courses are open to everyone but some target particular groups. Examples include keep-fit classes for older learners, men's and women's classes, classes for adults with learning and physical difficulties, and courses for people recovering from surgery. An extensive programme of yoga, tai chi and pilates has been developed in response to demand from learners. The most popular courses offer progression routes between different levels, but these are not always available in all centres. In all areas of the county there are examples of effective partnership links to widen and increase participation. These include links with general practitioners and health care trusts, and courses provided in conjunction with organisations working with mental health service users, the elderly and the unemployed.

40. There is a good outdoor education programme that includes caving, canoeing, rock climbing, mountain leadership, kayaking and sailing. Resources are good and the standard of teaching, learning and attainment is particularly high. Retention and achievement levels on outdoor education classes are very high. In 2001-02, the retention rate on accredited courses was 95 per cent, and 97 per cent of the learners who completed the course achieved a qualification. For the past two years, learners attending outdoor education courses have been awarded bursaries by a national awarding body in recognition of their achievements.

41. Tutors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable in their specialist areas. Relationships between tutors and learners are good. The better lessons are planned well and tutors understand the varying needs of their learners. Mixed-ability classes are managed sensitively. Teaching methods are adapted to meet individual learning needs and in some classes alternative activities are provided for more mature learners and those with limited mobility. Tutors' demonstrations are of a high standard on most courses. Some classes are characterised by a lack of attention to detail in learners' performance. Tutors often fail to provide sufficient individual feedback to group members to enable them to

improve their performance. Sometimes tutors are unable to identify learners' errors.

42. Specialist resources and equipment are satisfactory or better in most centres. Most of the accommodation used in outreach centres is adequate, but some has poor signage and poor access for learners with mobility difficulties. Regulating room temperature is a difficulty in some classes. Tutors have appropriate teaching, coaching and instructor qualifications.

43. For most classes, there is insufficient initial assessment of learners' abilities, prior learning or experience. Fitness levels and flexibility are not assessed at the beginning of a course or systematically monitored to identify progress or areas for improvement. Learners receive frequent informal feedback during classes but there is little recording and sharing of individual targets or progress. Notable exceptions to this are the accredited courses in outdoor education, a healthy hearts class and a yoga class in which there are records of learners' performance and improvements over time.

44. Many tutors fail to adequately assess the health and fitness of their learners before they begin exercise programmes. Some tutors do this informally through discussion at the beginning of a course, but few record the results. There is a questionnaire for this purpose but it is not routinely administered and the results are not used to provide advice to learners or to replacement tutors. Some tutors have devised their own questionnaire or use those provided by other organisations. Most tutors refer to health and fitness considerations at the beginning of each session and advise learners accordingly.

45. There is inadequate use of data in curriculum development and planning. There is little analysis of participation or retention rates on specific courses. There are no targets for increasing the number of enrolments or the number of learners from particular groups. There is little co-ordination of work within the area of learning across the county. Approaches to lesson planning and schemes of work vary widely. Some are excellent, others are totally absent. There are few opportunities for tutors to meet colleagues and share good practice. A small programme of in-service training has recently been organised. This has focused on generic aspects of teaching and has been evaluated positively by participants. Apart from observations of teaching, which are in the early stages of implementation, there are no other mechanisms to identify tutors' training needs.

46. Learners enjoy their courses. They recognise and appreciate the health and fitness benefits they gain and they also value the social benefits of learning in a group. Many feel that they can identify the amount of progress that they have made. They feel well supported by the tutors. Some learners expressed concern about the cleanliness, heating and state of repair of the rooms in which their classes are held.

Good Practice

A visit to the headquarters of a local cave rescue organisation provided learners on an outdoor education course with an excellent opportunity to understand health and safety and injury management in a realistic environment through teamwork activities. A former course member who has joined the rescue organisation was involved in planning the visit to ensure it met learners' needs.

Visual & performing arts & media**Grade 3**

47. Visual and performing arts and media is the Service's second most popular area of learning, offering some 240 day and evening courses, most which are non-accredited. There are also a few Saturday morning classes and summer schools. Courses include drawing and painting, pottery, sculpture, photography, jewellery, stained glass, dressmaking, upholstery, curtain making, needlecraft and embroidery, patchwork quilting, felting, jazz/blues, beginners' guitar, string ensembles, various forms of dancing, and adding a very local flavour, stick dressing. At the time of the inspection there were 3,374 enrolments on these courses. Over three-quarters of all enrolments are by women and 42 per cent by learners over 60 years of age. Most courses run for three terms. Classes are held in local schools and colleges, community centres, arts centres and church and village halls. Tutors are employed part time and most teach for two to six hours a week. Tutors are managed by local centre managers who are responsible for the programme of courses, recruiting staff and quality assurance.

