

REINSPECTION REPORT

Luton LEA Reinspection

05 November 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

LUTON LEA REINSPECTION

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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Luton LEA Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Luton Local Education Authority (the LEA) provides adult and community learning through the community education and development division of the lifelong learning department of Luton Borough Council. Adult and community learning takes place in the three main college sites of South Luton, Putteridge and Lea Manor, and other community venues such as schools and libraries. The LEA offers accredited and non-accredited programmes for adult learners in science and mathematics, land-based programmes, construction, business administration, information and communications technology (ICT), hospitality, sport and leisure, hairdressing and beauty therapy, health and social care, visual and performing arts, humanities, English and modern foreign languages, foundation programmes and family learning. Some areas of learning had too few sessions taking place to be inspected. In three of the areas judged to be satisfactory or better at the previous inspection, inspectors made judgements about progress in implementing the post-inspection action plan.
2. At the time of the inspection, there were 3,623 enrolments on adult and community learning courses. In 2003-04, there were 11,390 enrolments.
3. In June 2004, the unemployment rate in Luton was 2.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.2 per cent. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups is 28.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 8.7 per cent.
4. At the time of the previous inspection, four schools with community college status had direct contracts with Luton and Bedfordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for accredited programmes and the LEA was directly funded for non-accredited adult and community provision. The structure for providing adult and community learning changed in August 2003. One of the colleges has now withdrawn from publicly funded provision and there is a single contract between the LSC and the LEA. A senior adviser within the LEA, who reports to the head of community education and development, is responsible for family learning, basic skills and outreach work as well as supporting the implementation of the post-inspection action plan. An adult education manager has taken over a number of responsibilities as well as becoming line manager of the other managers.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

5. There are 399 learners enrolled on 35 hospitality, sport and leisure courses. In 2003-04, there were 1,957 enrolments on 71 courses. The current provision includes yoga, swimming, keep fit, tai chi, sugar craft and Indian cookery. There is one accredited

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course, in basic food hygiene. Most courses are run on a termly basis and last for an average of 10 to 15 weeks with individual sessions lasting for one to two hours. Just over half of courses run during the evening with the rest provided during the day and at weekends. Courses are held at 14 venues including schools, church halls and community centres across the borough. Some courses are specifically intended for retired people. Fifteen per cent of the enrolments are men and 25 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. There is a curriculum manager, and three co-ordinators are responsible for yoga, swimming and dry side activities. A total of 18 tutors are employed in this area.

Health, social care & public services

6. There are 222 learners on 10 health, social care and public services courses. A curriculum manager oversees the childminding, counselling, first aid and first steps into childcare courses and a co-ordinator has recently been appointed. The learning support assistants' course is overseen by another curriculum manager and a co-ordinator. There are 10 other tutors. First aid training is also provided in partnership with a relevant charity. All courses are part time and take place at venues across the borough. Twenty per cent of the learners are from minority ethnic groups.

Visual & performing arts & media

7. There are 673 learners on 54 courses in visual and performing arts and media. Most courses are non-accredited. Learners are able to gain a level 2 qualification in photography. The 37 visual arts courses available include floristry, lace making, painting and drawing, calligraphy, watercolour, creative crafts, dressmaking, soft furnishing, upholstery, embroidery and patchwork. Performing arts provision includes 17 courses in music and dance including jazz improvisation, guitar, singing, Egyptian belly dance, line dance, tap, ballroom and Latin American dance. There are 33 tutors managed by an adult education manager and two curriculum co-ordinators, one for performing arts and one for visual arts. Most courses run during the evening for 10 weeks with some running for 15 or 30 weeks. A small number of visual arts classes are available during the day. The courses take place in the three community colleges, local schools and other community venues across the borough. Six per cent of the learners are from minority ethnic groups, 75 per cent are women and just under 50 per cent are over 60 years of age.

English, languages & communications

8. There are currently 657 learners enrolled on 58 courses from entry level to level 3 in Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch, Mandarin Chinese, German, Greek, Russian, Swedish and Urdu. There is one level 1 British sign language course and one English language general certificate of secondary education course. Courses at entry level are non-accredited. Other courses provide Open College Network accreditation or another examination certificate. Courses last from 10 to 32 weeks and are held weekly during term time for 90 minutes or two hours on weekdays, mostly in the evenings. There are five daytime courses. Thirteen per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups and just over 30 per cent are men. There are 29 tutors on hourly paid contracts of between two to six hours a week. One full-time and two half-time salaried staff co-ordinate the programme.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	42
Number of learner interviews	272
Number of staff interviews	71
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	45
Number of partner/external agency interviews	11

