INSPECTION REPORT

Bradford Metropolitan District Council

02 June 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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning 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

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.

INSPECTION REPORT

Bradford Metropolitan District Council

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Bradford Metropolitan District Council's (the council) provision of adult and community learning (ACL) is managed by the Lifelong Learning Service (the service). In 2001, most local education authority (LEA) functions were taken over by a private company. Adult learning was retained by the council and the service forms part of the council's department of community development and lifelong learning. There are seven managerial and support staff in the service equivalent to 4.75 full-time equivalent posts. The team is led by a service manager, supported by a senior officer and quality development manager. A lifelong learning co-ordinator, a finance officer and two temporary posts of development officer and administrative assistant complete the team. The service manager reports to the director of community development and lifelong learning.

2. The service does not employ any tutors. All provision is subcontracted. There are service level agreements with 66 organisations, including 30 voluntary or community organisations, one local college of further education, and two former local authority-maintained external institutions. Approximately 140 tutors work in the subcontracted provision, of whom most are part time. A forum for providers meets monthly to discuss operational matters. The council spends 0.54 per cent of it total education budget on ACL. The main source of its budget is West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). New contracting arrangements will be introduced from August 2003 when the council will cease to be the sole contracting partner with West Yorkshire LSC. Two additional contracting partners will become involved, one taking responsibility for voluntary sector provision, the other overseeing family learning provision and adult learning in schools.

3. Bradford is the fourth largest metropolitan district in England. Nine out of its 30 wards are within the most deprived 10 per cent in the country. In 2001-02, 5,124 learners attended courses supported by the service, 2,734 older learners had their fees remitted for attending courses at three local colleges, and 2,390 learners enrolled on ACL programmes at 40 learning centres. About 25 per cent of enrolments were made by men and approximately 40 per cent were made by people aged over 60. Thirty-seven per cent of learners on ACL programmes are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups in Bradford is 21 per cent.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Community learning

4. As part of its community learning provision the service provides a range of introductory learning programmes, most of which are non-accredited. Established providers are contracted for overall numbers of recruited learners rather than for specific

learning programmes. Courses are run at 72 venues throughout the metropolitan district. A wide range of accommodation is used, including community centres, religious centres, youth centres and local halls, as well as schools and colleges. Classes take place on all seven days of the week, during the day and in the evenings. The length of learning programmes ranges from one day to three terms. Most learning sessions are two hours long.

5. At the time of the inspection, 19 courses were running in information and communications technology (IT). Subjects include introduction to computing, Internet for beginners, and courses in popular computer applications such as spreadsheets and word processing. Some courses lead to qualifications at levels 1 and 2, including the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). Learning usually takes place in computer workshops and learners are taught by tutors using workbooks and reference materials. Seven courses in visual arts were running at the time of the inspection. Subjects offered include dressmaking and design, upholstery and soft furnishing, sewing and garment making for Asian women, machine knitting, and arts and practical watercolours. There were 14 foundation courses at the time of the inspection, including supporting parents, social history, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), improve your basic skills, laughter therapy, and literacy and numeracy. The courses are mainly intended for learners who have poor basic skills and who were excluded from school. Some learners have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Five accredited courses are provided, comprising the national skills profile, literacy, numeracy, mathematics at level 1, and English at level 1. These courses last on average for one year.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	35
Number of learner interviews	110
Number of staff interviews	19
Number of subcontractor interviews	42
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	17
Number of partner/external agency interviews	3

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the leadership and management, the approach to equality of opportunity and arrangements for quality assurance are unsatisfactory. The quality of community learning programmes is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

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

Areas of learning	Grade
Community learning	4

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

7. **Achievement on accredited programmes is good.** Learners achieve well in visual arts, and there is an 83 per cent pass rate on a popular IT course. **Learners develop good practical skills in visual arts,** producing artefacts for use in the home. In oral history classes, learners develop good research skills, and the work produced by a creative writing class for learners with Asperger's syndrome reached the final of a national competition. A group of IT learners created a community website designed for use by the over 50s. Many learners gain in self-confidence and improve their self-esteem through attending these classes.

