

INSPECTION REPORT

Stockport LEA

10 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.

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Stockport LEA

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Stockport LEA provides adult and community learning through direct provision delivered by the continuing education service, part of the education services directorate of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. The LEA also has service level agreements with three of the local colleges of further education to provide approximately 40 per cent of its provision. The strategic objectives include widening participation, promoting equality of opportunity and raising skills through ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum.
2. The head of early years and continuing education services reports directly to the director for education services, who in turn reports to councillors and the chief executive through a number of key strategic committees. She is supported by the co-ordinator for widening participation and development, the strategic development manager, the head of basic skills and the head of the English language service. In addition, there is a recently appointed family learning co-ordinator and a number of curriculum managers and learning centre managers responsible for operational management. There are approximately 220 part-time tutors.
3. The LEA has contracts for adult and community learning, with the Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the LEA, and other sources. The LEA provides courses in all 14 areas of learning. During this inspection, eight areas of learning and family learning were inspected and graded. The continuing education service provides its direct provision through eight adult education centres and a variety of community outreach centres across the borough. There are currently over 2,300 learners in direct provision and just over 1,600 learners in subcontracted provision. The most popular provision is in visual and performing arts, which has 28 per cent of learners, with foundation, hospitality, sport and leisure each having 20 per cent of learners.
4. Stockport is one of 10 metropolitan boroughs which make up Greater Manchester. The unemployment rate is 2.5 per cent. Some areas have low levels of adult literacy and numeracy. The proportion of young people achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in 2001 in Stockport was 54.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.3 per cent. The 2001 census gives the minority ethnic population of Stockport as 4.3 per cent, compared with 7.9 per cent nationally.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

5. Courses in information and communications technology (ICT) are held in a variety of venues including adult education centres, libraries, colleges and school technology suites. These are convenient for most learners as they are in, or close to, residential areas or in the town centre. Currently there are 244 learners enrolled on ICT courses. Learners can choose from 18 different courses. Some, such as the taster or introduction to computing courses, run for as little as six hours. Others take up to 60 hours over 30 weeks and lead to recognised qualifications. Courses run mainly in the evenings with a small number of daytime classes held in the community centres. The area is managed by a curriculum manager who is employed full time. There are currently 26 part-time tutors, some of whom work across several sites.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

6. There are currently 786 learners on a total of 52 courses in hospitality, sport and leisure. Most of the provision is non-accredited, with some newly accredited provision in the area of cookery. Eighteen of the courses are managed directly by Stockport LEA and are delivered in a range of venues including adult education centres, schools and church halls. The remaining courses are subcontracted provision at three local colleges. There are 43 courses in sport and leisure, including yoga, medau rhythmic exercise, keep fit, tai chi, badminton, golf and bridge. There are nine courses in catering and hospitality including Asian cookery, vegetarian cookery, wired sugar flowers and wines of the world. Most courses are open to all adults, but some classes are specific groups such as older learners. Most of the courses run for 15 weeks. Classes are offered mainly during the evening with some during the day. The curriculum area is managed by a curriculum manager who works in conjunction with centre managers. The curriculum provision is taught by part-time tutors.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

7. There are currently six courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy, including aromatherapy, reflexology, homeopathy and learn to relax. There are two accredited courses in aromatherapy at levels 1 and 2 that lead to a certificate. Most courses comprise 10-15 weekly sessions of 120 minutes. Most of the courses are held in the evening. The venues are three local colleges and three community venues. All tutors work part time.

Health, social care & public services

8. The provision is delivered in partnership with the local early years development and childcare partnership and other local providers. There are currently 161 learners, of whom 96 are taught through direct delivery by the LEA and 65 by subcontractors. There are 50 learners working towards introduction to childminding practice, which fulfils the minimum requirements for work as a childminder. Developing childminding practice, which is a level 3 qualification, has not yet started in 2003. There are 26 learners on the playwork national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 3 and five on the NVQ at level 2. There are 26 learners on the early years care and education NVQ at level 3, and none on NVQ at level 2. NVQ learners attend weekly training sessions at various centres and community venues. They are assessed by peripatetic assessors in the workplace. Most learners on these programmes are employed, with the exception of the introduction to childminding practice, which is specifically for people wanting to become childminders. Other learners are on part-time courses such as assertiveness, living with teenagers, lip-reading and public speaking. Some of these are delivered in the daytime and some in the evening.

Visual & performing arts & media

9. Visual and performing arts courses provide the largest programme of adult and community education with 1,129 learners. Forty-nine per cent of these learners are in courses provided directly by the LEA and the rest are in subcontracted provision with local colleges. There are currently 107 courses provided at 11 different venues across the borough. Courses include watercolours, painting in oils, portrait painting, ceramics and pottery, music, line, Arabic and salsa dancing, woodwork and photography. Forty-three per cent of classes take place in the daytime with 57 per cent in the evening. There is no weekend provision. Most of the courses are non-accredited. Most classes are of two hours duration spread over 10 to 30 weeks and run at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Most classes have a mix of beginners and improvers. Some sites have crèche provision and most are accessible for people with restricted mobility.

Humanities

10. There are currently 197 learners on humanities courses. Of these, 22 per cent attend courses directly provided by the LEA, in four different community venues, and the rest are at one of the colleges subcontracted by the LEA. Most of the provision comprises non-accredited courses in local history and family history. There is one accredited course in criminology.

English, languages & communications

11. There are currently 574 learners on 39 courses in English, languages and communications. These figures include 53 learners on a sign language course that was not inspected. There are 19 learners working toward English at GCSE level. Fifteen learners are on a level 2 French course. Other French courses are non-accredited, as are all courses in Dutch, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Welsh. Most courses last for 20 or 30 weeks, but some are 10 or 15 weeks long. Most lessons are two-hour sessions held once a week from Mondays to Thursdays. Lessons take place at various times of day, but most are held in the evening. English and modern foreign languages courses are held at seven centres across the borough and are taught by 24 part-time tutors.

Foundation programmes

12. The LEA provides programmes for adults with literacy, numeracy and language needs and for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2002-03, there were 1,753 enrolments, for 158 courses. A significant number of enrolments, 43 per cent, were from minority ethnic groups. There are currently 735 learners on foundation programmes. The literacy and numeracy provision is concentrated at one main centre, in a central location, which also serves as the administrative base. The English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision has two key centres. A number of classes take place in community settings, including a library, a women's centre, a community health centre and a mobile learning bus. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes are offered at a number of levels. These range from entry level 1 to level 2. Classes take place five days a week during the day and the evening, but most the ESOL classes take place during the day. Most teaching takes place within the classes but individual support is also given to learners outside of classes and in learners' homes. The courses for adults with learning difficulties/disabilities mainly take place during the evening, at a centre which is in the southeast of the borough. Courses include cookery, art and craft, and travel and tourism. Overall there are 43 part-time tutors.

13. Community learning courses are developed in response to local need and requests. In 2002-03, 611 learners participated in 86 courses. These were taster sessions, short courses and some longer accredited provision, all in community venues. Programmes are targeted at disadvantaged groups and specific geographical areas. A community development officer manages the programmes.

Family learning

14. Family Learning is integral to Stockport LEA's strategy for raising achievement in schools and engaging parents and carers in their children's learning. There are three strands to the provision related to the different funding streams comprising family literacy and numeracy, family learning ESOL and other family learning. General themes are courses for parents and carers to support children's learning, learning about families and intergenerational learning. There were 280 adult enrolments in 2002-03. Courses are offered in a variety of community venues, mainly schools and community centres. They range from taster and one-off workshops for parents and carers, longer family literacy and numeracy 72-hour courses, with the option of accreditation and shorter programmes. In addition there is a range of other courses and events at different times to engage children and adults.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	19
Number of inspection days	95
Number of learner interviews	526
Number of staff interviews	147
Number of subcontractor interviews	5
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	58

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

15. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, Stockport LEA's leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance are satisfactory. Hospitality, sport and leisure, visual and performing arts, foundation and family learning are good. ICT, hairdressing and beauty therapy, health and social care and humanities are satisfactory. However, English and languages is 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	3
Quality assurance	3

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Information & communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

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

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

Humanities	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

English, languages & communications	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

Family learning	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

16. **There is some good achievement and attainment.** There is particularly good achievement on childminding practice courses and GCSE English. In aromatherapy and complementary therapy programmes learners make good progress. Learners in visual and performing arts and media achieve good standards of practical work.

17. **Learners achieve a wide range of personal and social benefits.** They develop skills, knowledge and understanding beyond their main learning goals. They gain in self-confidence and in their abilities as learners and provide good mutual support to help each other learn. Many learners achieve good health benefits and improved physical and mental well-being. In family learning courses, learners gain a better understanding of their own and their children's learning needs. Some learners improve their employment prospects.

18. **There are good retention rates on most programmes.** For example, the retention rate for hospitality, sport, leisure and travel is over 80 per cent and for health, social care and public services courses, for family learning and for community learning the retention rates exceed 90 per cent. Managers and tutors work effectively to keep learners on courses by providing effective personal and academic support. Learners attend regularly and the average attendance on most courses is good.

