

INSPECTION REPORT

Herefordshire Council

27 January 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

Herefordshire Council provides adult and community learning services to rural and urban communities within Herefordshire. Four areas of learning were inspected: information and communications technology; sports and leisure; foundation skills; and family learning. The other areas of learning provided by Herefordshire Council were not inspected because either numbers were too low, or they are funded by sources outside the scope of this inspection.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of provision in family learning is good. It is satisfactory for learners in information and communications technology, sports and leisure, and foundation programmes. Leadership and management, equal opportunities and quality assurance are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Areas of learning	Grade
Information & communications technology	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Foundation programmes	3
Family learning	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- strong partnership work widens participation
- good progress towards the achievement of clear strategic objectives
- good staff development and training
- good achievement levels
- good standard of teaching and learning

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient resources for expansion of provision
- weak management of the subcontracted provision
- inadequate analysis and use of data for planning and target-setting
- incomplete quality assurance procedures
- poor promotion of equality of opportunity

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recognition of learners' achievements

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of seven inspectors spent a total of 34 days at Herefordshire Council (the Council) in January 2003. They interviewed 111 learners, carried out 64 interviews with staff and made 27 visits to different community learning sites. The inspectors observed and graded 24 learning sessions. They examined a range of documents, including learners' work, curriculum paperwork, individual learning plans, policies and procedures and minutes of meetings. The inspectors studied the Council's most recent self-assessment report and adult learning plan. Both were produced in March 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	5
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	2	3	4	0	0	0	9
Foundation programmes	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	5
Family learning	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	5
Total	0	9	9	6	0	0	0	24
per cent	75.00%			25.00%	0.00%			

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Herefordshire Council became a unitary authority in April 1998. Prior to the formation of the new unitary authority, the main responsibility for the provision of adult and community learning in Herefordshire lay with the local further education college. The Council's involvement in adult and community learning began in April 1999 with the appointment of a lifelong learning development officer.

3. The Council's lifelong learning strategic objective is to bring adult learning to both rural and urban communities in Herefordshire which have been previously excluded from a range of learning opportunities. Its main emphasis is on the provision of entry level courses and this is recognised in the Council's mission statement. The Council's direct provision is mainly delivered through two projects managed by its lifelong learning development unit. The first of these involves the use of laptop computers to provide basic information and communications technology (ICT) courses in community venues. The second project supports a variety of family learning activities and courses in family centres, primary and secondary schools and pre-school groups. The Council also subcontracts its provision to two main training providers. The local college of further education is the largest subcontractor, offering a range of general adult education courses in arts and crafts and sports and leisure. The Council also provides and co-ordinates a number of other projects. It works in partnership with local businesses, voluntary organisations, community groups, schools, universities and other Council departments to organise, support and provide adult and community learning. The Council uses more than 50 venues in Herefordshire. Ten lifelong learning development groups and five subject-based thematic groups have been set up across the county to identify the learning needs of local communities and to organise provision in partnership with other organisations.

4. Enrolments on the Council's subcontracted basic skills and sports and leisure provision increased from just under 180 in 2000-01 to more than 220 in 2001-02. Enrolments for 2002-03 have totalled 130 so far this year. For the Council's direct provision, there have been over 150 enrolments in 2002-03. Seventy-five per cent of people who enrol on courses are women, which is in line with the national average for adult provision. Provision is free of charge for those learners who attend courses provided directly by the Council, or the subcontracted basic skills provision in the city of Hereford. Concessions of 20 per cent of the fee for subcontracted courses at the local further education college are paid for by the Council. Learners eligible for this concession include those who are aged over 60, those in receipt of means-tested benefits or a disability allowance and those who care for people with a disability allowance.

5. The Council's adult and community learning provision is funded principally through a contract with the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The population of Herefordshire is approximately 170,000. The county is one of low

population density, with many of its residents scattered over a wide rural area, a high proportion of part-time jobs and a higher than average number of people aged over 50. There is significant migration out of the county by young adults, primarily in search of education and training. Herefordshire has no designated higher education provider. In May 2002, the unemployment rate in Herefordshire was 1.8 per cent, compared with a national rate of 3 per cent. However, this figure masks low income levels within the county and the relatively unskilled nature of much of the available employment. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 0.6 per cent, compared with the 6.2 per cent nationally.

Adult and Community Learning

6. Most learners make good progress. The Council's adult and community learning programme is effective in widening participation and recruiting learners from some of the disadvantaged communities in Herefordshire. In addition to the knowledge and skills which they develop on their main programme, many learners achieve significant personal and social development. There are some good progression routes, but opportunities to move to higher-level courses are not fully established across the whole of the county. Procedures to more formally recognise learners' achievements through accreditation are incomplete. In some areas of learning, achievement is hindered by inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the provision. Subcontracted learning is not adequately managed.