8. **Insufficiently challenging learning targets are set for some learners.** In some classes attainment is poor, particularly in foundation programmes. Some IT learners make slow progress. There is poor attendance on some courses. Retention and punctuality are satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Community learning	0	2	7	9	6	1	0	25
Total	**0**	**2**	**7**	**9**	**6**	**1**	**0**	**25**
per cent		**36.00%**		**36.00%**		**28.00%**		

9. **Learners receive very good support from their tutors.** Learners are encouraged to stay on programme and complete their studies. Induction arrangements vary from satisfactory to poor. Some learners received no information on health and safety and equality of opportunity.

10. **There is a good range of courses in information and communications technology**

(ICT), including drop-in sessions as well as more conventional classroom learning. There are good basic learning programmes in visual arts but insufficient progression routes. Good provision is made in foundation programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities who prefer the small class sizes and the informality of community learning venues.

11. **Over a quarter of the learning sessions observed were unsatisfactory.** Some sessions are poorly planned, teaching methods are poor and learning sessions are not sufficiently varied. Inadequate use is made of individual learning plans and not enough attention is given to setting learners challenging targets based on their existing knowledge and learning potential.

12. **Some learners have poor access to learning resources.** In IT there are not enough resources for independent learning. In some foundation programmes, learners rely on resources made by the tutor or obtained from other sources. Resources in visual arts are satisfactory.

13. **There is insufficient monitoring of learners' progress.** Some learners are unaware of the progress they are making. There is not enough assessment on non-accredited IT programmes and learners receive insufficient feedback. In some visual arts programmes there is insufficient evidence in portfolios to indicate what learning has taken place. Initial assessment is ineffective on some IT and foundation programmes.

Leadership and management

14. **The service has a range of good partnership arrangements** which are effective in securing additional funding, promoting the widening of participation and the recruitment of new learners. Local learning centre managers are very knowledgeable about their communities and develop good links with local organisations.

15. **Communications between the service and many of it subcontractors are good.** Providers comment positively on the responsiveness and support provided by the lifelong learning team. Communication with some of the smaller and newer subcontractors is less well managed.

16. **There is a good range of learning centres to widen participation.** These are strategically positioned to recruit targeted learners in the community. Since 2000, the number of venues has increased from 30 to 72.

17. **There is an effective strategy to develop providers' quality assurance processes.** Significant progress has been made in increasing awareness of quality assurance issues among providers. Implementation of the new procedures has been slow at some learning centres and some tutors are not working to the new guidelines.

18. Strategic planning is satisfactory. The adult learning plan for 2002-03 has well-formulated strategic objectives and the head of service gives a clear strategic lead to the work of the lifelong learning team. There is no clear responsibility for the strategic

planning of lifelong learning within the city. The local learning partnership has yet to establish a clear direction for adult learning. The council has identified lifelong learning as one of its key strategies for change. However, the council's corporate plan does not identify ACL as part of its strategy for lifelong learning.

19. **The service has developed an effective strategy to integrate basic skills into the delivery of ACL programmes.** The scheme is not yet fully established and there are examples of both good and poor practice in the integration and delivery of basic skills. In some learning centres there is inadequate initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs.

20. **Curriculum co-ordination is poor.** There is no central management of the overall curriculum offer. There are few progression opportunities in non-accredited learning. There is no forum for tutors in a particular subject area to share good practice or receive specialist staff development to support curriculum development.

21. **Central marketing and publicity are inadequate.** An attractive brochure was produced in Autumn 2002, but there is currently no up-to-date published list of courses offered by the service. Learning centres do not advertise each other's courses.

22. **Equality of opportunity is not sufficiently promoted at some learning centres.** The policies recently revised by the service have not had time to become established across the service. Subcontractors' promotional material is not monitored to ensure it conveys positive images. Some subcontractors have no complaints procedures in place and learners at these locations were not aware of how to progress their concerns.

