

REINSPECTION REPORT

Rotherham LEA Reinspection

14 May 2004



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. 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.

REINSPECTION REPORT

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's (RMBC's) adult and community learning provision is the responsibility of the community learning service (the service). The service is part of the education, culture and leisure services directorate. A community learning manager is responsible for implementing the community learning strategy and is assisted by a family learning co-ordinator, an adult community learning co-ordinator and a basic skills manager. Other staff provide support in teaching, development and administrative roles. The service, which also includes a team to support out-of-hours learning for young people, has expanded since the previous inspection, and now comprises 30 staff.

2. With the exception of family learning, RMBC is not a direct provider of adult and community learning. It has contracts with 42 learning providers, ranging from large colleges to small voluntary organisations, which provide learning across 85 venues. At the time of the reinspection, RMBC had recruited 1,241 learners, compared with 1,236 at the time of the previous inspection. The numbers of learners on family learning programmes has increased and there has been a reduction in the numbers of learners on information and communication technology (ICT) programmes.

3. The borough of Rotherham has some areas of significant deprivation and it is the policy of the service to attract new learners by supporting non-vocational, non-accredited learning provision through its subcontractors. The service works with a range of partners and is a member of the Rotherham learning partnership and its subcommittees.

4. RMBC funds learning through the South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Single Regeneration Budget. The European Social Fund supports the learning network project.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

5. During 2003-04, RMBC offered 63 courses in ICT. There were 29 different courses delivered to 221 learners who were enrolled with 12 subcontractors. Since September 2003, 48 per cent of learners have been men and 20 per cent have been from minority ethnic groups. At the time of the reinspection, learners were enrolled with four subcontractors. Courses are offered to a wide range of learners, including the unemployed, the homeless, asylum seekers and refugees, older learners, and those with a range of visual or hearing impairments. There are also courses specifically for Asian men and women and community programmes involving ICT, delivered in schools and through community and voluntary groups. Most of the provision is during the day, but some is available in the evenings and at weekends. All the courses provide 'first step' learning, and include taster and introductory courses. Most courses last for two hours each week for eight weeks. All courses are non-accredited and free of charge.

Foundation programmes

6. Foundation provision includes community learning and provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. During 2003-04, RMBC has enrolled 616 learners. In this area of learning, 55 per cent of learners are on community learning programmes. These learners include asylum seekers and refugees. Forty-five per cent of learners are on programmes for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Twenty-six per cent of learners on community learning programmes are men and 14 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Thirty-one per cent of learners with learning difficulties are men and 18 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. At the time of the reinspection, RMBC subcontracted with 19 providers. Of these subcontractors, four plan and manage the programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and two providers offer single courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as part of their wider adult and community learning programme. Subcontractors include colleges of further education, voluntary and community organisations and social services. Programmes are non-accredited and include craft subjects, keep fit, music technology, drug education for parents, English for specific purposes, self advocacy and independence in the community. Literacy and numeracy is planned to form an integral part of all programmes. All programmes are free of charge.

Family learning

7. There are 404 learners in family learning, which includes 323 learners on family literacy, language and numeracy courses and 81 on wider family learning programmes. Most family literacy, language and numeracy courses last for 12 or 24 hours and are designed to fit in with learners' childcare arrangements. The main target groups are parents and other family members with children at the schools where the provision is based. Some learning sessions are linked specifically to the stages of the standard assessment tests. During the past year, RMBC has offered family learning in 51 primary and two secondary schools. The Open College Network accredits the longer family literacy, language and numeracy courses at levels 1 and 2. Wider family learning programmes are non-accredited and comprise a range of taster and short courses. All courses are free of charge. Subcontractors provide free childcare which is supported by adult and community learning funding.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	30
Number of learner interviews	169
Number of staff interviews	25
Number of subcontractor interviews	59
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	28
Number of partner/external agency interviews	24

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. The previous inspection found that the provision in family learning was good and the provision in ICT and community learning was satisfactory. The foundation provision was very weak. Leadership and management and the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection, the family learning provision was found to be good. Leadership and management, including equality of opportunity and quality assurance, and ICT were satisfactory. The provision on foundation programmes was unsatisfactory. RMBC has been referred to its funding bodies for emergency action.

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	4
Quality assurance	4

Information & communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	

Foundation programmes	5
Contributory grades:	

Family learning	2
Contributory grades:	

Community learning	3
Contributory grades:	

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	3

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

Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

Family learning	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. **Learners on ICT courses make considerable gains in skill and confidence.** They learn how to work with a computer, produce attractive documents, use the internet and send e-mail messages. Some older learners do not have sufficient opportunity to show that they can retain and integrate these skills into larger tasks.

10. **There is good skills development in most foundation programmes.** Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities improve their speaking skills and can confidently express their views and feelings to others. **In some community learning sessions, there is good practical skills development which builds the confidence and self-esteem of new learners.** However, overall **there is insufficient attention in foundation programmes to the planning of individual learning activities** to enable learners to achieve their learning goals. Short-term milestones are not always set precisely to monitor learners' progress.