7. The standard of teaching is good. Of those sessions observed by inspectors, almost 75 per cent were good, or better, and all sessions were at least satisfactory, or better. Tutors and learners enjoy good working relationships, and learners support each other well. Most teaching is well matched to individual needs and learners have adequately detailed, written individual learning plans. Tutors are well qualified and have good experience of working with adult learners. Resources are generally adequate, except in basic skills. Good partnership working leads to an appropriate range of courses to widen participation for some under-represented groups of learners. Equality of opportunity is poorly promoted by the Council.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

8. The Council's adult and community learning provision is the responsibility of the lifelong learning development unit (the unit) which forms part of the policy and community directorate. The unit comprises a team of four staff, three full-time and one 0.4 full-time equivalent. The principal learning and recreation officer and the lifelong learning development officer are responsible for the management of the provision. A partnership support assistant, five community learning officers, a full-time ICT tutor and more than 20 part-time tutors form the remainder of the lifelong learning team. The team reports to the policy and commissioning manager who, in turn, reports to the head of community and economic development. The lifelong learning development unit manages the annual contract with the two local subcontracted providers and a range of community projects as part of local partnership arrangements. The unit is responsible for equal opportunities, quality assurance, strategic development, business planning and the production of the adult learning plan. The adult learning plan for 2002-03 was completed in March 2002. The Council has an equal opportunities policy and a framework for quality assurance. A number of corporate functions are managed centrally by the council including finance, health and safety, personnel and property maintenance. The Council produced its first and most recent self-assessment report in March 2002. An updated development plan was produced for the inspection.

STRENGTHS

- strong partnership work widens participation
- good progress towards the achievement of clear strategic objectives
- good staff development and training

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient resources for expansion of provision
- weak management of the subcontracted provision
- inadequate analysis and use of data for planning and target-setting
- poor promotion of equality of opportunity
- incomplete quality assurance procedures

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of staff development and training
- better recognition of learners' achievements

9. The Council has developed particularly good partnerships with a wide range of external organisations, resulting in effective projects to widen the participation of some under-represented learners in the community. The Council has a strong commitment to

partnership working and is taking a leading role in recognising the changing nature of adult and community learning in the county. The lifelong learning development unit also has good internal working relationships with other Council departments, which lead to direct benefits for learners. For example, the unit is currently involved in the development of a new environmental studies centre for adults through its work with the Council's environment department. Council staff work very effectively in bringing together partners to pool expertise and resources. Staff are very knowledgeable about how to successfully submit bids for additional funding. Local partners appreciate the work carried out by the Council in supporting and helping them to manage partnership programmes. The Council also has a key role in sharing information through its 10 lifelong learning development and five thematic groups spread around the county.

10. The Council has made good progress in meeting some of its clear strategic objectives for the development of adult and community learning in Herefordshire. The appointment of a lifelong learning development officer in 1999 was the starting point for the Council to offer a small amount of direct provision. This provision has grown significantly in the past three years, helped by the setting of clear strategic objectives. These objectives accurately reflect a range of aims set out in other internal and external strategic plans. The Council is a central partner in the planning of a lifelong learning strategy for Herefordshire. There is a clear emphasis on the development of community-based education. Staff are very knowledgeable about the needs of different communities and there is a desire to involve local residents in decision-making about their future. The learning needs of communities have been well researched by the Council, through surveys, and the lifelong learning development and thematic groups. Most partnership organisations have a strong commitment to achieving the objectives for adult and community learning set out by the Council. There is a good awareness of the role of the lifelong learning development unit.

11. Staff in the lifelong learning development unit have access to good professional development and training. The staff team is well motivated and highly committed to the development and provision of good quality adult and community learning services. The small size of the team within the unit ensures that there is regular discussion of any issues involving staff. Staff are well qualified and there is good teaching in most classes. They are knowledgeable about the needs of adult learners and aware of the challenges of working in community settings. Staff have an annual review of their progress and development needs. Realistic targets are set and individual staff development is planned as a result. This training is carried out on a regular basis. The Council provides a central training programme of general staff development in useful subjects, such as assertiveness and presentation skills. The lifelong learning development unit has taken a leading role in developing a system to accredit the learning carried out by Council staff. There are no central records of professional development for individual members of staff. Records are kept in different sections of the Council depending on how the training has been funded.

12. The Council's adult and community learning service is still in the early stages of development. Good progress has been made in providing some appropriate courses to

under-represented groups of adults either directly or through subcontracting, but there are insufficient resources for further expansion. The Council acknowledges that it has insufficient funding to fully support adult and community learning. Its self-assessment report highlights insufficient resources to manage, monitor and quality assure its learning provision. There is limited or no provision in some areas of Herefordshire where there is an identified need for courses. There has been some good analysis of the needs of individual local communities. However, the lack of an effective management information system means that there is no overall picture of where there is the greatest need, or how the available provision can be matched to demand. There is an over-reliance on short-term external funding, and there are uncertainties about the continued provision of some courses. The Council owns one purpose-built facility for adult and community learning. A key personnel appointment were planned for the lifelong learning development team to resolve some of the identified weaknesses. These have been cancelled because of a lack of resources. A number of community learning officers' posts have yet to be refilled.

