INSPECTION REPORT

Barnsley LEA

16 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

Barnsley LEA

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Barnsley LEA's (the LEA) provides the majority of adult and community learning through direct provision delivered by the adult learning and training service, which is part of the education directorate of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. An acting head of adult learning and training manages the adult and community learning (ACL) provision and reports directly to the director of education. In addition, there is an adult learning manager, supported by a staff development and quality assurance manager, a curriculum development manager and a service support manager. The team consists of 76 teaching staff, including three lead tutors, six development workers and eight administrative and finance staff.

2. The adult learning and training service receives 40 per cent of its funding for ACL directly from South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and 60 per cent from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council through the service level agreement. The budget is £1,700,000, which is 1.25 per cent of the total local education authority budget. The LEA's strategic planning and evaluation division of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council produces the adult learning plan and has a service level agreement with the adult learning and training service to provide 90 per cent of the plan. The two service teams hold regular meetings to discuss all aspects of the provision. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council also monitors the strategic direction of adult learning and training through an annual performance plan. The LEA's strategic planning and evaluation division also has a service level agreement with a local residential college and the Workers' Educational Association to provide 8 per cent and 2 per cent of the LEA's adult learning plan respectively.

3. The LEA offers courses in over 70 neighbourhood locations. Over the past three years, enrolments have risen steadily. In 2001-02, there were 4,958 learners and 1,171 courses in 10 areas of learning. The most popular provision is in information and communications technology (ICT), which has 24 per cent of enrolments. Visual and performing arts has 21 per cent of enrolments and foundation programmes have 19 per cent. Across all provision, approximately eighty per cent of learners are women and 30 per cent are aged 60 or above. It is the ongoing policy of the council to make all ACL courses free of charge, in order to promote social inclusion and widen participation.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

4. In 2001-02, 2,795 learners were enrolled on ICT programmes To date in 2002-03, 1,700 learners have enrolled on ICT courses. There are 34 centres where the LEA provides ICT courses, 24 of which are owned by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and 10 by other organisations, such as churches or charities. Some centres contain fixed computers and printers, while in others tutors take portable computers and set them up

before the class. A technician maintains and services all of the equipment.

5. Most learners enrol on one of the seven accredited courses, while others take short taster sessions. Most classes are small and many have a maximum size of eight learners. The average attendance rate in the learning sessions observed was 73 per cent. There is one full-time lead tutor, who has operational responsibility for the ICT programme, and a full-time adult learning development worker, who supports the day-to-day running of the programmes, for part of their hours. There are 28 part-time ICT tutors.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

6. The LEA offers activities in health and fitness, cake decoration, food hygiene and cookery, at a wide range of locations across the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley. Most are offered in community venues and church halls. There are 548 learners enrolled on accredited courses in cookery, cake decoration and food hygiene. There are 442 learners on the health and fitness programmes, such as exercise to music, yoga, and qi gong, which are non-accredited. Classes take place throughout the week, mostly during the day, and range from a one-hour introductory session to 10 weekly sessions of two hours. Seven part-time tutors teach these sessions and course provision is planned around a geographical area. In 2001-02, there were 1,196 learners in this area, accounting for 14 per cent of the total number of adult learning provision learners. Since September 2002, 1,083 learners have been recruited, of whom 91 per cent are women, 4 per cent are from minority ethnic groups, and 55 per cent are over the age of 50.

Visual & performing arts & media

7. In 2001-02, there were 257 courses and 1,759 enrolments in visual and performing arts and media. At present, there are 243 courses, 1,810 enrolments and 820 individual learners. Most classes are in art, craft and sewing, with a few in stained glass and photography. These take place at approximately 25 sites in the borough, and accreditation is available on most courses at the learners' request. Classes take place in the daytime from Monday to Friday and in the evenings from Monday to Thursday. There is no weekend provision. Most of the teaching staff are employed on fractional contracts, which include four paid weeks of professional development.

English, languages & communications

8. There are language courses at 11 centres and the LEA provides courses according to local demand. Tuition is available in French, German, Spanish and Italian, with most classes at beginner or near beginner level. Until 2002-03, there were no accredited courses. Accreditation is being introduced in 2002-03 at beginner level. Courses last for 10 weeks and run for three terms each year, with learners attending for two hours each week. They are available in the morning, afternoon and evening. Most learners are women aged over 50. Five part-time tutors work in this area.

Foundation programmes

9. In 2001-02, there were 1,661 learners on foundation programmes. At the time of inspection, 1,093 learners were enrolled. The adult learning and training service provides most of the programmes directly and a local residential college and the Workers' Educational Association also provide some. Courses take place in day centres, resource centres, schools, libraries and community centres. Programmes include literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, and usually run for two hours a week. Learners have opportunities to gain accreditation. There is a small family learning programme. Childcare is available at some centres.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	12
Number of inspection days	60
Number of learner interviews	462
Number of staff interviews	124
Number of subcontractor interviews	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	78

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

10. The quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, Barnsley LEA's leadership and management are unsatisfactory, as are its quality assurance arrangements. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The quality of programmes in ICT, and visual and performing arts and media is satisfactory. However, the quality of hospitality, sports and leisure, languages and foundation 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	3
Quality assurance	4

Areas of learning	Grade
Information & communications technology	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4
Visual & performing arts & media	3
English, languages & communications	4
Foundation programmes	4

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

11. **There is some good achievement and attainment.** In 2001-02, 98 per cent of learners on cake decoration courses were awarded the Open College Network (OCN) certificate in cake decoration. The pass rate for food hygiene courses was 83 per cent. Learners in visual and performing arts and media acquire good practical and technical skills. The more confident learners make good use of the skills they learn, to benefit their family, friends and community.

12. **In ICT there is good achievement of personal learning goals.** Many learners begin their courses with no previous experience of computers and successfully increase their confidence to an elementary level. However, after gaining basic computer skills, learners make slow progress towards gaining accreditation.

