

INSPECTION REPORT

Gateshead Council

20 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
- **learnirect** 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

Gateshead Council is a metropolitan borough council and a unitary authority. It directly manages provision aimed at enabling people to achieve the skills, knowledge and attitudes associated with personal autonomy, democratic understanding and collective decision-making. It delivers, on behalf of the local college of further education, a range of courses in information and communications technology, the visual and performing arts sports and leisure, hair and beauty, health and social care, humanities and languages. By far the largest of these areas are information and communications technology and the visual and performing arts. These two types of provision take place alongside each other in community education centres or special project centres.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The community capacity building provision is outstanding and foundation is good. Provision in information and communications technology, the visual and performing arts and family learning is satisfactory. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Equal opportunities is good, but quality assurance is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

Areas of learning	Grade
Information & communications technology	3
Visual & performing arts & media	3
Foundation programmes	2
Family learning	3
Community learning	1

KEY STRENGTHS

- clear, well-communicated strategic priorities for adult learning
- very effective partnerships
- particularly effective action to provide learning opportunities in economically disadvantaged communities
- positive impact of learning and community action on the lives of local people
- good development of volunteers as professional workers

GATESHEAD COUNCIL

- significant improvement in parents' ability to help their children

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor planning of some aspects of the curriculum
- insufficiently established quality assurance system
- inadequate use of individual learning plans
- inadequate recording of learners' progress and assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better promotion of access, information and reading service for people with sensory impairments

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 11 inspectors spent a total of 61 days inspecting adult and community learning courses and activities directly managed by the learning and culture directorate of Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council. These courses and activities are taught through a franchise arrangement with the local college of further education. Inspectors observed and graded 52 learning sessions, interviewed 319 learners, looked at 134 examples of learners' work, and examined 102 individual learning plans. They carried out interviews with staff, senior officers and elected members, as well as 16 representatives from partner organisations. They also examined a range of policies, plans, minutes of meetings and other documents associated with the running of the service.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	5	5	1	1	0	0	12
Visual & performing arts & media	0	4	3	3	1	0	1	12
Foundation programmes	0	7	4	2	0	0	0	13
Family learning	0	4	1	3	1	0	0	9
Community learning	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	6
Total	0	23	16	9	3	0	1	52
per cent	75.00%			17.31%	7.69%			

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Gateshead Council is a metropolitan borough council and a unitary authority. It has a cabinet system of government. Adult and community learning is the responsibility of the cabinet member with the portfolio for learning and culture, and is part of the remit of the directorate of learning and culture. The raising achievement service within the directorate is responsible for commissioning and assuring the quality of service delivery. The council's youth and community learning service is its main in-house service provider. The directorate and a local college of further education work closely together to widen the range of educational opportunities for adults. The directorate is subcontracted by the college to run courses in community venues. Most of the learning activities which are directly managed by the local authority are not accredited, but all of the courses which it runs on behalf of the college are. The directorate employs a family learning co-ordinator, but subcontracts tutors from the college to deliver its family learning programme. Other parts of the council, such as libraries and arts, leisure services and the local initiatives team, also create and provide learning opportunities for adults. The council is installing the 'Gateshead Grid', an information and communications technology (ICT) network throughout the borough with the intention of placing facilities for learning within the reach of all.

3. The authority has recently reorganised the strategic management of its provision to take account of an increasing emphasis nationally on policies relating specifically to young people or adults. However, it retains an integrated approach to the organisation and delivery of its youth and community learning service. The youth and community learning service operates 76 community education centres. However, some projects, including a project for vulnerable young women and an outdoor education project, are centrally organised and draw participants from across the borough. In 38 of the centres, a full-time community education worker oversees activities and is assisted by part-time paid or voluntary staff. The other centres have part-time paid or voluntary staff, but no full-time worker. Each centre has its own voluntary management committee.

4. The learning and culture directorate draws external funding for adult and community learning from a range of sources including the Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Basic Skills Agency, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the single regeneration budget (SRB).

5. In 2001-02, over 21,000 people took part in activities which were directly managed and delivered by the youth and community learning service. Fifty-seven per cent of these people were 19 years of age or older. Many took part in more than one activity or course. Fifty-seven per cent of participants were women, 34 per cent were 60 years of age or older, approximately 11 per cent were from a minority ethnic group, and 10.6 per cent had a disability. The main areas of learning are community capacity building and foundation programmes. A further 650 adults took part in the directorate's family

learning programmes. In addition, there were 5,725 starters on the courses franchised to the authority by the college. This provision consists mainly of courses in ICT, the visual and performing arts, sports and leisure, hair and beauty, modern languages and humanities. By far the largest of these areas is ICT and the visual and performing arts.

6. The council serves a population of 191,151 in an area extending approximately 12 miles along the south bank of the River Tyne. The underlying employment trend is improving, but the unemployment rate currently stands at 3.5 per cent which is above the national average of 3 per cent. The unemployment rate for Tyneside overall is 4.7 per cent. The area qualifies for neighbourhood renewal funding, and a wide range of regeneration projects are taking place in the centre and east of the borough.

Adult and Community Learning

7. Gateshead Council directly manages provision aimed at developing individual autonomy, collective decision-making and democratic understanding. It delivers, on behalf of the local college of further education a range of courses in ICT and the liberal arts. These two types of provision take place alongside each other in the council's community education centres and special project centres.