19. **There is insufficient measurement of learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited provision.** This is a particular issue in humanities programmes, modern foreign language programmes and foundation programmes. Learning goals are imprecise on much of the non-accredited provision and records of non-accredited achievement are incomplete in some areas. Achievement data on non-accredited provision are not sufficiently accurate.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	1	6	5	1	1	0	14
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	7	10	2	1	0	0	20
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	5
Health, social care & public services	0	3	6	1	0	0	0	10
Visual & performing arts & media	0	6	17	2	3	0	0	28
Humanities	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	6
English, languages & communications	0	2	3	4	2	1	0	12
Foundation programmes	1	10	13	10	0	0	0	34
Family learning	0	3	2	2	0	0	0	7
Total	3	36	59	28	8	2	0	136

20. There is good teaching and learning across most of the provision some of which is very good. Of the 136 learning sessions observed, 72 per cent were good or better, 21 per cent were satisfactory and 7 per cent were unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned, with detailed schemes of work and session plans which take into consideration the varying needs of individual learners. Tutors use a varied range of teaching methods appropriate to the level of the course and the ability of the learners. Bilingualism is used effectively in teaching ESOL to increase understanding of complex language. Interaction with learners is both sensitive and effective and learners are able to draw on their personal and life experiences in an appropriate way. Tutors meet the needs and interests of individual learners.

21. There is good support for learners. Taster sessions within the local community enable learners to make informed choices regarding courses they may wish to study. The first week of the academic year is an induction week, during which time learners are made aware of the demands of the course. Additional support is available to support learners with specific learning needs. Learners speak appreciatively of the support they receive from tutors. There are crèche facilities at many venues. All classes on family learning have a crèche and classes are located at venues and at times that are suitable for parents and carers.

22. Staff are well qualified and have high levels of professional expertise and knowledge of their areas of learning. For example, in visual and performing arts and media, many tutors are practising artists, designers and makers with local and national reputations. Tutors of modern foreign languages are native speakers or attain near-native standards when they use the foreign language. Two-thirds of the literacy staff have obtained certificates in adult dyslexia support. Tutors develop good working relationships with learners that support learning and which learners value highly.

23. There is very good support for tutors. Staff receive a comprehensive induction at the beginning of each academic year and a useful handbook which has a strong focus on the quality assurance arrangements. There are subject champions in several curriculum areas who provide a valuable source of additional subject-specific advice and support.

24. There are insufficient resources in several area of learning. More specifically in the sports provision, there are insufficient supplies of essential items of equipment, which has a detrimental effect on the learners' experience. In aromatherapy and complementary therapy programmes, there is limited accommodation for massage and relaxation and classroom desks are inappropriately used to form massage couches. In visual and performing arts and media, learning is impeded by the inadequate provision of consumable resources and equipment for some classes. In many instances there is insufficient storage for equipment, materials and learners' work. Some classes are too small for the number of learners and the nature of the practical work being carried out. There are, however, some good learning materials in cookery classes and in ICT.

25. There is some inadequate accommodation for learners with restricted mobility. For example, the computer suite in one centre is located on the first floor and has no

wheelchair access. In another centre, steep steps lead to classrooms. One centre, which locates provision for learners with disabilities, has no wheelchair access and learners have been unable to take up learning opportunities.

26. Assessment in accredited courses is generally satisfactory, with the exception of the early years care and education NVQ, which does not meet the awarding body requirements, and has insufficient observation of work practice and poor monitoring of progress. Assessment is not adequate on most non-accredited courses. Although most tutors assess work and make helpful comments, there are no standard procedures for gathering or evaluating assessment data to enable tutors or managers to make effective judgements about learner progress and achievement. Formal recording of learners' progress does not always take place and there is some poor tutor awareness of how to best do this. Assessment is rarely used as a learning tool in the humanities non-accredited provision. In modern foreign languages, tutors rarely attend to the separate skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and learners tend not to be aware of their progress.

27. There is some variation in the range of courses on offer, which varies considerably according to the area of learning. Many areas of learning have a satisfactory range of provision. However, there is an insufficient range of courses in sport, with few courses targeted at specific ages, gender or minority ethnic groups or for learners with specific health issues. In humanities there is little choice for learners and insufficient introductory social science courses. There are insufficient opportunities for progression in modern foreign languages, and a poor range of levels across the languages taught. However, in visual and performing arts and media, there is an extensive range of courses, with good access to a wide variety of subjects, with a good geographical spread of centres across the borough. Family learning has significantly responded to the needs of the local communities. There are some effective and innovative projects, successful partnerships and responsive learning programmes.

28. Information, advice and guidance can vary across areas of learning and across centres. In many cases there are good handbooks and leaflets for learners. Some centres rely more on word of mouth to provide information on courses. In modern foreign languages, printed course titles and descriptions are sometimes unhelpful as they provide insufficient detail on courses.

Leadership and management

29. There is strong leadership of the LEA provision for adult and community learning. Stockport LEA has clear and detailed strategic planning for the development of learning opportunities in the borough. There are a number of good partnership arrangements to improve the coherence of existing provision and to create new learning opportunities across the LEA. There is currently fragmented leadership of family learning. However, this has been recognised and a new post has been established to co-ordinate the family learning provision.

30. There has been slow progress in implementing coherent curriculum management.

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Roles and responsibilities are unclear at curriculum level. There is weak programme management in ICT, humanities and modern foreign languages.

31. There are many effective initiatives to widen participation. New marketing material is well written, attractive and with appropriate images. Community learning outreach provision successfully targets those who do not traditionally take up learning opportunities, with a wide range of taster sessions offered. Crèche facilities are available at some centres and childcare arrangements are available during the day for learners across all LEA provision.

32. The views of learners are collected effectively and frequently in a systematic way. There is a high-profile campaign to ensure that all learners realise that their views count. Issues raised are well managed and positive action is taken to deal with concerns.

33. There is insufficient quality assurance of the subcontracted provision. The LEA relies on each college to quality assure its own provision. This issue has been recognised and there are advanced plans to observe the teaching and learning taking place in the colleges.

34. Insufficient use is made of data for curriculum planning. Centrally held data are challenged at local level. Some areas of learning do not have targets for improving retention and achievement profiles. An insufficient number of targets have been transferred from the strategic to the curriculum level.

35. The self-assessment process is thorough, well organised and involves staff at all levels of the organisation. Inspectors agreed with the grades in the self-assessment report for leadership and management and for most of the areas of learning. The exceptions were hospitality, sport and leisure programmes which were graded higher than in the self-assessment report, and English and languages which inspectors graded lower than in the self-assessment report.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong leadership
- good partnership arrangements
- very good support for tutors
- successful initiatives to widen participation
- well-organised self-assessment process
- good use of learner feedback

Weaknesses

- slow progress in implementing coherent curriculum management

- inadequate accommodation for learners with restricted mobility at some sites
- inadequate quality assurance of subcontracted provision
- insufficient use of data for curriculum planning

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good progress by most learners
- effective use of good learning resources
- very good support for staff

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation
- weak programme management

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths

- good retention and attainment rates
- very good teaching and learning
- good learning materials in cookery provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient resources in sport provision
- insufficient range of courses in sport

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Strengths

- good progress made by learners
- good teaching
- effective community links

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources
- inadequate quality assurance of subcontracted provision

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- very good retention rates
- good achievement in childminding practice programmes
- good teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- slow progress in early years care and education NVQ programme
- poor monitoring of progress and target-setting for NVQ programmes
- insufficient observation of work practice in early years NVQ programme

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good standards of practical work in visual arts
- good teaching and learning
- extensive range of courses

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources

Humanities

Strengths

- good retention rates and attendance on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- good personal support for learners
- good coverage of equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- insufficient measurement of non-accredited achievement
- inadequate leadership and management

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- good achievement rate on the GCSE English course
- good work by tutors to meet the needs and interests of individual learners

Weaknesses

- excessive use of English by tutors in modern foreign language classes
- unsatisfactory assessment practices
- insufficient opportunities for progression in modern foreign languages
- weak programme management

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good retention and attainment rates
- good teaching and learning
- effective use of bilingual approaches in ESOL
- very good learning and pastoral support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient measurement and recording of learner progress

Family learning

Strengths

- good retention and attainment rates
- good teaching and learning
- effective support for learners
- particularly effective partnerships with schools

Weaknesses

- poorly co-ordinated leadership

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT STOCKPORT LEA:

- the opportunities to achieve a qualification
- the social side to learning
- meeting other learners and giving each other support
- gaining in confidence
- the local provision
- the outside visits
- being able to draw on their own experiences
- the good support
- the interesting programmes and enjoyable sessions
- the highly skilled, experienced tutors
- the easy enrolment process

WHAT LEARNERS THINK STOCKPORT LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- the consultation about changes in class timings
- the resources on craft courses
- the signs and directions at centres
- the opportunities to progress
- the accommodation
- the prospectus information

KEY CHALLENGES FOR STOCKPORT LEA:

- develop processes for measuring achievement in non-accredited learning
- clarify roles and responsibilities for curriculum management
- make better use of data for curriculum management
- provide better learning resources
- improve accommodation
- improve the quality assurance of subcontracted provision

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

- strong leadership
- good partnership arrangements
- very good support for tutors
- successful initiatives to widen participation
- well-organised self-assessment process
- good use of learner feedback

Weaknesses

- slow progress in implementing coherent curriculum management
- inadequate accommodation for learners with restricted mobility at some sites
- inadequate quality assurance of subcontracted provision
- insufficient use of data for curriculum planning

36. There is strong leadership of the LEA provision for adult and community learning. The LEA has a clear and detailed strategy for the development of lifelong learning in the borough. The strategy has, as a key focus, the drawing together of separate adult education centres and complementary provision in other providers to create a wider learning community. This is integrated with wider community and economic development strategies. The strategy draws on local and national government initiatives to ensure that it is relevant to the projected needs of the community. There has been much progress in setting up new structures designed to support the implementation of this strategy, such as the appointment of curriculum managers within the LEA and the development of a learning partnership. This partnership recently commissioned a report on learning needs post-19 in Stockport. The report has much useful market information and presents a detailed analysis of current and possible future trends. However, it has only just been completed and has yet to be acted upon.

