

INSPECTION REPORT

Barking and Dagenham LEA

10 March 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

Overall judgement

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

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

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

SUMMARY

The provider

Barking and Dagenham LEA's division for lifelong learning and inclusion manages adult and community learning across the borough. The Adult College of Barking and Dagenham is the borough's main provider of adult and community learning. It is maintained by the local education authority and provides part-time day and evening courses at the main adult college site and over 30 venues across the borough. Courses provided are in nine areas of learning. All were inspected apart from courses in business administration, health and social care and humanities as there were too few courses running at the time of inspection. In 2001-02, there were a total of 9,550 enrolments and 4,250 learners.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the needs of those receiving it. More specifically, learning in hairdressing and beauty is good, and satisfactory in information and communications technology, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, English, languages and communications, and foundation programmes. Leadership and management are satisfactory and equality of opportunity is good. The quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Areas of learning	Grade
Information & communications technology	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	2
Visual & performing arts & media	3
English, languages & communications	3
Foundation programmes	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- good day-to-day management of learning programmes
- comprehensive staff review and development
- successful initiatives to widen participation
- good support for learners with diverse needs

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- good achievement of learning goals
- good teaching and learning
- effective family learning programmes

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate strategic management of one adult college area
- insufficient analysis of data
- incomplete quality assurance procedures
- insufficient recording of learners' individual needs and progress
- inadequate initial information and advice for learners
- weak individual learning plans
- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement of part-time staff in self-assessment
- better use of information and communications technology in visual and performing arts

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 11 inspectors spent a total of 55 days with the Barking and Dagenham local education authority (LEA) in March 2003. They made 22 visits to learning venues. They had 380 discussions with learners and held 101 interviews with teaching staff and managers. They attended seven meetings with external partners. Inspectors observed and graded 78 learning sessions. During visits to classes, they reviewed 127 individual learning plans as well as schemes of work, learning materials, samples of learners' practical artwork and assessment portfolios. Other documents reviewed included the LEA's adult learning plan, the Adult College of Barking and Dagenham's (the adult college) strategic and action plans, course evaluations, lesson observation notes and staff review and development plans, minutes of meetings, marketing materials, prospectuses and information on courses. Inspectors also reviewed the adult college's self-assessment reports and development plans produced in March 2002 and February 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	1	1	5	3	0	0	0	10
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	1	3	6	0	0	0	10
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	1	5	4	0	0	0	10
Visual & performing arts & media	0	4	5	6	1	0	0	16
English, languages & communications	0	2	5	2	2	0	0	11
Foundation programmes	0	4	8	8	1	0	0	21
Total	1	13	31	29	4	0	0	78
per cent		57.69%		37.18%		5.13%		

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. The lifelong learning and inclusion division of the LEA's department for education, arts and libraries has overall responsibility for adult and community learning across the borough. The LEA has received funding from East London Learning and Skills Council (LSC) since April 2001. It maintains the adult college as the LEA's main provider of part-time day and evening courses for adults. The adult college also manages the majority of the additional adult and community learning projects funded partly by the LSC and supplemented with external funding from the central and local governments. These projects are developed in partnership with other local providers of education and training. These include an initiative in adult basic skills, neighbourhood renewal projects and the development of community learning sites. The head of the adult college joined the division's restructured senior management in September 2002. In 2001-02, the adult college offered 947 courses over 21,727 teaching hours. Approximately 64 per cent of the courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications. In addition to the main adult college site based in Dagenham, the LEA currently uses about 30 additional venues across the borough, including the two recently opened UK online centres, community centres, primary schools offering family learning and one employer's premises.

3. Barking and Dagenham ranks among the most deprived areas in England. It is the 24th most-deprived authority of the 354 districts in England, according to the Department for the Environment, Transport and Regions index of deprivation for 2000. It is the seventh most deprived borough in London. Income levels are particularly low. A high proportion of the well-paid jobs are taken up by employees recruited from outside the borough. In line with the national average, unemployment in the borough has declined from 14.2 per cent in 1993 to 4.5 per cent in July 2002. However, long-term unemployment is higher. Barking and Dagenham has one of the lowest rates of economic activity for women in outer London. The 1991 census found that 6.8 per cent per cent of the local population, of just over 143,700, are from minority ethnic groups.

4. The Basic Skills Agency identifies Barking and Dagenham as fourth from bottom nationally for adult literacy and second from bottom for numeracy. The agency estimates that almost one-third of the population, aged 16-60, has poor literacy skills and just over one-third has poor numeracy skills. The Department for Education and Skills' statistics for 2002, of achievement of economically active adults, show that just 50 per cent of the population of Barking and Dagenham have a level 2 qualification, compared with a national average of 68 per cent, 26 per cent have a level 3 qualification, compared with 47 per cent nationally and 11 per cent have a level 4 qualification, compared with the national average of 23 per cent. At all three levels, Barking and Dagenham has the lowest achievement rates in the country. However, recently the LEA's rates of achievement in schools have increased significantly, making it among the fastest improving LEAs in the country.

Adult and Community Learning

5. The LEA has been particularly successful in widening and increasing participation over the past nine years. The number of learners attending the adult college has increased by 38 per cent from 3,068 in 1992-92 to 4,250 in 2001-02. However, the retention rate for information and communications technology (ICT) has declined since 1999-2000. Most learners make good progress in developing skills and knowledge in line with the aims of their learning programmes. Many learners also achieve significant personal and social development. Progression within areas of learning is good, especially in ICT and foundation programmes, where learners progress to courses at higher levels. The adult college does not collect sufficient data on learners' progression to other areas of learning or their destinations once they have left the adult college.

6. Most learners benefit from good teaching. Of the 78 learning sessions inspectors observed, 58 per cent were good or better and 37 per cent were satisfactory. Only four sessions were unsatisfactory. Tutors have high levels of expertise in their specialist areas and have benefited from the adult college's extensive staff development programmes. Learning sessions are well planned in most areas, apart from visual and performing arts, where tutors focus too much on the learning activities and pay insufficient attention to meeting learners' learning goals. Many courses do not have adequate systems for identifying and recording learners' individual needs. The adult college is currently running a project to develop procedures across areas of learning for recording progress and achievement on courses not leading to qualifications. Learners have a good choice of programmes in ICT, complementary therapies and most foundation programmes. However, the frequency and range of courses offered to learners of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) are insufficient to enable them to receive intensive language training. Most learners do not receive sufficiently detailed information about their courses at enrolment. The induction training at the start of each course is satisfactory. Tutors provide high levels of individual support to meet learners' diverse needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

