

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Hillcroft College**

**15 February 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

Hillcroft College is a charity and a company limited by guarantee, located in Surbiton in the southwest of London. It is a residential college for women, which offers learning programmes in information technology, professional development, access to higher education courses, foundation courses including basic skills, English for speakers of other languages, personal development and assertiveness courses, and a wide range of capacity-building and community leadership courses.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of provision in management and professional is satisfactory, as is the quality of humanities. The quality of foundation programmes is good. The quality of leadership and management and quality assurance are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is good.

### GRADES

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

Areas of learning	Grade
Business administration, management & professional	3
Humanities	3
Foundation programmes	2

### KEY STRENGTHS

- fully inclusive management style
- good management of information and communications technology resources
- effective management of equality of opportunity
- effective use of learners' feedback
- good personal and learning development

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate advice and guidance for learners on progression routes

## HILLCROFT COLLEGE

- inadequate access for people with restricted mobility
- fragmented quality assurance
- weak recording of learners' progress

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more systematic development of recruitment practices

## THE INSPECTION

1. Six inspectors spent a total of 30 days at Hillcroft College (Hillcroft) in February 2003. They observed 22 lessons, carried out 73 interviews with learners, 74 interviews with members of staff and interviewed the college's governors and eight external partners. Inspectors examined a range of documents, including learners' work, assessment records, external examiners' reports, a range of strategic development plans, action plans, review documents, policies, procedures, and minutes from meetings. They also studied the most recent self-assessment report and development plan, which was produced in June 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	3	2	3	0	0	0	8
Humanities	1	1	2	3	0	0	0	7
Foundation programmes	0	1	1	5	0	0	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>per cent</b>	<b>50.00%</b>		<b>50.00%</b>		<b>0.00%</b>			

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. Hillcroft is a charity and a company limited by guarantee, based in Surbiton, southwest London. It is a residential college for women, which provides full-time and part-time learning programmes for women who are disadvantaged educationally or socially and enables them to progress into higher education, vocational training and employment. Just under half the learners are aged 19-40 and just over half 41 and above, and a significant proportion are unemployed and from minority ethnic groups.

3. Hillcroft recruits nationally and attracts learners from across the country, as well as from London, and has good public transport links. The college has 52 study bedrooms, some with children's accommodation, a learning resource centre, and a nursery for 10 children. The college has a contract with London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

4. Hillcroft offers courses in information technology (IT), professional development, access to higher education, foundation programmes, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), personal development and assertiveness courses, and a wide range of capacity-building and community leadership courses. All of its courses are residential, apart from some in IT. At the time of the inspection, there were 52 learners in residence. In 2001-02, 512 learners made 843 enrolments. The college employs six senior tutors and 24 part-time specialist teaching staff.

5. In May 2002, the unemployment rate for London was 3.6 per cent, compared with 3 per cent nationally. According to the 1991 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in London is 20.2 per cent, compared with a national average of 6.2 per cent.

### Adult and Community Learning

6. The provision in all areas inspected is satisfactory or better. Learners make good progress and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Some lessons make effective use of practical exercises to develop learners' understanding, and the college uses some good course materials. A few lessons do not make sufficient use of the full range of resources available. Learners with specific needs are well supported, and staff are sensitive to learners' individual needs. Women from minority ethnic groups are particularly well represented on some courses. Teaching does not always take sufficient account of the learning needs of those who speak English as an additional language. Some learning programmes do not record learners' progress and achievements effectively. IT is well managed across the college and the learning resource centre is well resourced and fully available 24 hours each day. Managers welcome and value contributions from staff and learners. Learners' feedback is sought and used regularly. The college offers learners particularly good levels of personal support and the residential setting provides them with an effective learning environment free from distraction.



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## Grade 3

7. The college is managed by a principal and four directors, who comprise the senior management team. The directors are responsible for personnel, finance and information, resources and support services, and student learning. The principal and senior management team report directly to the board of governors, which determines the college's strategic direction. There are currently 13 governors, one of whom is the college's principal. The college's policies include equality of opportunity, harassment and bullying, complaints, grievances, appeals, and health and safety.

