INSPECTION REPORT

Swindon LEA

22 November 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

Swindon LEA

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Swindon Borough Council (SBC) became a unitary authority in 1997. SBC provides adult and community learning programmes in information and communications technology (ICT), hospitality, sport and recreation, hairdressing and beauty therapy, health, social care and public services, visual and performing arts, humanities and English and modern foreign languages, family learning and community development. Most courses are not accredited. At the time of the inspection, there were not enough learners in hairdressing and beauty therapy, health, social care and public services, and humanities for these areas to be inspected. Courses are currently offered at 32 centres around Swindon.

2. SBC's adult and community learning provision is managed by the Swindon Learning Partnership (SLP). The SLP is based in the lifelong learning department of the directorate of cultural change of Swindon Borough Council. Adult and community learning staff include the SLP's manager, who reports to the head of the lifelong learning department, assisted by a family learning co-ordinator, a part-time development and quality co-ordinator, a full-time contracts and task group officer, and a part-time financial and budget control officer.

3. SBC's adult and community learning provision is funded through contracts with the Wiltshire and Swindon local Learning and Skills Council, (LSC). Most adult and community learning provision is subcontracted to two main providers. A number of voluntary groups and other training providers also provide learning programmes with the support of SBC.

4. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of Swindon's population from minority ethnic groups is 4.8 per cent, compared with 8.7 per cent for England as a whole. The unemployment rate for Swindon in April 2003 was 2.3 per cent, compared with 2.6 per cent for England as a whole.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

5. Courses in ICT are provided at four main subcontractor sites, and a number of other venues, including community centres, and sheltered housing. During the academic year 2002-03, 147 learners enrolled on ICT programmes. At the time of inspection, 62 learners were enrolled on courses. A range of programmes of varying length are offered for beginners and more experienced users. Some courses, such as digital photography courses, run for 12 weeks. At drop-in centres, courses are open-ended and take place mainly in the afternoons and evenings. Most courses are non-accredited.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

6. The delivery of courses in this area of learning is subcontracted to two providers. In 2002-03, 1,403 enrolments were recorded in this area of learning, representing 898 learners. The range of courses includes tai chi, fitness, archery, bridge, cake decoration, recreational cookery courses and Royal Yachting Association navigation. These courses operate for periods of 10 to 12 weeks. There are also a number of short, specialist-recreational cookery courses, which range from a whole day to five weeks part-time attendance. Ninety per cent of the provision takes place during weekday evenings Monday to Thursday. Lessons last from one to two hours and take place in a range of venues across the borough, including colleges, community centres and schools. Many of the classes are for mixed-ability learners. Most courses are non-accredited, but navigation courses lead to an accredited qualification. There are 19 part-time tutors.

Visual & performing arts & media

7. The provision in visual and performing arts is delivered through two subcontractors. All programmes are non-accredited. Subjects include a wide range of dance styles, including salsa, Egyptian, tap, jazz and Indian. Other classes include pottery, stained glass, photography, painting and drawing, interior design, picture framing, stained glass, silk painting, fashion and textiles, silversmithing and jewellery, African drumming, and fitness and tone with ballet. Forty-nine courses are currently on offer. Eight are offered during the day with the remainder being weekday evening classes, which are offered for two hours over 10 weeks, and some Saturday classes. The provision is delivered at 22 different sites within the Swindon area. Six-hundred and seventy four part-time students are currently enrolled on these courses. All tutors are part-time, hourly paid employees.

English, languages & communications

8. Modern foreign language programmes are provided by two subcontractors. SLP offers 16 modern foreign language courses, covering seven languages. All courses are non-accredited, and 75 per cent of the courses are for beginners. Most classes are in Spanish; there are also Greek, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Russian classes. There is a small number of English and British Sign Language courses. Courses take place in the day and evening at nine locations. They last for one to two hours each week, and are of six, 10 or 20 weeks duration. Fourteen tutors, full- and part-time, work in this area. One-hundred and ninety learners are enrolled on programmes.

Family learning

9. The family learning provision began two years ago, and is co-ordinated by a family learning co-ordinator, working with a member of staff from SBC's education department. The family learning co-ordinator is responsible for parenting skills, family reading and intergenerational work. There are 10 part-time tutors. A range of courses is offered, including two- or three-hour workshops, and longer family literacy and numeracy courses. Many of the family learning courses continue from family literacy and numeracy courses. These include programmes such as family ICT, health and pastime pursuits. There are also a number of child support courses and programmes for parents and parents' groups. A short course is available for carers and their young children. SLP has enrolled 202 adults on family learning courses. Last year, 2002-03, 965 adults took part in family learning activities.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	13
Number of inspection days	87
Number of learner interviews	361
Number of staff interviews	77
Number of subcontractor interviews	19
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	79
Number of partner/external agency interviews	18

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

10. The inspection found that the quality of provision was good in ICT, visual and performing arts, and family learning. It was satisfactory in English, languages and communications, but unsatisfactory in hospitality, sports and leisure. Leadership and management as a whole were satisfactory, equality of opportunity was good, but quality assurance was unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

Information & communications technology	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

Visual & performing arts & media	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

English, languages & communications	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

Family learning	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS
Achievement and standards

11. **In all areas, learners achieve good personal benefits,** such as increased confidence, intellectual stimulation, and personal motivation. **In ICT, hospitality, sport and leisure, and visual and performing arts, learners develop good practical skills and knowledge** relevant to their daily lives. In visual and performing arts, learners' work is of a very good, and in some instances, professional standard. **Most learners in English, languages and communication achieve their personal language goals, gaining in fluency and confidence.**

12. Parents on family learning programmes are able to apply their knowledge directly in supporting their children, and feel that they have increased confidence when taking part in discussions with others. One school has noted a clear improvement in home and school relationships with parents and children.