11. **Learners' achievements in family learning are good.** Parents make good progress in understanding their children's education and they develop good communication and parenting skills. They become effective in promoting learning through everyday situations. All learners on family literacy, language and numeracy courses have the option of attaining accreditation. In the autumn term, 42 of 47 the learners who sought accreditation were successful.

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	2	3	4	0	0	0	9
Foundation programmes	0	3	2	10	4	0	0	19
Family learning	1	3	3	3	0	0	0	10
Total	1	8	8	17	4	0	0	38

12. The service has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The proportion of learning sessions graded as satisfactory or better has increased from 87.5 per cent to 89.5 per cent. The proportion of learning sessions graded as good or better has increased in ICT and family learning.

13. Teaching and learning on family literacy and numeracy programmes is very good. All of the sessions observed were judged to be good or better. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and outcomes. Tutors have high expectations of their learners and a brisk and challenging pace for learning is set. Courses are practical and fun. **Literacy and numeracy skills effectively form an integral part of the learning activities.**

14. Most of the observed learning sessions in ICT were graded as satisfactory or good. Unlike at the previous inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In many lessons, the teaching of initial ICT skills was well planned using schemes of work and lesson plans.

15. Although the foundation area of learning remains unsatisfactory, there has been some improvement in teaching on courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

16. There are good resources to support learning in ICT. Courses are provided in comfortable and familiar environments at a variety of times to suit learners' lifestyles and commitments. Sometimes laptop computers are used where space or portability requirements make them more suitable.

17. In the foundation area of learning, there is good access to specialist resources for some learners on community programmes and programmes designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most teaching and learning resources are satisfactory. However, there are some poor resources for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) lessons. Some accommodation is poor.

18. In family learning there is a good range of resources in all centres. Learning materials are well designed and of a very good quality. There is an ample supply of children's books to borrow. Computers and digital cameras are used well. Some schools have refurbished rooms for family learning classes. However, in other cases, the accommodation is too cramped or is not equipped with tables and chairs suitable for adults. Childcare is provided for learners on most courses but space is very limited in

some centres.

19. ICT learners receive good individual support. Tutors have developed good working relationships with learners. They help learners to gain confidence and overcome their anxieties about using information technology (IT).

20. In some of the wider family learning programmes there is an insufficient variety of learning activities. Some lessons progress too slowly and do not challenge learners. These lessons do not sufficiently meet the needs of adult learners.

21. Some ICT tutors set no individual targets for learners at the start of their courses and do not update learning plans through periodic reviews. In a significant number of learning sessions there was no time set aside for learners to work on individual practical projects to practise and reinforce their learning and work more independently of the teacher.

22. Most foundation learning sessions do not sufficiently focus on individual learning. The quality of initial assessment varies. Where initial assessment does take place, it is not used effectively to plan individual learning outcomes. Reviews for foundation learners are not sufficiently effective in identifying their progress. Targets are not routinely or regularly reviewed and revised. Evaluation of individual learning does not always formally take place after each session.

Leadership and management

23. RMBC has a clear strategy for adult and community learning. Good recognition is given to the role of the service in contributing to the achievement of RMBC's objectives. The strategy is clearly aligned with the objectives of the local lifelong learning partnership. Senior managers in the education, culture and leisure services directorate monitor the performance of the service effectively.

24. The operation of the service is well managed by a strong team. At the time of the previous inspection a number of staff had only recently taken up their posts. Since that time there have been further appointments and the service now comprises 30 staff. However, there are many staff currently on fixed-term contracts. Co-ordinators are well qualified and appropriately experienced. Roles and responsibilities in the team are clear. Staff communicate well with providers. The service also benefits from being able to call upon the specialist expertise available within RMBC.

25. There is particularly good curriculum management in family learning. There is much sharing of good practice with staff from other agencies working alongside the service's tutors. **There are good strategic partnerships with schools.**

26. There has been good progress since the previous inspection in the development of partnerships with the voluntary sector. The service currently contracts with 37 voluntary sector providers, including several who have had no previous experience in providing learning programmes. A good training programme has been provided.

27. The service has made good progress in recruiting learners from under-represented groups. Geographical communities and communities of interest are well served by the service's provision. In the current year, courses are offered at 85 venues which represents a significant increase on the previous year's 29 venues. Priority is given to working with providers who offer programmes in areas of high deprivation. Good use has recently been made of statistical data for the local area provided by RMBC's corporate statistical team, allowing for more refined analysis in the planning of future targeted provision.

28. The service has a comprehensive quality assurance framework which covers all aspects of the learning process. It was piloted with subcontractors and amended before being formally implemented in September 2003. An external scrutiny committee, which includes representatives from RMBC's quality assurance team and the voluntary and community sectors, has monitored the implementation of the post-inspection action plan, and receives quality assurance reports.

29. The management of subcontractors is now satisfactory. The service has introduced a rigorous procedure for vetting providers and an open bidding process for new work. The overall management of resources is satisfactory.