STRENGTHS

- broad range of provision across a wide rural area
- high standard of learners' work
- good teaching methods

WEAKNESSES

- lack of initial and continuous assessment
- poor curriculum management

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more systematic guidance and support

48. There is an extensive range of courses offered over a wide geographical area. Many are held in isolated rural communities. Courses are offered at different times and in a range of locations to attract new learners. Tutors offer learners additional study opportunities during vacation periods to enable them to continue their studies and maintain their interest. Gallery visits and performances are a regular feature of the provision. There are some opportunities for learners to progress within the provision from beginners to intermediate and advanced classes and to accredited courses. Many learners repeat the same course developing a range of skills, sometimes over several years.

49. Learners achieve a good standard of practical skills and technical expertise in a wide range of subjects such as jewellery making, upholstery, embroidery and drawing and painting. They frequently work independently at home and produce finished work to a high standard in class. Learners are proud of their achievements and enjoy sharing skills and knowledge. Many learners have produced upholstery and soft furnishings to professional standards for their own homes. Learners produce good still-life paintings and drawings. Some learners exhibit and sell their work. Learners comment on their increased confidence and sense of self-worth. They are well motivated and make good progress. The attendance rate is good on all courses.

50. All teaching is satisfactory and 66 per cent is good or better. Many tutors are practising artists, performers and craftspeople, and use their knowledge and experience to develop stimulating learning activities that encourage learners to progress to more advanced levels. Most classes are well planned and are designed to take account of the varied experiences and abilities of the learners. In the most successful lessons, learners are encouraged to take part in demonstrations, to share their skills and to question and advise one another. Tutors make good use of their own and learners' work to illustrate their teaching and introduce new craft techniques. Learners are encouraged to work independently but also benefit from sharing their work and ideas with their peers. Learners are able to work at their own pace in many classes. In some cases there is insufficient emphasis on completing work within a set time. In less successful lessons, tutors do not challenge learners sufficiently to explore new subjects, but allow them to remain focused on a narrow range of projects.

51. Tutors are skilled and qualified in their subject area, but just under half do not have teaching qualifications. There are good specialist facilities at some centres but some of the accommodation and resources are inadequate. In a few centres cramped classrooms and lack of storage space restricts the scope and scale of what can be achieved. Some tutors provide their own equipment for learners to use. Some venues have limited access for learners with restricted mobility.

52. One centre has appropriate initial assessment procedures and records learners' progress against individual learning plans. This practice is not shared with other centres. Tutors are often unaware of such procedures or the value of them. Assessments are mainly informal and unrecorded and provide little evidence as to how learners are progressing. While learners' final attainment is often good, there is no recording of the various stages of learning and development that have led to it. Tutors have little opportunity to share curriculum ideas. In one photography class the tutor has devised a course evaluation form for learners, the results of which help him plan future learning, but this practice is not apparent in other classes.

53. The quality of course information varies between centres. One further education college gives clear guidance about fees, equipment, course content and possible progression opportunities, and provides detailed and informative induction programmes. This is not common practice. Tutors have not been trained to identify learners' additional support needs, and there is insufficient additional support for adults

with learning difficulties or disabilities. Tutors offer high levels of informal support, both during and outside classes.

54. Staff have recently been appointed to provide stronger curriculum management and support for tutors. However, curriculum planning and development is poor. There is inadequate use of data and insufficient target-setting. Course reviews are not used to evaluate programmes in all centres and managers have yet to convince some staff of the value of review, evaluation, planning and assessment. Observations of teaching are gradually being introduced but are not yet fully effective. A programme of staff development and training is being developed but tutors have too few opportunities to share good practice.

55. Learners value the opportunity to develop skills in a craft over a number of years. They enjoy their classes, finding them relaxing and stimulating. Learners speak highly of the support provided by tutors and other members of the class. They also value the social interaction in lessons and the opportunity to develop social contacts.