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	1	1	2	4	0	0	0	8
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	1	10	2	3	0	0	16
Visual & performing arts & media	2	9	5	5	1	0	0	22
English, languages & communications	1	5	1	5	1	0	0	13
Family learning	0	2	5	0	1	0	0	8
Total	**4**	**18**	**23**	**16**	**6**	**0**	**0**	**67**

13. **In ICT, visual and performing arts, and family learning, there is a lot of good teaching,** with well-planned lessons and carefully designed materials. **Some teaching in hospitality, sport and leisure, is unsatisfactory. Lesson-planning is poor and tutors do not provide sufficient practical demonstrations for learners. The provision in most areas is responsive and meets the needs of learners in the community.** ICT programmes in particular encourage wider participation through local community initiatives. In ICT, hospitality, sport and leisure, visual and performing arts and family learning, learners particularly value the specialist skills of their tutors, and the **very good flexible support provided. In family learning, learners are encouraged to continue their studies and many move on successfully to other programmes.**

14. **Resources are poor in some areas. Visual and performing arts does not have sufficient specialist equipment** and some of the accommodation in hospitality, sport and leisure is unsuitable. In some centres access to teaching resources such as video recorders for modern languages, is limited.

15. Learners are not sufficiently monitored in some areas. **In ICT, learners' progress is not always recorded properly and there is no recording of learners' assessment and progress for foundation learners in community groups. In sport and leisure, there is not enough pre-exercise screening of learners. Staff have few opportunities to meet and do not regularly share information or good practice in ICT; in family learning, quality assurance is incomplete and there is no regular system of tutor observation.**

16. SBC's strategy for literacy, numeracy and language support is not developed sufficiently. However, a literacy and numeracy group has been established through SLP to evaluate the current provision. Literacy and numeracy courses are provided through the family learning programme. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) support is provided by one local organisation. SBC has provided, or is planning to give awareness training to all its staff.

Leadership and management

17. **SBC has established an effective local learning partnership** for adult and community learning, which sets **a very clear strategic direction for the development of community learning.** Partnership arrangements have already been very successful in developing new community initiatives and in obtaining considerable additional resources to help promote adult and community learning.

18. **Processes for the overall review and detailed curriculum planning of adult and community learning provision are weak.** The data provided by subcontractors are not evaluated sufficiently. SBC is aware of these weaknesses. **A new web-based data system has been introduced and is now being used to evaluate programmes, and to set more challenging targets for subcontractors. Both subcontractors have well-established quality assurance systems, but the monitoring of provision is inadequate.** A detailed framework for quality assurance has been put in place, but this is not yet fully operational.

19. **The promotion of equality of opportunity is good.** SBC has focused its efforts and resources on providing more facilities in the community. **It monitors the involvement of under-represented groups closely, and uses this information well in planning new projects to involve learners from disadvantaged groups.**

20. **SBC has a comprehensive framework for quality assurance which is being implemented progressively, but it does not plan and co-ordinate provision throughout the borough.** The overall self-assessment process has not been developed sufficiently. Although there is an overall self-assessment report for 2002-03, it does not adequately collect or evaluate detailed information from each area of learning for overall planning purposes.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths
- clear strategic direction to increase participation and community facilities
- effective networking and partnerships
- effective action to reach under-represented groups
- good use of data to monitor under-represented groups and set targets for projects
- coherent and comprehensive quality assurance framework

Weaknesses
- insufficient co-ordination and planning of adult and community learning provision
- inadequate use of management information systems
- insufficient monitoring of subcontractors' provision

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good achievement of practical skills and personal goals
- very effective teaching and learner support
- effective use of ICT to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of learners' progress
- insufficient sharing of information and good practice across provision

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths

- good acquisition of skills and knowledge
- good response to learners' needs

Weaknesses

- poor resources in some training centres
- inadequate pre-exercise screening
- poor planning of provision
- insufficient monitoring of provision

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- very good standards in learners' work
- good personal benefits for learners
- good teaching

Weaknesses

- insufficient specialist equipment
- poor management of curriculum

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- good achievement of learners' personal language goals

Weaknesses

- insufficient management of curriculum to improve quality of provision

Family learning

Strengths

- good standards of teaching and learning
- responsive curriculum for under-represented groups
- good progression from family learning courses

Weaknesses

- no records of planning and learner assessments in community groups
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SWINDON LEA:

- the enthusiasm, patience and support of the tutors - 'very encouraging and patient, and make the lessons fun'
- interesting courses and projects - 'they are addictive and good therapy – a chance to get away from the stress of work and home'
- the opportunity to learn new skills and develop individual interests - 'if my grandchildren can use a computer, then I wanted to do it as well'
- the social atmosphere of the classes - 'I've made new friends by coming to the class'
- the chance to gain self-confidence - 'We'd lost our confidence before the course', 'I've been able to set up my own course' (in the community)
- the chance to make a fresh start - 'I started doing the course for my child, now I'm doing it for myself'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SWINDON LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- the detail and accuracy of information about courses, availability of places, and opportunities to progress
- the continuity of courses
- the accommodation - '..noisy rooms that are too hot'; 'the workshops are too small'
- the resources for practical classes and family learning - 'using children's chairs makes your back ache'

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SWINDON LEA:

- establish a coherent planning system for adult and community learning provision
- increase the effectiveness of the adult and community learning management information systems
- improve the quality assurance arrangements for adult and community learning provision, including monitoring and evaluation of programmes
- ensure a more effective system for teacher observation
- introduce a more thorough system to meet health and safety requirements
- provide greater opportunities to share good practice
- establish a more consistent system of assessment for learners
- ensure the appropriateness of rooms and facilities for adult learners
- improve the effectiveness of the self-assessment report process

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Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths
- clear strategic direction to increase participation and community facilities
- effective networking and partnerships
- effective action to reach under-represented groups
- good use of data to monitor under-represented groups and set targets for projects
- coherent and comprehensive quality assurance framework

Weaknesses
- insufficient co-ordination and planning of adult and community learning provision
- inadequate use of management information systems
- insufficient monitoring of subcontractors' provision

21. SBC has a clear strategic direction for the development of adult and community learning provision. Its strategy aims to maintain existing mainstream adult and community learning provision at current levels, and at the same time to create additional capacity within clearly targeted local communities. This will allow sustainable development of lifelong learning provision. This strategic direction has been defined through thorough consultation with local voluntary and community groups; it follows well-defined principles and themes clearly identified within SBC's community strategy, SBC's adult learning plan and the local LSC guidelines.

22. SLP has strong partnerships and good networking arrangements. SBC works effectively with a wide network of external providers, community groups and voluntary associations. It uses the network well to initiate new projects for community learning, and to bid successfully for additional external funds. For example, it has successfully established a new learning centre for ICT in one location. With its partners, it has also successfully bid for funds to continue and expand its programme of local community regeneration and re-engagement of local people in learning, through the use of learning ambassadors. SBC also makes effective use of limited resources to support new learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups in targeted areas. Through the SLP, SBC has worked effectively with its partners to provide wider awareness of issues affecting adult and community learning in Swindon. It has actively arranged several programmes and conferences; for example, literacy and numeracy awareness training for managers within SBC.

23. SBC has a number of departments and agencies, which actively provide learning opportunities for adults, but these activities are not co-ordinated sufficiently. The SLP has established operational working groups for general issues, such as data collection and

literacy and numeracy skills. However, the provision of adult and community learning programmes remains based largely on historical patterns of delivery. SLP does not plan future provision with providers sufficiently. Area of learning annual reviews and self-assessment reports do not provide sufficiently detailed information of learners' feedback. The range, geographical spread, and timing of adult and community learning provision is not effectively co-ordinated. For example, two providers developed and offered a similar class in the same location on the same day. Annual programme reviews occur too late in the subcontractor planning cycle to allow effective implementation of curriculum change.

24. Not enough opportunities exist for subcontractors' staff to meet to share information about programmes or good practice. Learners cannot easily access comprehensive information about adult and community learning opportunities. For example, there is no single access point or directory for all adult and community learning provision in Swindon, and learners must consult a number of publications to identify programmes within their area. SBC has recognised this weakness and has begun to establish a strategic database of all learning opportunities throughout Swindon. It has also begun to support opportunities for operational managers to meet on matters of common interest.

25. SBC's overall strategy for literacy, numeracy and language skills support is not comprehensive enough. However, a task group has now been established through SLP to evaluate the current provision. Literacy and numeracy courses are provided through the family learning programme; ESOL support is mainly delivered by one local provider. SBC has recently given training courses in literacy and numeracy skills awareness to managers employed by SBC, and a further series of training sessions is planned to raise awareness of these issues among all of SBC's staff.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 2

26. SBC takes effective, positive action to reach under-represented groups. The adult and community learning team of SBC are very active in working with other community organisations to reach disadvantaged and under-represented groups, and successfully involve them in lifelong learning. For example, SBC provides crèche facilities for the duration of community courses to enable parents to attend. In the past year, over 800 people have benefited from this facility. The partnership provides a wide range of initial funding for community learning initiatives. It has also begun to establish additional learning opportunities which provide clear pathways and progression routes for adult learners. In one deprived district, the partnership has set up a well-positioned and well-equipped drop-in information technology (IT) suite, which has attracted 75 members of the community. Twenty of these have become regular attendees, some of whom are about to start more structured IT courses.

27. The partnership is also working closely with community organisations and the borough's library service in deprived districts to bring together a programme of effective IT taster sessions in libraries, homes for the elderly and centres for the homeless. These are beginning to attract people to community courses. The partnership has also financed successful specialist initiatives to reach some challenging target groups who have

additional support needs.