30. The collection and analysis of data are now satisfactory. The demographic profile of learners recruited to the programmes is closely monitored. Overall service targets are set for the recruitment of particular types of learner and providers are expected to contribute to achieving these targets. The overall performance of learners' retention and achievement is monitored and analysed by programme area. However, data about learners' performance are not used to identify trends in the performance of specific groups of learners.

31. The procedures for self-assessment are satisfactory. Many of the subcontractors have attended training on self-assessment and their reports usefully contributed to the overall self-assessment report produced by the service. The service's self-assessment report is comprehensive and well evidenced. However, it cites some strengths which are no more than normal practice in adult and community learning. Actions to deal with weaknesses are clearly identified.

32. Improvements have been made in initial advice and guidance made available to learners since the previous inspection and RMBC's arrangements are now satisfactory. The service has a partnership agreement with a South Yorkshire adult advice and guidance service to visit adult and community learning classes.

33. Staff development in equality of opportunity was identified as being required at the previous inspection. A well-devised training programme in equality and diversity awareness has been provided for the service's staff.

34. The procedures to identify and provide additional language, literacy and numeracy support are insufficiently established. Additional staff have been appointed to the service

and staff development sessions in this area have been provided for tutors. However, overall there is sufficient use of initial assessment to identify support needs, particularly in the foundation community programmes and in courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some cases where support needs have been identified, the support has not been provided.

35. There is ineffective curriculum support for teachers on some foundation programmes. Tutors are not effectively adapting guidance materials provided by the service to the requirements of their own classes. Some tutors do not have the confidence to apply procedures for assessment and evaluation.

36. The procedures to monitor subcontractors' arrangements for equality of opportunity are insufficiently established. The service does not currently have a comprehensive assessment of providers' equality of opportunity practices or an overall demographic profile of the tutors employed by subcontractors.

37. The observation of teaching and learning is not thorough. The overall target to observe each provider at least once a year is not sufficient. The focus of observations is generally more on teaching than on learning and attainment. Insufficient consideration is given to the impact of weaknesses on learners. Overall, the grades awarded are overgenerous, particularly for those sessions observed in foundation programmes.

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

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- strong management team
- good development of partnerships with the voluntary sector
- effective recruitment of learners from under-represented groups
- good progress to improve learning

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills
- ineffective curriculum support for tutors of foundation programmes
- insufficiently established procedures to monitor subcontractors' arrangements for equality of opportunity
- insufficiently thorough observation of teaching and learning observations

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good development of learners' basic ICT skills
- good resources to support learning
- effective support for individual learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established use of initial assessment
- insufficient differentiation in developing learners' individual use of ICT

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills on most programmes
- good access to some specialist resources

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established support for learners' literacy and numeracy skills
- insufficient focus on individual learning
- slow implementation of curriculum change by some subcontractors

Family learning

Strengths

- good achievement by learners
- very good teaching and learning in family literacy and numeracy classes
- good learning resources
- good curriculum management
- good development of strategic partnerships with schools

Weaknesses

- insufficient variety of learning activities in some wider family learning programmes

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

- clear strategic direction
- strong management team
- good development of partnerships with the voluntary sector
- effective recruitment of learners from under-represented groups
- good progress to improve learning

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills
- ineffective curriculum support for tutors of foundation programmes
- insufficiently established procedures to monitor subcontractors' arrangements for equality of opportunity
- insufficiently thorough observation of teaching and learning observations

38. RMBC has a clear strategy for adult and community learning. Widening participation in learning is regarded as a key component in promoting social inclusion and economic regeneration. Good recognition is given to the role of the community learning service in contributing to the achievement of RMBC's objectives. The strategy is clearly aligned with the objectives of the local lifelong learning partnership. Senior managers in the education, culture and leisure services directorate monitor the performance of the service effectively. The chair of RMBC's education committee, who is also on the executive board of South Yorkshire LSC, is well informed about the work of the service and its current performance.

39. RMBC has brought together several teams within the service, with respective responsibilities for learning outside of school hours, adult and community learning and family learning. The service also manages a learning network project on behalf of the Rotherham adult learning partnership. The teams collaborate effectively in formulating strategy and in planning provision. In addition, there has been further collaboration between the service and other parts of RMBC to develop opportunities for learning, including work with libraries, the social services department, and on particular initiatives such as 'Playing for Success' and 'University of the First Age'. Working on behalf of the

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Rotherham adult learning partnership, staff have conducted a comprehensive audit of the provision available locally, including the venues in use, and the identification of potential future providers. This will be used as a basis for future strategic planning for the district.

40. The operation of the service is well managed by a strong team. At the time of the previous inspection a number of staff had only recently taken up their posts. Since that time there have been further appointments and the service now comprises 30 staff. Co-ordinators are well qualified and appropriately experienced. Roles and responsibilities in the team are clear. Staff communicate well with providers. They maintain regular formal and informal contact and are responsive to providers' requests. Strategic partners and subcontractors speak very highly of the service's staff and their managers. The team members are open to new ideas and ways of working. The service benefits from being able to call upon the specialist expertise available within the borough council. For example, RMBC's specialist funding team have assisted in the preparation of funding bids and in providing advice on the types of government funding available to providers. The performance of the team is effectively managed through regular team and individual meetings and formal annual reviews. However, there are many staff currently on fixed-term contracts.