13. On foundation programmes, learners improve their confidence and personal skills. **Learners on literacy and numeracy programmes gain significant confidence and self-esteem** by achieving certificates, and put their literacy and numeracy skills into practice in their daily lives. In family learning programmes, parents acquire a good level of understanding of the literacy curriculum in schools, and are able to help children with their homework and produce work which they use for future accreditation.

14. **There is insufficient measurement of learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited provision.** Learning goals are imprecise on much of the non-accredited provision and records of non-accredited achievement are incomplete in some areas. Achievement data on non-accredited provision are not sufficiently accurate.

15. **There are good retention rates in ICT and hospitality, sport, leisure and travel.** In 2001-02, the retention rate for ICT learners was 82.5 per cent and it is now 91per cent. In 2001-02, the retention rate for learners on hospitality, sport, and leisure programmes was 97 per cent. Retention rates are satisfactory in the remaining areas of learning.

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
Information & communications technology	0	2	5	14	2	0	0	23
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	2	2	3	3	0	0	10
Visual & performing arts & media	0	4	10	8	0	0	0	22
English, languages & communications	0	0	3	5	2	0	0	10
Foundation programmes	0	1	7	11	4	2	1	26
Total	**0**	**9**	**27**	**41**	**11**	**2**	**1**	**91**
per cent		39.56%		45.05%		15.38%		

16. Out of 91 learning sessions observed, 85 per cent were satisfactory or better. In foundation programmes, 27 per cent of the classes observed in literacy, numeracy, ESOL, and programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, were less than satisfactory. In hospitality, sport, leisure and recreation, 30 per cent of observed sessions were unsatisfactory and, in languages, 20 per cent were unsatisfactory.

17. **There is insufficient planning to support teaching and learning.** The emphasis is on activities to be covered, rather than on meeting individual learners' needs. In the weaker lessons, there is a lack of variety in teaching and learning methods and the learners' individual learning needs are not being met adequately. More specifically, some ICT learners make slow progress. In hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, more able learners are not set tasks that challenge them appropriately. In languages, some learners are not challenged sufficiently, while others struggle to cope with the pace.

18. In visual and performing arts and media, learners practise using a variety of techniques and processes. They improve the standard of their art and craftwork, gaining crucial craft skills. **Tutors in art classes encourage their learners to experiment with a wide range of media and their demonstrations set high standards for the learners to aspire to.**

19. **Learning resources are used effectively.** On ICT programmes, tutors produce good-quality workbooks which learners of varying abilities use effectively. A good range of worksheets is used in the exercise to music programmes. Accommodation is satisfactory and generally suitable for its purpose, although there is some inappropriate accommodation for cookery and sugarcraft classes.

20. **Staff are enthusiastic, appropriately qualified, and develop good working relationships with learners that support learning and which learners value highly.** There is particularly effective staff development for managers and tutors in most areas of learning. All tutors have at least four weeks of paid staff development each year.

21. **There is weak initial assessment and target-setting.** Learners receive insufficient initial assessment, which is not sufficiently thorough and fails to identify learners' starting points. The setting of personal learning goals for learners is ineffective. Many individual learning plans consist of a list of topics or activities to be covered and do not contain measurable or challenging targets. Although individual learning plans are discussed during the course of programmes, they are rarely adjusted as learning goals change. For example, learners on ICT programmes are not formally screened to identify their literacy or numeracy needs. Learners receive good feedback from tutors, with detailed comments and observations. In most sessions, learners support each other and work well together.

22. **Courses are available in most parts of the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley, including rural areas and areas of high deprivation.** All courses are free of charge in order to tackle issues of social deprivation. ACL development workers work with individuals, groups, and local communities, to identify needs in particular geographical areas. In a recent major development which the LEA is leading, community learning network managers work directly with established community partnerships to identify and meet specific local needs.

23. **Learners benefit from extensive opportunities to learn a language in local community venues.** The range of languages has been widened greatly since their first introduction in 1999-2000. However, many existing learners have been in beginners' classes for quite some time, which makes it difficult for new learners to catch up.

24. **In ICT, there is insufficient development of the curriculum to attract learners from under-represented groups. Seventy-five per cent of the learners are women and many are retired.** Strategic plans to promote learning to other groups have yet to have an impact. In hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, there are no planned progression routes for learners who stay on programmes for more than a year. The range of activities and subject areas is narrow. There is a narrow range of foundation provision, with limited progression routes for learners. There are also some poor links between different parts of programmes, with tutors unaware of what else learners are doing.

25. **Information advice and guidance before enrolment are limited in ICT, visual and performing arts and media, and languages.** Courses are not publicised effectively. Many learners hear about courses from friends rather than through the LEA's publicity. Learners report difficulties in obtaining information about what courses are available. There are few targeted marketing campaigns. There is little exit advice or information about progression opportunities.

Leadership and management

26. **The LEA has a clear strategic framework and direction for ACL,** which provides clear priorities and values that most staff and partners understand. There are sound processes for monitoring performance.

27. **There is good professional development and support for all staff,** particularly in equal opportunities. All full- and part-time staff have an entitlement to four weeks of paid staff development each year, which provides them with opportunities to meet colleagues, share good practice, and keep up to date with new developments. All staff development activities are fully evaluated, and the LEA uses this feedback to develop and improve future provision.

28. **There is good programme leadership in literacy and numeracy programmes,** and in those for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is insufficient strategic management and planning of family literacy programmes, and insufficient curriculum management and development in some areas of learning.

29. **Target-setting is weak.** Some areas of learning do not carry out adequate initial assessment, and individual learning plans do not contain enough information for individual learners' development.

30. Communications are satisfactory. There are frequent team meetings at all levels of the organisation. A monthly bulletin keeps staff well informed.

31. **There is inadequate risk management, particularly on health and fitness programmes.** A new system of safety checks for premises has been introduced, but it is not yet fully developed. More advanced checks have been carried out on cookery classes.

32. **The LEA's management information systems are satisfactory.** However, best use is not made of data on equality of opportunity. There is a range of initiatives to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups, particularly at LEA level. However, most learners are women and many are not economically active. There is insufficient planning and use of marketing materials to promote learning opportunities to wider groups.