13. The Council recognises the need to help those learners with additional support needs. Tutors have received support and guidance to raise their awareness of such needs. The Council works with a local voluntary group to provide literacy and numeracy support to learners in deprived areas of Hereford. But there are no consistent formal arrangements for supporting learners in other subjects. The Council has an action plan, prepared by the basic skills thematic group, to use as a basis for a future strategy for additional support needs.

14. The Council's management of some of the subcontracted provision is weak. The Council has an agreement with a local further education college to encourage certain groups of under-represented learners to join courses. The 2001-02 contract specified that payment would be made to the college based on the numbers of learners completing their courses. Although information is produced termly by the college on the numbers of enrolments subsidised by the Council, retention and achievement rates are not consistently monitored. There is insufficient analysis of whether learners progress to further programmes or re-enrol on courses which they have already completed. The Council does not monitor the standard of teaching and learning. Formal reviews of the college's provision, as stipulated in the contract, are not carried out on a regular basis. The Council is not sufficiently involved in the planning of the curriculum of subcontracted provision at the college.

15. The analysis and use of data for planning and target-setting is inadequate. The need for a management information system is recognised by the Council and a bid for appropriate funding has been submitted. However, the Council has no clear strategy for the regular collection of reliable learner data, their analysis and subsequent use for planning the adult and community learning provision. There are no detailed targets for enrolments and learner numbers, as there are insufficient reliable data on which to base future plans. Staff in the lifelong learning development unit are unable to analyse any key trends in performance and cannot access the data they need in their workplace.

16. On some courses, learners are given a certificate by the Council, which recognises their achievement. However, this does not happen on all programmes. Many learners are now on accredited courses leading to certification by external awarding bodies. The Council does not always recognise opportunities to extend this accreditation to other appropriate courses.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

17. The Council's commitment to equality of opportunity forms the basis for development of its provision to date. It delivers a number of effective programmes for learners from under-represented groups, as a result of consultation with community organisations and local networks. Some projects take the learning, such as the laptop ICT courses and parts of the family learning provision, to people in rural areas. However, some of these 'first rung' learning projects do not offer sufficient progression routes to higher-level courses.

18. Some rural areas of the county do not have enough courses available, which makes it difficult for many adults to join the learning process. The traveller community has been identified as the main minority ethnic group in Herefordshire, but there is no provision available to meet their specific needs. Transport difficulties have been identified as a key barrier to learning in rural areas. One project for learners with learning difficulties includes transport to and from the course. The Council is working with the voluntary sector to improve access to provision, by using volunteers to drive learners to bus routes or the learning venue, but this initiative is still in the early stages of development.

19. The Council's equal opportunities policy and procedures focus on a number of service delivery objectives and personnel matters. Service delivery arrangements aspire to eliminate barriers, provide opportunities to consult with communities to identify their needs, and to give equal access to information, advice and the provision of grants and services to the voluntary and community sector. However, there is no monitoring of how far these objectives are being met. For example, the Council does not review the promotional materials of one of the subcontracted providers to ensure that positive images are used to attract under-represented groups of learners. Equal opportunities guidelines are available to aid business planning, but the use of these to support the process is not fully monitored. The Council has a comprehensive set of recruitment and selection procedures and operates a range of family friendly policies, which include flexible working hours and paternity leave. However, these procedures only apply to staff employed by the Council. There is no monitoring of the arrangements for staff of partner organisations. The Council fulfils the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. The Council is a partner in the Herefordshire Partnership which has a race relations development officer, this post has been in existence since 2000.

20. The Council has not produced equal opportunities policies and procedures specifically for its adult and community learning provision. Learners have a poor awareness of equal opportunities and diversity issues. There is insufficient discussion of equal opportunities issues during learners' induction. They are unfamiliar with any policies relating to bullying, complaints or harassment. The Council no longer offers a programme of equal opportunities training for its staff, although there is specific training for managers, for example, in implementing selection and recruitment procedures. Some staff have a poor awareness of how to ensure equality of opportunity for adult learners.

21. There is no procedure for evaluating the lifelong learning development unit's

performance in terms of equal opportunities. Data relating to learners are unreliable and cannot be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policies, or to set targets for improvement. The achievements and destinations of learners are not analysed by gender, ethnicity or age.

22. There is adequate access for learners with restricted mobility to most adult and community learning venues used directly by the Council, or owned by subcontracted providers. However, a number of the centres are not fully accessible, particularly for wheelchair users. The Council plans to carry out further improvements to these centres within the next year. Preparations are being made for the changes necessary to fulfil the requirements of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act. There has not yet been a full audit of accommodation to support an effective action plan.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

23. The Council has a framework for quality assurance which applies to the whole of the provision. But although Herefordshire Council is committed to the continuous improvement of its adult and community education provision, the current quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. Managers recognise that considerable progress still needs to be made. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

24. The arrangements for monitoring the quality of subcontracted provision are not adequate. They are over-reliant on the systems of the subcontractors, or the requirements of the organisation responsible for funding the provision. There is no agreement on the procedures to be followed, or who is responsible for quality assurance. There is no common system among subcontractors for the collation of information, and meaningful comparisons are difficult to make. The further education college has well-established quality assurance systems, but the Council does not currently have its own mechanisms in place to ensure that these systems are effective. The quality assurance arrangements now operating do not provide sufficient information to plan for improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The only data requested are those needed to verify the payment terms stipulated in the contract.