28. Data are used well to monitor under-representation and set targets for specific projects. The learning partnership has learner data about gender, age groups, those declaring disabilities, ethnicity and postcodes and it is held for a period of four years. These data have been collected from providers, and carefully monitored for trends: particularly trends pertaining to specific community projects. Over the past two years, vigorous data collection and analysis has contributed to strategic-planning by identifying which districts, and which groups within districts, to target in terms of resources. More recently, data were used very effectively to contribute to and shape the partnership's learning ambassadors programme, which contains very precise targets for each of three deprived wards. A similarly strong emphasis on data to help develop strategic-planning is well established in the partnership's Race Equality Scheme action plan 2003-06 which has recently started.

29. Equality of opportunity policies and procedures are satisfactory. SBC has comprehensive, up-to-date policies covering most aspects of equality of opportunity which are adopted by SLP. Equality of opportunity is comprehensively included in SLP's agreements with its providers. However, there is no clear policy statement on course fee refunds for learners. The main providers, the two local colleges, have their own clear and comprehensive equal opportunities policies which cover grievance/complaints procedures; however some of the newer, community-based providers do not have formal policies.

30. Learners' and staff's awareness of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Widening participation and reaching disadvantaged, under-represented groups in particular, is a well-established, high priority of SBC. However, no formal equal opportunities targets are set for partner organisations or providers. Learners' induction to equality of opportunity issues is generally satisfactory, although inspectors found some variation in practice between subcontractors.

31. Staff training in equality of opportunity is satisfactory. SBC has promoted a range of events and training through SLP to raise awareness of equal opportunities-related issues among partners and provider staff. All the partner organisation staff interviewed were fully aware of these opportunities and most had either attended some courses, or were attending in the near future. The lifelong learning team have a strong background in, and understanding of, equal opportunities issues.

32. Inspectors found access to premises and the provision of additional support to learners with specific needs to be satisfactory. SBC has recently completed a thorough audit of all training provider sites for compliance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This identified some sites as in need of improvements regarding access to premises and training rooms. Plans are in place to make the required improvements. Access to appropriate resources, or specialist support for learners with special needs, varies across the provision, but overall is satisfactory.

Quality assurance   **Contributory grade 4**

33. SBC has developed a coherent quality assurance framework. This framework is comprehensive, covering all aspects of provision including course proposals, data collection, and feedback about teaching and learning. The procedures have been fully implemented in courses under direct contract to the council. They are being introduced incrementally to subcontractors, and are regularly reviewed and refined following evaluation. The data supplied by subcontractors are thoroughly monitored; they are systematically challenged on discrepancies to ensure accuracy. The SBC has developed a data gatherers group who look in detail at the best ways of collating information about adult and community learning from all providers, including those not funded through SBC. The group has compiled a comprehensive list of courses and venues, which will be available electronically to all providers. However, this measure has not been fully implemented.

34. The self-assessment process is not sufficiently developed. All subcontractors produce a report and action plan, which is then collated centrally with SLP's report. The comprehensive adult education plan, provides information for the action plan for providers. Most staff are involved in providing information for the report, although not all staff have seen the final self-assessment report. The self-assessment report does not consider areas of learning separately, and there is no detailed information to allow SBC to make judgements about the quality of provision by different subcontractors.

35. The subcontracted provision is not monitored sufficiently. Subcontractors give summary reports on observations, complaints and learner' feedback, but there are no formal arrangements for this information to be jointly reviewed. Subcontractors' staff do not have sufficient opportunities to share information and good practice. SBC has begun to support opportunities for operational managers to meet on matters of common interest, but this has not had any significant impact on operations yet.

36. The SBC contract for its subcontracted provision requires that one third of all teaching staff should be observed every year. However, observations do not routinely take place in all areas of provision. In cases where the subcontractor has not had the resources to carry out these observations, SBC has responded by directly employing an additional observer. Some teacher observations are not thorough enough and do not provide sufficient feedback to the tutor, to improve performance.

37. SBC does not have clear and comprehensive data about retention and achievement in much of the subcontracted provision. This weakness has been recognised by SBC, and it has recently purchased a sophisticated, web-based management information system. This has been customised to produce a wider range of useful reports on adult and community learning provision. However, data collection is not yet complete, and it is not possible to report on the effectiveness of the system.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	62	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement of practical skills and personal goals
- very effective teaching and learner support
- effective use of ICT to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of learners' progress
- insufficient sharing of information and good practice across provision

Achievement and standards

38. Learners have good achievement levels in practical skills and personal goals. They are all well motivated, with attendance at the observed classes at 91 per cent. Although most learners are new to IT, they achieve good computing skills in their areas of choice. Many learners have become confident computer users, and have acquired skills beyond their previous, personal expectations. Learners can complete practical tasks using a range of software. In two centres visited by inspectors, recent beginners demonstrated good skills in using the internet. Learners' self-confidence grows along with their practical skills. All their work is of a good standard. Many learners are progressing from basic level courses to more advanced levels, while others are broadening their skills. For instance, some have joined classes in digital photo editing and have progressed from beginner to advanced level.