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

9. At the previous inspection, in May 2003, inspectors found that the provision in family learning was good. The quality of adult and community learning in ICT, visual and performing arts and media, and foundation programmes was satisfactory, but the provision in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, health, social care and public services, and English, languages and communications was unsatisfactory. Leadership and management were unsatisfactory. More specifically, equality of opportunity was satisfactory, whereas quality assurance was unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all of the areas of learning were found to be satisfactory or better. In those areas which were not reinspected, reasonable progress is being made in implementing the post-inspection action plans. Leadership and management are satisfactory. More specifically, equality of opportunity is satisfactory, whereas the arrangements for the quality assurance of the provision remain unsatisfactory.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4
Information & communications technology	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4

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Health, social care & public services	4

Visual & performing arts & media	3

English, languages & communications	4

Foundation programmes	3

Family learning	2

Grades awarded at reinspection

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	4

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	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	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

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

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

10. **In hospitality, sport and leisure, the development of skills by learners is good.** In sports courses, learners are able to maintain or improve their levels of fitness, mobility, flexibility and balance. Many learners develop good techniques during exercise and sporting activities.

11. **There is high retention and achievement on courses in health and social care.** The retention rate on first aid courses is 90 per cent and on the learning support assistants' course it is 86 per cent. On childcare courses, the achievement rate is 78 per cent. There is good progression by learners from levels 2 to 3 on the learning assistants' course.

12. **Retention is good in visual and performing arts** and learners produce satisfactory work. The retention rate rose to 94 per cent in 2003-04 on non-accredited courses. Attendance is also good. Learners develop good practical skills.

13. In English and modern foreign languages, retention has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Learners develop satisfactory standards of language overall. Their understanding of written language is good.

Quality of education and training

14. Of those lessons observed, most were judged to be satisfactory or better.

15. **In English and modern foreign languages, tutors use a wide variety of learning activities.** Lessons are well planned with a range of tasks, games and puzzles to develop learners' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

16. **Much teaching of listening skills is unsatisfactory.** Tutors often use English rather than the foreign language for feedback. Instructions are often given in English before the target language is used.

17. In hospitality, sport and leisure, teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. Lesson planning is satisfactory and tutors give good demonstrations in most sessions. In health and social care, lessons are well planned and organised, but introductions to the sessions are not always clear. Tutors use

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a variety of teaching methods to good effect. **In visual and performing arts, learning activities are designed well to develop the skills of all learners.** Some good handouts are used to support and reinforce learning.

18. Resources in all areas of learning are satisfactory. In English and modern foreign languages, most tutors use well-designed printed learning materials and audio tapes. However, there are no laptop computers to enable tutors to use the interactive whiteboards installed in schools where most courses are held. The weaknesses identified in visual and performing arts have been rectified, but there is too much use of tutors' own resources particularly in floristry, soft furnishing and beginners' art.

19. **The use of individual learning plans and the monitoring of progress are unsatisfactory in several areas of learning.** For example, in English and modern foreign languages, the plans record only work covered and have no specific targets and performance criteria. Many do not have the targets filled in. Others have no comments by tutors or learners. Where comments are made, they are often insufficiently evaluative. In visual and performing arts, many tutors and learners do not understand how to use the plans effectively.

20. **In visual and performing arts, there is a wide range of courses at beginner, improver and intermediate levels.** Successful outreach courses have been developed in partnership with family learning and skills for life. Partnerships have been established to develop courses for local minority ethnic groups.

21. **There are good partnerships in the health and social care curriculum area.** An effective link has been developed with a local university in order to carry out joint lesson observations, and guest speakers from other organisations cover relevant areas, such as behaviour management.

22. Since the previous inspection, the modern foreign languages programme has been restructured. It now satisfactorily meets the needs of most language learners and enables them to progress between courses.

23. **In health and social care, learners are well supported.** Tutors develop good working relationships with learners. In the childcare area, initial assessment has improved and a more suitable form of initial assessment is now in use. In hospitality, sport and leisure, initial health screening is now satisfactory. However, other aspects of initial assessment are unsatisfactory. **Initial assessment is very effective in English and modern foreign languages,** and is used well to help learners select the right course.

Leadership and management

24. **The leadership and management of family learning are good.** Strategic and curriculum management are particularly effective, with coherent strategies for implementing and improving a good range of family learning across Luton. There are good links with the school improvement and community development sections of the council, and currently courses are running in around 25 different schools and community

venues. There is good targeting of courses, with an emphasis on social inclusion.

25. **The provider makes effective use of partnership arrangements** to help identify learning needs, develop new provision and widen participation. Within the council itself, joint working with school improvement, community development, the youth service and libraries, greatly supports course developments.

26. Strategic and operational management is satisfactory, overall. Senior managers meet monthly, but these meetings do not sufficiently consider retention, achievement and the quality of provision. Curriculum management is particularly strong in family learning and ICT, with skilled management of change, well-supported staff and a wide range of staff training. It is generally satisfactory in the other areas of learning. The progress made in implementing the post-inspection action plan in those areas not reinspected is adequate. Communication is satisfactory.