8. The council's work in community capacity building is outstanding. The confidence of the members of the management committee, and their understanding of the political process is impressive. Many of the committee members are former or current adult learners. Equally impressive is the council's contribution to the development of sustainable communities with a thriving social infrastructure. The contribution of volunteers is welcomed and highly valued by the council, and an exceptionally high proportion of volunteers go on to become paid and qualified professional workers.

9. The council's foundation courses are highly successful in enabling people to gain the confidence and interpersonal skills necessary to become adult learners. Its family learning programme succeeds in enabling parents to play a fuller role in their children's education. In both of these areas, however, insufficient attention is given to the use of individual learning plans so that learners have a clear idea of their progress. The aims of the family learning programme are not made clear to learners from the start of their course.

10. There is some good teaching in ICT and visual and performing arts courses. Learners produce good work and achieve a range of personal learning goals as well as nationally recognised qualifications. However, curriculum planning and quality assurance arrangements are not satisfactory. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress is also a problem in visual and performing arts.

11. Managers have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, and are working hard to overcome the inadequacies. The contributory grades for equal opportunities reflect the council's commitment to community development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

12. The director of learning and culture has overall responsibility for adult and community learning. The responsibilities of the head of the raising achievement service include the leadership and strategic co-ordination of adult and community learning. More specifically, this means the procurement of provision, quality assurance, curriculum planning and the co-ordination of adult learning across the council. He is assisted by a lifelong learning manager who is responsible for issues relating to the 14-19 age group, the co-ordination of the Gateshead lifelong learning partnership, adult learning and family learning. Adult learning and family learning co-ordinators report to the lifelong learning manager. A head of youth and community learning also reports to the director of learning and culture. His responsibilities include the management of the youth and community learning service. The staff of this service include four full-time senior community education officers and 17.2 full-time equivalent community education workers who have significant responsibilities in relation to adult learning. There are also 32.8 full-time equivalent part-time adult education tutors and 3.2 full-time equivalent crèche workers. Six hundred and eighty-one volunteers are involved in the youth and community learning service, carrying out a range of roles, some of which have a direct bearing on adult learning. A cross-council adult learning co-ordination group meets every two months. The directorate calls upon a range of services from within the council to support youth and community learning including accountancy, legal and personnel services.

STRENGTHS

- clear, well-communicated strategic priorities for adult learning
- very effective partnerships
- good staff training and development
- particularly effective action to provide learning opportunities in economically disadvantaged areas
- highly effective equal opportunities practices
- effective services to support widening participation

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate collection and analysis of data
- poor planning of some aspects of the curriculum
- insufficient evaluation of achievement of equal opportunities objectives
- insufficiently established quality assurance system

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better promotion of access, information and reading service for people with

- sensory impairments
- better monitoring of health and safety

13. The council is committed to improving the quality of life of Gateshead residents through partnership working and proactive support for community groups. Adult learning is seen as important in raising aims and achievements in communities. The council's strategic priorities for adult learning are clearly expressed in its adult learning plan, its community plan and in its education development plan. Policies and procedures are clearly written and have been produced after a good deal of consultation with other agencies, members of the local community and staff. Good use is made of newsletters which are distributed to all households in the borough. There are regular public meetings to ascertain the public's views about adult learning and these are well attended. Internally the council makes good use of meetings at all levels to share the strategic priorities for adult learning. Senior officers attend many meetings to discuss proposed changes with staff, and there are also staff newsletters. Tutors and some of the learners have a good understanding of council priorities.

14. The directorate has good working relationships with a wide range of internal and external partners. It is taking the lead in recognising the changing nature of adult and community learning in Gateshead. A cross-council adult education group has been established and has been effective in identifying opportunities to combine resources, obtain additional funding, and share good practice. The council works closely with the local college of further education to provide adult education in Gateshead. There are many excellent examples of the college and council working well together to benefit the local community. A good example is the recently built learning centres. These well-equipped centres are owned by the council, but are staffed by the college and are strategically located in the east and west of Gateshead. The council is instrumental in ensuring a multi-agency approach to supporting individuals when barriers to learning are identified. In a number of its community education centres, staff from different agencies work alongside each other.

15. Staff training and development for community education workers are good. There are clear career paths for those with no or few qualifications. There are many appropriately qualified employees who started as learners on community-based programmes. There are good opportunities for continuing professional development for full- and part-time staff, and staff take a wide range of qualifications as part of this process. Adult education tutors are appropriately qualified and also have some good opportunities for continuing professional development. Volunteers are well supported and have good access to training. Many become part-time community education workers or adult education tutors. Staff are highly motivated, and are positive about recent changes in the council.

16. The council's use of data is inadequate. The information about how many learners are involved in its directly managed provision is approximate. Managers do not have the means to analyse trends in retention and achievement in the franchised provision,

and do not carry out overall analysis of the impact or effectiveness of the directly managed provision. The authority responds to specific concerns raised by local residents, but does not carry out systematic analysis of community needs. Managers are aware of the lack of data and acknowledged this weakness in the self-assessment report. A computer software programme has been purchased, and the authority is in the process of appointing a data co-ordinator. It is too early to judge the effect of this.