33. **There are some ineffective measures to improve teaching and learning.** The LEA carries out observations of teaching and learning, but the moderation process is not fully embedded. The grades awarded by internal observers were considerably higher than those awarded by inspectors. Some planning to support teaching and learning is poor. In the weaker lessons, there is too much reliance on a single teaching method, and lessons are not planned in sufficient detail to ensure that all individual learners' needs are met.

34. The self-assessment process is thorough, and involves staff at all levels. However, the self-assessment report did not identify some of the significant weaknesses.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- good professional development and support

Weaknesses

- poor curriculum-planning
- weak target-setting
- ineffective measures to improve teaching and learning

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good retention rates
- good achievement of personal learning goals
- effective use of good-quality learning materials

Weaknesses

- slow progress of learners towards accreditation
- inadequate initial assessment
- insufficient curriculum development to target under-represented groups

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths

- good levels of achievement in sugarcraft and food hygiene
- well-designed programme of exercise to music
- high retention rates

Weaknesses

- inadequate risk management on health and fitness programmes
- poor planning of teaching and learning
- weak initial assessment and target-setting on non-accredited programmes
- inappropriate accommodation for craft subjects
- lack of coherent curriculum development

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good use of learners' skills to benefit the community
- good acquisition of practical and technical skills
- effective tutor demonstrations which inspire learners

Weaknesses

- weak assessment practices
- poor pre-course information and guidance
- poor curriculum co-ordination

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- good development of learners' speaking skills
- good use of local community venues

Weaknesses

- insufficient account taken of some learners' needs
- poor pre-course information and guidance

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good achievement of confidence and personal skills by learners
- good programme leadership in provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, and literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Weaknesses

- much unsatisfactory teaching and learning
- poor target-setting
- poor initial assessment
- incoherent planning of programmes
- ineffective strategic management and planning of family learning

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BARNSLEY LEA:

- the locally accessible provision
- the friendship and support from other learners
- the supportive tutors
- opportunities to build confidence and self-esteem
- the range of learning materials
- the feeling of achievement from finishing a piece of work
- getting feedback on work from tutors and other learners

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BARNSLEY LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- the storage and display space
- some cramped accommodation
- the amount of form-filling in class time
- the length of some practical classes

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BARNSLEY LEA:

- raise the quality of teaching and learning
- improve curriculum planning and management
- improve initial assessment, individual learning plans, and target-setting
- improve the identification of achievement on non-accredited programmes
- complete implementation of risk management and health and safety
- widen participation to include the full range of learners

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
- clear strategic direction
- good professional development and support

Weaknesses
- poor curriculum-planning
- weak target-setting
- ineffective measures to improve teaching and learning

35. The LEA has a clear rationale for ACL provision. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's community plan provides strategic direction and sets clear priorities, values and goals. These are reflected in the adult learning plan and demonstrate how the key themes of social inclusion and widening participation are at the core of the adult learning and training service provision. The plan has clear links with other key strategic documents, such as the neighbourhood renewal strategy and the Barnsley learning partnership strategy.

36. Most staff have a strong shared commitment to the core values of the service, and a clear understanding of its aims and purposes. However, it is not always clear to staff how the strategy will affect their area of learning. Key partners also understand the council's strategy well. The adult learning and training service is well supported by its cabinet spokesperson for education, who meets officers and staff regularly to keep them fully informed of developments. The monitoring of the adult learning plan by the lifelong learning scrutiny committee is satisfactory.

37. There is good professional development and support for all staff. Full- and part-time staff have a contract which includes an entitlement to four weeks of paid staff development activity. Four one-week staff development events are timetabled throughout the year. The events include core activities that are run during the day and evening to ensure that they are accessible to all staff. Staff may also request training. The career and personal development of staff is also well supported. For example, one full-time member of staff is being supported to finish a degree by having her fees paid and being given half a day of study leave. Another manager is being given a day a week to work through a diploma in management studies. Staff development activities are fully evaluated and results are used to improve and develop new courses. The four weeks of paid staff development provide staff with the opportunity to meet colleagues, to be informed of new developments, and to share good practice. The development workers also provide good support for the part-time tutors that they manage.

38. Curriculum-planning is not consistent across the organisation. Some programme areas have a narrow range of curriculum and of levels. In some areas, there are a few planned and appropriate progression routes and insufficient specialist curriculum management and development. The LEA has been carrying out a best value review, which has identified some of the weaknesses in curriculum-planning identified by inspectors. The LEA is committed to making changes to the provision as a result. However it is too early to judge the impact of the planned changes on the quality of provision.

39. The LEA's self-assessment report identified that family learning lacks sufficient strategic direction, management and co-ordination. This was also identified by the inspectors.

40. Target-setting is weak. Some areas of learning do not carry out adequate initial assessment, and individual learning plans do not contain sufficient information for individual learners' development. Development workers have been set targets for enrolments in their geographical area, rather than curriculum area. The self-assessment report identified this as a weakness. Although the provision is growing, the courses lack coherence. Targets are not set for improvement in the areas of learning and gaps in the curriculum are not being dealt with consistently. Staff are not using the available management information effectively to set target in the areas of learning.

41. The LEA's financial management is sound and appropriate. There is good financial information available to managers. The management information system has been able to produce satisfactory general information. A new addition to the system is able to generate more detailed reports, and staff are being trained to use the new system.

42. Communications are satisfactory. There are frequent team meetings at all levels of the LEA, which are well minuted and produce action plans. There is an informative monthly bulletin, which keeps all staff informed of developments.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 3

43. There are clear policies and procedures for equality of opportunity. A comprehensive equal opportunities policy includes key action points for the further development and promotion of equal opportunities. The policy is up to date and is reviewed regularly. It is supported by detailed procedures, including those for the recruitment and selection of staff and for dealing with grievances and complaints. There is also a clear racial equality scheme. Staff receive copies of key policies. Learners are given a card which briefly sets out information on their entitlements. It also covers equal opportunities, and who to contact if the learner has any problems, particularly with regard to harassment. This is written in language which is clear and straight forward. Generally learners carry this card with them and are aware of whom to contact.