41. There has been good progress since the previous inspection in the development of partnerships with the voluntary sector. The service currently contracts with 37 voluntary sector providers, including several who have had no previous experience in providing learning programmes. A good training programme has been provided, including sessions on topics such as the bidding process, target-setting, the 'Common Inspection Framework' and writing self-assessment reports. Twelve minority ethnic women have been supported in initial teacher training. Sessions for tutors have been held on designing schemes of work and lesson plans. Although cover is paid for part-time teachers to attend training sessions, attendance is variable. Some development events for the voluntary sector have been jointly presented by the service with other community groups, such as an Asian women's association and a national charity for the elderly. These are effective in facilitating the exchange of good practice and the promotion of the service's work in the sector. Several delegates have attended training sessions from agencies that currently do not hold contracts with RMBC but who have benefited from the training and now intend to proceed with their own course proposals.

42. The management of subcontractors is now satisfactory. The service has introduced a rigorous procedure for vetting providers and an open bidding process for new work. The contract makes providers' responsibilities clear. Recruitment is monitored against agreed targets for each term. Regular visits are made to providers by the service's staff to give support and guidance. Good records of monitoring visits are maintained. The overall management of resources is satisfactory.

43. A member of the service's team has been designated responsibility for health and safety with support from RMBC's specialist staff. Providers have a contractual obligation to comply with health and safety, and during the current academic year, a checklist with supporting documents has been issued and monitoring visits made to three-quarters of the providers. Summary reports of the assessment of providers are regularly produced

for the service's management team.

44. Improvements have been made in initial advice and guidance made available to learners since the previous inspection and RMBC's arrangements are now satisfactory. The service has a partnership agreement with a South Yorkshire adult advice and guidance service to visit adult and community learning classes. During a period of four months, 15 group sessions have been held. A new service newsletter is distributed to learners which gives information on the current range of courses available and gives advance notice of future provision.

45. The procedures to identify and provide additional literacy, numeracy and language support are insufficiently established. Additional staff have been appointed to the service and staff development sessions have been held for tutors. There are examples of tutors on some ICT courses who have improved their awareness of learners' support needs and adapted their initial assessment procedures and learning materials accordingly. In some classes interpreters have been provided. However, overall there is sufficient use of initial assessment to identify support needs, particularly in foundation programmes both in the community programmes and in courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some cases where support needs have been identified, the support has not been provided.

46. There is ineffective curriculum support for tutors on some foundation programmes. Tutors are not effectively adapting guidance materials provided by the service to the requirements of their own classes. Some tutors do not understand the requirements of the foundation curriculum. Some tutors do not have the confidence to apply procedures for assessment and evaluation.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

47. A number of developments have taken place in the service's approach to equality of opportunity since the previous inspection. The head of service retains overall responsibility for equality of opportunity in an expanded team, which includes a new post of development officer for minority ethnic groups.

48. The service has made good progress in widening participation in learning. Geographical communities and communities of interest are well served by the service's provision. The focus of the provision is primarily on 'first-step', non-accredited learning to promote access to learning and to counter educational disadvantage. In the current year, courses are offered at 85 venues which represents a significant increase on the previous year's 29 venues. Priority is given to working with providers who offer programmes in areas of high deprivation. The proportion of male learners and of older learners recruited to the programmes on the first two terms of the current year has exceeded that of last year. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups has also increased and is significantly above the demographic profile for the local population. Projects to target particular groups of learners have included driving test training for young male learners, confidence building and sessions to explore health problems for minority ethnic women, programmes in former mining communities, IT for

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the homeless, and programmes for refugees and asylum seekers. The service manager leads a subgroup of the Rotherham adult learning partnership with a remit to develop new opportunities and share good practice in provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good use has recently been made of statistical data for the local area provided by RMBC's corporate statistical team, allowing for more refined analysis in the planning of future targeted provision.

49. Staff development in equality of opportunity was identified as being required at the previous inspection report. A well-devised training programme in equality and diversity awareness, using external consultants, has been provided for the service's staff. Other events have included sessions on recent legislative changes and on access auditing skills. The team has produced a well-formulated action plan for the service as a whole and in addition, individual equal opportunities targets have been agreed by each team member. Targets are reviewed and further equality of opportunity related training needs are identified as part of the process of staff appraisal. A similar programme of awareness training has been recently offered to providers. Representatives from nearly half of the subcontracted providers attended. These representatives will receive support to develop their own provider and individual action plans.

50. RMBC has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for equality of opportunity. The procedures meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, and they have been recently revised to meet the legislative requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The service's own policy and practice guidelines have been ratified by the council. An equality and diversity unit, recently established at RMBC, is effective in providing specialist expertise and support for the borough's employees. The demographic profile of staff employed at RMBC is closely monitored. However, some individual staff job descriptions for service staff do not contain specific reference to responsibilities to promote equality of opportunity.