17. Curriculum planning is weak in a number of respects. The authority and the college of further education work together to plan the programme for the franchised provision. Although the contractual arrangements are appropriate, the arrangement is not effective in estimating the demand for each subject, determining the priorities in each area of learning, ensuring that there are appropriate progression routes for learners and avoiding duplication of provision in some parts of the borough. The authority is aware of some of these weaknesses and plans to deal with them by appointing staff who have a responsibility for curriculum management. There are insufficient qualified staff to be able to integrate literacy, numeracy and language tuition into its directly managed community capacity building activities. There is no coherent strategy for the delivery of literacy, numeracy and language provision across the borough.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

18. The council is particularly effective in meeting the needs of learners in economically disadvantaged communities. It declares its intention to do this in its policies, and achieves its aim largely through the work of its youth and community learning service. Most community education centres are located in areas of economic disadvantage. Through their work in developing centre management committees and through other types of community intervention, staff create opportunities for local people to identify specific learning needs in their community. These are then met through a wide range of activities including long-term projects, short courses and personal development exercises. Extensive use is made of residential experiences to raise people's aims. These activities sit alongside more traditional and more formal learning opportunities, delivered through the franchise arrangement in areas such as information technology (IT), languages and cookery.

19. Staff are effective in encouraging people from hard-to-reach groups to take on roles and develop skills which ultimately lead to employment. For example, young people involved in the deaf project have training in sign language which gives them employment opportunities with the health service and the police. It also gives them the opportunity to train as sign language instructors.

20. The authority has a comprehensive range of policies related to equal opportunities, including those on disability, the development of locally based management structures and work with boys and men. Community education workers have a very good understanding of every aspect of equality of opportunity, and their understanding is reflected in their practice. They ensure that activities are appropriately inclusive, and place a high value on the contributions of other people, including volunteers. They are effective in challenging unacceptable behaviour in complex and sensitive situations. The council's training programme for community education staff, which leads to qualified worker status, includes a substantial component that is directly or indirectly linked to equality. This training is reinforced through frequent continuous professional development. Community education workers have a good range of contacts with other agencies, including the youth offending team and primary health care trusts. The need to work with young men on domestic violence is a good example of a problem which was identified in this way.

21. The council operates a number of services which are vital to the process of widening participation in learning. For example, the council's crèche service provides community education centres and projects with expert guidance which enables them to set up a crèche facility. It pays for two staff for an initial 20 weeks to operate the facility. After this, the centre or project must provide its own funding but advice is still available. A mobile crèche is also available. The council also operates a transport service for learners. This is invaluable to people who have restricted mobility, and to others, such as women who do not have control of their own finances, who would not otherwise be able to participate. The service is run by two staff with a large number of volunteers who have been especially trained. Other forms of support are available to individual learners.

For example, an all-terrain wheelchair was bought to enable disabled learners to have a greater experience of the outdoors during residential activities.

22. Only 33 per cent of community education premises are fully accessible to people with restricted mobility. Fifty-four per cent permit access to the ground floor only and 13 per cent of buildings are not accessible at all. Some lessons are moved to accommodate individual needs, but this is not always possible.

23. There is little systematic evaluation of achievement of equal opportunities objectives. Policy documents clearly articulate objectives for widening participation and learning opportunities. However, the directorate does not evaluate the extent to which these are being achieved. Information and data are collected and analysed locally, but do not contribute to service-wide evaluation.

24. The council has a very sophisticated service available to people who have sensory impairments and those who work with them. This includes translation of text and other visual materials into Braille, audio tapes and British Sign Language video tapes. A free talking newspaper is available each week. Staff and learners in adult and community learning are not fully aware of this service.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

25. Systems to evaluate and assure the overall effectiveness of the adult and community learning provision are not yet well established. The authority's quality assurance policy is not sufficiently detailed and staff have received little guidance on how to quality assure teaching and learning. The authority expresses many intentions in its policy and curriculum papers, but these are not translated into a set of performance indicators and targets. There are various approaches to evaluating the effectiveness of community projects, but some staff do not have a good understanding of the purpose and benefits of quality assurance. The effect of the weak quality assurance arrangements on learners has been partially reduced by the quality of teaching and the expertise of community education workers and tutors, supported by good staff development and training. Managers in the service are aware that the arrangements for quality assurance need to be improved. A new quality assurance framework has recently been introduced, and a consultant has been employed to help implement the new systems. The new framework incorporates an appropriate range of standard forms for tutors to use. Individual learning plans have been introduced for all learners. An audit which was carried out by the authority indicated that most tutors are using the new plans. However, inspectors found many examples where the plans have not been implemented or are being used inappropriately.

26. Teaching and learning are not regularly observed. Only a small number of observations have taken place over a three-month period in 2002-03. The observations are not graded and are not linked to staff development needs. The action plans are not detailed enough and their implementation is not monitored. Arrangements for the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning across the service are incomplete. There is insufficient recording of learners' progress and achievement in many areas of provision. Internal verification of assessed work on accredited courses is inadequate.

27. The authority does not make sufficient use of learner feedback to improve performance. Although some views are collected, it is not clear what happens to the information.

28. The authority's human resources department monitors health and safety arrangements at all community education centres. The management committee in each centre is responsible for taking action to improve health and safety as a result of the reports produced by the authority. However, the authority does not always confirm that the necessary actions have been taken.