44. There is a range of initiatives to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups, particularly at LEA level. All adult learning courses are free of

charge, which reflects a commitment to social inclusion in an area of deprivation and traditionally low rates of participation in adult learning. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council has a contract with the LSC to provide a Neighbourhood Learning Network. This is a community-based development, which works through existing community partnerships, to provide information, advice and guidance, and support access to learning, particularly for harder-to-reach groups of learners. Adult learning and training service development workers are also based in local communities, and work to identify needs and to offer local provision. There has been some targeting of specific groups, such as single parents, people with mental health problems, travellers, women returners and older learners. However, this work focuses on geographical areas, and there is insufficient emphasis on using curriculum-planning and development to widen participation.

45. There is insufficient targeting of some under-represented groups. In some curriculum areas, there is too much emphasis on recruiting traditional learners. For example, most learners are older women. Insufficient use is made of marketing materials to promote learning opportunities to wider groups.

46. There are partnership arrangements with the social services department, and with voluntary agencies, to provide opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The adult learning service also works closely with schools to develop family learning. The employee development scheme specifically helps council workers to access learning opportunities.

47. There is good staff development in equal opportunities. Training in equal opportunities has taken place at all levels, from the director and senior managers, to the tutors. Comprehensive surveys were carried out to establish the levels of understanding and awareness of equal opportunities issues among staff. These were thoroughly evaluated, and the LEA used the results to help plan and improve training. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's equality officer was consulted and helped to provide the training. The implications of the 'Disability Discrimination Act (1995)' were covered effectively, with tutors producing individual action plans for future development. Some staff have attended external courses on equality of opportunity. The adult learning service staff newsletter is used well to further promote equality of opportunity, and additional literature on disability, culture and religion, and equality and diversity, is provided for all tutors.

Quality assurance   Contributory grade 4

48. The LEA has a comprehensive quality assurance framework, which draws on the policies and procedures of the adult learning and training service and the two subcontracted providers. All three keep the authority informed of their quality assurance measures and provide self-assessment reports, which contribute to the LEA's overall ACL self-assessment report and development plan.

49. The LEA's adult learning and training provision is monitored and evaluated by the adult learning plan implementation and evaluation panel. This includes members from

each of the contracted providers, council members, officers from the education directorate's senior management team, LSC representatives, and officers of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's strategic planning and performance evaluation unit.

50. The LEA is nearing the end of its best value review. The process has involved looking at all aspects of the ACL provision and identifying actions to improve its organisation and structure. Weaknesses have been identified in curriculum management and planning. However, key changes have yet to be implemented and gaps in curriculum management and planning are not being dealt with consistently.

51. The quality assurance framework has been ineffective in identifying some significant weaknesses. The self-assessment report, although comprehensive, graded leadership and management, and all areas of learning, as satisfactory. Inspectors graded leadership and management, and three out of the five areas of learning inspected, as unsatisfactory. Key weaknesses in teaching and learning, in initial assessment, individual learning plans, and target-setting and risk management, were not identified.

52. Inspectors graded 40 per cent of the teaching sessions observed as good or better, 45 per cent as satisfactory, and 15 per cent as unsatisfactory. The adult learning service graded 65 per cent of its observed teaching and learning as good or better, and only 8 per cent as less than satisfactory. The LEA's observation of teaching and learning is insufficiently critical to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in all areas of learning. Observation records are not sufficiently evaluative, and there is too much reliance on auditing of classroom tasks and activities against a checklist. Comments tend to be too generic and bland, and are not focused sufficiently on teaching and learning. There are insufficient observations by subject specialists in some areas of learning.

53. At the end of each course, the three service providers collect feedback from the learners by questionnaire and analyses it. However, the resulting information is not available quickly enough to influence decision-making.

54. The management information system can produce information which would allow managers to monitor the whole service. For example, data are now collected on gender, ethnicity, age and disability. However, the adult learning and training service does not use this data effectively in planning. Target-setting is also weak across the provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology   Grade 3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention rates
- good achievement of personal learning goals
- effective use of good-quality learning materials

Weaknesses

- slow progress of learners towards accreditation
- inadequate initial assessment
- insufficient curriculum development to target under-represented groups

Achievement and standards

55. In 2002-03, the retention rate for learners on ICT courses was 91 per cent. In 2001-02, the retention rate was 82.5 per cent and, in 2000-01, it was 83 per cent. Learners make good progress towards achieving their personal learning goals. Many of them begin their courses with no previous experience of computers and successfully increase their skills to an elementary level and build their confidence. Many learners have their own computers and regard ICT as an interesting hobby, some are updating their job skills, others are doing voluntary or community work, and many want to keep pace with their children or grandchildren.

56. Almost all of the learners interviewed were on accredited courses. After gaining basic computer skills, learners make slow progress towards gaining accreditation. They do not learn strategies to study independently and most rely too heavily on the tutor for support. Learners are not allowed to take workbooks away and, in most cases, they are not given adequate alternative practice exercises. Learners often do not take notes. In the classes observed the attendance rate was 73 per cent. Classes are small, with a maximum size of eight. More than half of the learners interviewed had been taking courses for two or more years. Fifty-nine per cent of all learners enrolled in 2002-03 had previously taken courses.

Quality of education and training

57. All tutors use clear, standard schemes of work and lesson plans. The use of these documents is audited during lesson observations. Learning activities are planned around what is necessary to achieve qualifications, rather than meeting individual needs. There is insufficient variety in teaching methods. For example, there are few examples of learners working together in pairs or small groups. Staff are enthusiastic and have a good

rapport with learners. The learners are keen to learn and well motivated.

58. Staff produce effective workbooks and use them to enable learners with varying abilities to join classes and work individually. The workbooks cover a wide range of software and basic computer applications, and are linked to accreditation. However, in the less stimulating classes there is too much reliance on workbooks and checklists. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Accommodation is satisfactory in most centres. Many centres are located conveniently for learners. The tutors are expert at quickly setting up reliable and modern laptop computers and printers in centres where fixed equipment is not available. They do not use digital projectors or other aids to improve the quality of group work. The Internet is rarely used as a source of research or reference material. Tutors spend most of their time circulating around a class giving individual attention to learners. In a minority of centres the furniture is inappropriate and poses a health and safety risk. Learners' work is not displayed and some centres are dull, poorly decorated, and have limited access for learners with mobility problems. All staff hold appropriate teaching qualifications and show appropriate levels of ICT skills.