37. There are good partnership arrangements to improve existing provision and create new learning across the LEA. One aspect of the partnerships is to increase the number of tutors able to work on particular courses or projects, by drawing on expertise from other organisations. For example, the close working relationship with the local early years development and childcare partnership encourages the sharing of tutors, which is directly benefiting learners on childcare courses. Work with the borough social services department is leading to the joint planning of child protection courses for employed practitioners. These initiatives are directly impacting on the national target to have 50 per cent of childcare practitioners qualified by 2004. The LEA is working closely with

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local healthcare professionals to support learners on complementary therapy courses. Another aspect of the good partnership working is the development of progression opportunities from community courses onto centre-based LEA provision, or to courses or programmes offered by other providers, such as local colleges. One initiative being piloted is for college staff to teach final lessons on some community courses and community staff to teach the first few lessons in follow-on college provision, in order to help learners make this key transition.

38. There is very good support for tutors. All tutors are given a comprehensive staff handbook which has copies of the various documents they are required to complete, as well as sections on what they are to do and what makes an excellent tutor. There is a strong focus in the handbook on the quality assurance arrangements, including an explanation of how and why the observations of teaching and learning are arranged. The LEA has appointed a tutor mentor who works with tutors to support them in any aspect of their work. Tutors can contact the mentor directly, or can be referred to the mentor by a centre manager or curriculum leader for support. Tutors are allocated to a centre manager for line management support, and to a curriculum leader for subject specific support. Curriculum areas also have a number of tutor champions, chosen by the curriculum leaders for their experience and enthusiasm, who provide a second source of subject-specific advice and support. Tutors are encouraged to attend staff development events. All tutors are expected to gain a recognised adult education teaching qualification within two years of their appointment. This training can be provided within the community education service. Training has recently been offered to all tutors to help them to carry out risk assessments. Response to this invitation was good, but many tutors have not yet had this training. This is particularly significant for those tutors providing home-based support. The current arrangements for assessing and managing the risk to home tutors is recorded inadequately. There is an established appraisal system for full- and part-time staff which is linked to a good range of staff development opportunities. However, centre managers are not included, and some other staff have not been appraised for over a year. Part-time tutors are not included in the appraisal process. Observations of teaching and learning are used to evaluate tutors' performance and identify any development needs.

39. There has been slow progress in implementing the coherent curriculum management outlined in the LEA's strategy. Curriculum managers have been in place in some programme areas for two years. Their role is to plan the curriculum and monitor the provision. They are beginning to standardise some of the work of tutors, for example by developing and sharing learning materials. They are also involved in tutors' recruitment and in helping tutors to adopt the new course paperwork, such as learner outcome forms and the standardised course files. However, centre managers line manage all tutors and retain considerable authority to decide which courses they will offer. Centres also decide the minimum class size of any course, and this can vary between centres. Curriculum managers do not have the necessary authority to rationalise provision, or to deal with weaknesses in the quality of provision, for example where there is inadequate accommodation or resources. Where curriculum leaders identify poor teaching, they can recommend support for tutors from the tutor mentor or subject champions, but they do not have a sufficiently clear role in evaluating the

effectiveness of this support. The LEA has introduced a curriculum forum where curriculum managers, centre managers and representatives from partner organisations are encouraged to negotiate planning matters, but this is a relatively new development that has yet to fully impact on provision. Summary reports of the community education provision are discussed at key local council committees and feedback is given to senior managers. Information provided centrally is not routinely used by curriculum managers or centre managers to plan and implement improvements in provision.

40. Arrangements are satisfactory for the management of literacy, numeracy and language across the provision. The dedicated provision is managed in two separate sections, literacy and numeracy, and ESOL. Each area has a manager and key staff, full time, fractional and part time. Additional support is also available outside of the main classes.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

41. There is a wide range of successful initiatives to widen participation. New marketing material is well written with good use of appropriate images. It contains information in the five predominant minority ethnic languages guiding readers to a telephone enquiry service with interpreter facilities. There is a well-used telephone helpline with language support available for six weeks leading up to enrolment. All information is available on tape, in Braille and in large print. There is a free and well-publicised advice and guidance service giving easily accessible advice on appropriate paths into learning. Community learning outreach provision successfully targets those who do not traditionally take up learning opportunities.

42. There are good links with a wide range of community organisations including health, social services and local community groups. These successfully encourage people from under- and non-represented communities into learning. For example, three community groups have recently set up courses to meet identified needs including sewing, food hygiene and cross-culture cooking. The LEA is also in partnership with a local college to improve progression for learners, by offering integrated provision in two areas of learning. The LEA fee policy is designed to encourage participation by overcoming financial barriers. For example, there are significant discounts for people on means-tested benefits, for those registered disabled and for carers. Crèche facilities are available at some centres and childcare arrangements are available during the day for learners across all LEA provision. However, in one key centre the crèche is on the first floor and does have some access problems.

43. Elected members and senior officers set a high-profile equality and diversity agenda, which is reflected throughout the LEA. A council equality and diversity strategy group is established, which is replicated in the continuing education service. An equality and diversity audit has been completed leading to a comprehensive action plan, although this has yet to make a significant impact at operational level. While the proportion of adults from minority ethnic groups in the area is 4.3 per cent, the proportion in the provision is 13 per cent. Most of these learners are studying ESOL. Five per cent of current learners have a declared disability.

44. There is satisfactory equal opportunities policy statement. It outlines the LEA's responsibilities to learners and employees, and is supported by detailed procedures covering recruitment and selection staff, dealing with complaints and dealing with incidents including harassment and bullying. This is issued to all staff and learners. The LEA collects and monitors equal opportunities data. However the analysis of these data is not yet effective. For example, there is no analysis of achievement against equal opportunities criteria, and equal opportunities targets are not set at curriculum level. Staff understand their own learner profiles and generally take appropriate action to recruit learners from under-represented groups at local level. Although the LEA checks the equal opportunities policies of the subcontracting colleges, it relies on the colleges' own equal opportunities monitoring procedures.

45. Some equal opportunities training is available to all staff. This covers subjects including disability awareness, understanding equal opportunities issues and dyslexia awareness. Training is voluntary. Over half of all staff have had some equal opportunities training in the past two years. However, there is no assessment of staff knowledge or awareness of equal opportunities issues and no analysis of training needs.

46. Staff and learners are appropriately aware of their rights and responsibilities and understand the process for dealing with complaints. Although many complaints are not recorded, they are generally dealt with satisfactorily. There is no record of learner satisfaction at the outcomes. Individuals with additional needs are normally well served by the LEA. For example, one learner required a higher chair which was obtained immediately. Adaptive technologies are available and staff receive information on how to access this additional support. Learners' success is celebrated regularly in some centres, and press coverage is good and promotes the learning in the local community.

47. There is some inadequate accommodation for learners with restricted mobility. For example, the computer suite in one centre is on the first floor and has no wheelchair access. The facilities in some centres are inappropriate. In one centre steep steps and dark corridors lead to classrooms. One centre, where the main provision for learners with learning difficulties/difficulties is held, has no wheelchair access and four people have been unable to take up learning opportunities. In other centres staff try to make alternative arrangements, but this is not always possible. One learner on subcontracted provision was unable to access the classroom and had to return home, although alternative arrangements were made the following week. The LEA has carried out an audit to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This identifies issues about the premises which need rectifying and although some work has been done, many issues remain outstanding. These include access issues and inadequate appropriate facilities.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

48. The self-assessment process is organised well. There are clear guidelines, supported by appropriate staff training. Tutors are required to produce an in-depth evaluation following the completion of every course. Centre managers review effectively all courses and provide appropriate suggestions for improvements. Curriculum managers carefully

review all aspects of the courses on offer. The views of learners are collected systematically to aid the self-assessment process. Senior managers co-ordinate effectively the process and ensure consistency of judgements. All members of staff receive appropriate support and feedback following completion of the self-assessment process.