29. The directorate of learning and culture produced its first self-assessment report and development plans for adult and community learning in 2000. The most recent were produced in March 2003. Community education teams write assessments of the provision they manage. These are then summarised to produce the directorate's overall self-assessment report. However, this process does not involve all staff, or a sufficient number of learners. Many of the team reports are not sufficiently evaluative, and a number of community projects have not been included in the process. The strengths and

weaknesses identified in these reports are not always accurately reflected in the overall report for the directorate.

Good Practice

The directorate is actively involved in a fast-track staff development programme which was launched by the local learning partnership. It aims to counter a shortfall in the number of staff available to teach basic skills in a range of contexts. Forty-four graduates are being funded to take a year-long combined postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) and level 4 literacy/numeracy course for basic skills tutors.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

30. Courses in IT and computing are offered in nine community education centres, and courses range from level 1 to level 3. Accredited courses are provided through a franchise arrangement with the local college of further education. The authority makes use of UK online facilities, learndirect, and other sources of funding. In 2002-03, 41 courses have taken place so far through the franchise arrangement. There have been 894 enrolments in the current year, 545 of which were on introductory courses and 349 at levels 2 and 3. Introductory courses include 'computing for beginners' and 'kick off with computers' along with special interest courses in web design, keyboarding, the Internet, digital imagery and multimedia. An internationally recognised computer course has been offered but not in the current year. Progress is supported and encouraged through pre-enrolment facilities and many learners move from introductory to level 2 courses and also to specialist courses. Courses are offered over 30 weeks of the year on weekdays and in the evenings in seven centres, with others offering evening provision. Most of the provision is offered over 10, two-hour sessions every week with start dates in September, January and April. At the time of the inspection, it was possible to obtain a limited analysis of learner participation in ICT by age, ethnicity and gender for only two of the nine centres. This indicates that 61 per cent of learners were women, and 26.3 per cent were 60 years of age and over.

31. There is no central management of this area of learning. Tutors are employed by the council and report to senior area community education workers in the community centres where courses take place. Under the franchising arrangement with the college of further education, teaching observations are carried out by college staff. Some tutors are employed in more than one centre and teach on a range of courses. There are meetings held twice a year for tutors in this area of learning. These meetings are used to provide information and training, rather than planning or reviewing the curriculum. The council is responsible for budgetary management of this area. The council employs 11 tutors whose total hours ranged from 20 to 448 over the past year.

STRENGTHS

- effective teaching at all levels
- good achievements by learners
- good assessment practices

WEAKNESSES

- poor internal verification
- poor curriculum planning

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better sharing of good practice

32. Learners are clear about their learning goals and are able to produce good evidence of meeting their objectives and their progress towards qualifications. Some learners are completing their qualification before the end of their course and many progress from introductory level to level 3 courses. Most learners attend regularly and retention rates are good. Systematic analysis of achievement and retention is not apparent. Learners cite personal gains in confidence, entry or re-entry into employment and contributions to their families and communities as benefits of their learning. Many plan to continue their learning, and some are interested in specific aspects of IT such as digital imaging and desktop publishing. One woman of over 70 years of age was developing her IT skills to help her run a transport scheme for disabled people in the borough. In an ICT class for people from the Bangladeshi community, a learner managed to contact his relatives in Bangladesh by e-mail.

33. The standard of teaching is good at all levels. Lessons are well planned and have clear aims and objectives developed from schemes of work. Tutors have good knowledge of their subject and communicate this effectively to learners. Tutors identify and support learners' needs by providing differentiated tasks and materials. They often set assignments which require learners to practise their skills outside of lessons. Examples include carrying out administrative tasks for community groups and producing a curriculum vitae. Some tutors produce very good learning resources. Learners are very positive about the quality of teaching and are encouraged to evaluate their own work.

34. Computing facilities are satisfactory. In two centres, learners have access to industry standard equipment in digital imaging and multimedia. Access to some centres is limited for people with restricted mobility. This has been recognised by the council and steps are being taken to improve the situation. Tutors have appropriate qualifications in adult education.

35. Tutors have good knowledge of individual learners' needs and their levels of attainment. Assessment practices are effective. Assessed tasks are well planned and learners are given helpful feedback. The outcomes of assessment are effectively recorded by tutors at the time of the assessment and learners are well aware of their progress and achievements. Tutors complete monitoring sheets which help learners to review their own progress. Individual learning plans have been introduced recently, but they have not been integrated with the tutors' own recording systems.

36. Guidance and support in the classroom is satisfactory. Learners refer to their tutors and community centre staff for guidance and this helps them make choices.

37. The procedures for managing curriculum planning and course validation are unclear. Senior area community education workers are involved in formal and informal processes for identifying needs in the community. They also have a responsibility for commissioning and reviewing courses. However, there are no established procedures beyond the individual centre. Co-ordination between centres is not always effective, resulting in duplication in the timing of courses. There is little evidence of overall management of the recent introduction of individual learning plans.

38. Internal verification is not taking place in a consistent manner and tutors are not involved in verification meetings or in the moderation of assessment. Tutors are aware of the gains made by learners through their monitoring and assessment procedures, but there is no evidence of formal course review procedures.

39. Understanding of equal opportunities policies by tutors is varied, with examples of good practice being observed in most cases. Good practice is not recognised and shared to help tutors develop their practice.