59. When learners join classes the tutors welcome them and discuss their previous experience and their computer skills. The tutor determines the level of qualification and type of workbook the learner should start with. The activities necessary to complete the unit of qualification are recorded on an individual learning plan. Initial assessment is not sufficiently linked to the learners' individual interests, aspirations and needs. Individual learning plans are used to record completed activities but not progress towards personal goals. Learners are not formally screened to identify their numeracy or literacy needs. Although learning styles are checked briefly, neither tutors nor learners understand the purpose of this. Tutors mark learners' work regularly and give useful individual feedback on its quality. Most learners produce portfolios of evidence for assessment. Tutors meet regularly to ensure the consistency of assessment practice. Internal verification of assessment is satisfactory.

60. Courses are available in most parts of the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley, including villages and areas of high deprivation. Many learners are retired, 75 per cent are women, and many own their own computer and attend classes as a hobby. Many learners were placed on a waiting list before being invited to attend their first class. There is insufficient curriculum development to target learners from under-represented groups. Strategic plans to promote learning to under-represented groups, such as men, ex-offenders, homeless people, and people with drug or alcohol problems have yet to have an effect.

61. There is limited information, advice and guidance before enrolment. Most learners say they heard about the courses through friends or newspapers. There are no targeted marketing campaigns. Learners do not receive advice about progression to higher-level courses or alternative ways of learning, such as learndirect. Exit advice and information about progression to other training providers is limited.

Leadership and management

62. Tutors and managers are committed and enthusiastic in trying to fulfil the strategic priorities and long-term plans of the LEA. Partnerships are effective in establishing learning centres in a wide geographic area but they have had little other effect. For example, libraries are used as learning centres but learners are not encouraged to use them for access to reference material. Tutors have been involved in the self-assessment process but some of them feel that their managers do not value their contributions. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors were identified in the organisation's most recent self-assessment report. Observation of learning is carried out annually, using a checklist to ensure compliance with procedures. During observations made by the LEA, there was an over-estimate of the proportion of lessons that were good. Feedback given to staff after observations does not focus sufficiently on teaching and learning, and is not directly linked to staff development. All staff take part in four weeks of paid staff development activities each year. Managers do not set clear targets that focus on the improvement of teaching and learning. Equal opportunities training is comprehensive. All learners are provided with brief details of the LEA's equal opportunities policy and procedure. If learners wish to make a complaint, they are provided with a telephone number to call. All complaints are recorded following the local authority's official complaints procedure and are few in number. Feedback is collected from learners at the end of their course.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel   Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good levels of achievement in sugarcraft and food hygiene
- well-designed programme of exercise to music
- high retention rates

Weaknesses

- inadequate risk management on health and fitness programmes
- poor planning of teaching and learning
- weak initial assessment and target-setting on non-accredited programmes
- inappropriate accommodation for craft subjects
- lack of coherent curriculum development

Achievement and standards

63. There are good levels of achievement on some accredited programmes. In 2001-02, 272 learners were awarded the OCN certificate in cake decoration, which was a pass rate of 98 per cent. The pass rate for the certificate in food hygiene at basic and intermediate level was 83 per cent and for the OCN certificate in cookery it was 48 per cent of learners. The standard of work produced in the cake decoration classes is good, and learners clearly demonstrate design skills and attention to detail. One learner who had only been attending the class for five weeks was able to produce a detailed and intricate centrepiece for a wedding cake representing an open-topped wedding car. Learners are highly motivated. During lessons, learners participate enthusiastically in discussions and group activities. In health and fitness sessions there is a positive response to the background knowledge part of the class and learners respond well to tutors' questions and written tasks. Most learners have attended the same class for a number of years but report that they are still making progress and achieving their personal learning goals. There is insufficient measurement of progress and achievement in non-accredited programmes.

64. Retention rates are high, with an average of 97 per cent across all programmes in 2001-02.

Quality of education and training

65. The exercise to music programme is well designed, with an appropriate blend of practical activity and background knowledge. Tutors encourage learners to examine and reflect on their own lifestyle to achieve improvements. Tutors use a good range of worksheets, projects and tasks, to promote understanding, and learners are often asked to carry out research in their own time. The research is well planned to coincide with

everyday activities, such as visits to the supermarket or reading magazines, and effectively relates topics covered in class to the learners' own lives. Most learners are enthusiastic about the tasks, although a few of the older learners do not like completing written work. The range of health issues covered is extensive, and it is appropriately focused according to the particular group of learners. Groups of older women explore the impact of menopause, osteoporosis and inactivity. Class discussions provide useful opportunities for the learners to raise health concerns and extend their understanding of controversial issues. The tutor encourages the learners to challenge magazine articles and television programmes, while providing useful supporting information.

66. There is inadequate risk management on health and fitness programmes. The LEA has introduced a new system of safety check on premises but it is not yet fully developed. The risk assessments carried out are limited to the accommodation rather than the activity or the specific group of learners involved. In some cases, important considerations have been overlooked, such as the risks for older learners in a practical environment, which are not fully acknowledged. More advanced checks have been carried out in cookery classes but not yet in health and fitness. Learners complete health questionnaires at the start of a programme but tutors do not use this information effectively or record it systematically.

67. The planning to support teaching and learning is poor. Schemes of work and lesson plans lack detail and tend to list the activities to be covered rather than considering the learner and what should be achieved. In the weaker lessons, tutors rely too much on a single teaching method and do not plan progression of learning. Several classes include learners at different levels of ability and experience, but this is not always reflected in the choice of task or activity. In the better lessons, the tutors demonstrate a clear awareness of the needs of individual learners. However, they do not plan lessons and activities in sufficient detail to ensure that they meet these needs. In some cases, the more able learners are not set sufficiently challenging tasks.