23. **The monitoring of subcontracted provision is ineffective.** Insufficient attention is being given to monitoring the learning programmes. There is insufficient use of performance data to improve learning programmes. Data are not collected centrally on learners' progression routes within the service or on learners' destinations.

24. The self-assessment report contains good evaluative judgements with clear reference to sources of evidence. Consultation arrangements with learning centre managers are good. However some tutors were not consulted and limited use is made of the views of learners. There is a detailed development plan which incorporates key measures in preparation for the introduction of the new contracting arrangements in August 2003.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths
- good partnership arrangements
- good communications with most subcontractors
- good range of learning centres to widen participation

- effective strategy to develop subcontractors' quality assurance processes

Weaknesses
- poor curriculum co-ordination
- inadequate central marketing and publicity
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities in some subcontractors
- insufficient implementation of complaints procedures
- ineffective monitoring of subcontractors
- insufficient use of performance data and target-setting

Community learning

Strengths
- good achievement on accredited courses
- good application of practical skills in visual arts
- good individual support for most learners
- wide range of learning programmes in ICT and foundation
- good community links

Weaknesses
- some poor teaching and learning
- inadequate planning of learning
- poor access to learning resources for some learners
- insufficient monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- ineffective curriculum management

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL:

- patient, friendly, unpatronising tutors
- lack of pressure in self-paced learning
- small classes
- being in a class with people of a similar age
- clear explanations by teachers
- learning new skills
- provision of laptop computers
- good value for money
- welcoming learning centres
- socialising with other learners

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- the crèche provision
- the teaching of Internet skills such as email
- the computers
- the support for learners with language needs
- the noisy learning environments
- more class meetings each week
- the management of the learning sessions and provision of individual support
- the information on the requirements of particular courses
- the time between the publication of course information and the start of classes

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL:

- establish effective curriculum co-ordination
- improve the promotion of equality of opportunity at some centres
- improve the quality monitoring of a diverse range of provision
- improve the planning of learning and the monitoring of learners' progress
- raise the standard of teaching, learning and attainment

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Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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.

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths
- good partnership arrangements
- good communications with most subcontractors
- good range of learning centres to widen participation
- effective strategy to develop subcontractors' quality assurance processes

Weaknesses
- poor curriculum co-ordination
- inadequate central marketing and publicity
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities in some subcontractors
- insufficient implementation of complaints procedures
- ineffective monitoring of subcontractors
- insufficient use of performance data and target-setting

25. The service has a range of good working partnership arrangements. Some of these partnerships have effectively supported the widening of participation and the recruitment of new learners. Successful joint bids for European funding have been made with two primary schools to build and equip ICT facilities used by the community. Another successful joint bid funded a primary school to provide specific mentoring support to mothers from minority ethnic groups. The mothers were given advice and guidance on learning and development and the mentors were trained and achieved a qualification. The lifelong learning team works effectively with other departments within the authority to explore areas for joint working. Useful links have been developed with the library service and social services. There is a good working partnership with a local further education college to develop and deliver quality assurance systems for the ACL service and to train subcontractors' staff to implement them.

26. Communications are good between the service and many of its subcontractors. There are regular meetings for providers and those that attend find them very useful for collecting information, sharing good management practice and networking. The lifelong learning team has good working relationships with providers. Staff from the service make regular visits to learning centres. Many of the subcontractors in regular communication with the service are larger providers with considerable experience of provision, and they make good use of the support they receive. Communication with some smaller and newer subcontractors is not managed as satisfactorily.