49. There is good use of learner feedback. Learners' views are collected systematically at regular intervals. Learners are requested to evaluate their course using well-designed forms. Useful learner forums are used well to discuss relevant issues. There is a high-profile campaign to ensure that all learners understand that their views count. Surveys are well used to collate information supplied by learners. Issues raised are well managed and positive action is taken to deal with concerns. Examples of this include improving the lighting in some centres, and more closely monitoring the performance of particular tutors or of course content.

50. The observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There have been improvements to the design of documents used. There is appropriate staff training provided to managers and tutors. There are inconsistencies in the quality and appropriateness of the feedback given to tutors following an observation. Only 79 of the 220 tutors have been observed to date. The LEA policy to observe post-probation tutors only once every two years is inappropriate.

51. Appropriate policies and procedures exist to guide all involved in the provision. They are sufficiently reinforced through staff meetings and instructions to staff. Auditing arrangements are appropriate. Satisfactory training to increase staff awareness of quality assurance takes place. Internal verification and moderation practices are generally satisfactory. The identification and sharing of good practice is appropriate, although some areas of learning do this better than others.

52. There is inadequate quality assurance of subcontracted provision. The LEA does not monitor effectively this part of the provision. There is an appropriately written service level agreement in place with the three colleges used for subcontracted provision. The LEA relies too much on each college to quality assure its own provision. The LEA is unable to identify particular strengths or weaknesses within the college provision through its own quality assurance arrangements. This issue is identified in the self-assessment report. There are satisfactory plans in place to observe teaching and learning taking place in the colleges, although this has yet to be carried out.

53. Insufficient use is made of data for curriculum planning. The LEA has recently effectively altered the process of data collection. There is now a greater emphasis to centrally collating information and then supplying centre managers and curriculum leaders with information. Some managers question the accuracy of the information supplied. Although some targets are set, they are often based on information that has been challenged by managers. Despite the supply of centrally produced information, most curriculum leaders keep their own records and use these to set targets. In some areas of learning the targets set have not been met and insufficient action has been taken to remedy this situation. Some areas of learning have not set sufficient targets for improving retention and achievement profiles. An insufficient number of targets have

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been transferred from the strategic to the curriculum level. These issues are recognised in the self-assessment report and the LEA is taking appropriate action to rectify them.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	244	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good progress by most learners
- effective use of good learning resources
- very good support for staff

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation
- weak programme management

Achievement and standards

54. In most classes, learners are making good progress. Many learners start with no computer skills and have not previously enjoyed education. They are gaining in confidence, computing skills, employability skills, personal development and self-esteem. Learners also gain qualifications through their training. They are well motivated and pleased with their progress. A pre-course assessment is carried out to check learners' computer skills. Further checks are made during the course. Learners develop good ICT skills. Many learners on the basic computing courses go on to develop skills in word processing, spreadsheets, and desktop publishing. Some learners are pursuing interests such as digital photography either as a hobby or to enhance their professional work. Well-qualified and experienced staff provide appropriate support for the learners. Some learners are improving their literacy and numeracy standards by practising corrected exercises. The retention rate is satisfactory at 78 per cent and attendance during the inspection was good.

Quality of education and training

55. There is effective use of good learning resources. All course materials are illustrated clearly and contain explanations of various functions needed to be used with the programme. Many of these are independent study books through which learners work under tutors' guidance. Teaching is generally satisfactory or better. Learners are able to work at their own pace, to acquire and develop good computing skills and confidence. Much of the material in the workbooks is based on topics that are familiar to learners. This helps them to maintain their interest. Most learners are able to keep these

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workbooks and to use them at home for additional practise. Some centres are well equipped with modern computers, printers and good lighting. In others, there is good use of smart boards and computer-linked projectors. There is some good portable equipment such as laptops, with a sufficient number of portable colour printers. Some of these laptops are not sufficiently well shared. There is some unreliable equipment, such as printers, and faulty connections to the internet.

56. There are some interesting and effective initial assessment methods used by staff to identify learners' previous computing experience. However, these are not always carried out thoroughly. Ongoing assessment is satisfactory with appropriate and prompt feedback given to learners. Some staff use quizzes with laminated coloured flash cards, others use tick sheets so that learners can grade their progress on a regular basis. There are adequate records of learner progress and all learners can see how well they are progressing.

57. There is very good support for staff. All staff receive a comprehensive induction at the beginning of each academic year. Part of this is carried out by the curriculum manager and covers an introduction to the course they will be teaching, with support materials and course handbooks. Any material used for testing is also discussed to ensure that standards are met across the centres. The centre manager allocated to each tutor discusses the comprehensive staff handbook, which contains information about useful contacts, the tutor mentor, details of course paperwork, learner induction and key paperwork. This handbook is regularly updated. Information about health and safety and equality of opportunity is discussed in detail. Staff all demonstrate a very good level of awareness of equality of opportunity, particularly issues concerning disability. A member of the foundation team checks new learning materials to assess their suitability for use with learners. Additionally, any learner who demonstrates weak literacy, numeracy or communication skills can be referred to specialist help. There is a good observation programme for teaching staff. Tutors are observed within six months of starting if they are a new tutor to a centre or are teaching a new course. Detailed records are kept, with tutors receiving detailed written and verbal feedback. Tutors views are recorded and they are invited to identify areas for development. A new investment has been made in 15 laptop computers for tutors. This is to enable them to develop new course work or to use as another teaching aid. Most staff attended a development day earlier in 2003 during which procedures for the new accredited courses were covered. There is a newly appointed subject champion to arrange more staff training, to develop an internet newsgroup and to keep up to date with constant changes in information technology courses.

58. There is some poor accommodation, with difficult access either up steep steps or along dark corridors. Some centres have poor directions to computer facilities. Some of the accommodation is poorly decorated and contains insufficient up-to-date information on the walls. Additionally there is not enough information displayed explaining the use of computers. Most of the seating is not adjustable.

59. Most courses provide a free first session in which learners are inducted to the programme, enabling them to judge whether the course is suitable. Induction is

variable. Some learners receive a good induction and are quite clear about their rights and responsibilities; others receive a poor induction, with not enough specific course or personal safety information, and are not sufficiently prepared for the course. Advice and guidance varies across the centres. In most cases learners have good handbooks and leaflets giving advice and there is also a help-line. Some centres rely on word of mouth, whereas others supply leaflets to parents at open days in the schools to advise of course availability. One centre has a crèche.

Leadership and management

60. There is weak programme management. There are some unclear roles and responsibilities with respect to curriculum planning. There are no targets for retention and achievement set and monitored at local level. Recruitment targets are based on learner groups, but not discussed at any team meetings. There is not enough market research to aid curriculum development. Some courses are cancelled at short notice because of insufficient resources or learner interest. Managers do not work effectively to determine reasons for poor uptake. Of the 25 main ICT courses listed, 19 are taught between seven and nine o'clock in the evenings. There are a small number of courses running in the daytime in community centres and libraries. There is inadequate progression available for level 1 learners within the community education programme. Some centres provide learndirect courses. There is insufficient sharing of good practice, but improvements are being made. Some work has taken place to include ICT in other curriculum areas with the provision of laptops for other tutors.

61. The self-assessment report is generally accurate. Some of the strengths and weaknesses are partially identified, but the inspectors also found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	786	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention and attainment rates
- very good teaching and learning
- good learning materials in cookery provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient resources in sport provision
- insufficient range of courses in sport

Achievement and standards

62. Retention and attainment rates are good. Most courses have over 80 per cent retention. Learners achieve physical, psychological and social benefits from yoga and keep fit classes. In bridge, the social gains are very important to the older learners, who have developed new friendships and meet outside of the sessions to practise. Some learners, who are referred to fitness sessions after undergoing physiotherapy treatment, are able to maintain their rehabilitation outcomes. Learners also experience improved confidence as they achieve a wide range of personal and fitness goals. There is good development of occupational skills in cookery and good end product results. Learners obtain good background knowledge of nutrition, health and fitness. Learners in yoga and keep fit find it particularly useful to know the benefits and effects of the exercises they carry out. Some learners in tai chi have been entered in competitions after a relatively short time attending the course, resulting in one learner achieving an award. Learners in keep fit are encouraged by the tutor to enter fun runs and walks, and this is used as a method of measuring and celebrating their achievement. Monitoring of progress towards achievement is not always recorded by tutors. However, with the introduction of accredited courses, more formalised assessment and monitoring is now being carried out.

Quality of education and training

63. There is very good teaching and learning. Tutors are well qualified and experienced and many belong to relevant professional organisations and attend skills updating sessions. Lessons are well planned, with detailed schemes of work with consideration of the varying needs of individual learners. Tutors use a varied range of teaching styles and methods appropriate to the level of the course and the ability of the learners. Learners

are motivated, stimulated and sufficiently challenged, enabling them to acquire new skills, perfect existing skills and develop background knowledge. Learners receive good support from tutors, which includes induction, ongoing assessment, and specific detailed feedback relevant to individual learners. Learners can contribute to the lesson planning and tutors encourage them to consider the most appropriate activity to suit their personal learning goals. Learners develop further skills through the use of homework and practise, sometimes with the aid of video material.

64. Learning materials are good in the cookery provision. These include easy-to-read recipe sheets, shopping guides and general handout materials. The materials can be accessed in both paper and CD formats. Good use is made of visual displays including fresh foods and unusual ingredients.

