

INSPECTION REPORT

Tameside LEA

31 October 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

Tameside LEA

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Tameside Local Education Authority (the LEA) directly provides adult and community learning through Tameside Council's adult learning services. Adult learning forms part of the post-16 learning service unit in the education and cultural services department of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (the council).

2. The council's chief education officer has overall responsibility for adult learning funded by the council. The chief education officer reports to the strategic director for education and cultural services and the cabinet deputy for lifelong learning. The chief education officer is supported by the head of school organisation and social inclusion and the service unit manager for post-16 learning, who has day-to-day operational responsibility for adult learning in the council. There are six members of Tameside adult learning service's management team, the service unit manager, the adult education officer, the quality assurance manager and the three curriculum team leaders. There are also 26 full-time teaching staff.

3. The LEA provides adult and community learning in information and communications technology (ICT) and foundation programmes. Foundation programmes include training in literacy, numeracy and language skills and training for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most of the provision funded by the LEA is non-accredited learning. The adult and community learning provision is funded by Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The LEA does not subcontract any of the provision. At the time of the inspection, the LEA provided its adult and community learning provision at three full-time training centres and 19 community venues.

4. Tameside is located in the northwest of England, seven miles east of Manchester. According to the 2001 census, the borough has a population of 213,043, of which 5.4 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. In 2002, the proportion of school leavers in Tameside achieving five or more general certificates in secondary education at grade C or above was 43.1 per cent, compared with 51.6 per cent in England.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

5. There are 344 learners on ICT training programmes. One hundred and sixteen learners are following accredited programmes and 228 are on non-accredited programmes. Entry-level programmes last for six weeks and accredited courses at level 2 last for up to 50 weeks. Staff are supported by four administrators. Full-time courses are available at two sites, and 12 sites provide part-time courses. Learners can start training at any time. There are additional courses available in keyboarding and internet skills. All learners receive an induction covering course content, health and safety, equality of opportunity and learners' rights and responsibilities. All learners are interviewed at the

start of their programme by the student support worker or the course tutor. There are systems to review learners' progress.

Foundation programmes

6. There are two aspects to the foundation programme. Firstly, there is a learning programme for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and which includes information technology (IT), expressive arts, cookery, gardening, art and independent living. The other aspect of the provision is for literacy, numeracy and language skills. These courses are available at pre-entry and entry level. Accreditation is available for all courses except for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

7. There are currently 380 learners on courses in this area of learning. Of these, 125 are on courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 152 are on literacy and numeracy courses and 103 are on language courses. Most courses last between two and 46 weeks, although some courses last for two academic years, in line with accreditation requirements.

8. The LEA works in partnership with a local drug and alcohol misuse service, a women's refuge, playgroups and minority ethnic community groups. Learners are referred to the adult and community learning provision by Tameside's learning disability service or come to the LEA directly. Language learners are referred to the LEA by community organisations.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	35
Number of learner interviews	87
Number of staff interviews	56
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	26
Number of partner/external agency interviews	1

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

9. Leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. More specifically, equality of opportunity and quality assurance are satisfactory. Training in ICT is good and satisfactory for foundation programmes.

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	3
Quality assurance	3

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

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

10. **In ICT, learners make good progress towards achieving their learning goals.** There is satisfactory achievement on foundation programmes. Learners on literacy and numeracy programmes make satisfactory progress in achieving group learning goals and personal objectives.

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	5	3	4	0	0	0	13
Foundation programmes	0	2	9	3	2	0	0	16
Total	1	7	12	7	2	0	0	29

11. **In ICT, teaching is good.** Seventy-five per cent of learning sessions observed were graded good or better. All learning sessions are supported by detailed lesson plans and schemes of work. Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods which are appropriate to learners' learning styles. These methods are valued by learners, many of whom are returning to education after substantial periods of time. Most learners benefit from increased confidence.

12. **There are good resources in all of the learning centres.** Specialist resources are available to support learners with specific support needs. For example, an interactive whiteboard is used to meet the learning needs of a group of deaf learners. There are a variety of learning resources available, including open-learning materials, online resources and CD-ROMs with voice instruction which allows learners to choose from a number of learning methods. Some resources are available for independent study. There is a wide range of learning venues in easily accessible areas throughout the borough.

13. The LEA has widened participation in entry-level ICT programmes. It has been

responsive to learners' feedback and the organisation's strategic aims to increase ICT skills in the wider community. The organisation has expanded its ICT provision to provide 20 extra courses at an additional 10 community venues in the past six months.