27. Management of resources is satisfactory. Accommodation is good in some community venues and unsatisfactory in others. Learning resources are generally satisfactory. However, in some curriculum areas, there is too much use of tutors' own learning materials and resources.

28. Support for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs is adequate. Initial assessment is carried out to identify needs and provide appropriate support. An additional support worker now co-ordinates this work.

29. **There is insufficient systematic planning and co-ordination of staff development.** There is no staff development plan. Some staff have good access to staff development but others do not.

30. The staff appraisal process is comprehensive, and clearly defined, measurable and time-bound targets are set for staff. However, many tutors are currently not included in the appraisal process.

31. **The management information is insufficiently developed.** Data is not used effectively for target-setting, to support planning or to monitor effectively the provision. Managers do not yet have access to sufficient data at curriculum level. There is insufficient use of data by curriculum co-ordinators.

32. Since the previous inspection the provider has improved its communication of equality of opportunity to learners and staff. All learners now receive a copy of the learner charter and a learner handbook. Staff training in equality of opportunity has been provided but the take-up has been low.

33. The adult education service has produced a race equality policy, revised in June 2004. The arrangements for monitoring this policy are not adequate. Access improvements have been made to accommodation since the previous inspection.

34. **Quality assurance arrangements are incomplete.** There is no established quality

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assurance system. Managers do not regularly and systematically monitor retention, achievement and the overall quality of provision. Quality assurance processes are not yet fully established. There is not enough sharing of good practice.

35. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and clearly identifies many of the key strengths and weaknesses which were found by inspectors in the areas of learning.

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

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good leadership and management of family learning
- effective partnerships to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and co-ordination of staff development
- insufficiently developed management information system
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths

- good skills development
- effective actions to develop programmes

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of individual learning plans
- weak quality assurance

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- high retention and achievement
- good learner support
- good partnership arrangements

Weaknesses

- weak quality assurance

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good retention
- good development of practical skills
- wide range of courses

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- weak quality assurance

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- wide variety of learning activities
- very effective initial assessment

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory teaching of listening skills
- unsatisfactory use of individual learning plans in beginners' non-accredited courses

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

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

Strengths

- good leadership and management of family learning
- effective partnerships to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and co-ordination of staff development
- insufficiently developed management information system
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements

36. The leadership and management of family learning are good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Strategic and curriculum management are particularly effective, with coherent strategies for implementing and improving a good range of effective family learning courses across Luton. The provider makes good use of council, regeneration and other funding streams, and budgets are managed well. Long-standing and productive links exist with the school improvement and community development sections of the council, with current courses running in approximately 25 different schools and community venues. There is good targeting of courses, with an emphasis on social inclusion and working with families who are educationally and socially disadvantaged. Managers, adult education tutors, family workers and school teachers work together well to identify needs, work with families and run courses. A number of purpose-built family rooms in schools are well used. Courses run during the school day and also on Saturday mornings for parents who are employed during the week. Progression is good, for example, onto classes specifically developed in schools following family learning courses, or onto other adult education courses in literacy, numeracy, language and ICT.

37. The Luton adult education service makes effective use of partnership arrangements to identify learning needs, develop new provision and widen participation, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Within the council itself, joint working with school improvement, community development, the youth service and libraries, greatly supports course development. For example, ICT courses currently operate in five libraries, with additional provision for library staff to upgrade their ICT skills and qualifications. Health and social care staff work well with the early years partnership. Useful work with employers is developing ICT courses for learners in the workplace, with course times fitting around workers' shift patterns. Specialist staff from the music service and the local university support the observation of teaching and learning process. Some

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joint planning takes place with other providers in the area to ensure local communities' learning needs are met. Collaborative arrangements with local colleges of further education and Bedfordshire LEA support skills for life tutors to gain level 3 and level 4 qualifications in literacy and numeracy. There is also good use of a service level agreement with a provider of advice and guidance for adults.

38. Overall strategic and operational management is satisfactory. The council's executive committee approves key decisions and the council portfolio holder for adult education has a good understanding of the provision. The three-year strategic plan is satisfactory. Useful six-weekly meetings with the director, senior managers, the LSC and key partners, provide an effective forum for monitoring the provision. However, there is poor recording of the minutes and action points. Senior managers meet monthly, but these meetings do not sufficiently consider retention, achievement and the quality of the provision. Curriculum management is particularly strong in family learning and ICT, with skilled management of change, well-supported staff and a wide range of staff training.

39. Communications are satisfactory. Managers are based at different locations across the borough and good use is made of e-mail and formal and informal contact. A termly newsletter is sent to all tutors. The establishment of curriculum co-ordinators in the areas of learning has also greatly improved communications.