40. Learners are very positive about the value and relevance of their learning to themselves, their families and their communities. Many learners gave examples of their use of computing skills. Learners are equally positive about their tutors and the support they have received.

Visual & performing arts & media

Grade 3

41. The visual and performing arts programme takes place in community education centres across Gateshead. The main one is the Lyndhurst centre which attracts learners from across the borough. A further nine centres based in local neighbourhoods also offer courses. Most courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications. Some courses start at foundation level and are available up to and including level 2. Courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications are offered through a franchise arrangement with the local college of further education. In 2001-02, there were 1,446 enrolments on accredited courses. Between September 2002 and March 2003, there were 1,177 enrolments. The programme runs throughout the academic year for five days and four evenings a week. Some one-day workshops are offered at weekends and a residential arts weekend is provided once a year. These are directly funded by the council. Courses are part time and last between 20 and 60 hours over 10 to 30 weeks. Most courses take place over three terms. Tutors are part time and hourly paid. Visual arts courses include painting and drawing, patchwork, mixed crafts, interior design, soft furnishing, dressmaking and pottery. The performing arts include salsa dancing, guitar playing and a music workshop. There is currently no drama or media provision. There was no analysis of learner numbers by gender, ethnicity or age available.

STRENGTHS

- good achievements
- good application of learning for community purposes
- good resources

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate recording of initial assessment
- inadequate recording of learners' progress and achievements
- poor quality assurance

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better on-course guidance
- better curriculum planning

42. Learners achieve the aims, objectives and learning outcomes which are set by examination boards. They produce a good standard of finished work, particularly in sewing, art and pottery. The achievement rate is 74 per cent. Learners on textiles courses design and make clothes for family and clients to a professional standard. Some

artists produce paintings for sale and even beginners in pottery make a variety of finely decorated work which is suitable for exhibition. Learners gain skills and knowledge which enable them to work independently. They make good use of personal notebooks and journals to record their creative activities, and use them for reference when working on their own. Many learners gain sufficient skills and confidence to organise themselves into self-managed learning groups. Some of the work they produce is on display in centres across the region. They contribute to the activities of mother and toddler groups and women's groups and a wide variety of community arts and charity events. A banner to mark international women's day was produced in this way. Some learners pass on their skills to groups and contribute craft items for display, sale or auction.

43. Most lessons are well planned and are linked to appropriate schemes of work. Tutors give good practical demonstrations and make good use of a wide range of resources including visual and audio learning materials and informative handouts. In art lessons, learners are challenged by the content of the practical design tasks and project work they are set. Many agree a personal project brief with their tutor and then carry it out successfully. They work at their own pace and have individual tuition when needed. Learners make good progress. In a guitar lesson for beginners, learners progressed from repeating a few chords on their own to playing a whole tune together. Less-experienced learners learn from more experienced ones. In a lesson on making clothes for children, younger learners watched and tried out intricate hand sewing skills which were practised by older members of the group. Learners who have learning difficulties are well supported in craft lessons. In one group, the tutor has devised a plan for each learner, which helps their verbal skills and dexterity. Some lessons are poorly planned. In these lessons, learners have to wait for long periods for the tutor's help and make insufficient progress. Tutors ensure that learners are aware of, and adhere to, safe working practices. In a lesson where a learner needed advice on the safe use of ironing aids, the whole group was shown the correct procedures.

44. Resources are good with specialist facilities in the art and music studios. The pottery studio is of a professional standard and has the services of a technician for 10 hours a week. The resources for music technology are 'state of the art'. In one centre there was no access to art rooms for people with restricted mobility. Most tutors are well qualified and all have good subject expertise.

45. Tutors gather information on learners' starting points, but do not always fully record it. Learner's support needs are not always fully identified and literacy and numeracy skills are not appropriately assessed. Some learners do not have the written work necessary for them to gain accreditation. Individual learning plans are not used effectively to plan and record learners' progress. While most tutors give good verbal assessment and feedback on learners' work, little is recorded and learners have no supporting evidence of the progress they have made.

46. The range of courses is limited particularly in the performing arts, with few music courses and no drama or media work. There are few opportunities for progression, with learners often moving to courses of an equivalent level, which do not help them realise

their full potential. When courses are duplicated, tutors rarely share the syllabus content.

47. Community education workers give some guidance on progression routes and learning opportunities but it is limited. Staff are not trained or qualified in guidance. Induction includes general information about centres, learners' rights and health and safety, but course content and assessment procedures are rarely fully explained. Free or subsidised childcare is available in most centres.

48. Quality assurance for accredited courses is poor. The procedures for internal verification are inadequate. Reports do not comment on the standard of learners' work and there are few constructive comments for improvements. The process does not comply with awarding body requirements. There is little observation of teaching and learning, and no supporting paperwork. There is little sampling of lesson plans or schemes of work. Tutors and learners have had little involvement in the self-assessment report. Few actions result from the tutors' course evaluations and they are not used effectively as a basis for curriculum planning in some centres. There is no curriculum overview for the area of learning and some courses are duplicated at adjacent centres.

49. Many learners are enthusiastic about their courses and want them to be repeated or continued. Some are concerned about the lack of progression opportunities beyond level 2. Learners value the social and personal aspect of attending classes in local community education centres where they have been able to form friendships. They have a high regard for the professional expertise of their tutors.