8. Five full-time senior tutors are each responsible for an area of learning and manage a team of part-time, hourly paid staff. The senior tutors report directly to the director of student learning. There are 24 part-time specialist teaching staff who work regularly in the college. The director of resources and support services is responsible for a team of staff who support the residential provision. These include a full-time nursery manager, a full-time learning resource manager, a part-time assistant, and kitchen staff. There is a full-time resident warden and two part-time wardens. Technical and maintenance support staff make up the rest of the team. A full-time administrative assistant supports the director of personnel and resources. The principal is supported by a full-time administration assistant, who also supports the finance director.

### STRENGTHS

- good use of data for management decisions
- fully inclusive management style
- good management of information and communications technology (ICT) resources
- effective management of equality of opportunity
- effective use of learners' feedback
- thorough self-assessment and action-planning

### WEAKNESSES

- inadequate advice and guidance for learners on progression routes
- weak planning of the allocation of resources
- inadequate access for people with restricted mobility
- fragmented quality assurance
- no overall assessment and internal verification strategy

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more systematic development of recruitment practices
- better planning for observation of learning

9. The college collects a wide range of data and uses it effectively to make management decisions. Different management groups analyse data regularly to establish whether priority target groups are recruited and to assess the college's progress towards its strategic aims and targets. Information about learners is analysed carefully to indicate the balance of the recruited learner group and is used to target under-represented groups. The senior management team and board of governors make full use of data in strategic and financial planning. The senior management team analyses trends over time and modifies the curriculum accordingly. Staff receive reports through the weekly briefing meetings and other communication. Senior tutors use termly reports about learners' achievement to monitor learners' progress. The college uses benchmarking data supplied by its local LSC to compare its achievements with similar colleges.

10. Hillcroft has a fully inclusive management style. Staff at all levels of the college have a good understanding of the mission statements and targets in the strategic plan. All staff have a broad knowledge of the needs of the priority groups outlined in the plan, and contributed to the plan. The weekly staff meeting is well attended. Staff are confident they can contribute to a free and open exchange of ideas, and are fully aware of the wide range of activities for the coming week. Additionally, a number of working groups contribute to decision-making about new developments and monitoring the effective running of the college. Learners are encouraged to participate in these groups. However, it is not clear how the involvement of some staff in more than one group has an impact on staff resources. Governors are well known by staff and are fully involved in the consultations and decision-making process. There is good evidence of effective, open and valued consultation with external partners.

11. The college's management of ICT is good. There are good ICT resources and all computers have access to the Internet. One workstation in each room is adapted for wheelchair users and there is specialist software available for learners with dyslexia. There are IT classes specially for learners with dyslexia. Software to support study skills, ESOL, numeracy and literacy and the curriculum areas is also available. The open access room is open 24 hours each day and learners can use the teaching room when there are no classes timetabled in there. The resources are especially well used during the evening learning sessions, which take place twice each week to provide language and learning support.

12. Advice and guidance for learners about progression into employment or further education and training is inadequate. Advice is available from a qualified information advice and guidance worker through an external partner of the college and can be booked for individuals or groups. Most full-time tutors are aware of the guidance available but part-time staff are not. None of the college's staff are qualified in advice and guidance even at an initial level. Staff awareness of opportunities to access higher education is good, but it is weaker about vocational opportunities. The learning resource centre holds few stimulating resources relevant to the learners that Hillcroft aims to attract.

13. Hillcroft has done some good work in the past year to improve its marketing materials. The college's publicity materials reflect course contents but do not indicate clearly enough the benefits to the learners. While some of the college's partners tailor materials to reflect specific needs, the materials are not generally customised to the needs of particular target groups. New regional development worker posts have been created to work on recruiting learners from across the country but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

14. Planning for the allocation of resources to meet all learners' needs is weak. For example, a tutor qualified to teach English as a foreign language teaches English as an additional language. Several appointments to key roles have been made in the last eight months. The allocation of essential physical resources is slow, and a few learners are on their course for some time before receiving their learning support resources. Learners on programmes lasting over one month are entitled to structured additional learning support. Those on shorter courses are given support as needed. General staff training includes planning learning for people with multiple disadvantages, and staff are trained in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). However, there has been little training in relation to literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 2**

15. Management of equality of opportunity is effective. The college has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy, which includes reference to recent legislation, a race discrimination document, policies on bullying and harassment, a complaints procedure and a disability/access statement. Staff have had training relating to disability discrimination and the associated legislation and there is also a learners' handbook. Many learners are members of internal college committees, such as the equality and diversity committee and the accessibility working party, both of which support the development of good practice in the college.