65. There are insufficient resources for the sports provision. Some subject areas do not have enough specialist tutors to meet learner demands. There is insufficient sports occupational expertise at management level. Some of the accommodation is inadequate with inappropriate noise and heating levels and the absence of essential items including mirrors and exercise bars. There are insufficient supplies of small exercise equipment and learners and tutors have to use their own equipment. Storage facilities are inadequate and equipment and kit cannot be stored in or near the classroom in many of the venues used.

66. Monitoring of individual learners is satisfactory. They receive specific and detailed positive feedback during class sessions. Initial assessment is not always carried out adequately and formal recording of learners' progress does not always take place. In the sports provision some tutors do not fully understand how to formally record learners' progress in certain subjects.

67. There is an insufficient range of courses in sport. There are not enough courses targeted at specific age, gender or minority ethnic groups or for learners with specific health issues. With the exception of the swimming course for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there are no water sports courses within the provision and links with other providers of these courses are inadequate. The existing curriculum is historically based, with not enough courses suitable for complete beginners. Learners are recruited through a variety of methods including the internet, word of mouth, information leaflets and through staff attending a wide variety of community events. Taster programmes are run at a number of community venues and there are working links with a wide range of community groups. Learners receive good support in the classroom from teachers and are referred to specialist agencies for specific advice.

Leadership and management

68. There is a comprehensive strategy for the development of sport and leisure provision within Stockport LEA. This strategy has not yet been fully implemented. There are good partnerships and referral systems between the LEA and other agencies concerned with general well-being and health issues. There are good opportunities for staff development and this has been taken up by most tutors. There is a comprehensive staff handbook.

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Observations of teaching and learning carried out as part of the overall quality review process are not always sufficiently thorough, particularly in sport. There is a clear commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity. For example, there is good recruitment of men on to non-traditional classes. The self-assessment process was comprehensive in respect of the LEA provision, but less so for the subcontracted provision. The strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection matched many of those identified in the self-assessment report.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	97	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good progress made by learners
- good teaching
- effective community links

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources
- inadequate quality assurance of subcontracted provision

Achievement and standards

69. All learners are achieving their learning objectives at an appropriate level and pace. Good progress has been made by 60 per cent of learners. The remaining learners are making steady progress towards achieving their learning objectives. In a massage class, learners carry out back massage competently and with confidence by the third week of the programme. Within the direct provision, some learners have progressed from short, three-week taster courses to 10-week non-accredited programmes and then to NVQ at level 1 and level 2 Open College Network (OCN) accredited programmes. Learners provide each other with good peer support. For example, in a learning to relax group, learners support each other through appropriate use of personal disclosure of life experiences, and sensitive contributions to group discussion. Of those learners completing the Greater Manchester OCN level 1 qualification, there was 100 per cent achievement. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Quality of education and training

70. Sixty per cent of teaching is very good or outstanding. Tutors have good technical knowledge, skills and experience. They provide good learning and pastoral support for learners and use a variety of teaching methods to motivate, inspire and encourage them. These include inhalation and identification of essential oils, demonstration of massage techniques, group work and discussions. Learners are motivated to develop new knowledge, skills and competences to help them to be able to relax and live healthier lives. Humour is used appropriately. Learners are challenged appropriately to discuss contentious opinions. In a small number of classes there is over use of technical language. Handouts are good. During the tutor-led part of sessions, key concepts such as anatomy and physiology and the mathematics of the blending of essential oils were

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taught well. In these classes, however, there is not enough use of direct questioning by the tutors to determine learning outcomes. In the poorer classes, the tutors dominated the lessons, with not enough contribution by learners.

71. There are effective community links within direct provision with relevant agencies involved in advice and guidance. These links include community psychiatric nurses and a cardiac specialist nurse, local general practitioners and professional workers from the Stockport healthy living scheme. For those learners wishing to progress to vocational programmes, the LEA has introduced OCN programmes at levels 1 and 2. Further progression can be achieved at local further education colleges. In one of the links with further education colleges, there is a reciprocal teaching arrangement to support learners as they move into a larger college environment.

72. Taster sessions within the local community allow learners to make informed choices regarding the courses they may wish to study. The first week of each course is an induction during which learners are made aware of the demands of the course. Most of the programmes are designed to meet learners' personal development needs, with an emphasis on relaxation and stress management. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners are asked about their prior experience of aromatherapy and alternative therapies. Tutors devise their own methods of ongoing assessment, ranging from competency tick lists, to a form on which learners analyse what they had learnt as part of their homework. Additional literacy and numeracy support is available if necessary.

73. Resources in the learning centres are inadequate. Tutors use their own resources including essential oils and audio-visual aids. Noise interference from adjacent spaces disturbs relaxation classes. There is not enough private accommodation for massage and relaxation. Classroom desks are joined together to form inappropriate massage couches. At the start of the autumn term, advertised classes were cancelled as suitably qualified tutors were not recruited. There are plans to purchase equipment, including a portable massage couch, but there is not enough storage space at the centres.

Leadership and management

74. Curriculum management is satisfactory within the direct provision. Progression routes within the aromatherapy and alternative therapies curriculum have been developed from short taster courses to accredited programmes. There is successful action to widen participation through the use of taster classes in targeted areas of deprivation, the distribution of promotional literature in health centres and the timing of classes to suit parents with school-age children.

75. Quality assurance of subcontracted provision is inadequate. Links between the LEA and the subcontracted provision are in the process of being developed, but as yet there has not been enough progress in the sharing of good practice. There is no overall curriculum plan or framework to link the direct and subcontracted provision. Approaches to staff appraisal, classroom observations and staff development are inconsistent. The poorer classes are in the subcontracted provision.

76. The self-assessment report graded this area of learning as satisfactory as did the inspectors. The self-assessment report was broadly accurate, identifying many of the strengths and weaknesses that inspectors did. The main omission concerns the inadequate quality assurance of subcontracted provision.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	161	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good retention rates
- good achievement in childminding practice programmes
- good teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- slow progress in early years care and education NVQ programme
- poor monitoring of progress and target-setting for NVQ programmes
- insufficient observation of work practice in early years NVQ programme

Achievement and standards

77. Retention rates are very good, at over 90 per cent overall. On the early years care and education NVQ, only four from a total of 30 have left early since the start of the programme in 2001. In playwork three from a total of 21 have left early since the start of the programme in 2002. For childminding programmes 12 from a total of 124 have left early, since the start of the programme.

78. There is good achievement in childminding practice programmes, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Sixty per cent of learners have achieved a qualification. The minimum requirement for becoming a childminder is attendance on the childminding practice course. Although there is no requirement to achieve the qualification, learners are encouraged to do so. Achievement at the main centre is higher than at outreach centres. This issue has been identified and the staff have provided additional support to tackle this.

79. As the self-assessment report partly identified, there is slow progress on the early years care and education NVQ. Of 24 learners who started in April or September 2001, only four have achieved their qualification. Some others are nearing completion, but many are a long way off completion. There are no clear records of progress through the units. The assessor ticks off completed units on a chart, but these are not dated. There is no start date on the chart to give a clear indication of the rate of progress. The internal verifier dates the units she has sampled. Learners are not set targets for completion. The slow progress is also due in part to a shortage of assessors. There are plans to employ assessors on a contract basis, rather than as casual workers. Some research has been done to establish the role requirements before making an appointment.

80. Most learners' attendance at training and rate of progress in the other programmes is at least satisfactory, and often good. The standard of work observed in lessons and in portfolios is satisfactory or good. Learners on the NVQ programmes show a good level of competence.

Quality of education and training

81. There is good teaching and learning across all programmes. The self-assessment report identified this strength. Tutors are well qualified and experienced. Of the lessons observed, 90 per cent were judged to be good or very good. None were unsatisfactory. Schemes of work and lessons are well planned. Particular emphasis is placed on both group and individual learning outcomes, with effective review at the end of most lessons. Tutors are generally knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject. They use a variety of teaching and learning techniques. Equal opportunities are emphasised during the early years care and education, playwork and childminding sessions. Tutors are particularly supportive of learners, and aware of individual needs, although more able learners are not always sufficiently challenged. Every tutor has a comprehensive course file, which clearly sets out the standards required. Learners are well motivated and participate well in discussion during the sessions. They generally work to a very good standard.

82. There is poor monitoring of progress and target-setting for NVQ programmes. Learners complete learning outcome forms, which identify what they hope to achieve at the start of their programme, but the targets are not specific. Not all learners are monitored halfway through the programme. There is no formal review system to monitor progress and sets targets. Many learners think that they can take as long as they like to complete their NVQ.

83. There is insufficient observation of work practice in the early years care and education NVQ. In some portfolios, the level of observation in the unit does not meet the awarding body requirements. Some of these units have been signed off by the internal verifier. For some learners, assessor visits are infrequent. Learners have completed written evidence for a number of units, but have had no observation. There is too much written work in portfolios. These issues have been identified at assessor and internal verifier meetings and are being dealt with. Standardisation meetings take place four times a year, and focus on the requirements for specific units.