14. There is effective guidance and support to assist learners' progress into further learning. A recent analysis indicates that 48 per cent of learners progress into further training either with the LEA or with other training providers.

15. There is good teaching on the literacy and numeracy programme. Initial assessment is good. Tutors use a variety of teaching strategies to meet learners' needs. The teaching on ESOL programmes is mostly satisfactory. There is too little emphasis in some classes on language for everyday situations. There is good teaching on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Lessons are well planned and managed. Tutors use a variety of teaching strategies and plan stimulating activities that engage and motivate learners.

16. Curriculum-planning is effective for literacy and numeracy learning programmes and programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Curriculum-planning is satisfactory for language programmes.

17. Resources are good and effectively used on most programmes. Equipment for ICT courses is good, literacy and numeracy workshops are well equipped with ICT facilities, and there is good use of specialist equipment on courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learning resources for the ESOL provision are satisfactory.

18. Target-setting for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for learners on ESOL courses is weak.

Leadership and management

19. The council gives the adult learning service clear strategic priorities, which are influenced by the community strategy, and by national and regional priorities. The council works productively with a number of external organisations to benefit learners and the wider community.

20. There is an appropriate system of staff appraisal. Communications are satisfactory within the LEA and between the LEA and the rest of the council. The LEA's meetings are well recorded but there is no means of ensuring that the actions identified are completed.

21. Arrangements for additional literacy, numeracy and language support are satisfactory.

22. There is insufficient use of data to use as a basis for management decisions. Retention and achievement data are collected but is not analysed effectively across the adult learning service.

23. **There are effective arrangements to monitor and improve the teaching** through the use of an observation system.

24. **The self-assessment process is inclusive and has led to improvements in the provision.** Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were also identified by inspectors.

25. **The council promotes equality of opportunity well.** It prioritises equality and diversity in corporate planning. Staff throughout the organisation are committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. Positive action is taken to ensure that all learners reach their full potential.

26. **There are good links with external agencies to provide specialist support for learners.** These links help identify the needs of the community and widen participation in learning. Although most venues used for classes are accessible to wheelchair users, there is restricted access to two libraries.

27. Although a range of **data** are collected about race, gender and disability, **it is not sufficiently analysed by managers to enable them to target under-represented** groups. Target-setting for recruitment, retention and achievement for each course is not sufficiently thorough.

28. There is an appropriate range of procedures for quality assurance. The organisation also has satisfactory arrangements to collect learners' views.

29. The service sets improvement targets for each curriculum manager. However, few teachers are aware of these targets and few teachers are set individual course improvement targets. In ICT, there is insufficient action to improve retention rates on some accredited courses. Currently, management information systems are unable to accurately analyse reasons for poor retention rates. The LEA is developing systems to remedy this.

30. **The application of quality assurance systems is inconsistent in ICT.** Records of teaching observations and internal verification are incomplete and identified actions are not always recorded or completed.

31. **Marketing to attract new learners to the foundation programmes is ineffective.** There are only small numbers of learners on some literacy, numeracy and language programmes. There are few learners from under-represented groups on learning programmes for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic priorities
- productive collaborative work with external agencies
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- some effective procedures to improve teaching
- effective self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- poor arrangements to monitor identified actions
- insufficient analysis of management information to target under-represented groups

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good teaching
- good resources
- effective support for progression to further learning
- responsive action to widen participation into entry-level ICT provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient action to improve retention rates on some accredited courses
- inconsistent application of some quality assurance procedures

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good teaching
- effective curriculum-planning
- good use of resources

Weaknesses

- weak target-setting
- ineffective marketing to attract new learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT TAMESIDE LEA:

- relaxed and friendly atmosphere in a community-based ICT class - 'I'd never think of doing this in a college. I didn't know places like this existed'
- teaching in ICT - 'I can't wait till next week comes round'
- ease of access to ICT classes - 'it's on my doorstep now'
- life-changing experience - 'I was a down-and-out for years, but since coming here it has changed my life'
- pride in achievement - 'sending my first ever postcard to my mum was the proudest achievement of my life'
- confidence in being treated fairly - 'we've learnt how to complain if we need to'
- variety of learning experience - 'games are a better way to learn'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK TAMESIDE LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- more classes needed because courses get booked up too quickly - 'I can't get on a course till next September'
- security of buildings to better protect course equipment
- building on all learners' views - 'we're never asked what we think about the lesson'