Good Practice

In a class in a daycare centre, older learners complete a brief initial assessment when they join. The tutor records the information to use in planning. Progress is monitored in a weekly diary, and a care worker records learners' self-assessment against learning outcomes. Evaluations are made at the end of the course and recorded on behalf of the group by one of the class.

English, languages & communications

Grade 3

56. There are 128 courses in 12 modern languages. These include French, Spanish, Italian, German, Greek, Russian, Arabic and Japanese. Latin is also offered. Courses are provided at 38 community venues across the county. Forty-four per cent of courses are based at two large centres, both of which are specialist language colleges. The most popular languages, French, Spanish, Italian and German, comprise 89 per cent of all classes. Courses in these languages are offered at a number of levels, in some cases beyond advanced level. Although most courses do not lead to a qualification, a range of nationally recognised qualifications is available in some centres. Courses are offered during the day and in the evening. Course length differs according to local circumstances, ranging from six to 30 weeks. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,084 enrolments on modern languages courses. Almost two-thirds of enrolments are by women and 27 per cent by learners over 60 years of age. All staff teaching in modern languages are part time, many teaching only one class a week. Tutors are managed by centre managers who are responsible for the recruitment of staff, the management of the programme and quality assurance. A part-time modern languages curriculum development worker has recently been appointed to work in the north and west of the county. A languages co-ordinator also works at one of the major centres.

STRENGTHS

- good progress by learners
- very good use of the foreign language
- extensive range of learning opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- poor monitoring of progress on non-accredited courses
- inadequate overall management of the curriculum

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better access to resources for staff and learners

57. Learners achieve well and make good progress at all levels. Lessons are stimulating and enjoyable, and are challenging for the learners. They engage in fluent discussions at a high standard and give detailed and comprehensive answers with a good accent. In one class, level 3 learners contributed to a lively discussion which ranged from a description of spring flowers to the impact of foot and mouth disease. Learners make

good use of language skills in their daily lives. They use them for work and holiday purposes and for enhancing their contacts with family and friends. The portfolios of learners on accredited courses are well organised and demonstrate a good range of work at or above the appropriate level. Retention rates on some courses are poor, linked to the unwillingness of older learners to take a qualification. Retention rates are higher on shorter courses. In one major centre where all provision is accredited, retention is good and above the county average.

58. Most teaching is effective. A number of the lessons observed were exemplary. Most lessons are well planned and involve a variety of stimulating activities. There is widespread and skilful use of the language being studied. Learners are confident and feel able to speak and experiment with language without fear of ridicule. In many classes, they learn from each other in a good supportive atmosphere. At higher levels, they contribute spontaneously with a range of idiom and vocabulary. Tutors are skilled in using learners' interests to stimulate discussion. This is complemented by structured grammatical work using relevant texts and activities. In a few classes, there is insufficient correction of basic pronunciation and grammar mistakes. The lesson planning of tutors without teaching qualifications is less systematic. Aims and individual learning outcomes are unclear in these classes and there is insufficient use of the language in conversation classes.

59. The range of provision is good and it is widely accessible throughout the county. There is evidence of centres responding to individual needs and requests, sometimes in less popular languages such as Russian, Dutch, Arabic and Danish. Courses are offered at a suitable range of levels, with good progression routes in many languages. There is a lack of differentiation in some classes where it is necessary to combine levels to maintain the provision.

60. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most tutors are well qualified. Most environments are suitable for language learning. In the best classes, space is used flexibly to facilitate communication between learners. In the major centres, accommodation and resources are good. Video recorders are available in a number of classrooms but were only observed in use in a few lessons. In the smaller centres, some lessons take place in shabby accommodation with little or no audio-visual equipment. Often, tutors provide their own textbook, materials and tape-recorder, some of which are of poor quality. There is insufficient sharing of resources among tutors both within and between centres.

61. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress on accredited courses is satisfactory. However, it is an area of weakness on non-accredited courses. At one major centre detailed and comprehensive records are kept on learners' assessment and progress to help tutors meet individual needs. The more general practice of recording learning outcomes in class registers is not effective. Tutors do not find it useful and it is used inconsistently. Individual learning plans are not used. In most lessons, tutors know their learners well and give positive verbal feedback. In many classes, work is marked thoroughly with helpful written comments. There is no initial assessment of prior

learning on non-accredited courses. Initial assessment on post level 1 courses is not specific enough about learners' previous level of achievement in the language and the skills which need to be developed. Progress is not generally recorded. Advice on progression opportunities is poor. In the final session of many courses, learners are not made aware of the progression opportunities available to them.