51. A clearly expressed statement outlines learners' entitlements in relation to equality of opportunity. This statement has been translated into Urdu, Arabic and Chinese and is also produced in pictorial form. The service's marketing and recruitment materials have been reviewed by RMBC's commercial and promotional services team. A new branding of community learning has been developed and the service's promotional materials convey positive images and include statements on equality and diversity. The service plays an important part in local initiatives to promote awareness of and celebrate cultural diversity.

52. Support for learners is satisfactory. As part of the contracting process, providers are asked to identify learners' support needs. Support this year has included classroom support workers and interpreters, translators, the provision of specialist equipment such as a large keyboard and assistance to meet the costs of crèche provision and travel. The service commissioned an accessibility audit of venues where providers had not already submitted their own assessments. Findings will be used to prioritise funding for adaptations for next year. In the current year, LSC funds have contributed to the installation of a lift, a stair lift and ramps.

53. The procedures to monitor subcontractors' arrangements for equality of opportunity are insufficiently established. The service does not currently have a comprehensive assessment of providers' equal opportunities practices. The service does not have an overall demographic profile of the tutors employed by subcontractors, or an overview of how providers have dealt with incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Subcontractors' promotional materials have not been routinely monitored. The scheme for lesson observations invites comment on the effectiveness of teaching methods in promoting equality of opportunity, but not on the appropriateness of learning materials in promoting cultural diversity. However, a well-devised monitoring policy with useful supporting documents has been recently issued to providers with an invitation for them to comment on the framework and to assess their own equal opportunities arrangements. The service has also started to formally audit subcontractors' arrangements.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

54. The service has a comprehensive quality assurance framework which covers all aspects of the learning process. It was piloted with subcontractors and amended before being formally implemented in September 2003. An external scrutiny committee, which includes representatives from RMBC's quality assurance team and the voluntary and community sectors, has monitored the implementation of the post-inspection action plan, and receives quality assurance reports.

55. The service has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The proportion of learning sessions graded as satisfactory or better has increased from 87.5 per cent to 89.5 per cent. The proportion of learning sessions graded as good or better has increased in ICT and family learning. Although the foundation area of learning remains unsatisfactory, there has also been some improvement in the teaching in courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There has been some good staff development to improve classroom practice and in some cases tutors have started to make changes to the style, content and presentation of their sessions to the benefit of the learners.

56. The collection and analysis of data are now satisfactory. The demographic profile of learners recruited to the programmes is closely monitored. Data are collected on learners' ethnicity, age, gender, and learning and physical disabilities. Overall service targets are set for the recruitment of particular types of learners and providers are expected to contribute to achieving these targets. Individual providers' performance is currently being reviewed and will be used as a basis for contracting decisions for the next academic year. The overall performance of learners' retention and achievement is monitored and analysed by programme area. However, data about learners' performances are not used to identify trends in the performance of specific learner groups. Performance targets are not set for specific groups of learners.

57. There is satisfactory use of feedback from learners to improve the provision. Learners are asked a good range of questions including those on the achievement of

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their objectives and the quality of teaching. The arrangements for monitoring complaints are satisfactory. Complaints are thoroughly investigated and remedial action is taken.

58. The procedures for self-assessment are satisfactory. Many of the subcontractors have attended training on self-assessment and their reports usefully contributed to the overall self-assessment report produced by the service. The service's self-assessment report is comprehensive and well evidenced. However, it cites some strengths which are no more than normal practice in adult and community learning. Actions to deal with weaknesses are clearly identified.

59. The internal and external verification processes for accredited programmes in family learning are satisfactory.

60. The observation of teaching and learning is not thorough. Thirty-four observations have been carried out since the previous inspection, including six where tutors have been revisited. However, the overall target to observe each provider at least once a year is not sufficient. A useful checklist is used to record observations but in some cases the final recording of strengths and weaknesses on a summary sheet does not closely relate to the points noted during the session. In these instances, the resulting action plan does not deal with the strengths and weaknesses that have been identified. The focus of observations is generally more on teaching than on learning and attainment. Insufficient consideration is given to the impact of weaknesses on learners. The procedure includes the tutors' evaluation of the session, although in some cases this is incomplete and in others, the evaluative comments do not reflect sufficiently on how the teaching might be improved. Overall, the grades awarded are overgenerous, particularly for those sessions observed in foundation programmes.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	221	3

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

Strengths

- good development of learners' basic ICT skills
- good resources to support learning
- effective support for individual learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established use of initial assessment
- insufficient differentiation in developing learners' individual use of ICT

Achievement and standards

61. The ICT courses are all short 'first step' courses for beginners, many of whom initially do not have the confidence to use a computer. Achievements and standards on these courses are satisfactory. Most learners become well motivated, gain considerable skills and confidence and produce simple but appropriate results from their efforts. In learning sessions they successfully learn how to use a computer, produce attractive documents, use the internet and send e-mail messages. Some older learners do not have sufficient opportunity to show that they can retain and integrate these skills into larger tasks. There is some progression by learners onto short follow-on courses to introduce other software, for example spreadsheets, or to courses aimed at those with specific interests in digital photography or using ICT to trace their family history. One large subcontractor has identified that about 38 per cent of their beginners progress in this way. At the end of each course learners are usually given information about progression routes to more advanced, accredited courses. RMBC has no figures to show how many learners decide to take up such opportunities. Seventy-two per cent of learners are retained on courses.