KEY CHALLENGES FOR TAMESIDE LEA:

- establish systems to monitor management actions
- make better use of targets for recruitment and achievement
- increase recruitment of foundation learners
- ensure all staff are aware of quality assurance procedures and are using them
- set clear targets for individual 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 3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- clear strategic priorities
- productive collaborative work with external agencies
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- some effective procedures to improve teaching
- effective self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- poor arrangements to monitor identified actions
- insufficient analysis of management information to target under-represented groups

32. The LEA's adult learning service is given clear strategic priorities by the council. This was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. The council identifies its strategic objectives in its corporate plan. The objectives are based on a wide range of influences including the community strategy, national and regional priorities and the objectives of the local lifelong learning partnership. The council's strategic objectives also reflect the needs of the local community. The adult learning service produces an adult learning plan every year which identifies its own strategic objectives. The adult learning service's objectives also contribute to the council's strategic objectives. There is evidence to show that actions are being taken to meet these objectives but these are not clearly identified in the adult learning plan and it is not clear how some objectives are to be met. The adult learning service understands the council's strategic priorities and teaching staff have a broad understanding of how their role helps to fulfil them.

33. The council works productively with a range of external agencies. These partnerships benefit learners and the wider community. For example literacy and numeracy workshops for those with a mental health problem are offered at the premises of a national charity, and language classes for women are provided in a local Bangladeshi centre. The council plays a significant role in the local lifelong learning partnership which has a strategic role in determining the needs of the Tameside community. The self-assessment report recognised this as a strength.

34. There are satisfactory communication arrangements within the LEA and between the LEA and the rest of the council. There is a wide range of meetings which take information from the teaching staff through to senior staff in the council. Both the chief executive and the councillor with responsibility for adult education, have a good knowledge of the adult learning service and provide guidance about the council's priorities. Within the LEA, curriculum teams and the management team meet regularly.

In each of the curriculum areas, tutors have individual meetings with the curriculum manager every month, to review progress and plan action where needed. In addition, curriculum teams meet regularly to discuss learners' progress and areas of concern. Staff can access a range of information on the LEA's intranet and receive regular newsletters which go to every member of staff in a curriculum area.

35. There is a satisfactory staff appraisal system. Staff members meet with their line managers at least once every year to appraise their performance. Development needs are agreed. All staff have access to staff development opportunities. There have been improvements in individual staff performance and in the provision in some aspects of the service. The LEA offers staff a series of seminars covering topics including equal opportunities legislation, initial assessment and writing individual learning plans. These seminars are effective. Attendance at some of these seminars is compulsory and at others it is optional, although prioritisation of these is weak. For example the seminar on disability was not compulsory despite it being identified as being very significant by the LEA.

36. Additional literacy, numeracy and language support in adult learning is satisfactory. Staff are well qualified and initial diagnostic assessment is effective. Procedures for referring learners with additional learning needs are effective. Learners are able to access literacy and numeracy workshops at centres throughout Tameside. For learners who have dyslexia or dyscalculia, there are satisfactory arrangements with external agencies to provide the necessary diagnosis and support. Not all tutors teaching on the programme for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have received pre-entry level core curriculum training although they meet with tutors from other curriculum areas to share ideas and exchange resources. Although tutors meet regularly to discuss and evaluate the literacy, numeracy and language provision currently available, there is no routine evaluation of the effectiveness of additional learning support throughout Tameside.

37. A health and safety audit has been carried out at most of the centres that the LEA uses. However, these have not yet been carried out at the libraries. The LEA is aware that these need to be done but there is no planned timescale for their completion.

38. There are poor arrangements to monitor actions which are identified in meetings. The LEA's meetings are well recorded and minutes are produced in a standard format. Actions are identified together with the person responsible and the date for completion. However, these actions and progress towards their completion is not monitored. Although a separate list of outstanding actions is produced, it contains insufficient detail to clearly identify the action or the meeting in which the action was decided. It is very difficult to monitor the progress of actions from this list.

39. There is insufficient analysis of data to use it as a basis for management decisions. Retention and achievement data are not analysed effectively for any of the adult and community learning provision. However, retention and achievement data are collected at the end of each course and curriculum managers are aware of these data.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

40. The council promotes equality of opportunity well. It prioritises equality and diversity, which are clearly established in corporate planning. This inclusive approach is reflected in the formulation of the Tameside Community Strategy for 2003-06, which involved extensive consultation with the community. Staff throughout the organisation are committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy, which was written by learners, with support from staff. This is also available in a pictorial format, to ensure that it is accessible to all learners. The policy is displayed prominently in all learning centres, including those belonging to partner organisations. Positive action is taken to ensure that all learners reach their full potential.