7. The head of the division for lifelong learning and social inclusion has overall responsibility for the LEA's adult and community learning and reports to the director of the department of education, arts and libraries. The day-to-day management of the provision is the responsibility of the head of the adult college. The adult college has local management status and a governing body with student and staff representation. The adult college's adult learning plan and strategic plans are developed in collaboration with the LEA's divisional staff and includes the development of the LEA's adult and community projects, in partnership with other providers of adult learning, members of the voluntary sector, employers and other external agencies. The adult college receives support from the local authority for personnel, legal matters, building maintenance, finance and ICT. The head of the adult college is responsible for curriculum planning, staffing, resources and fee policies. Five full-time senior managers, eight part-time assistant curriculum managers, two assistant quality assurance managers and five administrative supervisors support this work. Three senior managers have started their posts since April 2002. One is on long-term absence. All but one of the 153 teaching staff are part time. Of the 214 staff, 182 are women. In 2001-02, just under 3 per cent of learners were under 19 years of age and 21 per cent were over 60. About 20 per cent of the learners were men. Twelve per cent of learners were from minority ethnic groups. The borough's policies for equal opportunities cover all aspects of the adult college's work. The adult college has developed shorter versions of these policies for a staff and learners' handbook. A draft quality assurance manual was produced in March 2003. Observations of learning sessions form the core of the quality assurance procedures. Observations are carried out to a standard agreed by a local partnership of four providers of adult and community learning. Each course has a formal evaluation on completion. These are used as part of the self-assessment process. The adult college produced its second self-assessment report in February 2003, on behalf of the LEA.

STRENGTHS

- good day-to-day management of learning programmes
- comprehensive staff review and development
- successful initiatives to widen participation
- effective course evaluations
- good support for learners with diverse needs
- effective and innovative lesson observation scheme

WEAKNESSES

- weak action-planning
- inadequate strategic management of one adult college area
- inadequate availability of some services and resources
- insufficient analysis of data
- incomplete quality assurance procedures

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement of part-time staff in self-assessment

8. The LEA manages most aspects of its provision well through the adult college. Managers have invested effectively in establishing good channels of communications for staff. Meetings for senior managers, most curricular teams and area teams are well planned and provide effective forums for debate and disseminating information. Part-time teaching staff are paid to attend staff meetings and attendance is good. The termly newsletter for staff supplements these meetings effectively. All staff are well informed of adult college developments and most make a useful contribution to developments within their area of learning or departments. Most individual courses are well managed. Tutors make good use of the staff handbook, which is well designed and provides comprehensive guidance on most key aspects of the adult college's work. However, some learners on waiting lists for some courses are not kept sufficiently informed of their chances of joining a course.

9. The review and development of staff's performance is well managed. Constructive appraisal interviews are held annually with all staff, including part-time tutors. The schedule for interviews and the resulting appraisal documents are monitored effectively. Line managers systematically follow up the progress towards meeting staff's development needs identified at reviews. The professional development programme is comprehensive and relevant. Development needs related to teaching and learning have a high priority in the programme. Most teaching staff are well qualified and have high levels of expertise in their specialist areas. The continuous professional development programme is well planned and provides a good range of relevant training, including training in equal opportunities. Take-up of staff training is good.

10. The LEA has been particularly successful in expanding its services to the community over the past nine years. Increasing and widening participation has remained a key strategic objective. Between 1999-2000 and 2001-02, participation at the adult college rose from 57 to 80 in every 1000 of the population. This increase has been achieved through collaborative and demanding developments in the community. The adult college's strategic objectives are well linked to the borough council's community priorities. The emphasis on taking learning to people living in areas of significant disadvantage has been successfully implemented through the development of 10 new facilities across the borough through the UK online initiative, all with the adult college's

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involvement. Many of the other partnerships that have successfully increased the adult college's range of provision have been developed by initiatives led by individual members of staff. These have been effectively supported by senior managers and have included developing work-based literacy and numeracy provision and courses arranged for specific groups of learners, such as older learners and lone-parent families.

11. Although the LEA has identified appropriate strategic objectives for improving the quality of its adult and community learning provision, the action plans for meeting the objectives are weak. Planned actions are not sufficiently prioritised. The list of isolated planned activities does not include sufficiently specific criteria for measuring improvement. Timescales for achievement are not adequate. Although staff are aware of developments within the adult college, some staff are not aware of the adult college's and the LEA's progress towards meeting the strategic objectives or how the planned actions will improve the learners' experience.

12. Managers are aware of the impact the long-term absence of one member of the senior management team has had on the learning programmes within one adult college area. Although staff have been given additional part-time hours and effectively cover some of the management duties, there are still significant gaps in the support provided to tutors and learners. Curriculum development has been held back in some areas of learning and long-term plans are uncertain.

13. The LEA provides satisfactory teaching and learning resources. The facilities at the new learning centre in the north of the borough are very good. Managers from the LEA and the adult college put a strong emphasis on the need for good learning environments. They are making significant improvements to some of their facilities. However, some learners are not able to benefit sufficiently from some of the adult college's resources and facilities. The resource centre at the main adult college site provides a good service to learners who are able to use it when it is open for four hours during the day. However, many learners attending courses at this venue when the resource centre is closed do not have sufficient access to computers and other services provided in the centre. The adult college canteen is well used during the day and the adult college's reception office provides a useful point of contact for learners and those making general enquiries. However, learners wishing to contact the adult college or use the canteen shortly before the evening classes start at 19.00 are unable to do so as these facilities only open at 19.00.

14. The strategic plan has highlighted the need to develop additional learning support for learners who need help with their literacy, numeracy and language skills in order to complete their main learning programme. Initial assessments on relevant courses are currently inadequate and many courses do not provide sufficient support. However, some tutors provide appropriately adapted learning materials and some individual additional training.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

15. The promotion of equality of opportunity has a high profile in all aspects of the LEA's work. This is reflected well in the LEA's strategic objectives. The aims to widen participation and meet learners' diverse needs are at the centre of strategic and course developments. Strategies to develop the provision have been sensitive to the needs of learners living in particularly disadvantaged areas. The adult college has worked well with the LEA and other partners to prioritise the most appropriate sites for the 10 new multipurpose community centres. The LEA acknowledges that many learners would be unable to attend courses if course fees were not subsidised. A fee policy identifies who is eligible for concessionary fees or fee remission, enabling many more learners to participate in the course. The adult college provides well-structured complaints procedures, which are explained effectively in the staff and learner handbooks. The handbooks also contain a simplified and effective version of the equal opportunities policy. Complaints and other concerns are followed up effectively.