27. The lifelong learning team's strategic planning for the provision of ACL is

satisfactory. There is an adult learning plan for 2002-03 with well-formulated strategic objectives. The plan clearly identifies a number of areas for development and strategies for dealing with weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. However, there are insufficient data available to set the plan in its local context and no cross-referencing of the overall provision of ACL in Bradford. There is no clear responsibility for the strategic planning of lifelong learning within the city. The local learning partnership has yet to establish a clear direction for adult learning. The adult learning plan has an associated review document that includes recommendations for 2003-04. This document outlines the reduction of the council's role and the addition of two new contracting partners to bring about closer monitoring and more focused direction to the provision. The council has an overall strategy for the development of Bradford that identifies lifelong learning as one of its key areas for change. There are within the council a large number of related departmental and area plans. However, the council's corporate plan for 2002-05 does not identify ACL as part of its strategy to achieve objectives related to lifelong learning. The strategic plan for the department of community development and lifelong learning for 2003-04 does not include objectives or goals related to the lifelong learning service.

28. There is an elected member of the council with a broad portfolio that includes lifelong learning, and a further member who serves on the education scrutiny committee with a particular interest in lifelong learning. Both members are well informed about the detailed work of the service. The council has approved the adult learning plan. There are clear lines of responsibility for reporting within the department of community development and lifelong learning to the director who is accountable for the service. The head of service gives a clear strategic lead to the work of the lifelong learning team.

29. The management information system is satisfactory. Data are collected on learners' gender, ethnicity and disability. Most of the subcontractors provide learner attendance and retention information.

30. The arrangements for monitoring of health and safety are satisfactory. The service provides clear health and safety guidelines for its subcontractors and requires them to perform a risk analysis of their premises. The service also provides training for the staff of its subcontractors. At some learning centres there is inadequate reinforcement of safe working practices.

31. The council makes satisfactory use of its resources. In 2001, when funds for ACL were transferred from the LEA to the LSC, the service was poorly funded. Since that date, the LSC grant has doubled. The lifelong learning team has also made successful bids for European funding and additional council funds have been added to the budget to ensure the continuation of some previously externally funded projects. Funds are allocated to a range of subcontractors and monitored through a service level agreement. Established providers are funded for total numbers of recruited learners. Funds are not allocated in relation to the number of course hours for each programme. Newer providers make bids against defined criteria. There is no systematic scoring of these bids, but there have been sufficient resources to fund all qualifying programmes.

32. Service staff appraisal and development is satisfactory. All members of the lifelong

learning team are appraised annually and have monthly supervision meetings with their manager. All service staff have training plans. Through its contract with a local further education college, the service has offered a staff development programme in quality assurance management and basic skills development to subcontractors and their staff. Not all of these programmes have been well attended, but those staff who have attended make good use of them. Some staff from the local LSC have attended this programme. Some subcontractors' part-time staff and those from smaller providers have found it difficult to attend.

33. Most of the funding for the development of basic skills in the city is channelled through the company responsible for the management of Bradford's schools. In addition to this provision, the lifelong learning team has developed an effective strategy to integrate basic skills into the provision of ACL programmes. Training on the national curriculum framework and the integration of basic skills was offered to staff to support this development. Mentoring is now taking place at eight learning centres where good guidance is given to tutors. The scheme is yet to be fully established. There is some good and some poor practice in the integration and provision of support for the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills.

34. There is poor curriculum co-ordination within the lifelong learning service. Subcontractors that receive historical funding are given learner number targets but design their own curriculum. New subcontractors have target areas for curriculum delivery. However, there is no central management of the overall curriculum offer. There is not enough evidence of curriculum innovation within the programme and a restricted curriculum offer in some areas of learning. There are insufficient progression opportunities in non-accredited learning. It is therefore often not possible to offer learners programmes suitable for their level of ability and experience and some learners are not sufficiently challenged. There is no forum for tutors in a particular subject area to share good practice or receive specialist staff development to support curriculum development.