41. The LEA is responsive to learners' needs. For example, a course for deaf learners is taught by a deaf tutor, in the medium of British Sign Language. Information is available to learners in a variety of formats to meet individual learning needs. For example, learning materials are available on tape for learners who are hearing impaired and in Braille for those who are visually impaired. The LEA also has an extensive range of adaptive technology to ensure inclusive computer access. For example, the LEA has mouse devices which do not require any movement or wrist rotation and keyboards which enable learners to word process in over 100 languages. In some learning sessions diversity in the classroom is reflected in the work which learners do. For example, in one cookery class observed, all the learners prepared food to celebrate Divali.

42. The LEA has good links with external agencies to provide specialist support for learners, identify the needs of the community and widen participation in learning. Staff make outreach visits to prospective learners who are referred through agencies, such as Social Services. Although most venues used for classes are accessible to wheelchair users, there is restricted access to two libraries. Health and safety audits, which cover accessibility, have not yet been carried out on 10 other libraries. Childcare support is not available to learners who do not qualify for fee remission.

43. Equal opportunities topics are discussed with learners during the induction period. Learners are encouraged to express any dissatisfaction with their learning programmes. A video has been made by learners with learning difficulties and disabilities to explain to others how to complain. Another video outlines services which are available to those who find it difficult to access such information easily. Students' complaints are dealt with quickly and sympathetically. All staff are aware of the complaints procedure.

44. Although a range of data are collected about race, gender and disability, it is not sufficiently analysed by managers to enable them to target under-represented groups. Target-setting for recruitment, retention and achievement is not sufficiently thorough. This is a weakness which was identified in the organisation's self-assessment report. There are quantitative targets identified in the adult learning plan, but no specific actions to demonstrate how these targets will be achieved.

45. Although staff are required to attend regular sessions for professional development on a range of topics relating to equality, such as deaf awareness, not all staff have yet

received training on recent legislation relating to disability. For example, although the legal requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 are met in the provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, curriculum managers are not fully aware of what these requirements are. There is no central monitoring to ensure that staff attend training which is required for their specific job role.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

46. The quality assurance arrangements for the LEA's teaching provision are effective and lead to improvements. All tutors are observed by trained observers at least once each year. The LEA uses an experienced external consultant to ensure that there is consistency of grading throughout the organisation and that grades are comparable with other providers. There is an effective system to improve the teaching of those tutors whose lessons are unsatisfactory. The tutor meets with the relevant curriculum manager and the quality assurance manager to determine an action plan to help improve performance. The progress on the action plan is monitored and the tutor is observed again no more than six weeks later. If the lesson is satisfactory, the action plan continues to be monitored and the tutor is observed six months later. If the tutor fails to improve, the LEA uses the council's capability procedures. Lesson plans, schemes of work and learners' files are monitored by members of the quality assurance team to ensure that they are effective. This is a good scheme but it is not yet fully applied in the ICT area of learning. Some recently appointed teachers in ICT have not yet been observed and some of these do not have a clear understanding of the lesson observation process. Some records of teaching observations are incomplete.

47. The self-assessment process is inclusive and effective in improving the provision. All curriculum managers have meetings with their staff to consider their curriculum area and identify strengths, weaknesses and areas which were satisfactory. The management team collated these to produce the first draft of the LEA's self-assessment report. The curriculum teams were invited to comment on this before the final version of the report was produced. This report has been used effectively to make improvements in the provision. For example, communication in the ICT department was considered to be a weakness in the self-assessment report, but action has been taken and inspectors judge it to be satisfactory. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment were also identified by inspectors.

48. There is a satisfactory range of procedures to ensure that all staff work consistently. All staff receive a copy of these procedures annually. The quality assurance team is responsible for ensuring that all staff use these procedures correctly and regular audits are carried out. The quality assurance team considers the effectiveness of the procedures and amends or introduces new procedures when needed. All staff are able to contribute to this process.

49. The adult learning service is set clear targets for retention, achievement and recruitment. These are translated into improvement targets for each curriculum manager. However, few tutors are aware of these targets, but they do record retention and achievement rates for every course that they teach. Curriculum managers collate

this data for courses across the curriculum area but few individual improvement targets are set for tutors using this information.