16. Staff have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues and provide good support for learners with diverse needs. A good range of relevant staff training, arranged through the adult college and the LEA, has effectively supported their development. Staff understand learners' individual needs well and respect their diverse backgrounds. For example, some tutors alter the times of classes to make it easier for learners to attend. Most courses provide learners with appropriate additional specialist equipment and resources. This work is well supported by the access facilitator, employed to support learners with physical and learning difficulties. The adult college has identified the need to extend its crèche facilities and work is currently underway on the main adult college site. Some community venues do not have sufficient crèche facilities. The premises of all sites have been adapted and provide full access for learners with restricted mobility.

17. Although the LEA promotes equality of opportunity well through the work of the adult college, the main weakness lies in the inadequate monitoring of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities development strategies. Targets are not sufficiently specific or prioritised. The adult college does not use data effectively to monitor progress towards meeting targets to widen participation among specific groups of the local population. Take-up of new and existing courses is not sufficiently analysed. Although the policy is disseminated effectively, the adult college has not identified sufficient specific criteria to monitor the implementation of the policy.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

18. The end of course evaluations are used well by the tutors and managers to improve course planning and teaching. Learners' evaluations contribute effectively to this procedure which is well managed and monitored. The course evaluations have been effective in helping staff identify and correct weaknesses, and build on strengths in the future provision of each course. The analysed results provide the senior management with a useful management tool. Improvements have included additional resources for some courses, such as a carpet in a room used for yoga, improved lighting in the car park and the introduction of ICT on courses on researching family history.

19. The adult college has developed an effective partnership with three other local providers of adult and community learning. These partners work well together to support developments and share good practice. The first project has been the successful development and implementation of a comprehensive programme on observing learning sessions. This effective and innovative work has resulted in common criteria and procedures in each organisation. Participants attending a training programme work towards an externally moderated qualification. Tutors receive comprehensive constructive feedback following an observation, and appropriate support is provided when the observations identify particular needs. In most areas of the adult college, each tutor is observed once a year. However, in one area with about 60 per cent of the adult college's tutors, they are only observed once every three years. This is not sufficient to gain the full benefits of the lesson observation programme in this area or contribute to the overall staff development programme. Some aspects of the analyses of the observations are inadequate. Although fewer learning sessions graded since the observation programme started have been unsatisfactory, managers have failed to highlight that fewer lessons are good or better. Staff do not sufficiently share good practice in teaching and learning. This has been identified as a weakness in most areas of learning and is identified in the self-assessment report.

20. The main focus of the adult college's quality assurance procedures on behalf of the LEA is on the course evaluations, continuous professional development and observations of learning sessions. Overall, the quality assurance procedures are inadequate. The adult college has produced a draft quality assurance manual but this has not been approved and is not comprehensive. Some staff have an inadequate understanding of quality assurance. Some aspects of the adult college's activities are not covered by quality assurance procedures. The curriculum policies provide useful guidance, but are not used by all curriculum managers and there are no procedures for monitoring their implementation. There is no quality assurance of the pre-enrolment advice and information system. Many learners do not have appropriate information about their courses before enrolment. Learners who ask for further information are often not given sufficient details about the courses they are considering. This aspect is well defined in the learner charter, but there are no procedures to monitor this and other services outlined in the charter. The adult college's health and safety procedures do not include checking the medical history of learners on the sports programme. Similarly, the adult college does not have an assessment strategy for monitoring assessments, especially on most courses

that do not lead to nationally recognised qualifications. The adult college has identified the weak procedures for identifying goals, developing learning plans for individual learners and recording learners' attainment, and has started a well-planned project to carry out this work in September 2002.

21. The new senior management team uses data well to manage programmes on a day-to-day basis. The team uses achievement and retention data to provide a good indication of overall trends. However, there is an over-emphasis on extracting and analysing quantitative data. The team uses data to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of learning programmes. Some data do not provide sufficient information. For example, the use of the number of enrolments does not clarify the number of individual people attending courses. Some data are not available at course level, with insufficient information on learners' destination when they complete a course. The effectiveness of new initiatives to widen participation are not sufficiently analysed. The adult college has identified the inadequate data and has purchased software to provide more detailed information. These new data were available from the beginning of March 2003.

22. The self-assessment report is satisfactory. It has been developed by the adult college on behalf of the LEA. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements and the grades in the area of learning, and gave a grade higher for hospitality, sports, leisure and travel. Most part-time tutors are aware of the procedures for self-assessment and that the course evaluations are used for this purpose, but many do not have sufficient opportunities to contribute. Few members of staff see self-assessment as part of the adult college's quality assurance procedures. The leadership and management report is not sufficiently self-critical and does not identify some of the key weaknesses in quality assurance.

Good Practice

The handbook for tutors has relevant information to help them support learners with diverse needs. It contains advice on working with people who have special needs, such as those with hearing and sight difficulties, and a section on supporting learners with literacy, numeracy, and language needs. The handbook for learners contains a section on the borough's disability statement and the support available, including additional funds. This handbook is available in large print, Braille and on audio tape.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

23. The LEA provides ICT courses in nine locations across the borough, including three schools, a local library and four community centres. Childcare is available at three sites. UK online courses are available in four of the locations. The adult college also provides UK online courses in partnership with other organisations in two other locations. In 2001-02, the adult college provided 130 courses in 12 subjects. Most learners work towards qualifications in word processing or basic computer literacy and information technology. Some courses are designed to attract particular groups of learners, such as people over the age of 50. This year, the adult college has introduced more courses in web page design. The adult college plans to replace many of its existing basic information technology (IT) courses with new and more-advanced courses. Throughout the year the adult college enrolls about 1,500 learners on ICT courses. There are currently 244 learners on 59 courses, including 15 courses at the two drop-in centres. Just over 70 per cent of learners are women, and over 20 per cent are from a minority ethnic background. A curriculum manager has overall responsibility for programme development and the day-to-day running of the ICT courses. The post-holder is supported by a full-time and a half-time assistant curriculum manager. Fourteen part-time tutors and 19 facilitators work between two and 20 hours a week. The facilitators support learners attending the drop-in centres.

STRENGTHS

- high pass rates and good progression by learners
- good teaching and learning
- comprehensive range of courses to widen participation
- good progression by learners

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient pre-application information and advice
- inadequate initial assessment
- ineffective use of resources
- declining retention rates on courses leading to qualifications

24. Learners on courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications achieve good results. Pass rates for the year 2001-02 are high, varying from 65 per cent to 100 per cent. Approximately 90 per cent of the 177 learners on the IT courses in basic computing literacy achieved the qualification in 2001-02. All 118 learners who completed the courses relating to using the Internet passed the qualifications. The

overall pass rate in 2001-02 of all learners on courses leading to a qualification was 86 per cent. The retention rate is satisfactory at 69 per cent.