Good Practice

On one pottery course, learners had applied sophisticated surface decoration to their pots using resist techniques, slip decoration and inlay with different coloured clays. They had fired their pots using the unusual technique of 'smoke firing'. The resulting items were innovative and of an extremely high standard. Learners had made tremendous gains in terms of practical and creative experiences.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

50. The directorate has developed a range of provision for adults at its centres in local communities. There are also six projects which serve specific groups across the borough, including a project for young women who are pregnant or mothers, one for young fathers and another for people who are over 55 years of age. Aspects of all of these programmes provide opportunities for learners to develop a range of entry level skills and the confidence to take their first steps as learners. Courses include British Sign Language, first aid, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), craft skills, DJ skills, assertiveness, team-building and citizenship. Many learners enrol on more than one course and most learners have the opportunity to gain a qualification. Tuition takes place at various times of the day and evening according to learners' needs and domestic commitments. Each programme or project is managed by a senior community education worker who is supported by a management committee which includes learners. New learners are recruited through direct marketing, referrals from other agencies and by word of mouth. The authority could not provide reliable data about the learners participating in this area of learning.

STRENGTHS

- many life-changing gains for learners
- good teaching
- good personal and practical support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient use of individual learning plans
- incomplete arrangements for quality assurance

51. Many learners achieve their planned learning goals. For example, they gain greater physical fitness, the confidence to talk to others in a group and sufficient skills in sign language to be able to communicate with a deaf child. Many learners achieve qualifications. For instance, over the past year, 37 learners on the young women's project achieved a certificate in literacy and numeracy. All learners achieved at least one qualification or completed a record of achievement by the end of their course. Learners on personal development courses achieve credits from nationally recognised awards. Tutors use accreditation sensitively as a means of encouraging learners' development and recognising their achievements. Many learners progress on to other courses run by the council. For example, some learners on an orientation course for Asian women have now enrolled on ESOL and computing courses. Learners on a deaf awareness course have progressed on to British Sign Language stage 1. One graduate from the young women's project is now on a further education business administration course, another is studying for a mathematics degree. Some learners put the skills they

have gained to good use in their communities. For example, some have become management committee members or volunteer helpers. At one centre, at least three women on foundation courses have gained the confidence to become a committee member. For many learners, the real progress lies in regaining self-esteem and self-confidence.

52. The standard of teaching and learning is good. Sessions have clear aims and objectives and learners are exposed to a broad range of learning experiences. Teaching methods include working in pairs, practical demonstrations, group discussions, talks by visiting speakers and role-play, as well as direct instruction. Good use is made of residential and outdoor activities to encourage learning. For example, to develop an understanding of team-building, learners on an outdoor education course were given practical problems to solve while wearing blindfolds. Learners actively participate in sessions and show good development of skills. For example, in one lesson young men learned how to make turntable remixes, a skill which they could use in dance venues. In another, Asian women were learning about local democracy. By the end of the lesson, they could identify various problems in their own communities that fell within the scope of councillors. They also knew how to contact and raise issues with their local councillor.

53. Tutors use formal and informal methods of initial assessment. Learners are given regular feedback about their progress, but this is not always recorded. Individual learning plans have been introduced recently and they are being used with differing degrees of success. Some tutors use them to set short-term and long-term goals for learners, and to record their progress. In other cases, there are no action plans with timescales or targets.

54. Programmes are well planned to meet the needs of particular groups or communities. Some community education workers carry out local research to determine needs and interests. Learners help the development of the curriculum through user surveys, direct input, evaluations and membership of management committees. In one of the sessions observed, learners made suggestions for the kind of topics they would like to see included on their project. Staff find imaginative ways to engage hard-to-reach learners. The DJ skills course is a good example of this.

55. Tutors have a relevant range of qualifications and many have a teaching qualification. They regularly attend in-service training courses on specific subjects which are relevant to their work. For example, some tutors have achieved additional qualifications in teaching basic skills.

56. There is a high level of personal and practical support for learners. Tutors are highly committed and enthusiastic and have a good knowledge of the needs of learners and their communities. Individual support for learners during sessions is good. Often, at least two tutors share responsibility for the teaching. In a session for Asian women, a community education worker acted as interpreter. A variety of strategies are used to support learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs. Some learners have been

guided to specific literacy, numeracy and language provision, while others receive individual support from one of their own tutors who has been appropriately trained. For learners on the young women's project, transport to and from the centre, crèche facilities and lunch are provided. Support for learners who have a disability is good. On one course, all the sessions are tape recorded to support the needs of a partially sighted learner.

57. Quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. It is common practice to evaluate lessons, and some lesson observations have been carried out. Course reviews are carried out at the end of most courses, and learners are surveyed regularly for their views. However, data are not systematically collected and analysed. Only one centre's annual report contains a detailed breakdown of learners' achievements.

58. Learners say that the courses they have taken have had a dramatic impact on their lives, making them more confident and positive about learning, and more confident about themselves and their lives. They feel well supported by the tutors and by each other.

Good Practice

One community education project has a partnership with a Dutch organisation for youth offenders. The two organisations exchange learners at least once a year. The Dutch organisation has a ship which is used to help learners develop personal and team-building skills. Learners from the Gateshead project spend a week sailing on the ship while the Dutch learners spend a week on outdoor education activities in the Northeast.