Quality of education and training

62. Learners have good access to up-to-date ICT resources. Courses are provided in comfortable and familiar environments at a variety of times to suit learners' lifestyles and commitments. Sometimes laptop computers are used where space or portability requirements make them more suitable. For example some classes take place in a sheltered housing complex where there is a computer club for learners to pursue their

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interests once they have completed the course. One of the main subcontractors has a centre equipped with a loop system for learners with hearing impairments, and special software to enlarge the content of the computer screen learners with visual impairments. Most accommodation has good access for learners with restricted mobility. RMBC offers subcontractors advice where unsuitable accommodation is identified. Some subcontractors' accommodation has been improved.

63. As was the case at the previous inspection, learners receive good individual support. Tutors have developed good working relationships with learners, and help them to gain confidence and overcome their anxieties about using IT. Tutors are accessible and approachable and are aware of learners' diverse needs. In practical work, learners are monitored closely and difficulties quickly remedied so that virtually all learners achieve lesson objectives. One large subcontractor makes good use of volunteers who work very effectively to support those learners needing most help. One class for visually impaired and blind learners was observed. For this class, there are arrangements with the social service department to provide learners with the necessary individual support.

64. Most of the observed learning sessions were graded as satisfactory or good. Unlike the previous inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In many lessons the teaching of initial ICT skills was well planned, using schemes of work and lesson plans. Since the previous inspection RMBC has offered tutors and providers training and advice in planning sessions. Lesson planning has improved. For example, in some weekly lessons there is now a specific outcome for all learners to achieve, such as downloading a picture from the internet to provide the background for their computer displays, or printing a document incorporating simple graphic images.

65. The provision meets the requirements of a wide and increasingly diverse range of learners. The ICT provision is available at a wide range of times and locations and involves many voluntary and community organisations. RMBC has worked with some of these to target specific groups of learners, for example men from minority ethnic groups. These projects are ongoing. The previous inspection identified that there is poor participation by male learners, and that it was particularly poor among those from minority ethnic communities. The proportion of learners from these groups has increased. Currently 48 per cent of learners are men and 20 per cent are from minority ethnic groups.

66. Although some providers have developed good practice in the use of initial assessment to identify learners who require additional support for their literacy and numeracy skills, others do not yet do so effectively. This weakness was identified at the previous inspection and has only been partly dealt with. RMBC has encouraged subcontractors to use more detailed enrolment procedures and documents to collect some of the necessary information. More providers are now aware of the learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs and are beginning to develop staff skills to conduct such assessments and make use of the information. An IT networking group is promoting better practice.

67. The previous inspection identified weaknesses in assessment and the use of

individual learning plans. RMBC has effectively raised subcontractors' awareness to these weaknesses and they are now exploring the use of individual learning plans and goals. The progress providers have made varies. It is still the case that some providers set no individual targets for learners' ICT skills at the start of their courses and do not update learning plans through periodic reviews. In some classes, for example, learners always work through tasks as a class. Some older learners find this close supervision reassuring but for others, more individual work is not identified through the use of individual plans and subsequent progress reviews. In a significant number of sessions there was no time set aside for learners to work on short practical projects that might encourage them to practise and reinforce their learning and work more independently of the tutor. The previous inspection found that some tutors did not have sufficiently high expectations of learners and did not set challenging targets. This is still the case as learning sessions are not sufficiently differentiated and in some parts tutors spend too much time introducing a topic or labouring a point, slowing down the progress of the lesson.

Leadership and management

68. The operational management of this area of learning is satisfactory. The previous inspection identified that the operational management was satisfactory but that the monitoring of subcontractors was weak. These aspects have now improved. RMBC has provided much staff development for subcontractors. This has successfully raised awareness and improved practice. A programme of lesson observations is now carried out with feedback provided to tutors and, where necessary, some sessions are revisited to monitor progress. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. An increasing number of providers conduct quality reviews and produce self-assessment reports. These reports identify some aspects of the provision still needing attention. RMBC now more closely scrutinises policies and practices. A development worker for ICT has been appointed to bring about improvements.

69. The previous inspection found poor availability and use of the management information system. There is now much better access to statistical measures; for example retention rates are analysed for each provider and there is a comprehensive analysis of learners' evaluations of their courses. Some data are still not readily available; for example those concerning learners' progress to more advanced courses.