25. The teaching of practical skills on ICT courses is good. Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced. They demonstrate a well-developed technical knowledge and expertise and teach their subjects effectively. Learning sessions are well planned. Most sessions comprise a well-structured brief introduction followed by an effective practical session. Tutors successfully check the level of learning by direct observation of the learners' work on the computer screen. They use effectively adapted manuals and work projects. For example, one tutor has developed a well-designed manual for text alignment and format for a word-processing course. Tutors organise a good range of learning-relevant activities involving both background knowledge and practice. Most learners are well motivated and benefit from the teaching provided. They use activities and exercises well to develop a good understanding of computing programmes and improve their skills. Their attainment is good and they take great pride in their competence in IT.

26. The adult college provides a comprehensive range of courses and a good range of progression routes for learners. Courses include computer literacy from level 1 to 4, website design courses, desktop publishing, and Internet courses. The rates of progression to these course are high. More than 80 per cent of learners on most courses enrol for a further ICT course, and many are now taking their third course. The range of ICT courses is growing each year. Some current courses are specifically designed for older learners and women returning to learning. Times and location of these courses are well planned to suit the local community. Numbers in the new drop-in centres, opened in September 2002, are low but increasing.

27. Many potential learners experience difficulty in obtaining information and advice before they enrol for a course. Course information sheets are available at some locations but these are not routinely given to enquirers. Some learners enrol without the information they require. Of the 1,208 learners who enrolled on ICT courses in 2001-02, only 835 were regarded as starters by the adult college, by attending on the second week of the appropriate course. Approximately 30 per cent of places booked were not taken up.

28. Learners do not take part in structured initial assessment when they join a course. Tutors do not use diagnostic assessments or simple computer tests to determine learners' IT competence at this stage. They do not have sufficient understanding of learners' previous experience in IT. Although the training sessions are well planned, tutors do not systematically consider the skills learners bring to the course or their individual learning needs, especially when they start a higher-level course. Although the retention rates on most nationally recognised courses are satisfactory, they are declining. Of the seven courses run in 2001-02, six have lower rates of retention than in the previous two years. The average rate of retention of these six courses has fallen from 81 per cent to 69 per cent. Retention rates on locally devised courses apply only to the year 2001-02.

29. Resources are not used effectively. One recently developed location has a well-equipped drop-in centre with modern computers in a spacious room. Other venues are not adequate for effective teaching and learning. Most tutors produce their own learning materials including classroom exercises and handouts. Many of these are good. However, there is no formal co-ordination of these documents. Handouts are not numbered or dated. They do not bear the initials of the tutor who produced them. Although curriculum and course meetings take place, these learning materials are not sufficiently shared among tutors.

30. Most learners enjoy their courses. They find the teaching good and learn a great deal. Most learners are planning to progress to higher courses and some have already enrolled. Many learners said that they had sought information about the courses before enrolment but had failed to secure the information and advice they needed. On joining the course, however, they received good guidance from the tutors. None of the learners had received an initial assessment or a formal review of progress.

Good Practice

One tutor teaching an introduction to computers course noticed that one learner was having difficulty in reading and understanding the handouts. The learner had literacy and language needs and was referred to the literacy and numeracy team by the tutor. To prevent the learner from falling behind with his computer course, the tutor rewrote the handouts using appropriately worded prompts and diagrams. They were well designed and the learner was able to work more independently.

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

31. The adult college provides all courses in this area of learning, comprising 31 courses of which 20 are in cookery and 11 are related to physical activity. These courses do not lead to nationally recognised qualifications. The catering courses include sugar craft, baking, and specialist culinary skills such as Indian cookery. The four areas of physical activity are yoga, keep fit, tai chi and Pilates. These courses are similar to the range of provision available the previous year. Many courses are offered two or three times a year. They take place during the week at morning, twilight and in the evening. Most of the learning sessions are two hours in length, generally running for 10 weeks. However, a few courses are offered for four weeks and others are up to 30 weeks in length. Courses are primarily offered at the main adult college site. Some courses in yoga, keep fit for people over 60, and introducing yoga to babies and mothers, take place at two community centres and a local secondary school. Learners can join courses throughout the year and receive an induction into their learning programme during the first session. In 2001-02, 413 learners were enrolled in this area of learning. A total of 379 learners have enrolled since September 2003, of which 286 are on catering. Most current learners are women, accounting for approximately 86 per cent. Very few learners are from minority ethnic groups. Thirteen part-time tutors teach these courses, working between two and 15 hours each week. They are supported by a part-time assistant curriculum manager responsible for curriculum planning, quality assurance and budget management. The curriculum manager is on long-term absence and the assistant manager has been allocated additional part-time hours to cover some of her duties.

STRENGTHS

- good achievement of individual learning goals
- high level of expertise and knowledge by tutors

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate curriculum development
- insufficient entry advice and initial assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- increased supply of some learning recourses
- better recording of learners' progress

32. Learners' achievement of individual learning goals is good. Learners acquire new

skills and refine existing skills in practical activities. Tutors are skilled at helping learners reinforce these skills and understand the theory behind each technique. For example, learners attending physical activity courses improve their mobility and posture, and gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to their well-being. Tutors are particularly responsive and sensitive when working with learners with specific physical problems. For example, one learner who suffers from lower back restriction receives adapted individual training activities which has improved her range of movement. Learners on catering courses make good progress in learning practical culinary skills. Many have broadened the range of recipes they use at home and have a better understanding of how to maintain a better nutritional diet. The resources used for the catering and physical education courses are satisfactory. However, the adult college has identified the need for new cookers, and a better supply of basic equipment, such as mats, for learners attending keep-fit classes.

33. Tutors have high levels of expertise and knowledge in their specialist areas. Continuing professional development activities is a high priority within the adult college. Tutors teaching the hospitality and sports courses benefit from the review and development procedures which effectively identify their individual training needs. They have taken a good range of relevant staff training and short courses to support their teaching. Courses include assessing learners' abilities and skills, making learning outcomes meaningful, and deaf awareness. Tutors maintain their professional development well. Many have achieved relevant nationally recognised specialist qualifications within their profession and have attended training events organised by the relevant industry. They apply this updated knowledge and expertise effectively in their teaching. Teaching is satisfactory. Most tutors use a good range of activities, although some sessions are repetitive, with insufficient variety. Tutors check learners' understanding well throughout the sessions, but some learners receive insufficient feedback on their overall progress.