62. Overall management of the modern languages curriculum is inadequate. Recent developments in curriculum management have had little impact on teaching and learning in many centres. There are some instances of curriculum enrichment activities being poorly publicised and there are no formal networks to enable communication between teachers. Some staff with experience of teaching a language have been trained to observe teaching and learning and are introducing a programme of observation. Tutors find the process helpful but it is too early to judge the impact of the procedures on the quality of teaching and learning. There are effective and well-established quality assurance procedures at one major centre where all courses are accredited, and there is good curriculum leadership. This has not been replicated across the county. In some centres, learners are regularly consulted and course evaluations are fed back to tutors. However, course review and evaluation is poorly developed in many centres.

63. Learners speak positively and enthusiastically about their learning. They enjoy acquiring language skills and gain personal fulfilment and enrichment from their language learning. They also value the opportunity to learn about the wider aspects of life and culture in the countries concerned. Some learners do not want to gain the qualifications associated with the courses they are following.

Good Practice

A group of nine adults and 16 primary school children learn French together for an hour at the end of the school day. The adults are working towards a basic qualification, and the children enjoy a 10-week introduction to the language. Through a skilful mix of sound and gesture, and an almost exclusive use of the target language, the tutor creates a structured yet relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere where adults and children converse together confidently and productively in French.

Foundation programmes**Grade 3**

64. There are 445 learners on 55 basic skills courses directly managed by the Service. Classes are offered during the day and in the evening, and more than half lead to a qualification. Learners follow programmes from entry level 1 to level 2. These consist of short courses of 12 hours or less and longer courses lasting for 36 weeks. Short courses include one-day intensive workshops in literacy and numeracy leading to national tests. Family literacy and numeracy courses and 'keeping up with the children' courses are run in conjunction with schools. Classes are offered in community venues across the county, in primary and secondary schools, a library and community centres. Over three-quarters of all learners are enrolled on literacy courses, 25 learners are following a course of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and the remainder are on numeracy courses. Over 80 per cent of learners are women. An adult basic skills development officer has responsibility for the development of basic skills across the county. She is supported by the three area co-ordinators, three family learning and basic skills development workers and a team of 31 part-time tutors.

STRENGTHS

- well-developed basic skills strategy
- good achievement of personal learning goals
- effective literacy teaching

WEAKNESSES

- lack of individual learning plans on short courses
- weak monitoring of learners' progress

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better access to learning resources in community venues
- more information on progression routes

65. The Service has a clear strategy to increase access to, and widen participation in, literacy, numeracy and language training. Staff have been appointed to co-ordinate the strategy and to support centres and tutors. The Service has targets for enrolment, retention and achievement rates. All tutors have individual targets which are monitored during support visits and termly area meetings. There has been good progress towards the targets. During the past year, there has been a 25 per cent increase in the number of learners and a significant expansion in the scope of provision. There are satisfactory quality assurance arrangements with observations of teaching and learning, and support

visits to tutors to help with curriculum planning and paperwork. Learners' feedback influences the planning of provision. Good use is made of staff in schools and partnership agencies to promote local learning opportunities.

66. Most learners achieve their personal learning goals and have a good understanding of their achievements. They make substantial progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills. For example, learners on intensive literacy courses are able to complete application forms, write memos and have a good understanding of different types of text. Learners on numeracy programmes demonstrate a good understanding of basic numeracy concepts such as fractions, decimals and probability. Parents on family learning programmes feel more confident and able to help their children at home and at school. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their individual learning goals. Learners are well motivated. They make substantial gains in confidence as a result of their courses and use their skills outside the classroom. Retention rates are good at an average of 84 per cent.

67. Literacy teaching is effective. Teaching is well planned and techniques are adapted to accommodate the range of abilities in the group. Lessons have clearly identified group learning objectives. Literacy and IT tutors work effectively together, and computing is used imaginatively to support the development of literacy skills. In family literacy classes, pictures of a group activity are used to prompt appropriate sentence construction by parents and children. Literacy tasks are linked to learners' experience and interests to ensure that learners are motivated. Learners work in small groups and are given good individual support during lessons. There is some poor classroom management. In a few classes interruptions are not managed effectively and learners' work is disrupted.