84. Access to resources is adequate, but for outreach centres this is dependent on the tutors taking the resources out to the centres. There is a list of resources available, so that tutors and assessors can identify what they need, and take it out to centres as and when they need it. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners have access to a good range of specialist equipment if they need it. A loop system is set up in the classroom used for lip-reading sessions for people with hearing impairment.

85. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Until recently the main form of initial assessment was the learning outcomes form on which learners identify their skills and the difficulties

they think they may have. Tutors informally assess learners at the start of their programme by checking the first pieces of work they receive. The area of learning staff identified that this was inadequate and from September 2003 a new initial assessment has been put in place, which is still informal but more thorough. Induction is satisfactory and learners receive an appropriate introduction to their programmes.

86. Support is satisfactory for learners with additional needs. Where potential learning needs are identified, learners are referred to the basic skills unit, where they may have further assessment to identify specific needs. They are offered appropriate support, but not all learners accept it. There is also support for learners who speak English as an additional language. In the course file there are useful hints and tips for tutors to help them support learners with additional needs. Assessors use alternative forms of assessment for learners if necessary.

87. There are appropriate programmes to meet the needs of learners at NVQ at level 2 and 3, but currently no entry level or level 1 courses. These are being planned but are not yet in place. The centre works closely with the local early years development and childcare partnership, which offers a range of short courses. Learners can access these courses and are encouraged to do so. Some learners progress from an NVQ at level 2 to level 3. No one has yet progressed to higher levels. A qualification based on accreditation of prior learning, aimed at experienced practitioners with no qualification, is currently being jointly planned with a local further college of further education.

Leadership and management

88. The post of curriculum manager is fairly new in this area of learning. There is a satisfactory awareness of the strategic plan, and this is reflected in the planning for the area of learning. There are a number of strategies for improvement in place. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these. Curriculum planning and monitoring of direct provision is satisfactory. Programme files for all programmes are comprehensive. Schemes of work are good, and monitored against group and individual learning outcomes. Observations of teaching and learning sessions are being carried out regularly.

89. Learners have a satisfactory awareness of equal opportunities, in terms of their own rights and responsibilities and of the needs of the children in their care. Currently, the percentage of people from minority ethnic groups on programmes does not reflect the local population. The number of male learners is also very low. There have been initiatives to increase the participation of both of these groups, but this is not yet showing any results.

90. The self-assessment report graded this area of learning as satisfactory, as did the inspectors. However, there were several strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection, which were not highlighted in the self-assessment report.

Visual & performing arts & media**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	1129	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good standards of practical work in visual arts
- good teaching and learning
- extensive range of courses

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources

Achievement and standards

91. Learners in art and crafts subjects achieve a good standard of practical work. They are enthusiastic about the progress they make and their growing self-confidence. Learners produce good portfolios of art work. Tutors use photographs to record three-dimensional work such as upholstered furniture, pottery and stained glass. Learners state that they know and understand their learning goals for the whole course and for each session. More confident learners make good use of skills learnt for the benefit of their family, friends and in the home. For example, learners from a celebration crafts class produce decorated ceramics for their children. Learners work well to improve their skills in order to produce good art and craft pieces for displays and exhibitions. Professional standards are achieved by some learners who aspire to produce pieces for commercial purposes. One learner, a professional cabinet maker, is attending an upholstery class to gain skills to enhance his business portfolio. One group of learners is producing good items of clothing. These learners have many personal goals, and include one learner who required higher-level skills to set up a business in making bridal wear. Attainment in performing arts is satisfactory. Retention and attendance is satisfactory or better in most classes.

Quality of education and training

92. There is good teaching and learning. Experienced tutors have in-depth technical competence and many are practising artists, designers and makers with local and national reputations. Tutor demonstrations enable learners to acquire a good understanding of the importance of practical and creative skills in art, crafts and dance. These demonstrations set standards to which learners can aspire. There are good working relationships between tutors and learners. Significant progress is made by new learners, with skills and knowledge being gained and used in art, music pieces and dance. There is good extension and development of skills and knowledge by more

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experienced learners. Learning activities are usually demanding and fully engage the learners in the learning process. Learners practise and use a variety of techniques to improve the standard of their work. Learners in art and craft classes are encouraged to experiment with a wide variety of materials and media such as glass, ceramics, fabrics and papers. New learners in dance and music classes practise and rehearse basic techniques and make good progress. More advanced learners improve existing skills and gain more advanced skills through using more progressive steps and musical pieces.

93. There is an extensive range of courses and good access for learners to a wide variety of arts subjects such as stained glass, watercolour, upholstery, soft furnishings, dressmaking, china painting, pottery, guitar, music technology, and salsa and Arabic dancing. There is a good geographical spread and location of centres across the borough which provides local access for learners. Learners benefit from a good programme of free taster sessions, available for learners before the commencement of the course. Learners are well informed regarding learning opportunities in the borough.

94. Initial assessment is used to ascertain learners' starting points and previous experience in the subject. Learners negotiate their personal learning goals within the stated learning outcomes of the course. The system for recording learners' progress and achievement is used well by some tutors to aid planning for the following session. Some tutors do not use this system and do not keep such records. Learners benefit from verbal feedback and constructive criticism in classes.

95. Many courses are inadequately resourced. Some classrooms are too small for the number of learners and the nature of practical work being carried out. At one college, learners in classes were disturbed by the noise from a communal area immediately outside the door. There is inadequate provision of consumable resources and equipment for some classes. Many tutors provide materials and specialist equipment for learners. An insufficient number of sewing machines are provided in some centres. Learners are disadvantaged in some art classes through insufficient basic equipment such as desktop easels. One pottery studio, used for a china painting class, is unsuitable for this purpose as dust on surfaces contaminates the learners' work. In many classrooms there is insufficient storage for equipment, materials and learners' work. There is also some poor management and maintenance of resources in some classrooms. Some specialist equipment has not been installed or does not conform to health and safety regulations. Learners are currently unable to use this specialist equipment to produce their work.

96. There is no formal procedure to identify learners who have literacy, numeracy and language needs. There is good advice, guidance and support for learners' progression from community-based courses into mainstream adult and community learning. Learners are able to negotiate their own learning needs through the support of tutors. Learners benefit from access to advice and guidance at one community centre. All learners have information and are able to book appointments to discuss progression and future needs and aspirations. Learners with restricted mobility receive appropriate support.

Leadership and management

97. New developments for programme management have recently been agreed, but are not yet sufficiently established to have a significant impact on learners. The curriculum forum does not yet have sufficiently developed policies and procedures to enable operational managers to coherently plan programmes and venues.

98. Overall quality assurance is satisfactory. There is a schedule of teaching and learning observations. All tutors are observed once every two years. New tutors are observed within their first year and an action plan is recorded. Some observations are not carried out by curriculum specialists and are not sufficiently thorough. Learner feedback is collected at the end of each course and used by tutors in their course evaluations. Tutors identify actions required for quality improvement and in some cases these are adequately tackled by centre managers. However, in a few instances the process has become a paper exercise.

99. Equal opportunities are well established into the working practices of tutors and managers. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities and the complaints procedure. Access to most venues and classrooms is adequate. However, one centre does not have access for learners with restricted mobility. A partnership project with a local college of further education is being developed to support progression in arts courses. Tutors from the college will teach the final two weeks of the continuing education course in the community, and the community education service tutors will teach the first two weeks of the college course. Visits to the colleges are arranged for learners on most courses.

100. The self-assessment report graded this area of learning a grade 3, while inspectors graded it higher at a grade 2. The strengths identified in the self-assessment report were broadly accurate, although the key weakness concerning resources was not identified in the self-assessment report.

Humanities**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	197	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention rates and attendance on most courses
- good teaching and learning
- good personal support for learners
- good coverage of equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- insufficient measurement of non-accredited achievement
- inadequate leadership and management

Achievement and standards

101. There are good retention rates and attendance on most courses, with an average overall retention rate of 80 per cent. The one exception to this is the accredited course in criminology which only has a 40 per cent retention rate. Attendance on most courses is good and during the inspection was 85 per cent.

102. In criminology, the achievement rate is satisfactory. All retained learners achieve the level 1 qualification. Learners are achieving sound standards in respect of analytical skills and a satisfactory understanding of the nature and theory of criminology. There is insufficient measurement of non-accredited achievement. Assessment is generally not used as a learning tool. There is some self-evaluation carried out by learners of the achievement of their personal learning goals. Learners review these goals at the end of courses with the tutor. Learners develop personal confidence, study skills and knowledge. However, in the directly provided provision, personal and learning goals are often vague. The evidence tutors are able to provide in respect of learner achievement is mainly anecdotal and general and not sufficiently effective to measure learner achievement of goals over time.

Quality of education and training

103. There is good teaching and learning. Tutors are well qualified for the courses they teach and often have a wealth of experience in teaching adults. They are enthusiastic and in command of their subject. Classroom teaching is well organised, with clear objectives shared with learners at the beginning of sessions. Tutors use a range of good learning materials. Interaction with learners is sensitive and effective, with the life and

personal experiences of learners brought into discussion in an appropriate fashion. Learners enjoy sessions and make good progress. Discussion is often lively and stimulating. The attainment of oral, analytical and teamwork skills, is clearly evident in many classes. However, some of the teaching is too reliant on the tutors with not enough learner involvement. Many courses involve some outside activity such as visits to museums, historical sites and public record agencies.