16. Minority ethnic groups are well represented among the college's academic staff, who have extensive experience of working with disadvantaged women. The college works with a number of partners to recruit learners. Analysis of learner recruitment is detailed and used to measure achievement against targets. In 2001-02, approximately 80 per cent of learners were from widening participation categories, 42 per cent were from a minority ethnic background and 6 per cent had a disability. On one course, 80 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. The college recruits across the full age range, with just under half of its learners aged between 19 and 40 years old. Only 12 per cent are 61 or over. Most learners are unemployed.

17. Hillcroft offers good practical and personal support for learners. The college provides free nursery facilities on site and several bedrooms can accommodate lone mothers and their children. Access to the library is good and the computer suite is open 24 hours each day. A technician and duty manager are available on Saturday mornings and a resident warden is available at all times. Learners can apply to a number of the college's funds for specific support with course fees, accommodation, living expenses, or practical tools. Laptops are available for residential learners to use and dyslexic learners have the use of personal dictation machines and note-takers in lessons. The college has provided furniture and adjustable tables at the correct height for wheelchair users and ensured that an accessible toilet and shower are available.

18. The residential provision offers a supportive and secure environment for the learners. The college is set in its own secluded grounds and provides a tranquil learning environment. For many women, it is their first real opportunity to concentrate on their own learning, without the distractions of demanding families or the pressures of everyday life. The learners appreciate the college's welcoming atmosphere and partner organisations confirm that this environment supports vulnerable learners in their first positive experience of learning.

19. Staff are highly sensitive to learners' support needs and a qualified counsellor is available at the college. The tutorial system enables the learners to discuss their concerns and they participate in the consultation processes to improve the range of support available. For example, learners with different disabilities assess the college for accessibility, which improves their self-confidence and raises the profile of their opinions and needs.

20. Access to the college for people with restricted mobility is inadequate. The building is Victorian and has many different levels joined by stairs and heavy wooden doors. The washing facilities in the study bedrooms are unsuitable for wheelchair users. The building has listed building status and many of the required changes cannot be carried out. However, the college makes careful arrangements for learners with restricted mobility, placing them in the most accessible rooms nearest to the teaching areas. The college has installed several ramps and arranged for special access through the learning resource centre directly into the dining area.

## Quality assurance

## Contributory grade 3

21. The college uses a wide range of effective methods to obtain learners' feedback, such as regular mid-term progress reviews and end-of-term evaluations. The college analyses learners' feedback regularly and uses it effectively to bring about changes. Regular meetings between senior staff, staff and learners help to develop positive relationships. Learners confidently discuss problems and raise concerns at these meetings. Simple logbooks for reporting minor complaints, such as repairs, enable a quick response. Learners are well represented on college committees and their representatives report back to them through the students' union.

22. The college carries out lesson observations for all teaching staff. The documents used set out clear criteria for the observation. Tutors are given helpful and detailed written feedback. However, there is no planned annual schedule of lesson observations. Although the college has observed some staff three times in four months, others have not been observed at all.

23. Self-assessment and action-planning is thorough. Continuous improvement is clearly a focus of both the self-assessment process and report. The college involves its academic, administrative and support staff, and learners, in developing its self-assessment report, which is evaluative, self-critical, and draws on a wide range of appropriate evidence. The report and action plans are detailed and contain many judgements which closely match the findings of inspectors. The report is validated through the college's academic board and governing council. The college reviews progress regularly against the action plan.

24. The college's quality assurance procedures are fragmented and it is unclear how new staff are made familiar with them. Some managers have developed their own quality assurance procedures, which do not clearly link into a coherent quality assurance system. For example, although the detailed annual review of learning programmes contributes to the self-assessment process, it is not clear how it supports fundamental improvements or leads to curriculum development. It is unclear when, or how frequently, quality assurance activities should take place. There is a planned internal audit from which action points are followed up, but it is unclear how this contributes to continuous improvement. There are two committees related to quality assurance, each with a different area of responsibility. The scope of these responsibilities is unclear. For example, the remit for the internal quality assurance committee refers to its role to ensure that all college activity is monitored effectively, but its agendas and minutes do not indicate that it is going this far. Some minutes from committees do not identify action points, timescales, or who is responsible, with sufficient clarity. It is not always clearly recorded when actions are completed.