40. Management of resources is satisfactory. Most staff are appropriately qualified or are working towards appropriate qualifications. Accommodation is good in some community venues but unsatisfactory in others. Learning resources are generally satisfactory, but in some curriculum areas tutors have to provide their own learning materials and resources. Budgets are still mainly based on historical calculations and allocated by geographical areas, with some money allocated centrally. An exception is family learning, where a devolved budget is managed well by the curriculum co-ordinator. In other curriculum areas, co-ordinators generally are not informed about current budgets. An agreed management policy on minimum class sizes is not always sufficiently adhered to.

41. Support for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs is adequate. Initial assessment is carried out to identify needs, and provision is appropriate. An additional support worker now co-ordinates this work.

42. There is insufficient planning and co-ordination of staff development. There is no staff development plan or consistent and coherent approach to staff development. For example, new quality assurance arrangements are being introduced for managers and tutors across the Luton adult education service, but no relevant staff training is planned to ensure effective implementation of these arrangements. Although some staff have good access to staff development others do not and staff development is not managed consistently well across the provider. Tutors are paid to attend key staff development sessions organised by adult education managers, but attendance at these events can be poor. Records of staff development activities are incomplete and plans to make greater use of the management information system are not yet implemented. Managers are not sufficiently aware of financial and budgetary issues relating to staff development. Luton

Borough Council's comprehensive appraisal process is used to appraise all key managers, and clearly defined, measurable and time-bound targets are set. However, different appraisal processes are in use for some administrative staff. Many tutors are currently not included in an appraisal process. Tutor appraisal is being piloted in one curriculum area, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

43. The management information system remains insufficiently developed. Data is not used effectively for target-setting, to support planning or to monitor effectively the quality of provision. A new management information system has, until very recently, been unable to provide sufficiently robust and reliable data. Key staff have received only basic training in the use of the system. Managers do not yet have access to sufficient data at curriculum level. There is insufficient use of data by curriculum co-ordinators to plan and improve the provision.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

44. The provider works well with external organisations to enrol new learners into adult and community education. This is particularly so in family learning. Some learners have particularly low self-esteem or have poor previous experiences with education. The family learning provision enables learners to attend courses within familiar settings. Learners on these courses progress to other courses. Since the previous inspection, the provision of crèche facilities has expanded significantly with over 70 crèches now available. In some areas of learning, such as literacy and numeracy, the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups exceeds the local average, whereas in others, such as visual and performing arts, the proportion is comparatively low. Overall, the participation of learners from minority ethnic groups closely reflects the proportion for the borough as a whole.

45. Since the previous inspection, the LEA has improved its promotion of equality of opportunity to learners and staff. All learners now receive a copy of the learner charter and a handbook. These make specific reference to the rights and expectations of learners in relation to equality of opportunity. In addition to an English language version, the charter is available in six other languages, reflecting local minority ethnic groups. However, it is not available in large print or Braille. The handbook contains clear guidance on how to make a complaint. Publicity materials are translated into the most commonly used languages. All tutors are given a guide to the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 with respect to teaching adults. Staff training in equality of opportunity has been provided but the take-up has been low. Other training events related to specific issues, such as deaf awareness, are better attended. In many courses the learning materials appropriately reflect equality of opportunity, for example, by including positive images of various groups of learners.

46. Luton Borough Council has an equal opportunities policy that was last revised in 1999. It relates to employees and service users. The lifelong learning department has a comprehensive equalities action plan for 2004-05. This includes references to adult and community learning. The adult education service has produced a race equality policy that was revised in June 2004. The arrangements for monitoring this policy are not yet

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adequate. Improvements have been made to the accessibility of accommodation since the previous inspection. Plans have been approved to make appropriate adjustments in six locations this year.

47. There is insufficient use of equal opportunities data. The LEA is aware of participation rates by area of learning. For example, the self-assessment report identifies the low participation by minority ethnic groups in visual and performing arts courses. It is also aware of areas where there are low enrolments by men or by people with disabilities. Enrolment targets in these areas have been increased. The LEA's management information system is not yet adequate to enable managers to analyse retention and achievement data by area of learning in terms of age, gender or ethnicity. The LEA has identified the need for further analytical capability in this area. At present it is not able to use the data to identify specific issues or to set appropriate targets within areas of learning.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

48. Over the past 18 months, some progress has been made by LEA staff to develop new procedures and processes to quality assure the provision. However, quality assurance arrangements at the time of reinspection remain incomplete and there is no established quality assurance system. A planning cycle for monitoring key processes exists in draft form, but managers have not yet implemented it. Managers do not regularly and systematically monitor retention, achievement and the overall quality of provision. The quality assurance system in the new tutor handbook is only a set of minimum standards for tutors, regarding significant aspects of the teaching and learning process. There is insufficient detail on how these standards are to be monitored and quality assured. Quality assurance processes are not yet fully established in the work of all tutors. Inconsistencies in practice exist across the different areas of learning. There is not enough sharing of good practice. For example, the effective use of individual learning plans is well established in family learning, but is a key weakness in hospitality, sport and leisure, visual and performing arts and media, and modern foreign languages.