104. There is good personal support for learners from class tutors. There is a good manual for tutors containing a good range of advice in respect of dealing with learners' needs, and comprehensive information, clearly set out, regarding service policies and support mechanisms. Learners receive sensitive and sympathetic support from tutors in respect of personal or domestic issues and a full appreciation of any learning needs they have. Learners are encouraged to identify any impediments to learning and there is good support available should this be needed. Although not formally assessed, learners are encouraged to declare any needs in term of literacy and numeracy, and again support is available should this be requested.

105. Provision is offered in a range of venues, many of which provide good teaching accommodation, with a range of good facilities and conducive learning environments. Some adult learners complain about noise and the poor behaviour of younger learners that can be disruptive at times. Some rooms are not large enough for the numbers of learners in the class and on one occasion this term, six learners could not be enrolled because there was not a large enough room.

Leadership and management

106. There is good coverage of equal opportunities. Tutors' manuals contain good equal opportunities material and reflect a sound approach to equal opportunities issues. Learners are encouraged to identify any learning needs or impairment that might require additional support. Tutors ask if there are any specific needs during classes and provide such aids as large font handouts. In classes there is a sensitive consideration of equal opportunities issues, for example in dealing with matters relating to family history.

107. The leadership and management in the curriculum area are inadequate. There is insufficient record-keeping, poor curriculum management and inadequate curriculum development. There is a recently established curriculum forum that provides a focal point for discussion of provision across the borough. The LEA has an insufficiently effective means of quality assuring humanities programmes or the achievements of learners. There are advanced plans to establish joint meetings with the subcontractors and to carry out a joint programme of lesson observations. However, these have not yet been fully implemented.

108. There are some useful partnership links, for example with the heritage service, which have directly contributed to many local history courses. Planning now focuses on widening the curriculum with other services, including the library and information services. However, currently there are not enough courses on offer in humanities.

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109. Quality assurance is generally effective in the subcontracted colleges and less effective in the direct provision. All tutors are required to keep a course file containing course information, such as schemes of work and lesson plans, course outlines and objectives, learning needs and personal objectives, learner feedback on achievement and tutor summary of learner achievement. There is also an evaluation of each course and an indication of areas for development, which contribute to the self-assessment reporting process. There is a similar system in the subcontracted colleges. In one college this system has been particularly effective, with thorough monitoring, through course files and the use of evaluation forms, all of which are subject to regular checks by managers. In the directly provided provision, the process has been less thorough. Staff in the contracted colleges are observed on a regular basis. The schedule of observations is designed to identify training and development needs of staff and includes feedback from observers. The self-assessment report graded this area of learning as satisfactory as did the inspectors. The self-assessment report was broadly accurate.

English, languages & communications**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	574	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement rate on the GCSE English course
- good work by tutors to meet the needs and interests of individual learners

Weaknesses

- excessive use of English by tutors in modern foreign language classes
- unsatisfactory assessment practices
- insufficient opportunities for progression in modern foreign languages
- weak programme management

Achievement and standards

110. There is good achievement on the GCSE English course. For example, in 2001-02, all learners who took the qualification achieved grades A*-C. This achievement rate compares well with local and national averages. Written work produced by current learners is very good. Learners are exposed to a variety of styles of language consistent with the demands of the examination. Small group discussions are characterised by sensitivity and personal commitment in all exchanges between learners.

111. In most modern languages lessons, learners' spoken language skills are at least satisfactory with regard to pronunciation and intonation. In the best lessons, they are very good. Learners make significant progress with their speaking in these lessons. For example, in one very good French lesson, learners discussed contemporary culture and described a person in a picture as well as more abstract concepts, such as speculating about the circumstances of the person in the picture. The skills of reading, listening and writing are inconsistently practised, but achievement is usually in line with expectations. Some learners' skills have not developed well, often because the tasks set are unsuitable or unchallenging. Most learners have a range of vocabulary consistent with their needs and aspirations. However, the extent to which they are able to use it fluently varies in proportion to their experience of listening to authentic foreign language exchanges.

Quality of education and training

112. There is good work by tutors to meet the needs and interests of individual learners. For example, in a Japanese class, the tutor negotiated the approach to the lesson with learners. A Russian class has been divided into beginners' and improvers' groups with

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each being given an hour's tuition from the two hours available. In an English class, the tutor gave careful support to a learner experiencing difficulties. In some instances, classes have been relocated to accommodate wheelchair users.

113. In the best lessons, when teaching takes place in the foreign language and the subject matter is intellectually challenging, the good teaching leads to good progress. For example, in a German lesson the tutor skilfully initiated a debate on imperialism, allowing learners to practise their speaking and to consolidate their vocabulary. In an English GCSE class, learners discussed the death penalty with clarity and precision. However, when lessons in modern foreign languages dealt with relatively mundane topics, some learners lost their concentration. Tutors' planning ranges from adequate to very good.

114. Resources for lessons and courses are appropriate. Staff are qualified to teach their subject. In some cases, teachers of modern foreign languages are native speakers. Tutors produce satisfactory learning resources of their own, including cue cards and pictures. They use appropriate textbooks to support learning. In the GCSE English class learners are given an attractively produced anthology containing good examples of previous learners' coursework. Insufficient use is made of audio and video materials. There is no use of ICT in lessons. All accommodation is adequate and some is good.

115. Information provided to learners is satisfactory. Individual learners receive a rapid response to expressions of interest, often by telephone or e-mail. However, printed course descriptions are sometimes unhelpful. Some course titles and descriptions do not give sufficient detail of intended learning outcomes, entry requirements and likely demands on learners. When learners do not take pre-enrolment advice, some find the course does not meet their expectations.

116. Some modern foreign language tutors make excessive use of English in classes, for example when issuing routine instructions or giving encouragement. They also use English when learners would have understood the foreign language. Learners are not being given the opportunity to hear the language or to respond to questions and instructions. They rely too heavily on translation and are not attaining levels of fluency appropriate to their needs. The development of learners' foreign language communication skills is also hampered by tutors' reluctance to challenge them sufficiently.

117. There are unsatisfactory assessment practices in modern foreign languages. Tutors do assess learners' work, but generally do not attend to the separate skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Learners tend not to be aware of the full extent of their progress. There are no mechanisms to monitor the progress of individual learners of modern foreign languages. Some tutors do not mark written work produced by learners. There is no shared understanding of what constitutes achievement in modern foreign languages, particularly on non-accredited courses, and learners' progress and tutors' effectiveness cannot be meaningfully evaluated or standards assured.

118. There are insufficient opportunities for progression in modern foreign languages.

Some learners repeat courses because continuation courses are not offered within the LEA provision. There is currently insufficient choice for learners in the curriculum offered. There is no comprehensive range of levels across the languages taught or the opportunity for learners to gain accreditation. The LEA is currently investigating ways of introducing more accreditation into its foreign languages provision.

Leadership and management

119. Programme management is weak. Not enough use is made of performance data to evaluate the provision. Mechanisms exist to collect data, such as on diversity and retention figures, but staff do not routinely use this information. Other than meetings to explore accreditation, there have been no recent professional development opportunities for tutors of modern foreign languages. The acting curriculum co-ordinator has no job description and the post-holder's managerial responsibilities are unclear, for example in respect of English or quality assurance across the provision.

120. Some observers of teaching and learning of modern foreign languages are not subject specialists. In most cases, the lessons observed are evaluated against generic criteria and no subject-specific developmental feedback is offered to tutors. Reports of lesson observations do not always comment on the essential linguistic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing or on the learners' vocabulary.

121. The self-assessment report was not produced collaboratively. This area of learning has not yet produced a draft self-assessment report for 2002-03.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	735	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention and attainment rates
- good teaching and learning
- effective use of bilingual approaches in ESOL
- very good learning and pastoral support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient measurement and recording of learner progress

Achievement and standards

122. The retention and attainment rates are good. In 2002-03, the retention rate was 82 per cent in foundation classes and 94 per cent in community learning classes. Retention on courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities rose by 5 per cent during 2002-03 to 80 per cent. Attainment is good in courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners are able to make and take home items such as pottery bowls, cooking products and artwork. Non-accredited achievement is demonstrated by photographic evidence and outcomes of collaborative work. Some community classes use a disposable camera to record group achievements. There was a slight fall in achievement in accredited courses in literacy and numeracy 2002-03. This was partly accounted for by changes in national curriculum accreditations.

Quality of education and training

123. Teaching and learning are good. Of the 34 sessions observed, 71 per cent are good or better. Well-planned sessions are differentiated to meet individual needs. Tutors use a variety of teaching techniques. This includes whole group, pair and individual work. Learners are able to practise language, literacy and numeracy skills throughout lessons. Preparation of topic work is thorough and good use is made of group discussions and presentations. Topic work is relevant with one group writing about the local history in their area. Classroom management is good, ensuring all learners respect one another. In ESOL there is good emphasis on the development of clear language structures. In literacy and numeracy classes, tutors take learners' individual learning styles into account when planning lessons. Learners are well motivated and receive immediate verbal feedback from tutors. Many complete homework before the next class. In classes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is good

encouragement of independent learning and decision-making. Tutors challenge effectively the learners by using technical language in the environmental studies courses. Learners on the skills for volunteers course, develop a reflective learning diary and can articulate the learning that has taken place. Learners are stretched through stimulating discussion and the sharing of personal experiences.