Quality of education and training

39. Teaching and support is effective. All of the teaching sessions observed were satisfactory, with 50 per cent graded good, or better. Most lessons are well planned. Tutors are well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic. They actively encourage and support learners well during learning sessions. All tutors demonstrate a high level of professional competence, using a wide range of teaching styles. The supporting materials produced by tutors are of a very good standard, and include both disk-based and paper-based resources. These materials are used effectively by learners for reference and revision. Tutors skilfully deliver training to adults at a pace that challenges, but does not threaten, learners. This allows learners to gain new skills and grow in confidence.

Learners receive very effective individual support, which is flexible enough to meet their needs. Ongoing monitoring and assessment of learners takes place during classes, with learners receiving clear verbal feedback during sessions. Learners are encouraged to develop further skills, and information about progression and other courses is provided.

40. ICT programmes are used effectively to widen participation, with successful initiatives to broaden access to computers and ICT training in deprived areas. For example, one drop-in centre has recently been established within a deprived ward, and is now used regularly by local residents. Supportive centre staff actively encourage visitors to try computers for the first time. The number of learners using the facilities is steadily growing. Disadvantaged learners are able to gain recognised qualifications. For example, inspectors found that learners living in sheltered housing greatly value their weekly computer course, and have gained sufficient confidence and skills to work in their own time on computers made available at the sheltered housing.

41. Resources in general are satisfactory. Learners with mobility problems have good access and a wide range of adaptive technologies is available at most sites. Some computer equipment and software on one site is too dated. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Support materials for learners is generally good, or satisfactory, but at two centres there is insufficient additional practise material.

42. Learners receive satisfactory guidance and support. Induction procedures vary from centre to centre and in some training centres induction is not always thorough enough. Some sites cover all aspects at the first session, while others cover the main points in subsequent sessions.

43. The formal recording of learners' progress is inadequate. Most centres do not have sufficient recorded information about learners. In many cases, the only information is on the enrolment form, and is restricted to the name and address of the learner, and payment details. There is not enough formal, initial assessment of learners' previous skills. Where formal assessment occurs, tutors thoroughly review with learners their previous experience or qualifications in ICT and skills for life. However, in many cases, no information about previous courses is recorded and information is not used formally to advise, or inform choice of course. Very few learning plans are currently produced for learners, but there is some evidence of these starting to be used in some training centres. Only a few formal progress reviews are carried out and there is no formal recording of work completed in most instances. However, informal verbal feedback is given regularly to learners.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership of the curriculum within each subcontractor is satisfactory. However, there is not enough sharing of information and good practice across the provision. There are no regular meetings between subcontractors to review the curriculum, including the range of provision and progression routes available to learners. Good practice is not shared throughout the training centres; for example, new documentation to monitor learners is being used effectively on one site, but this information is not shared with the

other subcontractors. Most adult and community learning tutors have been systematically observed by their employers, but this information is not routinely shared with SBC.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel   Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	898	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good acquisition of skills and knowledge
- good response to learners' needs

Weaknesses

- poor resources in some training centres
- inadequate pre-exercise screening
- poor planning of provision
- insufficient monitoring of provision

Achievement and standards

45. The overall retention in 2002-03 was good, at 90 per cent. The data for previous years are unreliable. Attendance during the week of inspection was 70 per cent. In classes observed by inspectors, 14 per cent of learners were men.

46. Learners acquire good skill levels. In cookery learners develop good practical skills, including knife skills such as peeling, slicing and dicing. Learners demonstrate confidence and increasing independence. In yoga classes learners show good knowledge and awareness of their physical limitations and use blocks, blankets and belts to enable them to perform advanced postures effectively. They show knowledge of modified techniques which allow them to accommodate their own fitness levels. Learners demonstrate good levels of fitness including strength, flexibility and local muscular endurance above the levels to be expected in the general public. Learners use their skills and knowledge to improve their daily lives. In cookery classes, learners who have limited experience develop sufficient confidence to entertain friends. Learners in fitness classes report that they are able to use the techniques they have learnt to alleviate the effects of daily stress, and have learnt how to maintain their level of fitness effectively. Some learners are able to extend their skills to more complex levels and have progressed successfully from beginners' classes to those for mixed abilities.

Quality of education and training

47. The training provision is very responsive to learners' needs. Subcontractors respond positively to requests for additional classes for specific needs. For example, one-day classes were quickly arranged to broaden and extend learners' knowledge and skills of

cake decoration, using chocolate to make gifts for Christmas and ideas for festive desserts.

48. The standard of teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Sixty-eight per cent of observed classes were good or better, 13 per cent were satisfactory and 19 per cent were unsatisfactory. In the better classes there is good evidence of a range of activities which provide a sufficient challenge for more-able learners, while supporting the less-experienced ones. Experienced cookery learners are given challenging tasks and activities, experienced yoga learners perform complex advanced postures, while those requiring more support attempt modified postures. Assessment of learners is informal and appropriate to the area of learning. Learners' work is thoroughly corrected and suitable adjustments are made immediately. In unsatisfactory classes, there is poor lesson planning, no account is taken of learners' ability to perform the postures, and not enough links are made between postures, and the reasons and benefits for doing them. In some classes, insufficient information is given to learners about medical considerations before moving into postures. Techniques are not demonstrated enough and tutors and learners are often unable to see each other effectively.