25. The college has no overall assessment and internal verification strategy. There is no shared understanding about learners' entitlement to appropriate assessment for different forms and levels of learning. Initial assessment and target-setting are insufficiently developed. Assessment and internal verification for accredited learning is specific to

each programme. Non-accredited learning is not currently assessed, but developments for assessment of these courses are at the pilot stage. Individual awarding body requirements are met, but tutors from different learning programmes are not sharing good practice in assessment and standards across the college. For example, some tutors use standard marking sheets and plot learners' marks on a spreadsheet, but this is not common to every learning programme. Another tutor has a system for retaining copies of assessed work, but this has not been adopted as standard practice to help establish the consistency of assessment decisions.

#### **Good Practice**

*Staff at all levels are sensitive to the learners' individual needs. An IT tutor adapted a learning session so that a deaf learner could lip-read more easily and was not disadvantaged in practical sessions.*

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### **Business administration, management & professional**

### **Grade 3**

26. Hillcroft runs three certificated management courses. The more comprehensive management course consists of 350 guided learning hours spread over three one-week blocks and 11 weekends. Learners can take additional modules in ICT and personal development as part of the course. Another course is specifically aimed at black women working towards self-employment and consists of 120 guided learning hours spread over five weekends. There is also an introductory certificate course in management consisting of 50-60 guided learning hours over three weekends, or two weeks of intensive study. In 2001-02, six learners enrolled on the certificate course in management, 15 enrolled on the self-employment course, and 16 enrolled on the introductory certificate course in management.

27. For 2002-03, 13 learners out of 18 who originally enrolled on the certificate in management course are on the point of completing and a further 19 have just started. Out of 12 learners who enrolled on the introductory certificate course in management, eight learners have just completed it. These two latter groups of learners are awaiting formal notification of their results. Only one of these courses was in college at the time of the inspection.

28. Most of the learners are from minority ethnic groups, with ages ranging from 21 to 59 years. A full-time senior course tutor leads this area of learning. Other specialist tutors work part time.

### **STRENGTHS**

- good personal and learning development
- good course materials and practical exercises
- flexible scheduling of courses
- good representation of women from minority ethnic groups

### **WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient attention to learners who use English as an additional language
- insufficient arrangements to meet learners' additional support needs on short courses
- inadequate recording of learners' progress



## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- greater reference to gender-specific issues in course content
- further development of distance learning and support strategies

29. Achievement rates are satisfactory and most learners who complete their studies achieve their learning goals and obtain a qualification. In 2001-02, the achievement rates for the self-employment course and the introductory certificate in management course were 67 per cent and 63 per cent respectively. For the full certificate in management, the achievement rate was 50 per cent. All these achievement rates are based on the numbers who started learning, not the numbers who took the final assessment. Learners make good progress from one college course to another. For example, 12 of the learners on the full certificate in management course completed the college's shorter introductory course.

30. Retention rates are satisfactory. In 2001-02, approximately one third of learners did not continue their courses beyond the early stages. In 2002-03, the retention rate for those learners completing the certificate course is 72 per cent. The retention rate for the groups that have completed the other two courses is 66 per cent.

31. Most teaching is satisfactory and some is very good. Course materials are informative, well presented and often incorporate points made at previous sessions. Good use is made of practical activities to enable learners to develop an understanding of management theory. All sessions have clear aims and objectives, and involve a variety of activities to maintain learners' interest and encourage them to work collaboratively. For example, games are used to help them review group processes and identify features of effective team leadership. Learners contribute well to sessions and make some perceptive comments on their own and each other's performance. Written work confirms that learners have a good understanding of their subject.

32. Hillcroft schedules its courses flexibly, in order to meet the needs of learners with different home and work commitments. After consultation with learners, the college changed the format of the certificate in management course. Enrolments to the course increased significantly. The new, two-week intensive introductory certificate course is aimed specifically at unemployed women.