25. The Council has some documented procedures for its direct provision. There are arrangements for feedback to ensure that these procedures are being applied as intended. However, in some areas these arrangements are incomplete. Teaching sessions in some parts of the provision are observed but are not graded. There is no systematic monitoring or internal moderation of the lesson observations.

26. The Council produced its first self-assessment report in March 2002. Two of the areas of learning inspected were not included in the report. It recognised many of the strengths and weaknesses, but understated the significance of some of the weaknesses and the improvements needed.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

27. At the time of the inspection, just over 70 learners were enrolled on ICT courses. Between January and December 2002, there were approximately 250 enrolments, a decrease of almost 50 per cent on the previous calendar year. Most of the ICT courses are offered directly by the Council, through an initiative involving the use of laptops in community settings. This initiative has been in operation for three years, using a number of partnership arrangements set up to widen participation. In some cases, the same courses are offered using computer networks available in local primary and secondary schools, or designated adult learning centres. Most of the courses provide learners with basic skills in computing and do not lead to qualifications. A small number of courses are accredited. They vary in length from single session tasters to programmes lasting 12 weeks. Courses are delivered by a full-time tutor employed by the Council, who takes laptops and other mobile computing equipment to a variety of community locations in Herefordshire. Most of these courses are in rural areas of the county, or deprived areas in the city of Hereford. They are held during the day, with a small amount of evening and weekend provision. All courses are free of charge.

STRENGTHS

- good progress by most learners
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good learning resources to support community-based provision
- very effective partnerships leading to widening participation

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress on non-accredited courses
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate curriculum management

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recognition of learners' achievements
- wider access to the internet

28. There is no formal assessment of learners' levels of literacy and numeracy when they first enrol on courses. However, the Council's full-time tutor has a basic skills qualification and has received training in recognising learners' needs for additional

support. Learners who are identified as having literacy or numeracy needs are given individual tuition by the tutor.

29. Most learners make good progress towards achieving their personal learning goals, at a pace appropriate to their needs and abilities. Many have no previous experience of computers, but are able to increase their confidence in using a computer for basic tasks. Learners have a real sense of achievement and are pleased with the progress they make. After gaining elementary computing skills, some learners are able to progress to more advanced courses offered by other providers. On one particular project, two different courses are provided on the same evening, allowing the more able learners to stay on for the more advanced-level workshop. Learners on non-accredited courses build portfolios of work which would be of a sufficiently high standard to be accredited. However, they are not always given the opportunity to have their work recognised in this way. Retention rates have been satisfactory over the past two years. For the periods 2000-01 and 2001-02, the retention rate was approximately 80 per cent. Good attendance levels have been maintained at approximately 85 per cent.

30. There are good standards of teaching and learning in ICT. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Sixty per cent of the teaching observed by inspectors was good or better. Classes are well planned, with clear schemes of work and learning objectives. Learners are highly motivated by the opportunity to learn the basics of using a computer and the Internet. In the best classes, learners set their own learning goals, share ideas and are encouraged to support each other. One course has been designed almost completely by the learners. The tutor makes good use of simple language to explain difficult computing concepts. However, one class was slow-paced and had insufficiently demanding material to allow the more able learners to reach their full potential.

31. There are good learning resources to support the community-based provision. A wide range of suitable equipment is used, including laptop computers, large-screen projectors, portable colour printers, a scanner and a digital camera. This equipment is easy to transport to different community venues and can be quickly set up for use. Some learning centres have good resources of their own, allowing open access to them between classes. However, access to the Internet is not available at all venues. There is no specialist equipment permanently available for learners with physical disabilities, although it can be arranged if required. Access for wheelchair users to most centres is satisfactory. However, one community venue only has first-floor computing rooms. Some classrooms are cramped and power leads for the laptops sometimes create a safety risk.

32. A comprehensive network of community and voluntary organisations allows effective assessment of communities' initial learning needs. Very good partnership work leads to specifically designed initiatives which bring ICT resources to a wide variety of under-represented groups of adults. All courses are provided free of charge. Good use is made of laptop computers and other mobile facilities across a wide geographical

area. The partnerships enable clear progression routes to a higher-level course for some learners. The Council plans to offer work-based ICT courses using local employers during 2002-03.

33. There is not enough formal monitoring of learners' progress on non-accredited courses. Individual learning plans are reviewed twice during the 12-week courses, but progress is not checked or recorded on a weekly basis. The work is not linked to any learning goals, or formally recorded on progress sheets. Some learners attending the classes are not sure of the opportunities for progression once they have finished their courses.