49. Schemes of work, lesson plans and other paperwork are satisfactory in ICT, literacy and numeracy and family learning. However, in visual and performing arts and media, there is poor implementation of course paperwork. In English and modern foreign languages, the content of course reviews varies from area to area. Learner feedback is regularly and systematically collected on some courses but not in others. A new electronic questionnaire to collect learner feedback has been devised but not yet implemented.

50. Arrangements to observe teaching and learning are much improved, with the appointment and training of specialist staff taking place throughout the service. A standard observation form is now in place with an improved focus on learning as well as teaching. New tutors are a priority for lesson observation. Unsatisfactory teaching observations are generally followed up with subsequent observations to monitor progress. Much informal monitoring also takes place. However, there are still not enough observations in some areas of learning and inconsistencies in approach remain in

others. Some aspects of the teaching and learning process are not adequately covered by the observations, such as learners' work.

51. Overall, internal verification and moderation are satisfactory on most accredited courses. However, in health and social care, there is insufficient recording relating to internal verification and moderation processes.

52. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and clearly identifies many of the key strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. All key managers were involved in the production of the self-assessment report, with some consultation taking place with other local providers. However, not all staff are sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	399	3

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

Strengths

- good skills development
- effective actions to develop programmes

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of individual learning plans
- weak quality assurance

Achievement and standards

53. The development of skills by learners is good. In sports courses, learners maintain and improve their levels of fitness, mobility, flexibility and balance. Many learners identify benefits including gaining relief from the symptoms of medical conditions such as joint problems, as well as stress reduction and rehabilitation following illness and injury. Many learners develop good techniques in exercise and sporting activities. Older learners make good use of the social gains from attending the courses. Learners are able to apply their learning effectively in their everyday lives. For example, in sugar craft classes, learners are able to produce professional standards of work. One learner produced a particularly good wedding cake. In cultural cookery classes, learners learn about the use of herbs, spices and vegetables commonly used in the cuisine. In 2003-04, 22 learners completed the basic food hygiene certificate. A further three certificates have been completed to date in 2004-05. There are no other accredited courses in this area.

54. Poor attendance was identified as a weakness at some of the sessions during the previous inspection. A system has been put in place to improve attendance. If learners do not attend a session for two weeks they are contacted by the tutor or the administrator. There was an overall attendance rate of 73 per cent during the week of inspection with some poor attendance in some sessions.

Quality of education and training

55. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory and have improved since the

previous inspection. Of the sessions observed, over 90 per cent were satisfactory or better. Lesson planning is satisfactory in most sessions. Learners' work is corrected and they are given alternative exercises appropriate to their individual needs and abilities. Tutors give good demonstrations in most sessions.

56. Resources are satisfactory. All tutors are appropriately qualified in their subject area. At most venues, accommodation is adequate, although at some community venues learning is interrupted by external noise. This is most noticeable during the relaxation periods of some sessions. Adequate space is provided for activities such as yoga, keep fit and swimming. In some beginners' sugar craft sessions, learners have to borrow the tutor's specialist equipment. Most learners purchase their own equipment for these sessions.

57. Insufficient health screening was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection. This is now satisfactory. All learners complete a standard written health screening form that enables tutors to assess their readiness for exercise. Medical screening forms are sufficiently detailed, allowing tutors to make necessary adaptations to exercise for learners with medical conditions. Most tutors do not carry out verbal checks of the health of learners at the start of each session.

58. Individual learning plans are ineffective, a weakness identified at the previous inspection. There is insufficient identification of learners' goals. Many learners do not formally identify their individual goals or state their reason for attending sessions. When goals are identified they are recorded on an individual learning plan. Tutors vary in the extent to which they record useful information, or make use of the information when planning lessons. Some tutors use the learning plans to record learners' progress while others do not use the form. Individual learning plans are not completed at the start of the course or revisited on a regular basis during the course in order to check on the progress made by each learner. In some sessions the learning plan is used as a weekly work log.

59. Insufficient monitoring and recording of learners' progress was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. Some learners do not receive regular feedback on how their performance or fitness has improved. Many tutors do not record the progress of individual learners. In some sessions, learners are asked to assess their own improvement, but this is often not completed or recorded. There is inadequate initial assessment. An initial assessment tool is being used for the basic food hygiene certificate, but there is no formal initial assessment for other courses, apart from health screening. Some tutors carry out their own initial assessments but this information is often not recorded on individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

60. Managers have taken effective actions to develop the programmes. The range of courses has been carefully reviewed and the range now provided better reflects the educational needs of prospective learners. Recreational sessions are no longer available

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through the adult and community learning programme. Managers have taken appropriate actions to raise the standard of teaching, and improve the quality of tutors and the appropriateness of their qualifications. A number of tutors who did not meet the necessary standards are no longer employed. This process has been managed effectively. There remains a reasonable range of progression routes available to learners, for example, beginners and improvers swimming, beginners and intermediate yoga and beginners and intermediate tai chi.