33. The college succeeds in attracting a high proportion of women from minority ethnic groups. For example, 80 per cent of learners who have recently joined the certificate in management course are from a minority ethnic group. Most learners come from the greater London area and learners from outside this area are under-represented. Learners are very positive about their experience at the college, their growing understanding of management theory and practice, their increased confidence and their raised career aspirations. Insufficient attention is given on all courses to matters that are relevant to women in the workplace, such as low pay and long hours. Women's

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perspectives on organisations and how they work are not fully reflected in course materials. The college has begun to tackle this on the certificate course, but has not yet reviewed its practice more widely.

34. Tutors do not pay sufficient attention to the significant proportion of learners who use English as an additional language. Tutors have few strategies for ensuring that these learners understand key points and contribute fully to the lesson. In IT lessons, teachers do not draw sufficiently on learners' prior learning and experience.

35. The college has insufficient arrangements to meet the additional support needs of learners on short courses. Learners on the certificate course in management carry out a self-assessment of their own literacy, numeracy and IT skills, which they discuss with the course tutor. Their first written assignment is referred to the additional learning support manager who assesses what help the learners require. This assessment process takes too long from the time learners start their course, and there is no equivalent assessment of the speaking and listening skills of learners who speak English as an additional language. Non-residential learners have access to telephone and email tutorial support, but the college has not developed other distance learning strategies.

36. The college does not maintain sufficiently comprehensive records of learners' progress, although learners receive detailed, and constructive feedback on their written and oral work. There is no comprehensive record of learners' prior knowledge and experience, their progress on all aspects of their programme, additional learning support, and their destination when they leave.

37. The college has revised its selection procedures to match learners to courses more appropriately. It has a comprehensive course guide for learners on the certificate course in management, which covers all aspects of their life at the college, including course content and key policy statements. It has a mentoring scheme for learners starting the certificate course, so that they have access to support while they are not resident. Last year's learners did not receive enough careers guidance and advice.

### Good Practice

*The college encourages learners to draw upon their workplace experiences or topics they are interested in for their assignments. For example, one learner produced recommendations about improving the workplace to comply with disability regulations.*

**Humanities****Grade 3**

38. The college offers courses leading to a higher education certificate in combined studies and a certificate of credit rating. There are 25 learners on the higher education certificate programme, who began their course in September 2002. A further nine learners joined in January 2003 and are working towards the certificate of credit rating. The course comprises a range of modules, each of which lasts 10 weeks and includes learning skills, which is mandatory for all new students, behavioural biology, theory and practice of computing, women and social policy, and reading literature. A foundation module ran in the September term and is mandatory for those on the full certificate course. Numeracy and IT entitlement are also available. Both certificate courses were revalidated in November 2002. The tutorial team changes in response to specific modules and currently comprises seven tutors. A senior tutor is responsible for this area of learning, including a return to learn course, which the college offers several times each year for all learners starting the higher education certificate course.

**STRENGTHS**

- good progress by learners towards achieving their learning goals
- well-planned lessons and individual modules
- thorough assessment of learners' attainment and progress
- good support for learners with specific needs

**WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient planning and design of the curriculum to match learners' individual starting points
- some unimaginative teaching
- no systematic working with higher education institutions or other partners

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more monitoring of learning in the classroom

39. Learners make good progress towards achieving their learning goals. Their achievements are marked by a significant increase in self-esteem and confidence, which further raises their aspirations and encourages progress to other modules. The learners interviewed were enthusiastic about their improved confidence during the programme. Achievement rates on individual modules are good, at an average of 84 per cent between 2000-02. However, full achievement on the certificate in higher education was 48 per cent in 2001-02. These achievement rates are based on the numbers who

started learning, not the numbers who took the final assessment.

40. Lessons and individual modules are well planned. Clear, written aims are given to the learner for individual sessions and for the overall module. Lesson plans contain some differentiation and reinforcement, and the individual modules are structured clearly. All the tutors have appropriate subject expertise.

41. Learners' attainment and progress are assessed thoroughly. The initial assessment of learners' abilities and needs forms part of the learners' profile, which is monitored throughout the module or programme. All learners on these courses are assigned a personal tutor and their grades are carefully recorded. Marking is carried out against clear criteria. Feedback on coursework is concise, thorough and constructive, with clear recommendations for improvement.