68. The accommodation used for the joint computing and literacy courses is well equipped and located centrally within small communities. Most centres have an appropriate range of learning resources and paper-based materials including reference books and newspapers. Physical access is restricted at two centres. Some local community centres are poorly equipped. Learners rely on the tutor to provide resources, such as laptops and audio equipment, and there is poor access to basic facilities such as photocopiers and whiteboards. Some of the furniture in rooms used for family learning classes is not appropriate for use by adults. Tutors are well qualified and well supported. The Service has prepared carefully for the introduction of the national literacy and numeracy curriculums for adults. All tutors have attended training in the national core curriculums. Core curriculum training has been extended to IT tutors involved in joint computing and basic skills courses to enable them to support learners.

69. There is little use of individual learning plans on short courses. Most learners have a literacy and numeracy initial assessment. This is not used to design an individual learning plan, and learners are not given clear short-term aims to help them identify the progress they make. There is insufficient monitoring and formal recording of learners' progress. Tutors review progress with learners informally during lessons but the

comments are rarely recorded and learners receive little written feedback on their work. Records of progress show the tasks that have been completed but do not clearly indicate the skills that have been developed or the gains in learning. Tutors regularly check learners' understanding and there is good verbal feedback to learners on their progress in all lessons.

70. The Service is developing a diverse range of learning opportunities to meet learners' needs. Learners on intensive programmes are able to progress to learning opportunities leading to national tests. Progression routes for longer-standing learners are unclear. There is little awareness among tutors of course availability outside their local area. Family literacy and numeracy courses are promoted effectively through schools. Pre-course information about other courses is poor and many people learn about courses by word of mouth. Access to impartial information, advice and guidance is available from the careers service, but few learners are aware of this.

71. Learners enjoy their courses and report gains in confidence and in literacy and numeracy skills. They value the range of learning opportunities available in the workplace, the community and with their children in school. They like the option of attending short intensive courses. Most learners interviewed would like to progress on to other courses and would like more information about what is available.

Poor Practice

In a numeracy lesson a test for learners was hand-written on a flipchart and was difficult to read. The test included a question on a topic that had not been covered in the course.

Language of the Adult and Community Learning

Terminology varies across the range of education and training settings covered by the *Common Inspection Framework*. The table below indicates the terms appropriate to Adult and Community Learning

Single term used in the framework	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Provider	Provider	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges
Learner	Learner	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
Teacher / trainer	Tutor Mentor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning. Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	Main learning goals Secondary learning goals	Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, e.g. in the family, community, or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge. These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
Personal and learning skills	Personal and learning skills	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome	Adults often experience unanticipated gains as a result of being involved in learning. These include improved self-esteem, greater self-confidence and a growing sense of belonging to a community. Gains of this kind should be acknowledged and recorded in any record of achievement.
Subject-based programme	A programme organised around a body of knowledge, e.g. the structure and usage of the French language or ceramic glazing techniques. Students could be expected to progress from one aspect of the subject to another, to grasp increasingly complex concepts or analyses or to develop greater levels of skill or to apply skills to a new area of work.
Issue-based programme	A programme that is based on the concerns, interests and aspirations of particular groups, for example members of a Sikh Gurdwara wanting to address inter-faith relations in their town, or parents worried about the incidence of drug abuse in their locality. Issue-based learning tends to be associated with geographically defined communities, but the increasing use of electronic means of communication means that this need no longer be the case. Progress is defined in terms of the group's increasing ability to analyse its situation, to access new information and skills which will help it resolve its difficulties and generate solutions and its growing confidence in dealing with others to implement those solutions.
Outreach provision	Provision established in a community setting in addition to provision made at an organisation's main site(s). Outreach programmes may be similar to courses at the main site(s) or be designed to meet the specific requirements of that community.
Neighbourhood-based work	The provider's staff have a long-term presence in a local community with a specific remit to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
Community regeneration	The process of improving the quality of life in communities by investing in their infrastructure and facilities, creating opportunities for training and employment and tackling poor health and educational under-achievement. Community regeneration requires the active participation of local residents in decision-making. Changes and improvements are often achieved either directly or indirectly as a result of the adult learning activities which arise from this.

Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Community capacity building	The process of enabling local people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to take advantage of opportunities for employment, training and further education and to become selfmanaging, sustainable communities.
Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make a conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.