Work with adults often leads to gains for younger people. In one instance, a Turkish woman who was on an ESOL course placed her two sons in the centre's junior youth club. The older one now plays cornet in the local silver band which practises at the centre. In another case, an Asian woman who was a regular user of a community education centre, showed a group of disaffected young men taking part in a healthy eating project how to make 72 chappatis from an 11p bag of flour.

Family learning**Grade 3**

59. Family learning is an integral part of the council's overall strategy for raising achievement, and a range of provision has been developed. During 2002-03 the authority has run five 60-hour family literacy programmes and four 48-hour family numeracy programmes. There have been 25 'keeping up with the children' programmes lasting 12 hours and three lasting 24 hours. 'Share' programmes, which involve parents making time to develop shared learning activities with their children, are a recent initiative and three of these are currently running. Courses take place during the school day, with the exception of one evening group. Materials which were developed during early projects have been shared with a number of primary schools in the borough. 'Early Start' programmes for parents with children aged three and under are also being piloted in the authority's two early excellence centres. All learners are part time and none of the programmes are accredited. Some groups include grandparents as well as parents. The authority employs a full time co-ordinator who is responsible for three part-time tutors from the local college of further education, 19 teachers who are employed by the local schools, five school staff working on the 'Share' projects and seven community education workers who are currently developing provision in the community. In 2001-02 there were 425 participating adults and 220 participating children on family learning programmes. Four per cent of the learners were men and there were no learners from minority ethnic groups. The retention rate across the programmes for 2001-02 was 81 per cent. At the time of inspection there were 634 learners, made up of 453 adults and 181 children. Four and a half per cent of learners were men and 4.5 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. The basic skills initial assessment is used with parents at the start of the family literacy and numeracy programmes.

STRENGTHS

- significant improvement in parents' ability to help their children
- good learning resources
- clear targeting of provision
- good partnerships

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate use of individual learning plans
- insufficient guidance on progression
- some poor accommodation

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more crèche provision

60. Family learning programmes lead to a significant improvement in parents' ability to help their children. Parents develop an understanding of the national curriculum and the variety of methods used in the teaching of literacy and numeracy to children. For example, some have learned how to introduce drama and interest into storytelling by making and using simple puppets, and in numeracy, some have learned how to use and explain the decomposition method of subtraction. Relationships between parents and schools have improved. Parents are more comfortable about talking to teachers, and staff have a better understanding of the families whose children they teach. Some learners improve their own mathematical understanding as a result of helping their children. One learner stated that she had learned more during the programme than she had during her own schooling. Parents' confidence in their ability to help their children has grown. Attendance on most programmes is good.

61. The quality of the teaching varies. Most lessons are well planned with a variety of teaching and learning activities and a good balance of teacher input and practical activities. The methods explored in the sessions with parents are carefully related to the work the children are doing in the classroom. However, some lessons are poorly planned and, in some cases, the pace is too slow. Learners are equipped with a range of appropriate resources, including notebooks, digit charts, tapes and files. They take home card, paper and books to continue activities with their children. Generally, learners do not have a clear overview of the aims of their programme and are unfamiliar with the scheme of work. Some tutors negotiate the content of programmes with learners, but learners are not always adequately informed to be able to make appropriate choices. Evaluation methods vary and systems are not always adhered to. Some teachers write their own evaluations at the end of each session. Learner evaluations are collected at the end of programmes but insufficient use is made of this information as a basis for further planning and development. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced.

62. In some schools learners have good access to facilities. For example, they are able to use the library one week and the computer suite the next, according to what they are learning. At some schools, the space is inappropriate, with some rooms cramped and others open plan and noisy. In some cases, the furniture is designed for small children and is inappropriate. Crèche provision is available at some sites, but there are several where it is not. This prevents some potential learners from participating.

63. Learners in the family literacy and numeracy groups have a basic skills assessment. Individual learning plans are used at the start of the programme to identify overall programme goals but they are not routinely updated. On the other programmes, initial assessment is carried out informally. All learners complete a learner profile form which

details their previous education. Learners' progress during the programme is not recorded in a detailed or meaningful way.

64. Tutors are sensitive to the needs of individual learners and offer a considerable amount of informal support and guidance. The programmes are very successful in fostering an interest in learning, but there is insufficient guidance on progression routes.

65. Tutors are given good support by the family learning co-ordinator, who visits them at least once during each programme. However, there is no lesson observation scheme as yet, and tutors are not given any formal feedback on their teaching. The council is supporting a fast-track training scheme to overcome a shortfall in the number of staff available to teach.

66. The family learning project has strong partnerships with internal and external organisations, including the local college of further education, schools, the early years service and the North-east family learning partnership. Partnership working has led to a significant growth in the range and number of programmes available. The number of adults who have taken part so far in 2002-03, is the same as the number for the whole of 2001-02. Provision is targeted at hard-to-reach learners using local indices of deprivation, ward ranking and school achievement data, and recruitment is generally good. Publicity is carried out by the schools, using a variety of methods, including invitations to parents to attend an introductory coffee morning. Once a programme is established, it starts to attract new participants by word of mouth.

67. Learners enjoy the programmes and feel they have benefited from them. They say that their children are always really pleased to see them in school and that the children also enjoy family learning sessions. Some learners express a wish for greater clarity about what the programmes involve at the start.