42. Learners with additional support needs are well supported. All of the tutors observed were fully aware of additional learning needs. Different coloured handouts and large print copies are available for learners with partial sight, and tutors encourage use of personal dictation machines. An additional learning support tutor attends the lessons and takes notes for two dyslexic learners. The tutor also gives weekly support to four other learners on the course and extends the additional learning support when it is required. The availability of additional learning support has been significantly increased since December 2002. Learners are enthusiastic about the learning resources centre and the support of the staff involved, who are highly sensitive to their particular needs. Learners recognise that support from staff improves the learners' experience and encourages their progress. Learners also see the college's residential status as a significant, positive factor in their personal, social and academic growth.

43. The curriculum is not sufficiently well planned to match learners' individual learning needs. The outcomes of quality assurance processes have not had enough impact on the curriculum. Some learners now start the programme at a lower level than in the past, others begin with the intention of achieving the certificate of credit rating, rather than the full certificate. The review and revalidation of the learning programme has not sufficiently recognised these changes. There are fewer modules available for study and the programme's ability to match a range of learners' needs and interests is limited.

44. Some of the teaching is unimaginative and too focused on the tutor, which does not engage the learners sufficiently. Tutors do not always make the best use of the teaching and learning resources available and rely too heavily on paper-based resources rather than ICT. Some tutors check on learning but it is not evident in all the sessions.

45. Hillcroft has no system for working with higher education institutions, or other partners for those learners who do not intend to progress to higher education. The college relies too heavily on personal contacts and temporary, informal arrangements, which limits the effectiveness of the advice and guidance on progression it provides.

**Foundation programmes****Grade 2**

46. Foundation programmes at Hillcroft incorporate two major elements of the college's work. The language and learning development programmes includes discrete courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The personal development skills programmes are aimed at helping women gain confidence and personal skills. Most foundation courses last between two and five days. Topics covered include assertiveness training, women's health, parenting skills and courses for carers and older people. An arts course is offered at a women's refuge. None of these personal development courses leads to a qualification, but the college awards a certificate to learners who have completed a course. Nine learners are on the college's five-day ESOL programme. Most of these learners are also on ESOL courses run by adult and further education colleges and have an interest in progressing to further or higher education, or vocational training. The programme aims to help women who would like to continue their studies, but are held back by their poor English. Learners have the option of attending additional five-day or weekend courses after the initial programme. A separate four-week ESOL programme is offered in July and August. Some learners on both courses take a nationally recognised assessment of spoken English. Hillcroft also runs a four-week course several times throughout the year for women who want to improve their literacy and numeracy and progress to further study. In 2001-02, 125 learners attended 12 different language and learning courses.

47. A senior tutor is responsible for language and learning development, planning and the running of the courses. The college employs part-time tutors for the duration of each course. The post of senior tutor in personal development skills is vacant.

**STRENGTHS**

- effective partnerships to widen participation for under-represented groups
- well-designed and imaginative learning programmes
- good progress by learners towards achieving their learning goals
- effective evaluation of learning programmes

**WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient focus on learners' language learning needs
- insufficient recording of learners' achievements on personal development programmes

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more effective marketing

48. Hillcroft has established effective links with a wide range of community organisations that support women from disadvantaged groups. The college's staff work well with these partners to develop learning opportunities for women who would not otherwise be able to participate. These women come from target groups identified in the college's mission statement and strategic plan, and include carers, single parents, and women living in refuges. Many have significant barriers to learning and have few or no formal educational qualifications. Staff respond quickly when an organisation contacts them for the first time to explore the possibilities of setting up new courses. This collaborative work is thorough, incorporating careful consideration of the social and development needs of the target group of learners. For example, the aim of the course for carers is to give them respite from their daily routine and therefore precludes them from bringing their dependants. On the other hand, increased childcare provision has enabled some learners to attend a course and has led to the development of family learning courses for mothers and their children.

49. Hillcroft's courses are imaginative, well planned and appropriate to the learners. For example, the courses in personal development skills cover a wide range of appropriate subjects, such as training in assertiveness and women's health. Some courses provide learners with specific skills or specialist knowledge, such as the courses in photography. Other courses are effectively designed to provide learners with an opportunity to recognise their existing skills and to encourage them to continue their education and training. Tutors effectively incorporate the college's facilities and local amenities into course plans, providing an appropriate mix of learning, personal development and social activities. Most courses include activities to develop learners' IT skills.