61. Good partnerships have been established with the sports development and recreation centres across the borough. Recreational courses that were taken out of the adult and community learning programme are now provided by these centres, for example, aqua natal sessions. All tutors employed to teach swimming are employed by the swimming development school that provides professional development to all tutors.

62. A number of weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have not yet been fully rectified. A curriculum manager was appointed in August 2003. Three occupationally competent curriculum co-ordinators are now in post, although the appointments are fairly recent. They have carried out teaching observations and they are providing additional support for tutors.

63. Quality assurance is weak. A number of processes have been put in place to tackle the previously identified weaknesses. Tutors have been trained in the use of relevant forms, but their implementation has been inconsistent. Co-ordinators have carried out individual sessions in the use of paperwork for tutors. However, it is not mandatory that tutors use the paperwork. There has been no team meeting of the curriculum co-ordinators to discuss the area as a whole and to standardise practice. There has been no monitoring of paperwork to ensure that it is well used. Some tutors give detailed feedback to learners on their progress, but others do not. Good practice is not shared among tutors. The self-assessment report partially identified some of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	222	3

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

Strengths

- high retention and achievement
- good learner support
- good partnership arrangements

Weaknesses

- weak quality assurance

Achievement and standards

64. Retention and achievement are high on courses in this area of learning. This strength has been maintained since the previous inspection and covers a range of programmes. For example, retention on first aid courses is 90 per cent and on the learning support assistants' course it is 86 per cent. In childcare, achievement rates are 78 per cent. Nearly half of the learners on the learning support assistants' course progressed from national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 to level 3. Learners develop good self-confidence and ability during their courses. Portfolios generally contain a good range of evidence. However, some portfolios contain too many handouts.

Quality of education and training

65. Learner support is good. Tutors develop good working relationships with learners and work well to ensure that learners are able to participate well in the learning activities. Tutors make good use of small groups for learning and provide additional individual support at the start and end of sessions. Learners can access additional support outside the taught session by using e-mails and work contact numbers. Many tutors allow time at the start of the session for learners to discuss any issues regarding homework or assignments. Some learners are given additional individual tutorial support to ensure they understand the NVQ requirements. An independent organisation, which has a base at each of the three main sites, provides learners with additional advice and guidance. Advisory staff are fully involved in enrolment week and adult learners week and they attend tutor briefing sessions.

66. Partnership arrangements are good. There is an effective link with a local university

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to carry out joint lesson observations within the learning support assistants' curriculum area. University staff inform learners about progression routes. The curriculum team also has good links with the LEA and invites guest speakers to cover relevant areas, such as behaviour management.

67. Of those learning sessions observed by inspectors, all were judged to be satisfactory or better. Tutors demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge. Sessions were well planned and organised, but introductions to the sessions are not always clear. Tutors make good use of a variety of teaching methods. One class observed was able to test out various types of equipment for water play and discuss the types of learning it encouraged. Learners apply their learning well with their own children. In one class, the tutor rearranged the furniture to enable small-group work.

68. Most classes are well resourced. Tutors build up their own resource materials. The childcare co-ordinator provides practical equipment for the first steps childcare classes. The resources are used appropriately by the various classes.

69. Poor initial assessment and support was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. Within the childcare area, initial assessment has improved. A more appropriate form of initial assessment is now in use. Where appropriate, learners are advised to take other courses before starting a childcare course. Learners who are accepted on to courses are not given the results of their initial assessment unless a need for additional support is highlighted. The use of assessment within the workplace on the learning support assistants' course has improved since the previous inspection. It is now timetabled into the programme. Learners have a good understanding of the procedure for NVQ assessment and have a copy of the awarding body's appeals procedure.

Leadership and management

70. Operational management of the area is satisfactory. Staff are well supported by their curriculum managers. The co-ordinator is involved in consultation over the self-assessment report. All tutors receive the new tutor handbook, but not all are clear about the new quality assurance processes. Tutors regularly attend meetings. However, minutes are either not taken or are insufficiently detailed. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are clearly recorded in teaching and curriculum files.

71. Quality assurance is weak. The format for individual learning plans has been revised but is not implemented consistently across the curriculum area. There is some good practice. For example, in the first steps provision, learners complete a weekly comments sheet which links to the individual learning plan. This approach has not been shared with other areas. In some other courses, learners do not use individual learning plans. Records relating to internal verification are not adequate. There is no indication of which units are discussed during standardisation meetings, or the number of portfolios examined during the meetings. Sampling records are incomplete.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	673	3

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

Strengths

- good retention
- good development of practical skills
- wide range of courses

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- weak quality assurance

Achievement and standards

72. Retention is good, a strength identified at the previous inspection. Retention was 92 per cent in 2001-02 and has increased to 94 per cent in 2003-04 on non-accredited courses. Attendance in the week of inspection was good, at 86 per cent.