49. Resources are unsatisfactory in some training centres. Most of the rooms used for sports and fitness classes are too cold and draughty. In one centre the temperature varies excessively. Many rooms are too small for the number of learners on the register. Access to a minority of classrooms is inadequate for those with restricted mobility. Some cake decoration classes take place in a classroom with no facilities for washing hands, and there is not enough equipment. One class observed was held in an infants' school with inappropriately sized furniture and restricted hygiene facilities. Information about available resources is not communicated to tutors effectively and access to some resources is also inadequate. Most classes are held after 5 pm and take place in a variety of centres where often the tutor is the only member of staff on the premises. Resources in some centres are inadequate. For example, essential learning resources such as blocks, belts, knives, boards, tins and saucepans required for classes are often provided and transported by tutors themselves, and in some instances by the learners.

50. The pre-exercise screening of learners in fitness classes is inadequate. A minority of tutors carry out informal checks during discussion. However this information is not systematically recorded or routinely available to substitute teachers. In two classes observed, where limited checks were carried out, they were done in a group situation, with no confidentiality. The responsibility for conducting checks was not sufficiently clear to those tutors interviewed. However, in several classes visited, it was evident that some learners' conditions were well known to their tutors and suitable modifications in the programme were made. Pre-course guidance and telephone enrolment procedures do not give sufficient information to enable learners to decide the suitability of a course for them. Procedures for referral of learners to a more suitable course are not sufficiently clear to tutors. There is no clearly established first-aid procedure for evening sessions, in the event of accident or injury. Some tutors are unsure what course of action they should follow in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

51. The planning of the provision is unsatisfactory. The current pattern of provision is based on what has been offered in the past, and course programming remains focused on the traditional academic year which includes several long breaks. Learners commented that they found it difficult to maintain their learning, progression and, in fitness courses, their physical condition. The needs of the community have not been systematically evaluated and there is insufficient targeting of under-represented groups. There are no clearly established progression routes between non-accredited and accredited courses. The current range of fitness courses offered is limited, with 57 per cent of the current provision being yoga classes.

52. SBC does not monitor the quality of provision in this area sufficiently. Teaching and learning are not observed sufficiently, and observations that do take place are ineffective. Few current tutors in this area of learning have been observed and new tutors are not prioritised. The number of lessons observed has been increased recently, but observations are not thorough enough and are not always carried out by people who are sufficiently occupationally competent. Observation feedback does not focus enough on learning and learning outcomes. Observers do not always give feedback immediately following observation. Tutors do not routinely receive more general information about learners' feedback.

Visual & performing arts & media   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	674	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good standards in learners' work
- good personal benefits for learners
- good teaching

Weaknesses

- insufficient specialist equipment
- poor management of curriculum

Achievement and standards

53. Retention and achievement rates for programmes in 2002-03 are good. Attendance on current programmes is satisfactory. Data from previous years was not sufficiently reliable to report on trends.

54. Learners' work is of a high standard. Learners are achieving these standards and are motivated to continue further development in their own time. In dance classes learners, including beginners, are achieving good skill levels. In stained glass making and picture framing, pottery, silversmithing and jewellery classes, learners are developing professional skills. Learners combine strong personal involvement with good professional skills in picture framing. For example, learners successfully use paintings, tapestries and photographs produced as hobbies, or on other courses, as the subjects for framing, to a high professional standard. Many of the more experienced learners produce good-quality pieces which motivate and inspire new learners. Most classes have good attendance levels and in 2002-03 retention was very good, at 92 per cent.

55. Learners gain good personal benefits from the courses, including a considerable increase in self-confidence which enables learners to progress to further activities. Informal group meetings of learners in stained glass and watercolour painting allows them to actively support each other in the further development of their work. Other groups of learners are effectively involved in activities which directly benefit the community. One group is organising an imaginative Christmas fund-raising activity and a group of dancers are producing a local Children in Need performance. Some of the learners developing effective craft skills such as stained glass, pottery and jewellery, have been motivated to develop facilities at home, for example by converting a garden shed for use as a workshop. Inspectors noted clear examples of adults with learning difficulties or disabilities who have gained significant social and personal confidence.

Quality of education and training

56. Standards of teaching are good. Teachers develop clear outline schemes of work, which they successfully develop into detailed individual learning schemes and thoroughly prepared and thoughtful lesson plans. Learners benefit from the good industrial and professional experience of the teachers. For example, in a tap dance class, the tutor had established a disciplined and challenging approach among learners. A group of absolute beginners were able to demonstrate a sequence of complex routines within six weeks. Teachers provide good individual support to learners and there is good recognition of individual needs, with students being encouraged to develop their own interests.

57. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers provide good verbal feedback to learners about their progress, through individual teaching. However, in most classes teachers are not providing any written assessment, or recording student progress. There were three good examples of well-focused learning plans which record the development of student skills. This good practice is not being shared with other teachers.