50. Learners participate well in learning activities and make good progress in developing their personal skills and achieving their learning goals. All learners attending the college's foundation programmes since August 2002 have completed the short course. They receive much personal support and make good progress in learning literacy, language and numeracy skills. Achievement rates on the four-week summer ESOL programme are good. Twenty-three of the 26 learners on the course achieved a nationally recognised certificate in spoken English. Of the seven learners who were on the four-week literacy and numeracy course that started in November 2002, three passed the national literacy and numeracy tests and one succeeded in the literacy test. Learners benefit from the good IT resources and skilful teaching in IT, and make good progress in developing IT skills. Most learners also acquire knowledge and skills they can use at home. For example, the learners attending the course about women's health gain a better understanding of their diets.

51. The college evaluates its learning programmes effectively. Staff make good use of feedback from learners and tutors to plan new programmes and adapt existing ones. External partners make a valuable contribution to this process. Substantial

improvements have been made to some of the learning activities and the organisation of some courses in response to this feedback. Programme reviews have also led to fundamental changes in the curriculum and additional learning support, such as methods of reviewing learners' progress throughout the four-week language and learning programmes. Staff continue to review and adapt the programme in the light of changes. All observations of learning sessions took place on the five-day ESOL programme, which was the only programme running in the week of the inspection. All the observed teaching and learning was satisfactory or better.

52. A high proportion of learners on foundation programmes return to Hillcroft to attend another course. In 2001-02, 28 learners attended at least two courses, and six attended five courses. Six of these learners progressed to the college's course in access to higher education. However, learners do not receive sufficient careers advice and guidance, and are unaware of possible progression routes other than those within Hillcroft.

53. There is insufficient focus on learners' language learning needs. Hillcroft's learning sessions are well structured and learners gain a good understanding of the background to reading, writing and speaking skills, but tutors do not have sufficient expertise in teaching ESOL. The tutors do not make sufficient use of the results of initial assessments carried out before the start of the course. Teaching and learning support materials are satisfactory, but tutors do not adapt learning activities sufficiently to help learners improve specific language skills. Tutors do not confirm that all of the learners understand the concepts they are presenting or give them sufficient opportunities to practise.

54. The college has recognised that it does not record learners' progress sufficiently. Staff are developing systems for identifying and recording learners' individual learning needs. Learners do not receive sufficiently specific feedback on their progress and the college does not adequately measure achievement on foundation courses that do not lead to qualifications.

55. Marketing materials used to promote the programmes are weak. They provide a list of the activities planned, but give little information on how learners benefit from attending the course. Many learners come to Hillcroft on recommendation from partner organisations or from previous or current learners. Recruitment on some courses is low. Only 16 of the 24 courses planned to run between August 2002 and February 2003 went ahead. The college recognises this problem, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of its strategies to rectify it, which include visits to ESOL learners at local colleges and the development of further links with national organisations.

56. Learners appreciate residential courses. They are pleased to be able to return to learning on a short intensive course in a supportive environment. They particularly value the support given by staff and tutors, and the fact that they can use the learning resource centre at any time. Most learners find the activities enjoyable and are pleased that they can attend more than one course. Many learners find their course particularly

effective in helping them realise that they have the ability to study at a higher level.

#### **Good Practice**

*Hillcroft is particularly responsive to the needs of individual learners on foundation programmes and provides high levels of specialist personal support. For example, courses for carers are structured around the learners, who receive sensitive and skilled support from staff who recognise the difficulties experienced by learners away from their dependants for the first time. One of the tutors is a trained counsellor who provides a good service to all learners on foundation programmes.*



## 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	
<b>Provider</b>	<b>Provider</b>	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
<b>Learner</b>	<b>Learner</b>	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
<b>Teacher / trainer</b>	<b>Tutor</b>  <b>Mentor</b>	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.
<b>Learning goals</b>	<b>Main learning goals</b>  <b>Secondary learning goals</b>	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.
<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	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
<b>Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome</b>	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.
<b>Subject-based programme</b>	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.
<b>Issue-based programme</b>	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.
<b>Outreach provision</b>	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.
<b>Neighbourhood-based work</b>	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.
<b>Community regeneration</b>	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.

<b>Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning</b>	
<b>Community capacity building</b>	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.
<b>Active citizenship</b>	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.