Good Practice

At the end of the family literacy and numeracy programmes a celebration event is held which brings all the groups together. Each group brings a display of their work, such as photographs of activities and books and games that learners have made during the sessions. Each family is presented with a certificate of attendance and a children's book which they have chosen.

Community learning**Grade 1**

68. Community capacity building is an explicit and primary aim of the council's learning and culture directorate. Its community education curriculum emphasises the importance of furthering community empowerment by enabling people to play an active role in local decision-making, develop the skills of community leadership and self-advocacy and increase their understanding of democratic processes. Inspectors examined the three main areas of activity that contribute to the development of community capacity building in Gateshead. These are the involvement of local residents in community education management committees, the development of volunteers, and a range of learning opportunities, both formal and informal, designed to develop leadership skills.

69. Much of the activity takes place in the service's 76 community education centres. Seventy of these are based in local communities, and most run programmes for young people and adults. Six projects operate on a borough-wide basis and have been developed in response to specific problems. For example, the young women's project was established to meet the needs of isolated and vulnerable young women with children. All centres and projects have their own management committee, and all offer opportunities for community capacity building through participation in that committee.

STRENGTHS

- positive impact of learning and community action on the lives of local people
- good development of management committees
- good development of volunteers as professional workers
- wide range of opportunities for learners to develop their community leadership skills
- very skilled community education workers
- strong commitment to community development by the council

WEAKNESSES

- some poor accommodation

70. The service's community capacity building activities make a significant impact on the quality of life in local communities and plays an important part in strengthening community infrastructures.

71. Local people of all ages are well represented on management committees. People from minority ethnic groups are also well represented. Some committees have made

significant improvements to their environment. For example, one campaigned successfully to improve community policing in the area. Another secured lottery funding for a new building. Committee members have a good understanding of local democratic processes and understand the workings of local authority finance and external funding regimes. They use the specialist terminology associated with these knowledgeably and confidently. The presence of elected members on management committees enables other members to gain an insight into the workings of local democracy and to put the case for their own community. Management committees are well run and members are familiar with committee structures. They take on responsible roles, and understand how to exercise those responsibilities. Some management committee members have found that meetings provide them with an opportunity to break down cultural barriers, and develop an understanding of each other's perspectives. Local people demonstrate a high level of mutual support and a commitment to their community. Older people, in particular, talk about their desire to reinvest in a community which has supported them, and many people carry out several roles in this pursuit.

72. Teaching on courses for management committee members is good. In one very effective session, learners increased their knowledge of the 'Disabilities Discrimination Act 1995' and made practical action plans to apply their knowledge in their own centres.

73. A high value is placed on the contribution that volunteers make to the process of community capacity building. Volunteers are given a lot of encouragement and support from salaried staff. A clear career route is available to them, with professionally accredited training at each stage of progression. There are many examples of people progressing in this way. From the 266 learners who have taken accredited community education worker courses over the past 15 years, 186 have taken up part-time paid work in the service and five have become full-time workers. In addition, others are working in other council departments or public sector organisations. Many of those who start as volunteers have few or no previous qualifications. Their achievements and experience provide encouragement for others. One man sought basic skills help for himself, and then qualified as a community education worker and went on to university. Teaching on the course for volunteers is good. The most recent course has a retention rate of 94 per cent. Tutors are skilled in facilitating groups and use a range of appropriate methods to check progress and evaluate learning. These include evaluation sheets completed by individual learners, and group evaluations typed up and held in a portfolio by an individual group member.

74. There are many other opportunities for learners to develop community leadership skills. Some of this learning takes place informally, with limited support from professional workers, and often involves people learning from their peers. For example, one group of residents is campaigning to change the use of nearby land. Their group is self-managing, with each member carrying out tasks designated by the whole group. Group members can give a good account of their progress in relation to their goals. Occasional guidance from the community education worker helps them move their plan forward. At one management committee meeting, one of the members confidently

explained to others how to waterproof tents and how to meet health and safety requirements on a forthcoming community camping trip. Good use is made of residential courses to increase people's confidence in meeting new challenges and to help them develop team-building skills. Learners are involved in the planning and fund-raising before the events. They describe their experiences as 'life changing'. For example, on one residential weekend, the fathers cared for the children while the mothers followed their own programme of activities.

75. Community education workers are very skilled and are well respected by local people. They have an excellent knowledge of the communities and groups with which they work, and have well-developed networks of contacts with agencies and individuals. They use these to good effect to encourage people into learning and to refer them to the college. Learners value the level of personal support they are given by community education workers. This support often continues when they no longer have direct contact with a programme or initiative.

76. The council has a strong commitment to community development and this is reflected in its values and in its strategic plans. It is also reflected in its practice. Each year the council makes an award in recognition of the contribution volunteers have made to the quality of local life. A number of the volunteers working in the youth and community learning service have received this award. Local councillors play an active role in centre management committees. The council makes a significant investment in the infrastructure necessary for effective community development by maintaining a large number of community venues. Many of these are in good condition, but two in economically deprived areas are poor and repairs can take a long time.

77. Many positive statements were received, including one from a member of a management committee, one from a full-time qualified community education worker who started as a volunteer and one from a full-time qualified community education worker.

Good Practice

Young adults who have been involved in youth work activities are encouraged to become volunteers, and are well represented on community centre management committees alongside adults.

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	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	Mentor	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	Main 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.
	Secondary learning goals	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.