50. Learners' views are collected through the use of a range of questionnaires. The views of learners who might have difficulty in completing a questionnaire are compiled through the use of focus groups. The outcomes are analysed and the results discussed by the management team who determine appropriate actions. However, these actions are not monitored and their effectiveness is not evaluated. There are few records of the outcomes.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	344	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good teaching
- good resources
- effective support for progression to further learning
- responsive action to widen participation into entry-level ICT provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient action to improve retention rates on some accredited courses
- inconsistent application of some quality assurance procedures

Achievement and standards

51. Achievement is satisfactory. During 2002-03, achievement ranges from 37.5 per cent on accredited courses to 94.4 per cent on non-accredited courses. Learners who reach the end of their course usually achieve either a qualification or the course objectives. Learners make good progress towards the achievement of learning goals during their course. Learners on non-accredited courses are encouraged to record their work in portfolios. All learners show pride in their portfolios of evidence and coursework is well structured. Learners receive regular feedback about their work from tutors. Learners on non-accredited courses receive certificates of attendance.

Quality of education and training

52. Teaching is good. Seventy-five per cent of learning sessions observed were graded good or better. All learning sessions are supported by detailed lesson plans and schemes of work. Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods which are appropriate to learners' learning styles. These methods are valued by learners, many of whom are returning to education after substantial periods of time. Most staff are well qualified and have higher level teaching qualifications. New staff are working towards teaching qualifications. There is a good rapport between tutors and learners. Learners develop both practical ICT and personal skills. Most learners benefit from increased confidence. The self-assessment report identified this as a strength.

53. There are good resources throughout the LEA's learning centres. Specialist

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resources are available to support learners with specific support needs. For example, an interactive whiteboard is used to meet the learning needs of a group of deaf learners. There is a variety of learning resources available, including open-learning materials and online resources on CD-ROMs with voice instruction which allows learners to choose from a number of learning methods. Some resources are available for independent study. Learning resources are adapted to meet learners' specific support needs. All computer software and hardware used by the LEA is up to date. Tameside LEA has a biennial renewal policy for all hardware. Learning venues are located throughout Tameside and are professional, spacious and attractively presented. The accommodation is conducive to learning. Most staff work full time, which provides learners with continuity of teaching staff. This arrangement also ensures that there is sufficient cover for lessons in the instance of staff absence. The self-assessment report recognised this as a strength.

54. Tameside LEA has widened participation in entry-level ICT programmes. The LEA has been responsive to learners' feedback and the organisation's strategic aims to increase ICT skills in the wider community. The organisation has expanded its ICT provision to provide 20 extra courses at an additional 10 community venues in the past six months. Sixty-five per cent of the LEA's ICT provision is taught to small groups of learners. Learners value the opportunity to learn in small groups and appreciate the support which staff provide. Retention is good. However, participation by learners from minority ethnic groups and by learners with specific learning difficulties is poor.

55. There is effective support to assist learners progress into further learning. A recent analysis indicates that 48 per cent of learners progress to further training either with the LEA or with other training providers. Tutors are very knowledgeable of learners' needs and provide guidance about further learning opportunities throughout the course. Most learners receive an exit interview from a dedicated student support worker who provides impartial advice about further training and employment opportunities. Information provided to learners about courses, reinforces course objectives and provides clear progression routes for learners.

56. The monitoring of progress reviews is satisfactory. Lesson plans take account of assessment activity. Initial assessment is thorough and takes account of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Assessment of accredited programmes meets with awarding body requirements. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed during induction. Learners requiring additional support are interviewed by the student support worker and are referred to appropriate support, as required.

Leadership and management

57. There is insufficient action to improve retention rates on some accredited courses. Retention rates are as low as 37.5 per cent for one accredited training programme at level 2. There are no identified actions by management to deal with the problems with retention. Staff are not set individual targets for retention, however group targets have recently been introduced for ICT. It is too early to measure the success of this initiative. Currently, management information systems are unable to accurately analyse reasons for

poor retention rates. Systems to remedy this are being developed.

58. The application of some aspects of quality assurance is inconsistent in ICT. Records of teaching observations and some internal verification are incomplete. Some members of staff who have recently been appointed have not been observed and although a teaching observation timetable has been drawn up, staff are unaware of when their next observation will take place.