34. The Council does not advertise its ICT courses directly to the general public. The provision is aimed at particular groups of under-represented learners in the community. Target groups include those adults who live in rural areas, the elderly, ex-offenders, learners with learning difficulties and others who face barriers to learning because of personal or social circumstances. These learners are enrolled on courses through community and voluntary partners. The quality of advertising carried out by these organisations is inconsistent. A number of courses have been cancelled or operated with insufficient numbers of learners. The Council's full-time tutor has been trained in giving advice and information on appropriate courses. Guidance surgeries have been held in some areas of the county.

35. Quality assurance arrangements are inadequate. There are no procedures to ensure standard teaching practice throughout the provision. Data are not used to set and monitor targets. Health and safety arrangements are inconsistent. Learners do not receive sufficient guidance about the use of laptops or computer workstations at induction. Risk assessment forms are sent to all community venues but the returned forms are not checked and monitored adequately.

36. Curriculum management is inadequate. This weakness was not identified by the self-assessment report. The current strategy to promote ICT learning in the community is still in its early stages of development. The laptop project has raised expectations for individual progression which cannot always be fully met. The management of the ICT provision is shared between two managers in the lifelong learning development unit. Both managers have other responsibilities and their specific roles regarding the ICT courses are not always clear. There is no central co-ordination of the various initiatives, and not enough regular meetings to discuss the curriculum.

37. Learners welcome being able to learn at times and in locations that are convenient to them. They are pleased that the laptops are provided in local community settings which ensure a friendly and familiar environment. They praise the supportive nature of the tutor. Some learners have done the same course more than once, although they feel that they always learn something new and make good progress. All learners are gaining in self-confidence. They particularly appreciate being able to talk to their children and grandchildren about computers. Learners would like more access to the Internet and a guarantee that courses will continue to be offered in their communities.

Good Practice

Towards the end of one of the introductory projects in basic computing skills, the tutor takes the learners from their community venue to a local centre, where they can access a higher-level course. This helps the learners come to terms with the unfamiliar surroundings and lets them decide whether further progression is suitable.

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

38. The Council offers its sport and leisure provision mainly through the local further education college. There is also a small programme offered in partnership with a charity established for people with mental ill health. Courses include yoga, tai chi, keep fit, body massage, bridge, and wine appreciation. Over 40 per cent of enrolments are for yoga classes. Most courses cater for learners of mixed ability. All courses are non-accredited. Just over 360 enrolments were subsidised by the Council on sport and leisure courses in 2001-02, an increase of 13 per cent on the previous year. More than 75 per cent of enrolments are by women and a similar number of learners are aged over 50. Courses are offered termly, each term lasting between 10 and 12 weeks. Most courses take place in the evening. Approximately half of the courses are provided at the college, with the remainder at a number of venues across the county. Programmes are staffed by 18 part-time tutors who are employed by the subcontracting college. They work for between two and six hours a week.

STRENGTHS

- good achievement levels
- particularly good retention rates
- strong partnership work in targeting some provision

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate checking of part-time tutors' qualifications
- insufficient information and guidance about courses
- inadequate monitoring and evaluation of provision

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more formal recognition of learners' achievements
- better access to some centres for learners with restricted mobility
- better sharing of good practice

39. Levels of learners' achievements are good. They demonstrate good practical skills and are able to use and explain technical language and specialist knowledge. For example, in a body massage class, learners are using appropriate descriptions of massage techniques and are able to demonstrate the techniques effectively in paired practical sessions. They can explain how these activities contribute to their own physical health and well-being. Learners recognise and value the progress they make. They achieve good lifestyle improvements. Retention rates are very good. In 2001-02,

the average retention rate was 95 per cent and this has been maintained for the current year.

40. Teaching and learning standards in sport and leisure are satisfactory. Teaching was good or better in almost 60 per cent of the lessons observed by inspectors with no unsatisfactory sessions seen. Tutors are experienced and enthusiastic. They use their practical skills effectively to illustrate teaching points and enhance learning activities. Tutors use examples from their professional experiences to enhance the learning. Most courses have well-developed schemes of work. Lessons are well structured. Learners work well with tutors and support each other. In some cases, the tutor negotiates the course content and learning objectives with learners. However, in most lessons, insufficient recognition is given to the range of learners' abilities. In some classroom-based sessions, there is not enough variety in the teaching methods used. Some learners complete tasks ahead of others and are kept waiting while the remainder of the class finishes their work. In one observed session, work was repeated for the whole group when new learners attended the class for the first time.

41. The Council has a strong partnership with a local charity which is successful in widening participation and meeting the needs of learners with mental ill health. Learners targeted by the Council enrol on a wide range of courses at the local further education college. However, despite having a formal agreement with the college, the Council has insufficient influence over the courses offered or the venues where they are held. There are not always planned progression routes to higher-level, accredited courses.