58. Learners receive good support from teachers. Where needs have been identified, strong support is provided. For example, in one class for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, two additional support workers enhance the very sensitive teaching, and a number of learners from this class have successfully progressed to accredited classes. However, some initial assessment by subcontractors is inadequate and where the needs of some learners have not been adequately identified at enrolment, insufficient support is provided. This applies especially to tutors working in outreach centres, such as church halls. Some initial pre-course information is inadequate.

59. Resources are inadequate, and there is not enough specialist equipment and materials. Tutors are not sufficiently aware of subcontractors' systems for obtaining materials, and some tutors frequently provide their own equipment for learners. For example, tutors in frame making and stained glass provide substantial amounts of material and equipment, dance teachers bring their own CD players and discs, painting tutors are providing their own materials for demonstration. Jewellery tutors provide their own specialist tools. Many training centres, particularly those for specialist craft and dance classes, provide good facilities. One subcontractor's facilities are excellent. Other centres, for example those used for painting and drawing classes, provide inadequate accommodation, such as cramped rooms with poor lighting, no water and no specialist equipment, such as easels and boards.

Leadership and management

60. The overall curriculum is poorly managed. Although individual subcontractors have clear quality assurance systems, the overall review or monitoring of the quality of provision is inadequate. For example, while some teachers have been formally observed recently, others have not been visited for 18 months. The range of provision is satisfactory; however, most provision is in the evening and there are very few opportunities to attend textile and fashion classes during the day or at weekends. SBC

has no thorough system of course review across the adult and community learning provision and there is insufficient co-ordination with other local training provision. Subcontractor's staff do not have sufficient opportunities to meet to share good practice.

English, languages & communications   Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	190	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement of learners' personal language goals

Weaknesses

- insufficient management of curriculum to improve quality of provision

Achievement and standards

61. Learners' achievement levels for personal language goals are good. They demonstrate increased confidence and fluency in the use of the chosen language. Those learners interviewed expressed great satisfaction with their courses. Learners on language courses for holiday purposes find that their classes provide good awareness of the cultural background of the country, intellectual stimulation, and a strong sense of achievement. Learners make good use of their new skills outside classes; one learner with hearing difficulties, attending a course in British Sign Language, is now able to teach her children new vocabulary. Two learners have been inspired to start clubs in sign language at the schools where they work. One learner interviewed has now progressed to teaching the language at introductory level.

62. Learner retention and achievement rates were 80 per cent in 2002-03. Attendance during inspection week in the classes observed was 68 per cent. There is not enough reliable data for previous years to report further.

Quality of education and training

63. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons in foreign languages are mostly well-planned, with clear objectives and good links between sessions. In the best lessons, tutors make very good use of the language being learnt to create an authentic atmosphere. A satisfactory range of teaching techniques and materials is used to engage learners. For example, in one lesson the tutor brought in two baskets of fruit and vegetables to demonstrate new vocabulary, and skilfully incorporated the language laboratory, video clips and pair work to extend learning. Learners acquire a lot of new vocabulary and speak confidently in their new language. Tutors and learners have a good working relationship with a friendly, yet purposeful atmosphere. There are good opportunities for further benefits. Foreign language learners are able to travel in groups to France and Spain; one tutor is planning a visit to Spain with learners next year. Inspectors observed good teaching in English and sign language classes, with tutors

successfully engaging all learners in a range of activities in a supportive atmosphere.

64. Resources are satisfactory. Many of the foreign language tutors are native speakers and all are competent linguists. Most have appropriate teaching qualifications and extensive teaching experience. All tutors have good access to photocopying resources, overhead projectors and cassette players. In one training centre, there is no access to the use of video tapes. Accommodation is satisfactory, and most rooms are warm and bright with comfortable furniture. However, two rooms inspected were affected by external noise and another was too small for the size of the group, which limited the range of activities used by the tutor.

65. Initial assessment of learners is satisfactory, although this is often informal and not fully recorded. On advanced level courses, one tutor routinely conducts a telephone interview in the target language with the prospective learner, and another gives formal tests in all four skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. Although there is some use of individual learning plans and tutors use them satisfactorily to record progress, these practices are not standardised. However, tutors frequently check understanding and learning by question and answer sessions and by thoroughly monitoring pair and group work. All tutors set homework regularly and this is marked and returned promptly. In most instances learners are satisfactorily aware of the progress they are making.

66. Tutors in foreign languages do not always employ a sufficient range of activities to allow for learners' different learning styles and previous knowledge of the subject. In some classes observed, activities were mainly teacher-centred and there was not enough clarity in setting tasks for learners. In one session there was no pre-teaching of essential vocabulary and although the listening task was aimed at different abilities, these levels were still too advanced for many learners. IT is not used sufficiently to help with learning.

Leadership and management

67. Subcontractors' leadership and management of the curriculum areas are generally satisfactory, with regular communications between programme managers and tutors by means of letter, e-mail and telephone, as well as regular site visits. One subcontractor has training meetings of part-time staff and specific training in languages. However, the subcontractors have insufficient contact with each other and there is no joint planning of the adult and community learning programme. Good practice is not shared throughout the provision.

68. Most learners receive sufficient programme information from the two subcontractors, and one subcontractor has a particularly informative course leaflet written in clear, friendly language. However, there is no fully comprehensive leaflet for language courses within the adult and community learning programme.