Foundation programmes**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	380	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good teaching
- effective curriculum-planning
- good use of resources

Weaknesses

- weak target-setting
- ineffective marketing to attract new learners

Achievement and standards

59. There is satisfactory achievement in most foundation programmes. Learners on literacy and numeracy programmes make satisfactory progress in achieving group learning goals and personal objectives. Most courses are non-accredited although all learners are offered the opportunity to gain national literacy and numeracy accreditation if they wish. Many learners have little or no experience of formal education before joining a class. Learners gain confidence to continue with their learning programmes. Learners can identify the impact that the course is having on their daily lives. Some learners interviewed were enthusiastic about the differences the courses have made in their approach to learning and the opportunities they have for further progression. For example, a learner who started on a literacy course at a local centre for alcohol and drug misuse progressed on to an introductory ICT course.

60. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Learners develop the necessary skills to enable them to be active participants involved in a variety of learning activities and they develop effective learning and personal skills. There is good achievement on accredited courses. On ESOL courses there is satisfactory attainment of language skills in most learning sessions.

Quality of education and training

61. There is good teaching and learning on the literacy and numeracy programme. Initial assessment is good. Workshop sessions are well planned and managed with clear objectives matching the needs of learners. Tutors use a variety of teaching strategies to best meet and challenge learners' needs. For example, in one numeracy workshop a learner with a construction background was identified as needing metric numeracy skills.

The tutor devised an individual metric learning assignment for the learner. Staff are aware of the learning needs of under-represented learners in their communities and learners' feedback is used to improve course planning. This was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report.

62. The teaching on the ESOL courses is mostly satisfactory. Tutors plan lessons well and offer good individual support for learners. There is a clear focus on some aspects of language learning in classes, such as prepositions and the alphabet, but too little emphasis in other classes on language needed for everyday situations. Tutors encourage learners to note the skills they have learnt and to evaluate their learning at the end of each session. This helps learners to recognise the progress they are making. However, some of the lesson reviews done by learners are written in such general terms that they are meaningless.

63. There is good teaching on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Lessons are well planned and managed. Tutors use a variety of teaching strategies and plan stimulating activities that engage and motivate learners. Learners are punctual, attend regularly and develop a broad range of skills which enables them to achieve their group learning goals and progress onto other courses.

64. Curriculum-planning is effective for literacy and numeracy learning programmes and programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Lesson plans for literacy and numeracy classes are well structured and recorded. The arrangements for recording individual progress in workshop sessions are particularly effective. In addition to individual learning plans, learners have a personal learning session record sheet that is completed at the end of the class and records attainment and progress. Tutors use learners' feedback, learning session record sheets and other course evaluations as a basis for curriculum-planning. In workshop sessions, individual learning assignments are negotiated to stimulate and motivate learners. For example, in a literacy workshop, a learner with do-it-yourself interests was given assignments based on catalogues for builders' merchants.

65. In ESOL programmes, curriculum-planning and session plans are well structured, well recorded and clearly linked to the adult learning core curriculum. However, the curriculum does not show clearly enough how the organisation aims to prepare learners for everyday communication in a variety of contexts.

66. Resources are good. Literacy and numeracy workshops are well equipped with ICT facilities, which tutors use effectively. In outreach centres learners have access to laptop computers and other learning materials. In one numeracy workshop, the tutor made good use of an electronic whiteboard to introduce and reinforce the concept of area and volume to learners. Resources for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. At the learning centre which these learners attend, there are new ICT facilities and adapted equipment for learners with physical disabilities. Additional learning support staff are used effectively in most lessons.

67. Learning resources for ESOL provision is satisfactory. There is an adequate range of

materials available to support learning, including handouts, dictionaries and a portable whiteboard for use in community venues. Accommodation in one community centre is unsatisfactory as it is inadequately heated.

68. There is weak target-setting for learners on ESOL courses and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In ESOL learning sessions, the outcomes of assessment are not used to set clear targets for learning. Short-term goals on individual learning plans are often too general and do not relate to the learners' specific language needs. As a result, there is no basis for measuring or recording learners' progress against their learning goals. In learning sessions for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, target-setting for some learners is not specific. Teaching records provide a list of activities completed, but not what the learner has achieved. There is no clear link between the individual learning plan and the individual record of learners' progress.

Leadership and management

69. Marketing to attract new learners is ineffective. There are very few learners on some literacy, numeracy and language programmes. There are very few learners from under-represented groups on learning programmes for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

70. Staff development is satisfactory. There has been an improvement in the provision for several learners with behavioural difficulties. Staff who teach literacy, numeracy and language skills are receiving training for the introduction of family learning.