73. In most courses, the standard of learners' work is satisfactory. However, achievement on the photography course is poor. Learners develop good practical skills. Many learners gain sufficient skills and confidence to work at home on their own projects. Learners fully understand the improvements in their visual awareness and the impact that this has had on other aspects of their lives such as interior decorating and gardening. Learners clearly understand their learning goals. In line dance, learners are able to perform long and complex sequences of movement.

Quality of education and training

74. Learners develop good practical skills. Appropriate tasks are provided to enable them to gain good self-confidence and relevant experience. In dance classes, learners are given adequate time to consolidate basic movement skills before being introduced to more complex tasks. In ballroom dance, the basic steps and elements of style are successfully learnt. Beginners dance with increasing levels of confidence during sessions. Activities are designed to develop learners' skills regardless of their ability and level. Some good handouts are used to support and reinforce learning. In a session on working with stained glass, a learner gained sufficient skill and confidence to purchase equipment and work independently at home. In the same group, another learner used his new skills in his job as a builder and carpenter. In some classes, tutors do not use the

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skills of the more able or experienced learners to illustrate how skills are developed.

75. There is a wide range of courses at beginner, improver and intermediate levels. Most learners fully understand the social and health-related aspects of study. For example, one learner is attending a course to regain her confidence following an illness. One learner is using her newly developed skills in drawing to help her children with their art work. Successful outreach courses have been developed in partnership with family learning and skills for life. These courses are aimed at learners from minority ethnic backgrounds and for learners with mental health problems. Some good links are being developed with local community partners. The partnerships aim to develop courses relevant to local minority ethnic groups. Currently, however, much of the content of courses does not reflect the cultural diversity of the local community. Many learners enrol on the same course a number of times. Some new learners are not able to attend some courses that are over-enrolled. Returning learners accounted for 35 per cent of learners at the time of inspection.

76. Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. Approximately half of the lessons observed were judged to be good or better. Most tutors effectively enable learners of differing abilities and levels of skill to work productively throughout the session. Some teaching is well planned and structured. Some tutors are effectively using the newly introduced course paperwork. Learners respond well to tasks set and are able to apply them to their work both inside and outside the class. In dance classes, steps and patterns are taught effectively and there is some emphasis on the quality of the movement and elements of style. Some staff do not set tasks that help the development of creative skills. In one watercolour class there was too much use of secondary source information. In floristry, learners develop good skills in composition and colour and work confidently on individual projects. In lace making, learners develop sufficient skills to work independently outside the class and the historical significance of Bedford lace in the region is highlighted in order to help learners explore a variety of techniques.

77. Resources are satisfactory. The issues raised at the previous inspection have been resolved. New enlargers have been purchased for photography courses and mirrors have been provided for a belly dancing class. Generally the facilities are at least satisfactory. One learning centre is particularly well furnished. Dance resources are appropriate with sprung floors and adequate space for the number of learners. Resources available for some specialist courses are inappropriate. In soft furnishing, the cutting tables are too low and there are no ironing facilities. There is too much use of tutors' own resources, particularly in floristry, soft furnishing and beginners' art. There is no budget for the purchase of equipment or consumables. If tutors require resources they make their requests to the curriculum co-ordinator. Some tutors are not aware that they can do this.

78. Leaflets are available for all courses and are clearly written. Most provide a clear review of the course content, aims, objectives and additional costs. For one accredited course the information does not inform learners of the additional study required to achieve the qualification.

79. There is insufficient monitoring of learners' progress. There is inconsistent and insufficient use of the individual learning plans. In some classes they are not used as working documents in order accurately to record and evaluate learners' progress. The self-assessment report identified the need for further development of the use of individual learning plans. Many tutors and learners do not understand how to use the plans effectively. In watercolour sessions, the individual learning plans are used effectively and provide useful information on each learner's progress. In one beginners' art class, the tutor made effective use of the individual learning plans in conjunction with an assessment of a classroom task.

Leadership and management

80. Operational management of the area is satisfactory, but quality assurance is weak. There is insufficient data to aid improvements and management decision-making. There is not enough data for managers to set targets. Since the previous inspection, progress has been made in developing policies and procedures for quality assurance. A comprehensive tutor handbook has been developed and circulated to all staff. The implementation of this and associated paperwork is inconsistent. There is no systematic collection and analysis of learner feedback. A new feedback system has been introduced. Sharing of good practice is inadequate. Meetings and training events have been provided for staff to share good practice, but not all tutors attend these events. A lesson observation scheme has been established. The self-assessment report accurately identified the key weaknesses of the provision.