35. Central marketing and publicity are inadequate. There is no systematic needs analysis carried out by the lifelong learning team against which to judge bids for funding. The lifelong learning team assumes that potential subcontractors understand the needs of their community and that bids for funding will reflect these needs. Central publicity has been produced since 1999 and there was an attractive brochure for the autumn term 2002 but no publicity material has been produced centrally since then. There is now no complete and up-to-date published list of courses offered by the service. The service produced an attractive video publicising the provision in 2000 but the contacts the video identifies are no longer employed within the service and the video can no longer be used. Inspectors found both good and poor marketing practice and publicity in use in individual centres.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 4

36. The head of service is responsible for the implementation and promotion of equality of opportunity. The service's equal opportunities strategy is to widen participation

among four groups of learners namely, male learners, minority ethnic groups, older learners and learners with learning disabilities. The focus of the provision is to get people back into learning. Enrolment statistics for the current academic year indicate increased recruitment of learners in the target groups.

37. Learners are offered provision at a good range of learning centres, which are strategically selected and have effectively widened participation. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Learning centres are identified by a thorough analysis of distribution of targeted learners and training providers in different wards. The learning venues are located in colleges, schools, churches, mosques, voluntary support centres, centres that support older people, and venues which support learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. Since 2000, the number of venues has increased from 30 to 72. Some courses are provided in community languages. For example, a group of older learners were offered a course for preparation for a religious festival. However, some of these learners did not progress to programmes to improve their English language skills. In response to the recommendations of a report into disturbances in the metropolitan district in 2001, the service intended to provide an active-citizenship course during the current year. This provision has not been fully developed and is not yet provided.

38. The arrangements for the implementation of the 'Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000' for the recruitment of staff to the service are satisfactory. These arrangements are based on the council's requirements for advertising, interviewing and selection. The service monitors the ethnicity and disability of its staff. However, there is currently no routine monitoring of the procedures of its subcontractors.

39. The collection and analysis of equal opportunities data on learners' gender, ethnicity and disability is satisfactory. This information is used to monitor the recruitment of the learners, but these data are not systematically used as a basis for plans which improve the retention, achievement and progression of minority ethnic learners.

40. Service staff receive equality of opportunity training. There has been insufficient involvement by tutors. The service carries out a detailed audit of venues to assess their suitability for learners with learning difficulties or physical disabilities. Most learning venues are satisfactory. The service has provided funds for improvements to some venues, including the installation of disabled toilets, improved access and ramps, designated parking areas, improved signage and the purchase of specialist equipment.

41. Equality of opportunity is not sufficiently promoted in some subcontractors. The service has recently revised its equal opportunities policy and procedures. These comply with the current legislative requirements with regard to equality, diversity, and disability. The policy has been developed to support the subcontractors and can provide a clear framework for subcontracted provision. It includes harassment and complaints procedures, and sets out the service's expectations of the subcontractors. At this stage it is not compulsory for subcontractors to adopt this policy, and the self-assessment report acknowledges that the policies have not yet had time to become fully established throughout the service. A number of subcontractors do not use the service's policy and

do not have adequate policies of their own. Some policies are written in a language which some learners will find difficult to understand. Some learners do not receive equality of opportunity information during their induction or during their courses. These learners are not offered sufficient information on their rights and responsibilities. There are some promotional materials produced by the service which convey positive images, but these materials are not available in most subcontractors' venues. The promotional material developed by subcontractors is not monitored to ensure that it conveys positive images, and celebrates diversity and social cohesion. Some subcontractors' publicity material does not contain statements on equality of opportunity and disability in line with current legislative requirements. Learning centres do not advertise each other's courses. Some learners are not aware of the provision available elsewhere in their locality or of progression opportunities.

42. There is insufficient implementation of complaints procedures. Some learners are not aware of the complaints procedures or the appropriate means for expressing their concerns. For example, one learner who had a concern about the attitude of a tutor was not clear how to progress with her concern. Another learner, who had physical access problems due to some maintenance work in the learning venue, did not know how to complain about the situation and decided not to attend the course until the construction work was completed. Although the subcontractors are expected to have effective complaints procedures, some have no procedures in place and they are not maintaining any records of complaints and how they have dealt with them. However, there is a strong commitment among subcontractors to respond to learners' views.