68. There is weak initial assessment and target-setting on non-accredited programmes. Learners receive very little initial assessment. They complete a negotiated individual learning plan with the tutor, which in most cases is merely a list of topics or activities to be covered. The learning plans do not set measurable or challenging targets. At the mid-point and end of each term, the learning plan is updated by the tutor and learner, but individual learning goals are rarely adjusted. Learners are assessed at the beginning of the programme to identify their preferred learning style, but tutors do not use this useful information regularly, to plan lessons.

69. Some inappropriate accommodation is used for cookery and sugarcraft classes. Even though the class sizes are small the rooms are very cramped and there is not enough space to work comfortably. In one kitchen used for a cookery class, five learners have to share two cookers. Learners in cake decoration classes cannot store their unfinished work or their equipment and have to take it home at the end of each class, which risks damaging their work in transit. Specialist staff are adequately qualified but, in most cases, there is insufficient professional updating of qualifications and knowledge to ensure that tutors are operating to current standards.

Leadership and management

70. There is a lack of coherent curriculum development. Provision is largely historical and does not offer planned progression routes for learners who stay on a programme for several years. The number of classes offered has increased over the past two years but the range of activities and subject areas is still narrow. Provision is offered in response to demand and organised around a geographical area. Development staff linked with communities identify the demand for classes. There is some direct promotion of learning opportunities through leaflets and introductory events.

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

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths
- good use of learners' skills to benefit the community
- good acquisition of practical and technical skills
- effective tutor demonstrations which inspire learners

Weaknesses
- weak assessment practices
- poor pre-course information and guidance
- poor curriculum co-ordination

Achievement and standards

71. Most learners interviewed said that they achieve their personal learning objectives. Where this results in the achievement of accredited units through the OCN they value this highly. Some learners take a long time to assemble enough work for accreditation and their progress is slow. The provider's data combine accredited and non-accredited provision and this makes judgements about overall success difficult. Learning goals in unaccredited provision are imprecise and difficult to measure. Most learners achieve satisfactory standards of practical work. They talk enthusiastically of the progress they have made and the growth in their confidence. Portfolios of work and sketchbooks are generally well maintained and most contain some good work. More confident learners make good use of their new skills for the benefit of their family, friends, and community. A new group of floristry learners had gained sufficient confidence in their abilities to do the decorations for their local church. One of the group, a publican, displayed her work in the pub and had made table decorations for Mothers' Day. Learners from a stained glass class had worked on a millennium window in a local community centre, which was dedicated to the life of a former learner. Attendance rates in some classes are sometimes poor. This, combined with low numbers, means that occasionally there are too few learners for the class to work effectively. Known absences are not counted as absences in the statistical returns.

Quality of education and training

72. Learners develop good practical and technical skills. Experienced tutors enable learners to acquire a good understanding of a range of methods and techniques in art and crafts. Learners use a variety of techniques and processes to improve the standard of their art and craft work. Many gain traditional craft skills, many of which are in danger of being lost to future generations, such as hardanger embroidery, crewel work, black work, white work and cutwork, quilting techniques, quilling and decoupage. Learners in art classes are encouraged to experiment with drawing and painting techniques and a

wide variety of media, such as pastels, charcoal, oil paints, acrylics and watercolour.

73. Tutors effectively demonstrate art and craft techniques which inspire and motivate learners. Their demonstrations are supported by informative explanations and often stimulate discussion about the best techniques, methods and materials, to create finished art and craft work. Demonstrations set standards to which the learners can aspire. There is a good rapport between tutors and learners which supports and encourages learners to explore new ways of working.

74. Accommodation is satisfactory and generally suitable for its purpose. Some classrooms are particularly suitable for practical art and craft classes, being light, spacious, and airy. However, in a few cases, rooms are inadequate and too small for the number of learners. There is a good range of learning materials to support learning, including handouts and samplers. Essential equipment is provided, such as sewing machines for dressmaking, soft furnishings and some craft classes.

75. There is a good geographical spread of centres across Barnsley, which provide local access for learners to courses in visual art and crafts. These include churches, church halls, community centres, council learning centres, and libraries. Learners benefit from the experience of teaching staff who all have teaching qualifications.

76. There are weak assessment practices. Initial assessment is ineffective and fails to assess learners' existing skills and experience in the subject. There is ineffective setting of learners' personal learning goals. Many individual learning plans list activities to be carried out rather than stating learning goals or outcomes. A few learners are encouraged to use the individual learning plan as a learning diary, and this motivates them to keep a record of their own learning. However, tutors' comments on learning plans are rarely evaluative enough and many only record the completion of agreed tasks and not what learners have learnt. Internal verification is not sufficiently thorough and tutors have not received specific training in the verification process.

77. There is poor pre-course information and guidance. There are no course information sheets advising learners of what to expect or what they should bring to the first class. Courses are not publicised effectively, and many start with very low numbers. Vacancies are not advertised and many classes continue to run with low numbers. Many learners say that they hear about the course from a friend rather than the LEA's publicity. Some learners say that they have been looking for a class to attend and did not realise for some time that classes were held in their own community. Guidance is only available on request.

78. There is poor curriculum co-ordination. The LEA offers a limited range of subjects in visual and performing arts and media. The range of visual arts courses is narrow and based on drawing, painting and general crafts. There are very few courses in performing arts and media. There are few opportunities for learners to progress to higher levels in a particular art or craft area. The provision is largely demand-led and has changed little in recent years. Enrolments have increased by introducing the established arts subjects to new communities in Barnsley. The provision is not specifically advertised to attract under-

represented groups, such as younger learners and men. Sixty per cent of learners are over 60 years of age. However, on one new course in the use of digital cameras, 90 per cent of the learners are men, and all are new learners.

Leadership and management

79. All areas of learning are managed by one curriculum manager. There is no specific curriculum leadership of the visual and performing arts and media programme, and no forum for the discussion of subject issues, such as curriculum innovation, integration of ICT into the arts curriculum, introduction of new techniques, or the relevance of accreditation and the suitability of awarding bodies.

80. Some teachers are unclear about who their line manager is and who makes decisions about the curriculum. There are no targets set for learners' achievements. Many learners make slow progress.