34. Curriculum development in hospitality and sports courses is inadequate. The range of courses offered in sports is narrow and has not changed significantly in recent years. Although managers ask for learners' and tutors' views on the types of courses offered, they do not carry out sufficient systematic analysis to help develop the curriculum. Learners have insufficient opportunity to progress onto more-advanced courses. The policy statement for physical activity has not been sufficiently implemented, although plans to increase the range of courses for the next academic year are in their early stages. The introduction of recognised national qualifications is in its infancy and planned for the year 2004-05. Most course evaluations are superficial and have not been sufficiently used to improve or develop the programme. Managers do not carry out sufficient observations of learning sessions. These are planned so that each tutor is observed once every three years. Tutors receive detailed and useful feedback after managers have observed their teaching, but they do not get sufficient feedback from subject specialists.

35. Learners receive insufficient information on the courses when they join a course. The current course literature is inadequate. It is poorly detailed and some course

information sheets do not accurately reflect the content of the course. In one course, the tutor needed to change the level and content of the course as it did not meet learners' expectations. The adult college has identified the need for better pre-entry information and are updating some course information sheets. The self-assessment report also identifies the weak initial assessments. Current assessments at the start of courses do not identify learners' prior learning, abilities, or experiences. Tutors do not systematically collect and record learners' personal details, which is necessary to help them plan a course. For example, tutors do not routinely carry out basic medical history checks on learners attending physical activity courses. Not all tutors sufficiently understand the medical history and the implication for their learners, such as cardiovascular/respiratory problems or conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy.

36. Learners are satisfied with their courses in hospitality and sports. They meet new friends, take part in relevant learning activities and appreciate the wider benefits to their own health. They fully understand the improvements to their lifestyle and how participating in these courses has helped develop their self-confidence. Older learners consider maintaining a level of fitness as important, in addition to having fun and enjoyment. In cookery classes, learners appreciate the benefits of learning new recipes in order to maintain a healthy nutritional diet. Some learners would appreciate a certificate to recognise their achievements. A few learners feel that the period in the summer without courses is too long. They find it difficult to maintain some of their skills and knowledge during this time.

Poor Practice

Safe working practices are not systematically monitored in all sessions. For example, a learner turned up over 20 minutes late for a practical lesson and joined straight in with the activities without warming up. The learner did not change his clothes for the session other than putting on trainers. He took part in the session wearing his shirt, tie and trousers with a pen in his shirt pocket. The tutor did not point out the risks to the learner.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 2

37. This area of learning comprises 14 subjects in complementary therapies, including Alexander technique, aromatherapy, healing as energy, reflexology, massage, and makeovers. All are provided by the adult college. Fifty courses took place during 2001-02. Aromatherapy, healing as energy and reflexology are offered at different levels, from beginners to a course for practitioners. Courses take place across four sites, although most take place at the main adult college site. Course sessions are generally for two hours each week over a period of five to 35 weeks. Most learners are women. Most of the courses do not lead to recognised national qualifications. Practitioner qualifications are offered in Indian head massage, holistic massage, and reflexology. These courses have standardised assessments from the awarding bodies. One full-time curriculum manager and one part-time assistant curriculum manager are responsible for the planning, delivery, development, staff recruitment and budget management. The full-time curriculum manager was on long-term absence at the time of the inspection. The assistant curriculum manager has been allocated additional part-time hours to cover some of her duties. Nine part-time tutors teach in this area of learning.

STRENGTHS

- good teaching
- high level of staff expertise
- good achievement
- good curriculum planning
- wide provision of courses

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient pre-course advice and information
- weak initial assessment
- poor recording of progress and achievement

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better teaching accommodation

38. Teaching is good. Detailed course and lesson plans include appropriate aims and objectives identifying suitable teaching methods and resources. Tutors make good use of an appropriate variety of teaching methods such as lectures, question and answer sessions, group discussions and videos. They are appropriately qualified, experienced and knowledgeable. They make good use of training provided by the adult college for

continuing professional development, including subject specific courses and more varied courses. For example, one member of staff has completed an advanced course in her own speciality, a course to update her teaching skills, training in disability awareness, and a course in neurolinguistic programming.

39. Tutors are enthusiastic about their subjects. They provide learners with a high level of individual support and advice, often outside sessions times. They use a good range of learning materials and equipment, such as relevant and well-designed wall displays, effectively complemented by anatomical models, including a skeleton. Tutors bring additional resources such as music and incense which successfully enhance the learning environment. Teaching accommodation is clean, warm and well lit, but some rooms are poorly decorated. One teaching room does not have hand-washing facilities.

40. Pass rates are good on most courses that lead to nationally recognised qualifications. In 2001-02, 74 per cent of the 27 learners who completed were successful, and 96 per cent of learners were successful in the previous year. Learners achieve their individual goals on all courses. Attainment is good. For example, in a session on the digestive system, learners gained a good understanding of the main organs involved in the digestive process. The tutor assessed their understanding effectively in a question and answer session and learners showed an increase in their knowledge. Practical sessions provide well-structured supervision. Learners develop good techniques in specialist skills and gain confidence in using these skills independently.

41. Curriculum planning is good. Managers use information from the course evaluations effectively when considering the range and content of the courses on offer. The individual courses are well planned and developed. The assistant curriculum manager has given priority to this area of learning. The comments on the course evaluation forms are used well to improve existing courses. The adult college offers a broad range of courses in complementary therapies. This includes an appropriate balance of daytime and evening courses. All courses are well attended. The assistant curriculum manager uses local research well to incorporate community needs when reviewing the range of courses offered. As a result, the assistant curriculum manager has established effective links with relevant organisations to set up courses that would benefit learners from community groups, such as elderly people and lone parents. For example, a course in massage for people over 60 currently takes place in a community centre. Taster courses are designed to encourage single mothers to return to education courses. The take-up of these courses is good. Managers also consider the range courses offered by other local providers and avoid unnecessary duplication.

42. Learners do not receive sufficient advice and information before joining a course. Not all learners are interviewed, as advertised, before enrolling on courses leading to recognised qualifications. The procedures for providing potential learners with information about courses in complementary therapies are inadequate. Some learners are unaware of the level of difficulty of the course and others do not have an accurate idea of what the course entails although they had been attracted by the description in

the adult college prospectus.

43. Initial assessment of learners' prior experience and individual learning needs is poor. The form for recording the outcomes of initial assessment is inadequate. The process does not adequately identify learners with literacy needs on courses requiring written assessments. Some tutors identify learners' additional learning needs once the course has started. Most provide learners with informal additional support to help them achieve their goals, but this is not systematically recorded.

44. The adult college identified the weakness in the poor recording of learners' progress and achievement in its self-assessment report. The document used to review learners' progress and achievement is not effective. It does not accurately reflect the amount of verbal feedback given on learners' practical and written performance. Assessment records are incomplete. They are not always up to date or signed off properly. Some tutors have enhanced these forms effectively or they use additional assessment records to ensure that their learners are well informed about their progress. There are inadequate systems for the team of tutors to review and share these amended forms.