42. Resources on most courses are satisfactory. Specialist classrooms are well equipped and risk assessments have been carried out at most of the venues. Many of these venues have appropriate access for learners with restricted mobility. However, some courses at the college and in community learning centres are not held in ground floor classrooms and are not easily accessible for these learners. Tutors are occupationally competent. They carry out professional development to enhance their teaching skills. However, there is no routine checking of the qualifications of part-time tutors before their appointment, or once they are employed.

43. The assessment and monitoring of learning are satisfactory. Initial assessment is based on learners' self-assessment. Information about learners' health, and any medical conditions, is collected and recorded. Tutors make frequent reference to health and safety issues in practical classes. But information collected on enrolment forms about learners' disabilities is not routinely passed on to tutors. Assessment on most courses is informal and is carried out mainly by tutor observation, question and answer or discussion. Learners are aware of the progress they are making.

44. Learners do not receive sufficient information and guidance about courses. The subcontracted college publishes details of classes in a prospectus, supported by additional promotion each term, through local newspapers. Specific provision for certain groups is publicised through partnership networks and support agencies such as

social services and doctors' surgeries. However, information is not sufficiently detailed for learners to be able to make an informed decision about their choice of course. Learners who wish to join a course after it has started have difficulty in finding information.

45. Curriculum management is inadequate. The Council has succeeded in developing a number of effective partnerships leading to some good targeted provision. It has strategic objectives for sport and leisure provision. These are based around increasing participation, by encouraging a greater number of older learners to join courses and targeting support for learners living in rural communities. However, the need for courses in rural areas has not been fully met. The agreement between the Council and the subcontracted college is not formally monitored. Quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. There is insufficient systematic collection or analysis of data about learners to contribute to curriculum development. There are too few daytime courses for learners. Although there is a system for collecting learner feedback, the results are not shared with learners or tutors. There is no evidence of follow-up on identified areas for improvement.

46. Learners value the progress they make in their classes and the opportunities to learn new skills. They speak highly of their tutors and the support they receive. Learners identify a wide range of health benefits such as improved flexibility. They are critical of the poor-quality information available about courses. Learners would also like to be able to choose from a wider range of courses.

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

47. The Council's involvement in the provision of basic skills is through a voluntary community group, offering mainly individual home tuition, or small group teaching in literacy and numeracy. Most of the activities supported by the Council are based in Hereford and serve the literacy needs of residents in the four most-deprived wards of the city. At the time of the inspection, there were 150 learners and just over 100 volunteer tutors from the voluntary community group, across the county. More than 100 of these learners are involved in the literacy project in the south of the city of Hereford. The project is centrally co-ordinated and partly taught in the premises of a local church. A full-time manager is responsible for the project. She is supported by a team of just under 50 part-time volunteer tutors. The manager reports to a committee of board members. The Council's lifelong learning development officer provides support to the manager and sits on the committee. He also co-ordinates the basic skills thematic group. This group is working towards a partnership approach to basic skills provision in Herefordshire. Learners are taught primarily on an individual basis. There are also five discrete courses targeted at identified groups of learners in need of literacy support. These include the employees of a local company, young people being rehabilitated into their communities, and single mothers. Drop-in workshops are also made available for anyone wishing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Learners are able to enrol at any time of the year. There are no limits on the amount of time for which they can receive support. Individual tuition and group classes are offered at times to suit the needs of the learners and the availability of the part-time volunteer tutors. Most learners work towards achieving entry and foundation level qualifications.

STRENGTHS

- good achievement of personal objectives
- good standard of teaching and learning
- good curriculum management of the voluntary sector project

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient learning support
- insufficient resources
- ineffective strategic curriculum planning and management

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more frequent formal progress reviews

48. Learners make good progress in achieving their personal objectives. Courses are planned to allow learners to achieve realistic learning goals. Many have made substantial progress, having started courses with very poor literacy and numeracy skills. They develop increased self-confidence and regularly use the skills they are learning in their daily lives. Some learners have acquired better jobs and others have progressed to higher-level further education and university courses. Many of them act as role models to encourage further members of the local community in to learning. One of the learners has appeared in a government-sponsored video to promote adult learning. Most learners are encouraged to work towards accredited qualifications. Thirty learners have achieved nationally recognised awards in the past year.

49. There is a good standard of teaching and learning. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning were good or better in all lessons observed by inspectors. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives. Classes cover a wide range of relevant skills and knowledge. Learners can articulate the learning that has taken place in sessions. In the best classes, tutors explain concepts clearly and allow learners to play an active part in their learning. These sessions use the interests of the learners as the context for learning. In one very good teaching session, the two tutors worked together to encourage learners to study posters. They then helped them to design their own posters using a computer software package. Tutors analyse learning styles, but do not use this information in planning and delivering teaching sessions.

