

REINSPECTION REPORT

Dudley LEA Reinspection

07 May 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

DUDLEY LEA REINSPECTION

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. 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
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Dudley Adult and Community Learning Service is part of the education and lifelong learning directorate of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. It provides a range of learning opportunities across all 14 areas of learning. Most of the provision is subcontracted to local colleges, a national provider of adult learning and through schools. The range of courses is provided from 16 venues, including community and neighbourhood learning centres, schools and other partnership sites. At the time of the reinspection some provision was too small to be inspected, or shorter courses had been completed.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Health, social care & public services

2. Dudley Local Education Authority (LEA) currently offers six accredited courses and 14 non-accredited courses. To date this year, there are 587 enrolments. Sixty-four of the 391 learners on active retirement programmes have LEA support. A local college of further education is subcontracted to provide 'active 'n' older' programmes for a further 125 learners. This provision enables more mature learners to evaluate their skills and experience, and negotiate their learning programmes across a range of themes such as health, other cultures, local history, horticulture, and various exercise options. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) in care and childcare and early years are subcontracted to local colleges. Seven learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in childcare and early years, and in direct care 15 learners are working towards the level 2 and 10 towards level 3. These courses recruit annually. Forty-nine learners are on other short courses such as first aid and self-awareness. Eighty-two per cent of learners are women and 2 per cent have a disability. Centre managers are responsible for curriculum and budgetary management and quality assurance within their centres and service level agreements with the LEA. They report to the LEA's head of lifelong learning. There are seven part-time tutors who work between two and four hours a week.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learner interviews	78
Number of staff interviews	18
Number of subcontractor interviews	21
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	13
Number of partner/external agency interviews	5
Number of visits	13

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

3. At the previous inspection in March 2003, the quality of learning in health, social care and public services was unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, this provision is satisfactory.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Information & communications technology	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3

Health, social care & public services	4

Visual & performing arts & media	3

English, languages & communications	2

Family learning	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	587	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good achievement of group learning goals
- good teaching and learning
- effective partnerships to widen participation

Weaknesses

- slow progress to improve formal assessment and monitoring practices
- insufficiently established arrangements for quality assurance

Achievement and standards

4. Achievement of group learning goals is good. Group learning outcomes are carefully negotiated with the learners. Learners improve their self-confidence and social skills after attending the learning opportunities on offer. Many learners on retirement courses have benefited from group members giving their own presentations and sharing their experience and expertise. Significant numbers of learners benefit from being retained over subsequent years, as provision is evolving in response to needs. Knowledge which is gained on one course may be developed further with activities to broaden activities, such as lively debate, outside speakers and visits. Learners also progress to additional learning opportunities as they gain confidence. Retention rates are good at 94 per cent for the autumn of 2003, compared with 85 per cent in the same period of the previous year. This has had an impact on the high levels of achievement of learning goals, although this is not always formally recorded. One significant improvement since the previous inspection is the raising of awareness and understanding of wider community issues, particularly greater acceptance and appreciation of the value of diversity through enrichment activities and social interaction. Retention rates on NVQ programmes are good at 93 per cent for 2002-03 and achievement rates are satisfactory at 64 per cent in the same period.

Quality of education and training

5. Teaching and learning are good. All sessions observed were satisfactory, with 70 per cent good or better. Since the previous inspection, there has been significant

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improvement in learners' involvement in designing their programmes. Learners' views and evaluations of sessions are actively sought and are used effectively to make improvements. They speak highly of the variety of programmes and the stimulation this provides. The LEA now provides increased staffing for courses with high learner numbers and many active retirement classes have two tutors, as well as a range of visiting speakers. Lessons are well planned, although the recording is sometimes not detailed. Effective use is made of information technology in some classes, through electronic presentations. Promotion of equal opportunities within lessons is good. In one session, the tutor used a range of resources very effectively, including an electronic presentation, books, photographs, clothing and musical instruments to build on a visit the previous week to a Sikh temple. Learners' knowledge and understanding of the Sikh religion was raised significantly and they were clearly inspired to relate this to practices in other religions.

6. Partnership work to widen participation of under-represented groups is particularly effective. The LEA has successfully built on its strategies to engage new learners. Many thriving courses are designed by the lifelong learning team for people aged over 50, and there is good promotion of learning to minority ethnic groups. Neighbourhood learning centres and outreach workers work closely with the local community to identify needs and encourage involvement and progression in learning. Partnership working with other authority departments and with other local authorities is good. One initiative with a neighbouring authority led to the NVQ care provision being jointly supported by outreach workers from both authorities. Employment opportunities have been identified by these teams and learners have gained jobs despite their long-term unemployment. Progression routes are now more clearly recognised and some learners identify that they have been stimulated to pursue new areas of learning following taster sessions, such as in art classes. Access funding has been used to form clubs for the learners who wish to continue learning in the community. Good use is made of a range of visiting guest speakers and visits to broaden learners' experiences, particularly in relation to wider community issues and cultural awareness. One development project includes LEA, health and charitable organisations working together to increase language development of the learners in an integrated learning programme.