45. Tutors are well supported by management and are well informed about changes to procedures relevant to their courses. They are fully involved in the development of the curriculum. All tutors are appraised each year and participate in staff training. The assistant curriculum manager provides tutors with detailed and constructive feedback after formal observation of learning sessions but these are not sufficiently frequent. Only one-third of tutors benefit from this process each year.

46. Learners speak highly of the courses and of the tutors. They value the variety of courses and that they are offered at different levels. They also value the taster days which enable them to sample the subject before enrolling. Many learners have said that they would like there to be a greater range of courses leading to recognised qualifications. They would also like better information about the content and depth of the courses. Several learners said that they had experienced improvements in their own health as a result of a healing course. Learners also spoke very positively about the extent to which these courses have made a positive impact on their own lives as well as the lives of friends and families.

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

47. The adult college provides all the LEA's courses in visual and performing arts. Courses include music, fine art, applied arts, dance, pottery and textiles and take place in seven learning centres and one mobile unit in the borough. Venues include a secondary school, a charitable organisation, a community centre, residential homes and housing estates in addition to two main adult college sites. Courses range from one to 40 weeks in length. Some courses are repeated each term. Sessions last between two and three hours and usually take place once a week. A small number of one-day craft workshops provide training in craft techniques which are usually oversubscribed. Most courses do not lead to nationally recognised qualifications and are available to learners of all levels of expertise and ability. Three courses in embroidery, paint effects and interior design lead to nationally recognised qualifications. The part-time assistant manager is currently allocated additional hours each week to manage this area of learning while the curriculum manager is on long-term absence. These joint roles include responsibility for planning, delivery, curriculum development, staff recruitment and budget management. There are currently 31 part-time tutors, six of whom teach six hours or more each week. In 2001-02, 568 learners started arts courses. Many attended more than one course. Seventy-four per cent of learners are women and 8 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Just over a half of all learners are aged over 60.

STRENGTHS

- good achievement of individual learning goals
- good support for learners' diverse needs
- high retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective curriculum management
- insufficient identification of learners' aspirations
- poor lesson planning

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of ICT

48. Learners attending visual and performing arts programmes make good progress towards achieving their individual learning goals. Many learners gain new skills and improve their levels of existing skills, such as life drawing and oil techniques. Individual

learners display good attainment through gaining better standards of creative art work. Learners fully understand their own achievements and are enthusiastic about their courses. Some learners take new skills and use them in the family, the local community or within voluntary work. Many learners have taken further courses within the arts or other subject areas. Many learners also benefit from the social aspects of courses. Some learners use the art practice to help them explore personal issues. Achievement rates are high in the creative arts courses leading to national qualifications. In 2001-02, 33 of the 35 learners who registered achieved qualifications. Retention rates are very good in embroidery, at 96 per cent and are satisfactory in interior design, at 58 per cent.

49. Staff supporting the creative arts programme successfully encourage learners with different social needs and personal circumstances to take part in courses. The courses attract people who have had a good previous experience in education, those who may be unemployed or recovering from illness, or those who are retired. Tutors provide learners with high levels of personal support and fully understand their needs. Courses designed for specific learners successfully attract those from the target group and re-establish these individuals within a learning environment. The targeted groups include elderly disabled people, lone or working parents, estate-based groups, young men, and those with particular learning needs. Learning materials and equipment are generally provided for learners. Crèche facilities are based within two sites.

50. Retention rates are high on courses in visual and performing arts not leading to qualifications, ranging from 67 per cent to 90 per cent. Attendance is good with some new learners at each enrolment period. Many art courses have waiting lists. Good scheduling of courses at different times of day and evening enables many learners to attend and stay on the courses. Most learners who have returned to learning after many years successfully complete their courses.

51. Management of this area of learning is not effective. Inadequate arrangements have been made to cover the curriculum manager's long-term absence. Curriculum planning for this area of learning is not sufficiently developed. Topics discussed and agreed actions are not adequately recorded or followed through. Although partnerships with key community agencies are emerging, targets regarding curriculum development and improvement are not sufficiently specific. Tutors are not sufficiently involved in the development of the curriculum. Only a few of the teaching staff share professional ideas and teaching methods across the area of learning. Quality assurance procedures are not fully implemented. Too few lesson observations are scheduled in this area of learning. Tutors receive comprehensive written responses to course evaluations, but not all issues and concerns are resolved. The needs of the local communities are not sufficiently researched.

52. Tutors do not sufficiently identify learners' individual aspirations and starting points. The use of initial assessment is inconsistent. Some tutors do not complete initial assessment with learners. They do not have specific information about learners' starting points to create fulfilling learning journeys. The adult college has recognised this

weakness in the self-assessment report and is currently developing procedures for identifying and recording learners' individual goals. Few tutors have detailed individualised records to facilitate and support the management of learning. The procedures for identifying and supporting learners with literacy, numeracy and language skills are inadequate. Although learners receive high levels of personal support, some learners do not receive the additional tutoring in literacy, numeracy or language required to complete their art course. This invariably depends on the skills and goodwill of individual tutors.

53. The self-assessment report recognises that many learning sessions are inadequately planned and workshop sessions lack structure. Most schemes of work fail to relate to stated course aims and the syllabi of examination boards. Although learners learn new skills through carrying out tasks, the focus on learning and attainment is insufficient in some sessions. Teaching is satisfactory. Tutors do not sufficiently set subject matter set in a contemporary, historical or cultural context to enhance learners' experience and knowledge of the subject area, particularly in craft classes. Teaching methods in some sessions are not sufficiently varied to cater for learners' different learning styles. Learning sessions do not always provide sufficiently challenging learning opportunities to help learners identify and fulfil their potential. Some tutors do not plan courses to provide enough opportunities for individualised creative work. There is an over-reliance on copying and reproducing art works and designs. In some classes, learners do not receive meaningful feedback on the quality of their work.

54. Classrooms are generally suitable for purpose with basic resources provided in practical studios and specialist rooms. The music technology resources are good. Learners are able to use specialist materials and resources provided by tutors. However, there is not enough integration of ICT to aid research, develop portfolios and to help in the production of written assignments and art work.

55. Many learners spoke with enthusiasm about the way their learning had enriched their lives. They were proud that they could develop new skills and produce work such as glass lampshades and embroidered pieces or artwork. Many learners understand the importance the course played in providing them not only with social interaction, but also a means of maintaining manual dexterity and creative skills. Young mothers use their new skills with their children. Some learners have used their new skills to gain work, such as flower arranging and glasswork.