81. There is very good support for staff development. Four weeks each year are allocated to all teachers. Many of the development sessions relate to systems and procedures rather than subject-specific teaching and learning issues.

82. Tutors understand the procedures for the observation of teaching and learning. Many have been observed and tutors claim to benefit from the experience. Observation records are not sufficiently evaluative and rely on an audit of classroom tasks and activities against a checklist. Comments are too general and are not focused sufficiently on teaching and learning. Some tutors receive detailed feedback and use the action plan to improve their teaching. The observation grades recorded in the self-assessment report are significantly higher than those awarded by inspectors.

83. The self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative. Strengths are claimed for aspects such as high learner satisfaction, which are considered to be the norm. The key strengths and weaknesses lack the focus which would enable action-planning for quality improvement.

84. Tutors say that the staff handbook is invaluable. They use it to find out information for learners, including information on learner support. Issues such as poor resources are often dealt with satisfactorily when tutors report problems.

85. The LEA's marketing strategy is poor. There is poor analysis and use of socio-economic data in curriculum-planning and setting targets for widening the participation of learners from under-represented groups. Area brochures are produced to publicise courses but distribution is uneven. Little information is included to promote equality of opportunity. Brochures are only provided in English, however, translation services are made available when required. The brochures rarely include sufficient details of the course or subject.

English, languages & communications **Grade 4**

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths
- good development of learners' speaking skills
- good use of local community venues

Weaknesses
- insufficient account taken of some learners' needs
- poor pre-course information and guidance

Achievement and standards

86. Achievement on non-accredited provision is measured by the achievement of learning goals set out in individual learning plans. However, this is not measured in the same way across the languages provision, making the achievement data insufficiently adequate. In 2002-03, accredited courses have been introduced for the first time. Currently, 39 learners have achieved accreditation at beginner level and 80 have achieved at level 1.

87. Learners make good progress. One learner was delighted to discover that he could now understand the Spanish he heard when watching boxing from Florida on satellite television. Others report that they can communicate successfully with native speakers when carrying out simple transactions abroad. Many comment on their greatly increased confidence in speaking and declare that they have a new enthusiasm for learning.

88. The retention rate in this area of learning for 2001-02 is over 90 per cent. During the inspection, the attendance rate at language classes is 75 per cent.

Quality of education and training

89. Thirty per cent of the lessons observed were good or better, and 50 per cent were satisfactory. In lessons, learners speak confidently with good pronunciation. They are supported by tutors who are competent linguists. Some are native speakers and almost all are appropriately qualified. All use tapes and most have access to video to increase the exposure of learners to authentic speech. In the best lessons, tutors communicate and instruct in the language they are teaching. They are skilful at adapting their spoken language appropriately to meet the needs of the learners. One tutor arranged a meal in a local hotel and learners were required to speak French all evening to the staff, who were French nationals. Oral, as well as written, homework is set regularly and marked formatively. Learners appreciate the tutors' ability to encourage them to participate in learning activities. They speak well of the relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere they created. One group of learners thoroughly enjoyed singing German songs with

accompaniment on the piano by a group member.

90. Learners benefit from extensive opportunities to learn a language in local community venues. There are classes held in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings, at 20 different sites, including resource and community centres, schools, churches, and libraries. Many learners appreciate the fact that sessions are local and attendance does not involve travelling any long distance. The number of courses offered has increased and the range of languages has also been broadened to include Italian. There are plans to introduce short courses in Russian and Croatian.

91. The teaching does not meet the needs of all learners. Some are not challenged sufficiently by the activities, and others struggle to cope with them. The pace is sometimes slow and there is a lack of variety in tasks which are often tutor-centred. Resources are largely textbook-based and not adapted to suit the learners' needs. In some lessons there is too much reliance on translation and not enough on groupwork or problem-solving tasks. Provision for new learners is inadequate. Many learners have been in classes for quite some time and have made progress. This makes the level of an existing beginners' group considerably above the level of the new learners who join a class. Some newcomers feel overwhelmed by the language level of existing learners and the almost club-like atmosphere.

92. Most accommodation and resources are adequate. All tutors have access to cassette players, and most use videos and whiteboards. However, one class takes place next to a room where a dancing session is taking place and at another site the acoustics are poor. There is no evidence of the use of ICT to enhance learning.

93. Tutors use a variety of techniques to establish learners' existing language skills, including testing and observation. There is no standard method of initial assessment. Assessment is rarely used to plan differentiated activities to ensure progression within the group, and is not recorded on the negotiated individual learning plans.

94. There is poor pre-enrolment information and advice. There is a brief course sheet but it does not provide details of the level or content of the course or, in some cases, the start dates. Learners report difficulty in obtaining information about what courses are available. Some have found details at the local library, or school, or in the local newspaper, but many rely on word of mouth and are unclear about where to seek further guidance. Others have made telephone enquiries but have not been told promptly about an appropriate course.

Leadership and management

95. Tutors feel part of a team which is well supported by managers. There is regular effective communication between managers and tutors by letter, email and telephone. There is some training designed specifically for linguists. This year, there has been a days' training on the requirements of the new accreditation, and an extra training session was provided on the topic at the request of language tutors. Training meetings are also the main opportunity for the exchange of ideas and sharing of good practice. A resource

bank has recently been set up in the office of the development worker responsible for languages.

96. Observation of teaching sessions takes place approximately twice a year, with written and oral feedback. Some tutors consider the process to be helpful. Trained observers carry out observations but they are not subject specialists and the use of common observation forms results in very bland feedback. Tutors were unaware of any targets set for languages but had contributed to the self-assessment report in training sessions.