7. Resources are satisfactory. The lifelong learning staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Tutors are knowledgeable in their specialist subjects, although some do not have a teaching qualification. Many classes are held at centres in the community and learners value the opportunity to access learning close to their homes. Venues are generally clean and welcoming and learners feel comfortable in these environments. Most venues are easily accessible to those with restricted mobility. A range of appropriate learning resources is available to support teaching and learning including audiovisual aids. At many centres, learners are provided with facilities for refreshments, to further promote social interaction before and after sessions.

8. Support for learners is satisfactory and this was identified at the previous inspection. Learners receive adequate pre-course information and ongoing information, advice and guidance. This service is comprehensive and impartial. Learners are now benefiting from the improvements made after a high priority was given to achieving the new national

information, advice and guidance standard across several areas of the service. Induction is satisfactory. Tutors provide good advice on additional learning opportunities. Careers advice for care students is effective. Crèche facilities in neighbourhood learning centres support the needs of learners on care programmes. Mature learners on active n' older courses in college have access to the full range of support services. One subcontractor provided two additional tutors in response to the request of a large group that they remain as one group because of the strong social relationships formed. Effective peer support within sessions is well facilitated by staff. Learners on active retirement courses help each other with transport and access to venues. Some group members organise additional meetings during the summer when courses are closed.

9. Progress to improve formal assessment and monitoring practices is slow. Individual learning plans have been introduced, but initial assessment of learners' needs is weak. Many individual goals are not specific and do not provide an adequate basis against which progress can be measured. A diary system has been introduced as a method of monitoring progress, but this is not always evaluative or adequately monitored against targets. Many learners do not have individual progress reviews. Arrangements for assessment in care are inadequate. Many learners do not have an assessor, although they have been on the programme for four months. Learners are unsure when or how assessment will take place. This has been recognised by the authority, but **actions taken to rectify it have not yet resulted in improvements**. Assessment of readiness for exercise is **inadequate** for some programmes. Currently, there is no formal procedure that is used systematically to gather, record and update medical history and injuries to ensure appropriate types and levels of exercise are taught. Tutors in these sessions enquire verbally at the start of sessions, but this is not confidential and is not recorded. The LEA has recognised this and plans to implement the physical activity readiness questionnaire that is currently used satisfactorily on dedicated exercise courses.

Leadership and management

10. Curriculum management has improved since the previous inspection. There are particularly effective strategies for managing change. Staff have worked extremely hard, and hold post-inspection monthly progress meetings to deal with the identified weaknesses and to improve the quality of provision. It is too soon to assess the full impact of many of the improvements because of their recent introduction. Staff have good development opportunities that are closely related to the health and social care curricula. However, less importance is placed on meeting the personal development needs of each member of staff.

11. Very good progress has been made in further developing the computerised management information system. Centre staff are trained to enter up-to-date information about learner recruitment and retention and they use the system effectively. The information is used by management to produce a range of reports. However, the system cannot yet be accessed by staff who work in non-LEA centres. Learners and potential learners can now access the service's website to obtain comprehensive information about learning centres and courses.

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12. The LEA has a strong culture of inclusion. Staff training and the attendance of staff at various working groups has been successful in promoting equal opportunities more widely. Lessons include exploration of issues and appropriate challenges take place within sessions. Equal opportunities data are collected, but some learners are unwilling to disclose personal information and the provider finds it difficult to set targets.

Accommodation is diverse to ensure provision takes place in communities where need is greatest. Recent audits of venues have been thorough and improvements have been made where possible. Access for those with restricted mobility is satisfactory. The LEA is well advanced in its arrangements for complying with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

13. Priority is being given to literacy, numeracy and language needs of learners and a strategy and a dedicated co-ordinator are now in place. All learners on childcare courses are assessed for literacy and numeracy needs and a satisfactory level of support is provided for those who need it.

14. The quality assurance system is insufficiently established, although significant improvements have been made during the last year. A quality assurance manager has recently been appointed. A satisfactory framework of quality assurance policies has been developed, but these have not yet been fully implemented across the range of provision, including that of subcontractors. Senior staff are familiar with the quality assurance processes, but some tutors are not fully aware of all the components and there are inconsistencies in practical application of procedures. The quality of documents, such as lesson plans and individual learning plans, is inconsistent, although there is a deliberate management policy to trial different documents. The system of lesson observations is evolving and still relies on subcontractors' own systems. As yet, evaluation of all lesson observations is insufficient to adequately identify individual staff training needs and common areas for improvement, or to highlight opportunities for sharing best practice. This is recognised by the LEA and plans are in place to implement more rigorous and collaborative improvements later this year. Contracts are currently being revised to include more stringent targets and monitoring of subcontractors.

15. The self-assessment process does not make enough use of feedback from learners and stakeholders. Although systems to collect feedback are in place, procedures are not standardised or used to best effect. Staff have the opportunity to contribute to the self-assessment process, although some tutors do not fully understand its role in continuous improvement. The most recent self-assessment report and development plans identify the strengths and weaknesses which were identified by inspectors.

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.

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	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.