Good Practice

Safe working practices are well integrated in some sessions. In one session the tutor questioned the learners to explain working practices with floral materials. Specific poisonous flowers and foliage were named and learners were able to identify these among their own materials. The learning was reinforced with a comprehensive handout to be kept in the learners' personal folders.

English, languages & communications

Grade 3

56. The adult college provides the LEA's courses in French, German, Italian, Spanish, British Sign Language (BSL), general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) English and creative writing. All but two of the 25 courses in modern languages lead to nationally recognised qualifications courses at levels 1 or 2. Level 1 courses run for 34 weeks for two years, and level 2 courses for 23 weeks for two years. Not all levels in all languages are run both day and evening. Two BSL courses at level 1 are offered day and evening over 33 weeks. Two creative writing courses are also offered day and evening over 13 weeks. Three courses leading to a GCSE in English take place during the day over 31 weeks. Two of these are for women who have returned to learning. Most courses take place at the main adult college site and a few take place at two other learning centres in Barking. In 2002-03, there have been 397 enrolments on the 32 courses, with 319 learners currently still registered, showing a retention rate, at present, of 80 per cent. All sessions last for two hours, except for GCSE English which is allocated two and a half hours. Management responsibility for the modern language programmes is shared between a temporary assistant curriculum manager and a temporary senior tutor for languages. The assistant manager has been allocated additional part-time hours to cover some of the duties of the curriculum manager who is currently on long-term absence. Eleven part-time tutors are currently teaching these courses.

STRENGTHS

- good achievement of learning goals
- good teaching in most learning sessions
- effective monitoring of learners' progress in GCSE English

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient sharing of good practice in modern foreign languages
- insufficient recording of learners' progress on modern foreign languages courses
- insufficient recording of initial assessment on modern foreign languages and BSL courses

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider range of provision

57. There is good achievement of learning goals, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Learners on most courses achieve their learning goals. Many

modern foreign languages learners have progressed through courses at different levels within the adult college and have very well-developed speaking skills. They use these skills when they travel abroad and when they meet native speakers at work or in the community. Most learners have a good understanding of the progress they have made, although data on progress are often only recorded on the assessment forms that are completed for their qualification. Pass rates are good on courses that lead to nationally recognised qualifications. Learners produce good work on the creative writing courses. The work of the GCSE English learners is also good with a high pass rate in 2001-02 of 75 per cent, with most at grades A-C. The standard of attainment of learners on the BSL courses is good. However, pass rates over three years have fallen from 82 per cent in 2000 to 58 per cent in 2002. Most learners are performing at or above the appropriate level for their chosen course.

58. The standard of teaching in most learning sessions is good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Most learning sessions comprise a good range of effective and appropriate teaching methods. Staff are well qualified with good teaching expertise in their specialist areas. In modern foreign languages learning sessions, tutors make effective use of the language learners are studying. Pair and group work are used effectively across all subject areas. For example, in one level 2 Spanish class, the teacher used realistic dialogue taking place in a property office to itemise possible vocabulary and expressions. When learners role-played similar scenes in pairs, the tutor gave them appropriate levels of support and feedback in the language learners were studying. Lesson planning is satisfactory. Some schemes of work do not contain sufficient details about resources and expected outcomes for the learners. Most tutors make good use of well-chosen course books in modern languages and audio-visual equipment. However, there are insufficient visual displays on the walls. Some modern foreign languages learning sessions are unsatisfactory. Some tutors do not use the language learners are studying sufficiently and learners do not practise their speaking skills enough. In English, too much time is spent on discussing grammatical aspects of the language.

59. The monitoring of learners' progress on the GCSE English courses is thorough. Tutors make good use of a comprehensive initial assessment to identify learners' abilities and areas for development. Tutors keep detailed records of learners' achievements against the targets on the schemes of work. Learners receive constructive feedback on their work and are given relevant advice on how to improve. Moderators' reports commend the application of the assessment systems by adult college staff. Management of the curriculum area of English is good, with clear direction and leadership. However, the initial assessments of learners' language skills in modern foreign languages classes are inadequate. Although the brief oral assessments are used adequately to guide learners to the most appropriate course, the results are not fully recorded. Learners do not receive sufficiently detailed information on their levels of skills. Similarly, the procedures for recording learners' progress throughout the language courses are inadequate. Learners receive adequate feedback on their performance after tutors have assessed their work against the criteria for the qualifications. Tutors keep insufficient records of other aspects of learners' achievements. Learners do not

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receive sufficient feedback on their progress towards their individual personal goals. Learners on courses not leading to qualifications receive insufficient constructive feedback on their progress. The adult college has identified this weakness. Staff are currently involved in a project to develop individual learning plans on modern foreign language courses. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this new scheme.

60. The day-to-day management is satisfactory, with courses offering an adequate range of modern foreign languages. However, progression to a higher level in some languages is problematic. Not all levels occur both day and evening and some levels are not available because of current low numbers. Some aspects of the modern languages courses are inadequately managed. Tutors do not sufficiently share good practice. Some learning sessions are unsatisfactory while in others, tutors adopt a good range of successful teaching and learning activities. Tutors do not discuss teaching methods sufficiently at meetings or share learning materials and ideas for developing learners' skills. Although the feedback given to tutors after observations of teaching is detailed and constructive, tutors teaching in this area of learning are not observed sufficiently frequently.

61. Learners appreciate their tutors' teaching techniques and expertise. Those on modern language courses state that their confidence in speaking has been greatly increased. Learners on GCSE English and BSL courses appreciate the good progress they make. All learners make positive comments about the adult college, its friendliness and accessibility, though they feel the reception, cafeteria and resource centre are not open often enough. Some learners who are only available in the daytime are not able to progress to other higher-level courses as they are unable to attend in the evenings.

Foundation programmes**Grade 3**

62. The LEA's foundation programmes include courses and projects in literacy, numeracy, ESOL, family learning, and supported learning. The adult college manages most of these courses and projects, in partnership with other LEA departments and external organisations. Approximately 117 classes are currently running across the borough in 10 locations and 10 schools, with 450 ESOL, 221 literacy and 121 numeracy learners. Most courses take place during the day, with 15 taking place in the evening. Courses vary in length from three-hour initial assessment sessions and family learning workshops, to courses running for 34 weeks a year. Learners can enrol on ESOL and some literacy and numeracy courses at any time of the year. Most ESOL learners attend two two-hour sessions each week. Literacy and numeracy learners attend one three-hour session each week. Family learning courses range from three to six hours a week, up to 63 hours in total. Courses are run at all levels from pre-entry to level 2 and are linked to the national standards. In 2001-02, just over 80 per cent of courses led to external qualifications. ESOL learners receive an in-house adult college certificate at entry level 1 and are all entered for an external speaking exam from entry level 2 to level 2. Learners work towards external qualifications in literacy and numeracy. These are based on assessment portfolios learners produce at entry level. Learners at levels 1 and 2 take the national literacy and numeracy tests. One full-time curriculum manager, two full-time and two part-time assistant curriculum managers are responsible for foundation programmes. The curriculum manager and assistants are responsible for planning, development, staff recruitment and budget management. Thirty-nine part-time tutors share the teaching in this area. The teaching hours vary from three hours to more than 20 hours a week. Most staff in this area have a specific qualification in teaching literacy, numeracy or ESOL.