Foundation programmes Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement of confidence and personal skills by learners
- good programme leadership in provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, and literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Weaknesses

- much unsatisfactory teaching and learning
- poor target-setting
- poor initial assessment
- incoherent planning of programmes
- ineffective strategic management and planning of family learning

Achievement and standards

97. Learners achieve increased confidence and personal skills. In family learning programmes, parents acquire a good level of understanding of the literacy curriculum in schools and are able to help their children with their homework. They have greater confidence in working in partnership with their child's teacher and have a better understanding of how children develop and how their learning is planned. Learners produce a wide range of stimulating resources for their children. All learners' work contributes to a personal workbook, which includes games, toys, and ideas for helping their children. Some parents use this for future accreditation. Parents become involved in their local school and community. There is good progression from family learning programmes to programmes which offer qualifications in literacy and numeracy. In literacy and numeracy classes, learners have good opportunities to gain accreditation. Tutors prepare learners well to help them sit new national tests in literacy and numeracy. The LEA is now registered as a pilot centre to provide national tests online. Learners gain a lot of confidence and self-esteem by achieving certificates. They are able to put their literacy and numeracy skills into practice in their daily lives. For example, some now write letters to members of their family, are able to fill in forms on their own, or have applied for promotion at work.

98. Poor initial assessment and poorly defined learning goals make the measurement of learners' achievements difficult. Some learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are insufficiently challenged by the work they do in learning sessions, and the modules of the regional OCN programme are insufficiently relevant to their lives. Attendance and retention rates are satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

99. Twenty-seven per cent of the classes inspectors observed in literacy, numeracy, and ESOL, and for learners with learning difficulties, were less than satisfactory. The sessions are poorly planned and teachers do not set short achievable steps in learning for individual learners. Lesson plans focus on activities and not on learning. There is insufficient differentiation, and the results of learning styles assessments are not used to plan teaching and learning. Learning is poorly evaluated. In ESOL, there are insufficient opportunities for learners to develop speaking skills, and little emphasis is placed on teaching communicative language in a context. Teachers of learners with learning difficulties lack expertise in teaching basic skills and do not adequately support the development of learners' literacy skills. In the sessions for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties, tutors enable learners to contribute through resources that aid communication or through adapted technology. These tutors give learners good individual support and tuition with careful explanations of tasks that help them develop skills. In literacy and numeracy there is good integration of ICT with teaching and learning. In family learning, teaching and learning is satisfactory. Tutors demonstrate a high level of knowledge and expertise. They use a range of strategies to help parents achieve their learning goals.

100. Most accommodation and resources for classes are satisfactory, although some accommodation used for language learning is inappropriate. There is insufficient space and rooms are noisy. In family learning, the chairs are too small for adults. In some centres, there is insufficient access to ICT, and little use of audio-visual aids. In ICT sessions for learners with learning difficulties, there is good ICT equipment with dedicated touch screens, large keyboards, voice-activated software, and other adapted technology. There is good use of ICT to produce new and up-to-date learning materials for literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes. However, in an art and craft class observed there were very few resources available. All teachers of literacy, language, family literacy and numeracy and learners with learning difficulties have teaching qualifications. However, some teachers lack specialist qualifications. Adult learning development workers are working towards an NVQ at level 3 in advice and guidance.

101. Initial assessment is poor. Background information is collected but learners are not assessed to identify their learning needs or to identify a level from which to measure achievement. In literacy, numeracy and ESOL, the initial assessment of skills is inadequate and inconsistent The basic skills of learners with learning difficulties are not assessed.

102. Target-setting is poor. Learning goals are not sufficiently individualised. They focus on the content of the programme and not on the individual skills the learners need to develop. Information from initial assessment is not fully recorded on the individual learning plan. Learners' progress reviews identify some of their progress but are not used to identify new, challenging individual learning targets. The use of individual learning plans is ineffective. They are not used adequately to plan learning or to measure individual and group progress. Individual learning goals are not meaningful to learners. In family learning, most individual learning plans are incomplete. End-of-session reviews

are not carried out systematically or recorded. Learning goals do not build on learners' previous experience, skills or employment goals.

103. Learning programmes lack coherence. Sessions take place in venues that are accessible and known to local people but the provision does not meet the needs of the whole community. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision is mainly planned geographically and most learners attend classes for only two hours each week. There is a narrow range of courses with limited progression routes. Some new initiatives are taking place to provide classes on employers' premises and in partnership with other organisations.

104. There are poor links between different parts of learners' programmes. Tutors for the workplace classes do not meet to plan an integrated learning programme. There are few links between what the learners with learning difficulties learn in classes and their overall learning or care plans. Teachers are unaware of the other parts of the learners' programme.

105. There is satisfactory support for learners. Tutors are friendly and approachable and form good working relationships with the learners, which promotes learning. Care staff from the day and residential centres work well with tutors to support learners' care and personal needs and their learning. Tutors encourage learners to access accreditation and progress onto further learning. In some classes, volunteers provide additional support for learners. Learners are also supported by adult learning development workers.

Leadership and management

106. There is good programme leadership in literacy, numeracy, ESOL, and programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Lead tutors set a clear direction and have introduced a standard system for schemes of work, lesson-planning, and negotiated learning. The lead tutor verifies schemes of work. A curriculum review has resulted in a broader curriculum. The adult learning service's good staff development programme has supported curriculum development and recent national initiatives. There are good partnerships with other agencies, including social services, schools, and community groups. There is regular contact with the community through the use of community development workers. There are regular team meetings and good communications between staff. Systems for internal verification are satisfactory and meet the requirements of awarding bodies. However, as many of the learners have very poor literacy skills, the verification of their work by the sampling of portfolios is not always appropriate. Lesson observations during the past year have identified areas for development. Lead tutors have to teach and cover for staff absences and this restricts their opportunity to observe and support tutors. There is insufficient use of management information and target-setting to improve the provision. Few of the weaknesses identified by inspectors appeared in the self-assessment report.

107. Until March 2003, family learning was mainly funded and monitored through the Single Regeneration Budget arrangements. In March 2003, funding for family learning provision transferred to the ACL provision. There is currently poor strategic management

and planning of family learning. Changes in funding arrangements and in the planning and organisation of family learning have resulted in uncertainty about the future of this provision. The provision is now small and fragmented and there is inadequate support for tutors. A significant number of experienced tutors have left or are leaving the service. There has been little information provided about the programme for September 2003. Marketing of family learning is weak, and mostly takes place by word of mouth.