69. Both subcontractors systematically observe teaching and learning. Those tutors observed receive satisfactory written and verbal feedback. However, observation is not adequately planned, and new part-time tutors are not routinely visited at the start of their

employment.

70. Subcontractors' have had some opportunity to contribute to the self-assessment report, although no separate self-assessment report is produced for this area. Not all staff have seen the final version of the report.

Family learning **Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	202	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good standards of teaching and learning
- responsive curriculum for under-represented groups
- good progression from family learning courses

Weaknesses

- no records of planning and learner assessments in community groups
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements

Achievement and standards

71. The retention rate in family learning is very good, with 95 per cent retention on school-based family learning courses in the year September 2002-July 2003. The achievement rate is satisfactory. Most programmes are non-accredited, but accreditation has successfully been offered for learners on family literacy and numeracy courses in the past year. Four out of six parents passed a nationally recognised literacy test at level 1 in 2003. Certificates of attendance are given to parents at the end of some of the courses to celebrate their success. Significant gains are made by parents in terms of confidence and personal empowerment.

Quality of education and training

72. Teaching and learning in family learning classes is good, with 88 per cent of the sessions observed judged to be good, or better. Tutors show good subject knowledge and are well qualified. In-service training is effective, with tutors gaining good information and training for the national curriculum in specialist diagnostic materials. Tutors are also attending family learning training offered by a neighbouring authority. Effective use is made of 'buddying', where a new tutor is paired with a more-experienced tutor for a term on a family numeracy course.

73. Thorough and detailed lesson-planning takes place in family learning classes. Sufficient time is allocated for family literacy and numeracy tutors to carefully plan and prepare a thorough scheme of work and detailed sessions. The tutors work with the children's school teacher to meet the needs of the adults and their children. Effective reviews and negotiations with the learners take place at the end of each session. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods, and good use is made of relevant topic

work. Learners are able to successfully apply their knowledge and demonstrate their increased confidence clearly. One school had noted a clearly improved home and school relationship following a family literacy course, with children showing increased social and behavioural skills. One group of learners showed particularly good application of learning. Learners on the parenting course have been able to use the skills gained to set up parenting courses in their own community settings. Another group of learners are preparing story books to use with their children.

74. The curriculum is very responsive to the needs of under-represented groups, and there are a wide variety of initiatives to widen participation. For example, a newly established Bhangra dance class was observed at a Sikh temple; this lively group has attracted more women than expected and there is now a demand for another group for men. Valuable short courses have been provided in care, as well as imaginative short courses in rural skills and crafts for children and their carers at a local farm project, supported by SBC. One particularly well-resourced training centre in one disadvantaged area has a good crèche facility. The centre offers good learning opportunities to local residents and allows adult carers to attend a wide range of classes. Further courses are also provided effectively in other community centres in response to requests from the local community.

75. Learners on family learning courses progress well to further programmes. A positive ethos encourages good progression by parents from and within family learning courses. A significant number of parents who attend an initial workshop in a school sign up for a family literacy or numeracy course and some of these parents progress successfully to the child support club. These learners become ambassadors to actively recruit other parents to family learning. Adult learners also worked effectively in partnership with the school and a large local retail outlet to enable a classroom to be renovated and designated for parents' use. The family learning curriculum manager provides effective support and routinely visits all parent groups as they are nearing completion, to give clear advice on future opportunities and progression routes. One course had 80 per cent positive outcomes, with six learners successfully progressing to full- or part-time college courses, one gaining a full-time job in a school nursery and one doing voluntary work in the school.

76. Resources are satisfactory in family learning, with groups meeting in a variety of settings including schools, community centres and places of worship. Family learning mainly takes place in schools, some with a satisfactory, dedicated parents' room. However, several groups of parents use inadequate, small chairs which are uncomfortable and unsuitable for adult learners, and one school venue is noisy when children pass by in the corridor. Some tutors are effectively using very good-quality, purpose-made worksheets, and a variety of effective supplementary materials such as games and calculators. Learners in one community venue were observed was making use of good-quality laptops provided by the subcontractor.

77. Planning and learner assessments are not recorded in community groups. There is little evidence of any initial assessment of individual learners, or target-setting in individual learning plans. Schemes of work were incomplete, or not available for

inspectors on observation, and no lesson plans were available. However, a thorough initial assessment is given to parents joining family literacy and numeracy courses. For example, all parents have an individual learning plan which includes long- and short-term aims, and good use is made of reviews at the beginning of the session to reinforce learning. Parents have a good understanding of their programmes.

Leadership and management

78. Overall management of the area of learning is satisfactory. However, quality assurance arrangements are incomplete for early years, family learning and community learning. There is no regular, formal observation system for tutors, although informal appraisal takes place in some classes. Data are not shared sufficiently between subcontractors and SBC to allow fully informed planning. However, the family learning management group is now meeting termly with subcontractors to review and set targets.

79. The self-assessment report does not adequately include all the subject areas. Not all the key questions were asked for early years and not all managers and tutors participated in drawing up the document. However, the self-assessment report accurately reflected some of the family learning strengths and weaknesses.