Foundation programmes

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	616	4

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

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills on most programmes
- good access to some specialist resources

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established support for learners' literacy and numeracy skills
- insufficient focus on individual learning
- slow implementation of curriculum change by some subcontractors

Achievement and standards

70. Most foundation programmes have good learning activities to promote skills development. The previous inspection report identified this strength in community learning. On programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there are good opportunities for learners to extend their speaking skills. For instance, one group of learners is developing good verbal and non-verbal communication through their involvement in the production of a play. In other examples, groups of learners are assisted to make and receive telephone calls and learners are given opportunities to confidently express their views and feelings to others. In some community learning sessions there is good practical skills development which builds the confidence and self-esteem of new learners. Learners in one craft session developed good practical skills across a range of crafts. In another session learners were acquiring and applying good guitar and music technology techniques. A drug awareness session provided practical knowledge of different types of drugs and their effects to parents and carers. However, there is insufficient attention to the planning of individual learning activities to enable learners to achieve their learning goals. Short-term milestones are not always set precisely to enable learners to see their progress.

71. Attendance and retention rates are satisfactory. During the reinspection, data for non-accredited achievement were not available.

Quality of education and training

72. There is good access to specialist resources for some learners on community programmes and programmes designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For instance, a group of learners with learning difficulties, on a course to learn how to care for small animals, was able to work with poultry to understand animals' different care needs. Other learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities used a local community arts theatre for their play production. In a community learning session, learners used specialist music resources, including computerised music technology facilities. Most teaching and learning resources are satisfactory, although in two ESOL groups, poor-quality worksheets were used. Some of these worksheets were aimed at learners with learning difficulties and do not reflect the cultural differences and backgrounds of adult ESOL learners. Some accommodation is poor. One group session was held in a hall with poor acoustics and background noise. A craft group was held in an open plan, screened area and exams had taken place for four weeks in the remaining area. This limited the craft learners' opportunities for talking.

73. The range of provision is satisfactory. Many programmes are located in areas of high deprivation where community regeneration is a priority. A local residents association has, with the assistance of RMBC, established craft sessions for local residents. This group is contributing to a mosaic that will be hung in the local community centre. Other groups have been established in community centres in collaboration with voluntary organisations to recruit learners who need to improve their English language skills.

74. Of the teaching observed, 26 per cent was judged to be good or better, 53 per cent satisfactory and 21 per cent unsatisfactory. There has been an improvement in teaching and learning for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities since the previous inspection. In addition, there has been some improvement in schemes of work. Satisfactory training has been offered by RMBC on the new procedures in the tutors' handbooks for teaching and learning, such as the identification of aims and learning objectives, schemes of work, and the recording and evaluation of learning activities. However, not all providers have attended these training sessions.

75. The support for literacy and numeracy is still not sufficiently well established. Tutors do not include the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills in their teaching. Learning activities to promote these skills are not included in schemes of work and lesson plans and are not identified on individual learning plans. Most providers of community learning programmes do not understand how to promote learners' interest in improving literacy and numeracy skills, or to assist in overcoming such barriers. Some providers are unaware of the national curriculum for literacy, language and numeracy at pre-entry level and up to level 2. As at the previous inspection, there is insufficient additional learning support for learners on community learning programmes to develop literacy, numeracy and language skills. There is no systematic diagnostic assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs.

76. The focus on individual learning is insufficient in most sessions. In those sessions judged to be unsatisfactory, the focus on individual learning is poor. In addition, the quality of initial assessment varies. The previous inspection identified this as a weakness for provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For some community learning programmes, learners complete an application form and informally discuss their interests and potential learning requirements. For other courses, learners complete the documents unassisted. However, in one session, the initial assessment was thorough and well documented. Where initial assessment does take place, it is not used effectively to plan individual learning outcomes. There is no link between the initial assessment framework and the national adult pre-entry core curriculum, and there is inadequate awareness of this national initiative. Reviews for foundation learners are not sufficiently effective in identifying learners' progress. Progress reviews were identified as being weak at the previous inspection in the provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Targets are not routinely or regularly reviewed and revised. Individual learning is not always formally evaluated after each session.

Leadership and management

77. Some providers are implementing RMBC's planned curriculum changes slowly. A development strategy is in operation and satisfactory improvements in the procedures for planning and recording teaching and learning have been made since the previous inspection. There have been some training events to raise providers' awareness to the new procedures in the tutors' packs and written guidance has recently been provided. However, not all providers have attended the training and some have been slow in implementing the changes. As identified in RMBC's self-assessment report, many subcontractors do not have the capacity to manage the required changes. Many of the staff in the voluntary sector do not have teaching qualifications and have limited teaching experience. There has been variable practice in the implementation of the planned curriculum changes. This is acknowledged in RMBC's self-assessment report including the need to establish a wider range of methods to support these providers. In addition, RMBC's monitoring of subcontractors has not been effective in developing those providers who have yet to implement the planning of learning to meet individual learning needs. Observations of training have failed to identify the unsatisfactory teaching found by inspectors. However, RMBC's current monitoring has identified a small number of providers whose contracts they will not be renewing.