50. The subcontracted project involving the voluntary sector is well managed, and it effectively meets the different needs of learners. They attend classes and receive individual tuition in their homes at times that fit in with their lifestyles and other commitments. The flexible enrolment arrangements allow them to join courses at any time of the year. Classes are provided in venues which learners are already familiar with, for example, employers' premises, and care establishments. Local shift workers can attend a choice of afternoon or evening workshops. The board members and the Council's lifelong learning development officer give good-quality, professional advice and guidance to the project manager. Challenging targets, set as part of the project contract, are met and in some cases exceeded. Tutors feel well supported by their manager. Their teaching is regularly observed and they are given constructive feedback, which is used to improve their teaching practice. Tutors produce a useful evaluative report at the end of each course which is used to make improvements to the curriculum offered.

51. The initial assessment of learners' needs is satisfactory. It is carried out at appropriate times for learners starting their training. A checklist is used to establish learners' prior levels of ability. This is followed up with a further assessment once they are placed on the correct level of the course. Assessments are matched with the new literacy and numeracy core curriculum, introduced as part of a government strategy aimed at improving peoples' basic skills. They are carried out in a sensitive manner. All learners have an individual learning plan. These are specific to the needs of each individual learner, but do not always recognise how learners could accelerate their

progress using experiences from their daily lives. Formal reviews of learners' progress are carried out after 40 to 60 hours' tuition. Verbal and written feedback to learners is detailed, but the reviews are not frequent enough for learners who often only attend classes for two hours each week. There are very thorough assessment arrangements in place for accredited courses. Learners are given detailed and helpful feedback about their progress. Planned learning programmes are amended according to the emerging needs of the groups and individuals concerned.

52. Learners are often referred to the voluntary sector project by other local agencies as a result of the strong partnership links. There are appropriate publicity materials in place to promote the service. Many of the learners need extensive support with personal and social issues. However, there is insufficient pastoral support available to meet the needs of learners. Tutors' time is often spent supporting learners with personal issues, rather than teaching, but they are unable to give the levels of attention required to all learners.

53. There are not enough resources to support learning. Tutors and volunteers are well qualified and experienced. Several of them have an intermediate or higher-level award in teaching basic skills. Some of the tutors have had experience of being learners on community courses. They have a very good empathy with adult learners. Good-quality laptops are used for work-based learning. However, learning resources at the church hall venue are poor. There are no photocopying facilities. Learners have insufficient access to computers. The few computers available are of poor quality. There are no up-to-date basic skills software or audio packages in use. There is insufficient space for learners to be able to discuss confidential matters. There is not enough investment in resources to meet the needs of local employees requiring literacy and numeracy support. For example, one employer currently has 60 members of staff waiting to start basic skills training. There are not enough funding or teaching resources to carry out this training.

54. The strategic curriculum planning and management of basic skills is ineffective. There is insufficient long-term planning for basic skills provision across the county. The literacy and numeracy needs of many parts of the community are not being met. Issues relating to basic skills are identified by the lifelong learning strategic and thematic groups. However, these issues are not always dealt with or referred to the appropriate organisations for action. The minutes of the meetings of the two groups do not have any action points. Subsequent meetings do not follow up discussions from the previous minutes. Who has responsibilities for basic skills provision is not clear and there is insufficient discussion of resources. Initiatives tend to be short-term and rely on temporary, external funding. There are not enough permanent staff to be able to implement a wider basic skills strategy for the county.

55. Learners enjoy their courses and welcome the opportunity to attend them locally, at times to suit their needs. They fully understand how their skills have improved and positively influence their quality of life at home and work. They value the support given by friendly and helpful staff. They feel they are treated appropriately and that staff are

sensitive to the learners' difficulties. One learner summed up the provision and support as 'life changing'.

Good Practice

A successful work-based basic skills training programme has been used to prepare a group of employees for impending changes in their working methods. One of the company's directors held a breakfast meeting with a group of other employers to encourage them to take the same initiatives. One of the ex-learners, the voluntary sector project manager, and staff from the local LSC were invited to make presentations at this meeting.

Family learning

Grade 2

56. Beginning in September 2002, the Council's family learning provision has developed from a range of well-established family literacy and numeracy courses into a wider programme of learning activities for parents and their children. There are 88 enrolments for the current year, of whom 64 are adults and 24 are children. Family literacy and numeracy courses take place in primary schools across the county. The schools apply to operate the family learning courses. The choice of venue is then decided by the local education authority's advisory service, based on which target schools and communities would benefit the most from this provision. The schools are responsible for recruiting learners to join the programmes. In 2001-02, there were just under 50 enrolments on five family literacy and numeracy courses. Each course is planned and delivered by a member of the school's early years staff, and a basic skills tutor provided for the Council under contract by the local further education college. The family learning programme now includes courses such as first aid for families, storytelling, making learning fun, family ICT, baby massage and aromatherapy for families. Courses vary in length from three to 12 weeks. They take place in schools, family centres or partners' premises within the target communities. Provision is made for adults and children to learn together and for adults only. The average class size is between eight and 10 learners and most are women. Most of the provision is non-accredited.

57. Lesson plans and learning objectives are matched to the basic skills core curriculum. If it becomes apparent on family literacy and numeracy programmes that there is a significant number of adults with additional support needs, the local further education college will provide a separate workshop.