Quality assurance   Contributory grade 4

43. The service has an effective strategy to develop providers' quality assurance processes. The need to provide additional specialist support for quality assurance was identified as part of the 2001-02 self-assessment exercise. During the current academic year, a team of quality assurance management staff at a local college have been contracted to provide consultancy for the service and support for providers. Significant progress has been made during this time in increasing awareness of quality assurance issues among providers and in the introduction of more standardised formal reporting procedures at learning centre level. A programme of staff training has been conducted throughout the year. Sessions have taken place on the 'Common Inspection Framework', quality assurance procedures, self-assessment report writing, observation of teaching and learning, and the integration of basic skills within vocational programmes. New support materials have been provided for learning centre managers including the recent introduction of a handbook for learning centres that brings together all administrative procedures and updated policies. The self-assessment reports produced by individual learning centres have improved and have increased in number from 11 in 2001-02 to 48 by May 2003. New providers have to complete a pre-self-assessment form as part of the authority's selection procedures. Quality assurance issues are highlighted at an early stage of the contracting process. The council's quality assurance manager holds monthly meetings with the college team to monitor progress. A mid-year survey of providers resulted in positive feedback on the support they had received, particularly from smaller providers and where learning centres are managed by staff who

do not have an education background. However, implementation of the new procedures has been slow at some learning centres and some tutors are not aware of the new guidelines.

44. The arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are satisfactory. A new scheme was introduced at the start of the academic year. A team of trained observers, including three representatives from the adult learning sector, had completed 62 observations by the time of the inspection, with 95 per cent of learning centres visited. Most observations provide useful written feedback including clear identification of areas for development. In some cases, feedback made insufficient reference to techniques specific to particular subject disciplines. In general there was more emphasis on teaching and less attention given to evaluating the learning taking place and learners' attainment during the session observed. In the grade profile of 30 internal observations published in the self-assessment report, the grades were higher than those given by inspectors. Following the observation, the scheme requires an action plan to be completed and agreed between the tutor and their centre manager. The service has not yet monitored the completion of action plans and follow-up actions. Formal arrangements for the sharing of good practice are not yet in place. This has been identified by the service as a key area for further development.

45. The monitoring of subcontracted provision is ineffective. Service staff make termly monitoring visits with written evaluations. The focus of these visits is on contract compliance and on auditing policies and procedures. Insufficient attention is being given to monitoring the quality of the learning programmes. The visits do not include formal arrangements to meet with learners. Checks are made of attendance by staff at service training events but an assessment is not made of the staff development carried out by tutors or that tutors are being appropriately assigned to teach on particular programmes. The service has identified inconsistencies in use of individual learning plans, and there are inconsistencies in tutors' use of schemes of work and lesson plans. At one learning centre there is a lack of clarity about the starting time of classes, and learners received less class time than advertised. At the end of the first class meeting at another learning centre, the number of future class meetings and their dates could not be confirmed to learners. For many courses, learners complete course evaluation forms at the end of their learning programmes. The service collates these data and student satisfaction survey data centrally but some centres are not aware of the overall evaluations of the feedback carried out by the service. The self-assessment report acknowledges insufficient evaluation has been carried out of the information received from providers. Single meetings of learners' forums have been successfully piloted at four centres and a residential course has been held for learner champions. Outcomes from some forums have brought about improvements in the learning environments. The need for the wider development of learner forums has been identified by the service.

46. There is insufficient use of performance data and target-setting to improve learning programmes, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Overall recruitment targets are set and specific subtargets are set for the recruitment of learners by age, gender, ethnicity, postcode, and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Comparisons are made with the local demographic profile. Targets are set for the

development of provision in new locations, but not for the overall recruitment of new learners by providers at established locations. Some learning centres do not distinguish between new and repeat learners. Data on learner retention are collected and overall service targets set for the current operating year. The overall retention figures and targets do not distinguish between learners on long, short and one-day courses. Data on learners' reasons for leaving their learning programmes early have been collected but not analysed. Achievement rates on accredited learning programmes have only recently begun to be centrally collated and analysed. Achievement data have not been used for target-setting or to help service planning. The recording of achievement on non-accredited programmes is at an early stage of development and is seen by the service as a priority area for the future. Comparative performance data from providers funded by the service have recently been made available at the request of individual centres. Data are not collected centrally on learners' progression routes within the service or on learners' destinations.