Family learning**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	404	2

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

Strengths

- good achievement by learners
- very good teaching and learning in family literacy and numeracy classes
- good learning resources
- good curriculum management
- good development of strategic partnerships with schools

Weaknesses

- insufficient variety of learning activities in some wider family learning programmes

Achievement and standards

78. Learners' achievements are good. Parents make good progress in understanding their children's education. They become more confident and head teachers comment favourably on the greater involvement of parents in school life. Learners develop good communication and parenting skills. They become effective in promoting learning through everyday situations, for example, through the use of numerical calculations when shopping, or by memory exercises and word games prompted by signs and landmarks on the journey to school. Some of the children of parents who attend the longer family learning courses show good improvement in their test scores. Several parents now help as volunteers in the schools and some have got jobs as paid workers, including learning mentors. Others have gone on to further study. There is good celebration of achievement. At the end of every course the mayor attends and makes a formal presentation of certificates in the school assembly. The success of both parents and children is celebrated. Learners and schools are given photographs of the event. These are used to market the course.

79. Retention rates are very good at 94 per cent for family learning and literacy programmes. In wider family learning retention is 84 per cent. All family learning literacy and numeracy learners have the option of attaining accreditation. In the autumn term, 42 of the 47 learners who sought accreditation were successful.

Quality of education and training

80. Teaching and learning on family literacy and numeracy programmes is very good. All of the sessions observed were judged to be good or better. Lessons are well planned with clear learning aims and outcomes. Tutors have high expectations of their learners and a brisk and challenging pace for learning is set. Courses are practical and fun. There are many activities and ideas that enable learners to have fun with their children while they learn. Literacy and numeracy skills are effectively integrated with learning activities. Good verbal feedback is provided. However, in some cases written feedback is not sufficient to show learners how to improve their learning. Parents and their children gain in confidence. Parents develop skills in role-play and storytelling. They learn to communicate with their children more effectively, for example, by the good use of open and closed questions. Learners feel calmer when dealing with their children. They are able to help their children with their schoolwork and homework. The celebration event at the end of all courses is treated as a further learning experience and learners plan their displays well.

81. There is a good range of resources in all of the centres. Learning materials are well designed and of a very good quality. Learners are given a resource bag with pens, paper, glue and rulers. Their children also choose a book that they can take home and keep. There is an ample supply of children's books to borrow. Computers and digital cameras are used well. Laminators are used to protect learners' work including personally created books and games which are then used in the home. Premises are chosen to offer maximum accessibility to learners particularly in terms of closeness to home and children. Where space is available, several of the schools have refurbished rooms and have also provided an additional room for a crèche. However, some accommodation is too cramped or is not equipped with tables and chairs suitable for adults. Childcare is provided for learners on most courses but space is very limited in some centres. In some instances babies stay in the class.

82. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory. Group learning plans are used and individuals also identify their own learning outcomes. These are monitored fully at the end of the course. As has been identified in the self-assessment report, there is insufficient written feedback to aid learning. Although well used by the core staff, initial assessment is not routinely used by staff who are not directly employed by RMBC.

83. There is a wide range of school-based family learning courses of various lengths. Some courses are also offered in libraries. Library volunteer programmes and pre-entry sports leader courses have also been developed. Many taster and short courses are offered to meet the needs of first-level learners and cover topics such as learning through play, time for rhyme, yoga and first aid.

84. Information advice and guidance are satisfactory. Courses are well publicised and attract lots of learners. RMBC's good relationship with schools enhances recruitment. Learners often progress from taster and short courses to longer courses. Learners on 10-

and 12-week courses receive information at the end of the course about further learning opportunities. The service produces an attractive leaflet which is given to learners at the end of the course.

85. In some of the wider family learning programmes there is insufficient variety of learning activities. Some lessons lack pace and challenge and do not sufficiently meet the needs of adult learners. In some cases, there is too much information provided and learners are not given sufficient opportunity to develop skills in independent learning. In some sessions where there is more than one teacher, there is ineffective team work to co-ordinate learning.

Leadership and management

86. The operational management of this area of learning is good. A core team of four directly managed staff are well qualified and experienced, and have received training from the Basic Skills Agency. The team is effectively co-ordinated. Staff meet every week to share ideas and further develop learning materials. There is much sharing of good practice with staff from other agencies working alongside the service's tutors. Verification procedures are good and courses are effectively reviewed to identify areas for improvement.

87. There are good strategic partnerships with schools. RMBC is fully committed to family learning. The service has developed a model policy for parental involvement which is shared with schools. Training courses are offered to school staff and head teachers. RMBC has also led the development of family learning with neighbouring authorities. The provision has developed from working with 30 schools in 2001-02, to 51 in 2003-04. There is good financial management with effective use of several funding streams, including additional income earned from the family learning training provided for other LEAs and agencies. These funds are used creatively to widen participation in learning and train more staff to deliver family learning. RMBC pays for staff cover to enable school teachers to shadow family learning tutors and to train to deliver the programmes themselves. Twenty-six people have completed the facilitator training and 18 schools are preparing bids to offer their own family learning programmes.