124. There is effective use of bilingual approaches in ESOL. Bilingualism is used effectively in teaching to increase understanding of complex language. In the lessons observed tutors have used Chinese and French to engage learners. They encourage learners to use bilingual dictionaries and make very good use of bilingual resources.

125. There is very good learning and pastoral support for learners. A large proportion of learners on literacy and numeracy programmes receive additional support, including support for dyslexia. Two-thirds of staff are trained to offer some dyslexia support. Individual support for learners is provided both inside and outside classes. There is very good support in classes in terms of adjustments, for example use of a green screen, coloured paper and filters for learners with visual difficulties. One learner with visual difficulties had an eye test with the local university and had a pair of green tinted glasses purchased for her through additional support. Retention has improved for those receiving additional support, from 80 per cent in 2001-02 to 91 per cent in 2002-03. Very good use is made of the access fund to purchase materials for learners, for example starter packs and textbooks. Good information advice and guidance is given in literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes and is also programmed into community classes. There are crèche facilities for all learners. However, at one main centre, the crèche is upstairs, which presents some access issues. Some learners with a learning disability are integrated with art and pottery classes where access is good and extra support is given. A mixed craft class has been set up for a group of learners who are very dependent. They have additional support workers.

126. Community learning taster sessions encourage new learners. Good advice and guidance is given to enable learners to progress to other courses. New courses are also developed as a result of these tasters; for example, new provision in health and beauty at an early years centre in a deprived area is being developed into a 10-week course with the option of accreditation. There is good progression to mainstream programmes, often with support from community tutors.

127. In ESOL, learning resources are matched to the core curriculum. Tutors use good in-house worksheets and published materials. However, some reading resources for learners are out of date and inappropriate. At a main centre, there is good ICT hardware. Laptops are also available. Literacy and numeracy tutors are not yet trained to make full use of the software available. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Two-thirds of the literacy staff have completed the certificate in adult dyslexia support. These tutors also deliver dyslexia awareness as part of the staff development programme which is offered to all community education service staff.

128. In many of the centres, the learning environment is good. Learners feel safe and have access to refreshments and snack meals. There are positive images displayed in

community venues. However, at one of the centres visited, where the main provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities takes place, there is no access for learners in wheelchairs.

129. There is insufficient measurement and recording of learner progress. All new learners have an hour-long interview where initial assessment takes place. This information is used to draw up an individual learning plan in literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes. Some of these individual learning plans are incomplete, with no date for review. Targets are generally reviewed at the end of term, but there are insufficient systems and records of individual formative assessment in literacy, numeracy and other needs. The paperwork in classes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not suitable to record the progress being made. Targets set are not always owned by the individual learners and are over-focused on core curriculum standards. The achievement of learners on non-accredited provision is not sufficiently measured or recorded.

Leadership and management

130. Leadership and management is satisfactory. The provision is managed in three main sections: literacy and numeracy, ESOL, and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Each area has a manager and key staff, full time, fractional and part time. Community learning programmes are well managed. In the foundation area of learning and particularly in community learning, there are effective partnerships with other organisations which directly benefit learners. There is contact with a wide range of organisations to support curriculum development. There is close working with the heritage service to provide local history courses and with the council for voluntary service to refer learners to the skills in volunteering course. Social services values the involvement of its clients in community learning. Strong internal partnerships also exist, with community learning working closely with the other area of learning managers.

131. There is a strong drive towards the promotion of equal opportunities at strategic level, but this is not sufficiently followed through to classroom level, with insufficient focus on equal opportunities in many teaching and learning sessions. However, equal opportunities is well integrated within the skills for a community volunteering course and learners are also appropriately sensitive to the needs of a learner with a hearing impairment. There are positive multicultural images and images of positive role models on the walls of some classrooms. There is a complaints procedure and evidence of complaints being dealt with promptly and effectively.

132. There is currently not enough sharing of good practice between the different curriculum areas in foundation, but this is beginning to be tackled. Learner feedback is encouraged and acted upon. Learner surveys are conducted at the beginning and end of the course and there is evidence that suggestions are acted upon; for example, a handwriting class has been set up. There is a system to observe tutors. However, in literacy and numeracy only 40 per cent of tutors were observed last year and there is no formal moderation of observations. A number of community tutors are not observed if they are delivering one-off or very short courses.

133. There is good involvement of staff in the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weakness in the self-assessment report and with the grade awarded, but also identified additional strengths and weakness.

Family learning**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	58	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention and attainment rates
- good teaching and learning
- effective support for learners
- particularly effective partnerships with schools

Weaknesses

- poorly co-ordinated leadership

Achievement and standards

134. Retention and attainment rates are good. The retention rate for 2002-03 was 92 per cent. Learners can take national accreditation tests. Fifty per cent of family ESOL learners opted for and gained accreditation. Seventy-two per cent of family literacy and family numeracy learners took the test and 76 per cent received accreditation. Destination data indicate that most learners move on to other learning. Learners achieve their personal learning goals. They gain in confidence in supporting their children and extend their own knowledge and understanding. Learners acquire technical language and vocabulary in Keeping Up With the Children courses. One learner understood grammatical terms for the first time, having never grasped this when in school. Specific skills are developed and activities, games, books and models are well made to use with children. For example, bilingual books of a very good standard were developed by family learning ESOL learners. In a promoting reading workshop, parents developed skills to work with children with specific difficulties and gained ideas and methods to use with children at home. Other events and workshops produce exhibitions and photographic evidence. The collective outcome from one large group of learners was a collage depicting the history of the neighbourhood. Headteachers value programmes in the school and report on the impact on the adult learners, who are more confident and are prepared to be more involved in supporting their children.

Quality of education and training

135. There is good teaching and learning. Effective teaching and learning strategies are employed, with all sessions observed being satisfactory and 72 per cent of sessions being good or better. Sessions are well prepared with clear and detailed lesson plans. All literacy and numeracy courses are matched to the core curriculum. An appropriate

range of teaching methods is used with some good use of role-play. Good facilitation skills encourage learners to share their experience of learning and consider the relevance of their own learning style when supporting their child. There were examples of learners negotiating the content of the course in Keeping Up With The Children and numeracy. Learners are able to articulate the learning that has taken place and to demonstrate how the learning has been applied at home. Learners display a good understanding of what children are doing in school and the requirements of the national curriculum.

136. There is effective support for learners. All classes have a crèche and are located at times and venues suitable for parents and carers, including the use of the Brinnington Bus. Most classes are free. All classes have a visit from an information, advice and guidance worker at the end of the course. Short, one-off courses have time at the end of the session to discuss options for further learning. There is good progression for learners to other family learning programmes or other courses. Some form of assessment takes place in all courses ranging from formal initial assessment on longer courses for literacy and numeracy to more informal methods on shorter courses and workshops. All courses have clear learning outcomes. One-off sessions have self-assessment of what has been learnt, what has been achieved or what the learner needs more help with. Key paperwork is used consistently on all programmes.

137. Learning resources are used appropriately. Materials are up to date and used effectively. They include handouts, books, video and audio tapes, computers, equipment to use with children and examples of national curriculum materials used in schools. Tutors are appropriately qualified.

Leadership and management

138. There are particularly effective partnerships with schools. A positive parenting strategy promotes and encourages family learning and parental involvement. The Stockport Excellence Cluster of 10 primary and five secondary schools has a theme of parents as partners. A programme is being developed in primary schools as a partnership between the learning mentors and Stockport community education service. A pilot Keeping Up With The Children course in numeracy is being delivered to parents of key stage 3 (year 7) children in a secondary school. Headteachers are clear about the benefits of involving parents. Schoolteachers and family learning staff jointly plan and deliver some programmes.

139. Leadership of the family learning provision is poorly co-ordinated. The three strands of family learning relating to the different funding streams, are managed separately. Co-ordination currently relies on good informal links rather than the management structure to facilitate this. There is potential confusion for headteachers with separate publicity and over-reliance on word of mouth. A new family learning manager has recently been appointed, with a remit to co-ordinate provision but not to line manage. It is too early to judge the impact of this. The positive parenting strategy group working at a strategic level does not yet impact at an operational level. A family learning strategy is being developed, to help bring all the elements together.

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140. There are appropriate staff development opportunities. All staff have had basic skills core curriculum training. Staff have also had recruitment and selection training as well as training in Share, a national family learning project.

141. Equal opportunities is satisfactory, with positive images in buildings and useful equal opportunities statements in course handbooks. In many sessions, tutors check to ensure learners can all see and hear. There is good use of bilingual support for learners when required.

142. Quality assurance is satisfactory with consistent application of proforma and procedures. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. For 2002-03, family learning was reported under the different areas of learning, but in the current year a specific self-assessment report for family learning is being produced.