47. The self-assessment report is the second produced by the service. Individual learning centre self-assessment reports were used to contribute to the council's document. Consultation processes with learning centre managers are good. However, some tutors were not involved and not enough use was made of learners' views. The report closely follows the assessment criteria in the 'Common Inspection Framework'. There are good evaluative judgements throughout the report and effective reference is made to sources of evidence. The authority has produced a detailed development plan which clearly identifies actions to maintain strengths and tackle weaknesses. It has been regularly updated and incorporates key measures in preparation for the introduction of the new contracting arrangements which take effect in August 2003. Some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are normal practice and inspectors found additional weaknesses not identified in the report. Grades given by inspectors were lower than those in the self-assessment report.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Community learning   Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement on accredited courses
- good application of practical skills in visual arts
- good individual support for most learners
- wide range of learning programmes in ICT and foundation
- good community links

Weaknesses

- some poor teaching and learning
- inadequate planning of learning
- poor access to learning resources for some learners
- insufficient monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- ineffective curriculum management

Achievement and standards

48. There is good achievement on accredited courses. There is good achievement in units of visual arts programmes and an 83 per cent pass rate on a popular IT programme. Retention is satisfactory but the collection of retention data is not adequate. In some learning centres, learners who only attended once have not been withdrawn from the class records. A scheme to measure achievement in non-accredited learning programmes has only recently been introduced. Learners on many courses develop good practical skills, as identified in the self-assessment report. For example, in visual arts, learners produce lampshades, dresses and soft furnishings for their homes, families and friends. In foundation programmes, a range of skills is developed. For example, in oral history classes, learners develop their research skills as they investigate the local communities in which they lived when they were young. In a creative writing class for learners with Asperger's syndrome, the learners produced work that reached the final of an open national writing competition. There has recently been good progression from this group into further education. In ICT a group of learners has created a community website especially for use by learners aged over 50 years. Many learners attribute their increased self-confidence and improved self-esteem to the classes they attend.

49. Insufficiently challenging targets are set for some learners in foundation and visual arts classes. In some classes and on some courses attainment is poor, particularly in foundation programmes. Some ICT learners make slow progress. The self-assessment report refers to the low attendance on some foundation courses. There is also poor

attendance on some ICT and visual arts courses. Punctuality is satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

50. Many learners receive very good support from their tutors, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. The support enables learners to stay on programme and to complete their courses when they might otherwise not do so. At one learning centre, absent learners are telephoned if they miss a session to see if anything can be done to help them to attend subsequent sessions. Induction arrangements range from satisfactory to poor. Some learners receive an induction pack that contains information on health and safety and equal opportunities, while other learners have no information on these topics. There is insufficient monitoring of attendance and retention in ICT drop-in sessions where attendance data are insufficiently analysed to identify learners whose attendance is poor.

51. There is a good range of courses in ICT and in foundation programmes. In ICT there are courses aimed at particular groups, such as older learners and women from minority ethnic groups. Learners can choose between flexible learning in drop-in sessions or more conventional classroom learning. There are many taster and introductory courses. There are also good opportunities to progress to level 2. However, at one learning centre there are insufficient level 1 courses and many learners find it difficult to move directly to level 2 from entry level. There are good opportunities to learn at a basic level in visual arts but there are insufficient higher-level programmes and progression routes for learners. For example, there are insufficient three-dimensional, mixed media, applied arts and performing arts courses. Foundation programmes include a wide range of courses, such as educating parents, oral history, computing for beginners, basic skills, and creative writing. Good provision is made in foundation programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities who prefer the small class sizes and the informality of the community learning venues.