STRENGTHS

- good attainment
- effective management of recent national developments
- effective family learning programme

WEAKNESSES

- weak individual learning plans
- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching
- some inadequate resources

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more intensive training for ESOL learners
- better arrangements for giving feedback to learners

63. Initial assessments are comprehensive. The adult college's staff systematically carry out detailed initial and diagnostic assessments for all learners, using the national standards. These assessments effectively identify learners' levels of literacy, numeracy and language skills. Staff use these assessments well to refer learners to courses at the most appropriate level. Staff have a good knowledge of their specialist areas. They are skilled at providing learners with appropriate levels of support to help them achieve their individual learning targets. Learners' attainment of these targets is good. All targets are cross-referenced to the core curricula. Most learners make good progress in improving their literacy, numeracy or language skills. For example, ESOL learners on entry level 2 courses have learned to use the correct tenses when describing an event that happened when they were younger. Learners' aspirations are recognised and well supported by staff. Learners achieve good communication and interpersonal skills. Most learners quickly pick up the skills required to understand how their learning programme is linked to the national curriculum. They improve their self-esteem and self-confidence, demonstrating good self-assessment and reflective skills.

64. The managers of the LEA and the adult college provide strong leadership of foundation programmes. They define staff roles and responsibilities clearly and communicate well with all staff. Managers have a good understanding of local and national strategic objectives and the adult college's contribution to them. For example, the adult college is taking part in the pilot level 1 work in both literacy and numeracy with the LEA's adult basic skills initiative. In-house and national training has been well attended and staff apply the training well in their teaching. The LEA provides a comprehensive range of courses, and learners are able to work towards externally moderated qualifications. Learners are well informed about the range of qualifications. The venues for foundation courses have been selected well and are situated in areas with high levels of literacy, numeracy and language needs. Classes take place in a good geographical spread of locations across the borough, including two UK online learning centres. Much of this work is well supported by relevant external agencies, including employers and trade unions. In ESOL, however, some learners are not able to attend for a sufficient number of hours each week. The adult college does not provide intensive ESOL courses.

65. The LEA runs an effective family learning programme, which is well managed by the adult college in collaboration with relevant partners. Courses cover a wide range of relevant topics based on helping parents and guardians develop their own literacy and numeracy skills, while discovering different methods to support their children. These courses are successful in attracting learners otherwise unlikely to return to education. Teaching is good and retention and achievement rates are high. Learners make good progress towards demanding targets. Some participating schools provide strong support. They make appropriate arrangements to allow parents to play enhanced roles in school-life as their self-confidence increases. In one group of six literacy learners, four have begun to work in school either voluntarily or as classroom assistants. Sessions with

children and parents successfully provide purposeful learning activities. Testing of children's literacy and numeracy skills before and after courses shows that measurable improvements have taken place.

66. Individual learning plans provide an adequate record of learners' individual targets against the national curricula and work they have completed during sessions. For example, in literacy, these targets may relate to improving the use of punctuation, understanding the difference between formal and informal writing, and techniques for remembering the spelling of adjectives. However, the documents are inadequate as a planning tool. They are not used sufficiently to record learners' progress towards their overall goals and aspirations. Tutors do not sufficiently plan the development and assessment of the learners' use of literacy, numeracy and language skills in a wider context. Learning activities are primarily based on curriculum targets, with insufficient emphasis on helping learners use the skills to meet their personal goals, such as talking to their children's tutors, writing reports at work and passing the driving theory test. Although plans contain a review of learning, this too is primarily restricted to curriculum targets. Learners are not sufficiently involved in this process. Many learners are not given sufficient opportunity to renegotiate their goals or review the impact of learning on their lives. Learners who come to learning sessions late sometimes disrupt teaching and learning. Tutors do not use the reviews sufficiently to give learners constructive feedback on poor punctuality or irregular attendance.

67. Teaching and learning in foundation programmes ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Although tutors attend programme area meetings frequently and participate in staff development well, they do not sufficiently share good practice in teaching methodology or learning materials. In some learning sessions, tutors do not adapt their approaches sufficiently to suit learners' preferred learning styles, as identified during the initial assessment. Most tutors use the curriculum targets on the learning plans to identify skills and knowledge to develop group teaching. However, group teaching in some sessions is insufficiently challenging for some learners and pitched at too high a level for others. Many learners do not participate fully in learning sessions. Some staff vary the range of learning activities effectively, making good use of paired and small group work. They provide good opportunities for learners to work collaboratively and develop their communication skills in a wider range of contexts. These approaches are not sufficiently shared.

68. In ESOL, some tutors do not use a sufficiently wide range of learning materials and audio-visual equipment, such as radio and television, printed materials from learners' everyday lives and authentic prompts during role-play. Some courses are not supplemented by sufficient resources. For example, childcare facilities at some learning sites do not meet the needs of some learners on ESOL programmes, and this is a barrier to participation. The adult college acknowledges the importance of providing childcare and has increased this provision significantly in some parts of the borough. Some accommodation used by ESOL and family learning groups is inadequate. For example, one family learning group uses children's chairs and tables, and another group uses a room that is too small for the number of learners, leading to disruption in learning,

especially in the session with children. Some schools which have identified a need for a family learning programme are unable to participate because they cannot arrange sufficient accommodation.

69. Learners express high satisfaction with the courses they attend. They not only learn new skills but feel more self-confident in their wider lives. Some have developed new career plans as a result of attending classes, and others speak highly of their increased ability to support their children in their English and mathematics. For many this is the first experience of learning as adults and they feel tutors are understanding and supportive as well as having good subject knowledge.

Good Practice

The adult college has made particularly good use of the national campaign to promote its literacy and numeracy programmes. Managers sought the required permission to use part of the national marketing designs. They incorporated this well into their own marketing design and adult college logo. The adult college's advertising campaign is prominent in the borough, with large posters on bus stops in the area and in other public places. The adult college has increased the number of learners participating in its literacy and numeracy courses and is on course to reach its targets.

Language of the Adult and Community Learning

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

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

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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