58. A part-time family learning development officer is responsible for the management of the family learning programme within the lifelong learning development unit. She manages a team of 14 part-time tutors. A variety of funding sources is used to support the programme.

STRENGTHS

- good achievement of learning goals
- good standard of teaching and learning
- good support for learners
- effective strategic partnerships

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective strategy for accreditation
- insufficient analysis and use of data

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of progress
- more formal identification of the respective roles of the Council and the subcontractor

59. Learners make good progress towards their individual learning goals. They can articulate the learning that takes place and how it influences their lives. Many learners report that they benefit from unexpected outcomes such as improved self-confidence, an ability to manage their learning and better parenting skills. Some courses lead to useful practical outcomes which can be used outside the classroom. For example, learners make number games to play at home and develop the confidence to speak other languages on holiday. Head teachers report that learners gain in confidence and become more involved in their children's school activities. Most of the provision is non-accredited. On family literacy and numeracy courses, learners receive a certificate of completion from the local further education college and are offered the opportunity of Open College Network (OCN) accreditation. However, learners are not offered sufficient opportunities for nationally recognised accreditations which they would value.

60. There are good standards of teaching and learning. Observed sessions were good or better in all classes observed by the inspectors. Courses are planned with clear aims and learning outcomes. There is effective joint planning of family literacy and numeracy courses by school staff and basic skills tutors. Teaching styles are adapted to suit the needs and characteristics of the groups. Learners are enthusiastic and well motivated. There is good interaction between the learners, who support each other well. Individual learning goals are set at appropriate levels and are matched with the literacy and numeracy core curricula introduced as part of a government strategy aimed at improving peoples' basic skills. Tutors are well qualified and have appropriate experience. Most tutors have attended basic skills awareness lessons. However, tutors are not given any standard guidance in identifying learners' additional needs.

61. The laptop computers used for family ICT programmes provide a good mobile resource. This ensures that courses can be delivered in accessible local venues close to where the learners live. Many of the programmes take place on school premises. Space is limited and sometimes the classrooms allocated for family learning courses are inappropriate to the needs of adult learners.

62. Learners' abilities are identified using a range of initial assessment procedures. These include formal written assessments, self-assessment and informal questioning. All learners have individual learning goals, negotiated at the beginning of their programmes. Progress reviews during each session focus on the outcomes of work

carried out by parents and their children at home. However, they do not fully record the adults' own literacy and numeracy learning.

63. Learner surveys are used effectively to identify their needs and interests. A number of courses have started as a result of learners expressing a lack of confidence in particular skills, such as cooking and first aid. There is an increasing number of fathers participating in family learning. Courses are now being targeted specifically at men. A recent family learning weekend, which included workshops held in Hereford and five other towns, resulted in useful information on what courses parents and children would like to attend. Demand for music and drama courses has led to a new performance skills class. Family literacy and numeracy courses are targeted at specific communities within Herefordshire. However, limited funding means that these courses are often only offered once. There are few opportunities to repeat a course even if there is a demand for it. The more recent family learning programme has only been funded since September 2002. Many aspects of the curriculum are still being developed in response to learners' needs.

64. There is good support for learners. They are given clear information before joining family learning courses. Tutors help learners with personal issues and these discussions are handled sensitively and in an appropriate manner for adult learners. A range of childcare options is available including nurseries, family centres, crèches and child minders. All courses are free and materials are provided for learners. Learners are offered good guidance about the range of family learning courses available, and possible progression routes.

65. Effective strategic partnerships ensure that there is a wide range of programmes available to learners. These partnerships are well managed by the family learning development group, chaired by the Council's family learning development officer. All partners share a clear vision for the development of the provision throughout the county. The Council works well in partnership with the local college of further education. However, there is no formal identification of their respective roles and responsibilities. A thorough audit of the provision has identified some gaps in the curriculum offered and contributed to good planning. A family learning weekend organised by the partners in the family learning development thematic group, enabled providers to offer a wide range of workshops in different areas of the county. A survey of learners' further needs and interests has resulted in useful information being obtained for course planning.

66. There is insufficient use and analysis of data to contribute to the planning of learning provision. Data are collected about each programme, but are not aggregated to illustrate the effect of the family learning programme throughout the county. Data about pupils' improved literacy and numeracy levels are held by their school, but are not sufficiently used to promote the benefits and future expansion of the family learning provision. No information is collected on the proportions of participants from target groups. There is a schedule for regular class observations carried out by the family learning development officer. The outcomes of these observations are recorded, but

are not graded.

67. Learners feel well supported by their tutors and are highly motivated. They have increased confidence and a better understanding of what further opportunities are available to them. They are keen to understand how their children are taught literacy and numeracy, in addition to gaining the skills themselves. They consider the programmes to be responsive to their needs. Many are surprised at how much they learn on a short course.

Language of the Adult and Community Learning

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

Single term used in the framework	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Provider	Provider	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges
Learner	Learner	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
Teacher / trainer	Tutor	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.