52. In most cases accommodation is satisfactory. Some classes are based in modern community centres, church halls and schools. However, some learning centres do not have satisfactory facilities for learners with mobility difficulties. In one building, a corridor is on two levels connected by steps with no facilities to help learners with mobility difficulties. There is inadequate reinforcement of safe working practices in ICT and foundation programmes. There is some unsafe furniture, such as work benches with rough surfaces and inappropriately positioned equipment.

53. ICT tutors do not hold appropriate teaching qualifications. In visual arts, tutors' teaching qualifications and experience are adequate, although some tutors do not have up-to-date subject knowledge. There is a satisfactory level of tutor expertise and qualifications in foundation programmes. There is insufficient attendance at staff development events. Teaching staff are not able to adequately share good practice or discuss subject-specific teaching and learning issues.

54. Learning sessions are inconsistent. Seventy-two per cent of sessions were judged to be satisfactory or better, while 28 per cent were less than satisfactory. Some sessions are poorly planned and taught. Inadequate use is made of individual learning plans for learners and not enough attention is given to setting them challenging targets based on their existing knowledge, skills and learning potential. Poor use of individual learning plans is a recurring weakness in the self-assessment report. Tutors give insufficient attention to differentiating work on the basis of learners' abilities and aptitudes for the topics being learned. Some of the teaching methods are inadequate. There are not enough progress reviews and some learners are unaware of their progress, what they still have to achieve and the timescale for completing their work. There are good working relationships between learners, tutors and peers.

55. Some learners have poor access to learning resources. Satisfactory resources in ICT support learning in classrooms and workshops but there are not enough resources for independent learning. Learners do not have access to computers and instruction manuals in their communities to enable them to develop their computing skills further and to apply them, for instance, by producing letters and publicity materials for local community events. There are insufficient resources in foundation programmes, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Learners on an easy literacy programme do not have access to simplified dictionaries, appropriate reading texts, a tape recorder or suitable computer programs in the learning centre. They rely on resources that the tutor makes or can obtain from other sources. Similarly, a group of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities on a national skills profile programme do not have access to any commercially produced resources. There are satisfactory resources in visual arts which are generally suitable for the purpose for which they are used.

56. There is insufficient monitoring of learners' progress. Tutors make good use of assignments for assessing learners' knowledge and skills on accredited ICT courses. Learners receive satisfactory feedback on how well they have completed the assignments. However, there is not enough assessment on non-accredited ICT courses and learners receive insufficient feedback on their progress. Assignments are negotiated well with learners on foundation programmes and visual arts courses. However, tutors do not record progress on non-accredited courses. In visual arts courses there is insufficient evidence produced, such as note books, sample books, sketch pads and portfolios of work, to indicate what learning has taken place. In ICT and foundation programmes initial assessment is not thorough. This has resulted in a significant number of learners in ICT being placed on inappropriate courses.

Leadership and management

57. Learning centre managers maintain good community links. There are good working partnerships with a range of local associations and organisations. These include local day centres for the elderly and disabled, faith groups, psychological and health services and childcare nurseries. They use this knowledge to good effect in designing and marketing courses that will appeal to local residents. Learning centres promote their own courses

and learners usually know what is available there. They do not, however, know what is available in other centres because centres do not advertise each other's courses. This limits the number of programmes from which learners can choose and it inhibits progression to other courses.

58. Although curricula are designed to appeal to local residents and to respond to community needs, insufficient attention is given to developing and redesigning courses to improve them. Some staff do not fully understand quality assurance techniques or the new quality assurance arrangements implemented by the service. Providers are now required to integrate basic skills into subject teaching for all learners with basic skills needs. However, in some learning centres there is inadequate assessment of learners' basic skills needs to accurately identify the extent of their reading, writing, speaking and listening competences and to diagnose their learning needs. Until the extent of learners' basic skills needs is known, they cannot be systematically and effectively tackled. There are some effective management committees in community learning centres. These include learners and representatives of local community groups. They also provide good advice about fund-raising and obtaining support from volunteers. However, as noted in the self-assessment report, not all learning centres have their own governance arrangements.