English, languages & communications**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	657	3

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

Strengths

- wide variety of learning activities
- very effective initial assessment

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory teaching of listening skills
- unsatisfactory use of individual learning plans in beginners' non-accredited courses

Achievement and standards

81. Retention has improved significantly and is now satisfactory with 78 per cent of learners completing their courses. Figures for overall achievements were not available at the time of inspection. Learners develop satisfactory standards of language overall. Their understanding of written language is good. Learners' writing skills are satisfactory, but their understanding of spoken language is not sufficiently developed. The standard of pronunciation is unsatisfactory. Many learners have difficulties with correct pronunciation, intonation and stress, which are not always tackled by tutors.

Quality of education and training

82. Tutors use a wide variety of learning activities to interest and motivate learners. Lessons are well planned with a range of stimulating tasks, games and puzzles to develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Tutors make extensive use of paired work to ensure that all learners are able to practise their speaking skills. Learners work well together and are fully involved in class discussions.

83. Very effective initial self-assessments are used to help learners select the most appropriate course. All learners complete a form that asks about their experience of the language, contact with speakers of the language, and reasons for learning. Learners who are not beginners also complete a one-page self-assessment to determine whether they should choose a level 1, 2 or 3 course. Tutors give good verbal feedback during lessons and keep satisfactory records of progress for learners working towards accreditation.

84. Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory. Most tutors use well-designed printed learning materials and audio tapes. Course books and other materials are

carefully chosen. The use of ICT resources has increased since the previous inspection. Many tutors use material from the internet and refer learners to appropriate websites. One learning centre has a whiteboard for interactive exercises. However, there are no laptop computers to enable tutors to use the interactive whiteboards installed in schools where most courses are held. Some learning materials are out of date, with prices in former currencies. Most tutors are qualified and experienced. A small number of tutors do not have teaching qualifications.

85. The restructured programme of courses satisfactorily meets the needs of most language learners. Beginners' courses in all languages are now 10 weeks long in order to attract learners who would be deterred from joining longer courses. All beginners' courses have the same content and use the appropriate version of same easily available course book and CD-ROM. Learners are able to progress between courses. One 15-week course is still provided.

86. Publicity and guidance have improved and are now satisfactory. Course descriptions are produced for all courses. The standardisation of the courses provided at beginner level in two areas has clarified previous confusions around course content. However, the continued existence of the small, alternative beginners' programme creates difficulties for some potential learners. The current prospectus is not fully accurate in its description of all courses as being equally suitable for business and personal use.

87. Much teaching of listening skills is unsatisfactory. Tutors often use English rather than the foreign language to provide feedback. Instructions are often given in English, before the target language is used. Listening exercises on tape are generally not at the correct volume. Some tutors do not allow enough time for repetition and reinforcement during taped exercises.

88. The use of individual learning plans for beginners on non-accredited courses is unsatisfactory. The plans record work covered, with space provided for learners and tutors to comment on progress. Specific targets and performance criteria are not set and there is not enough evidence of achievement. Many plans do not have targets. Others have no comments by tutors or learners. Where comments are made, they are often insufficiently evaluative.

Leadership and management

89. Operational management of the area is satisfactory. Effective action has been taken to rectify weaknesses in curriculum management, with the appointment of curriculum co-ordinators and the designation of a senior manager to lead the area. The team holds monthly minuted meetings to agree policy and implementation. A staff development programme has been reinstated. Training events are held termly, staff receive a training allowance and attendance is good. The programme is also open to other tutors throughout Bedfordshire. Programme planning has been co-ordinated across the borough and the number of courses has been reduced to improve class size. Curriculum co-ordinators do not fully understand the management information. Different formats for

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course descriptions are still in use. There is no budget for the purchase of laptop computers to use with interactive whiteboards. Participation by men is higher than in other areas of learning, at 34 per cent. Equality of opportunity is discussed with learners at induction when they are provided with the adult education service's leaflets on equalities and harassment. However, there are considerably fewer learners from minority ethnic groups in this area than on other programmes.

90. Quality assurance has improved since the previous inspection. More teaching observations by language specialists are now carried out. Co-ordinators receive effective training on observation, and grading is generally accurate. Lesson grades are moderated by a senior manager and amended where necessary. There are effective internal verification systems for accredited courses. The judgements in the self-assessment report are self-critical and mostly accurate. However, some aspects of quality assurance remain unsatisfactory. Co-ordinators have not been sufficiently involved in developing the self-assessment report. There is insufficient moderation of tutors' assessment of beginners' progress on non-accredited courses. Teaching observations are not carried out sufficiently frequently. There is insufficient support for new staff to develop their teaching skills. The information asked of tutors in course reviews varies between areas.