

REINSPECTION REPORT

Kirklees LEA Reinspection

22 October 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.

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Kirklees LEA Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Kirklees Local Education Authority (the LEA) is part of Kirklees Metropolitan Council (the council) in West Yorkshire. It serves the towns of Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Holmfirth. The LEA has organised its non-statutory services under the umbrella of the community education service (the service). The assistant director of education manages the service. He reports to the director of education, who in turn reports to the portfolio holder for education. The service is further divided into four strands: early years and Sure Start, the extended learning service, the young people's service, and post-16 and adult learning. The head of post-16 and adult learning manages the adult and community learning contract.

2. The adult and community learning team includes the adult lifelong learning manager, the adult learning project manager, the quality assurance manager and a number of neighbourhood learning project staff. This team also contributes to the adult learning strand of the Kirklees learning partnership. The adult and community learning team is supported by a monitoring team. The family learning element of the provision is under the supervision of the community education extended learning service. There are service level agreements and quality assurance arrangements between the services.

3. The service directly manages a small community and family learning provision. During 2003-04, most of the provision that was subject to the previous inspection was transferred to subcontractors. The service now identifies groups of learners and works to involve them in learning. It then passes them on to appropriate subcontractors whose aim is to develop the capacity of the learners, their families, schools and communities. The LEA finances its services through West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and from a range of funding initiatives for deprived communities. It has secured funds of £1.6 million through the initiatives, much of which is used to build the capacity of the voluntary sector providers and local colleges.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Community development

4. Adult and community learning in Kirklees includes family learning and community learning opportunities offered through voluntary sector providers. Family learning is managed through Families and Schools Together Literacy and Numeracy for Everyone (FASTLANE) which is part of the extended learning service. FASTLANE runs taster sessions in primary schools to attract parents into learning. Skills for life and longer family learning courses are provided in partnership with local further education colleges. The service also provides courses for parents and volunteers to support children's literacy, numeracy and language skills. It particularly targets older learners for some of its programmes.

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5. The service also provides learning opportunities that contribute to community development and neighbourhood regeneration. It targets learners who have not recently taken part in learning. The service subcontracts its provision to nine voluntary and community-sector training providers. Some of these are specialist organisations working with specific target groups, such as minority ethnic groups, learners with physical disabilities, vulnerable women, and young adults at risk of homelessness.

6. The service offers courses that prepare volunteers to help with children's reading in schools. There are 45 learners on four 'reading friends' courses. Thirty-four learners are on three 'helping in schools' courses which are provided by a national educational organisation and accredited through the open college network. Since September 2004, 71 learners have taken part in nine community learning courses. In addition, three taster workshops have attracted 60 learners. All learners receive information, advice and guidance under contract from a specialist organisation. In 2003-04 there were 2,393 enrolments from 2,130 learners. Seventy-four per cent of learners were in family learning and 26 per cent were on adult and community learning courses. Overall, 11 per cent were men, 26 per cent were from minority ethnic communities and 7 per cent had disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	15
Number of learner interviews	69
Number of staff interviews	18
Number of subcontractor interviews	27
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	27
Number of partner/external agency interviews	19
Number of visits	12

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. At the previous inspection, the service's leadership and management and its arrangements for equality of opportunity were unsatisfactory. Its quality assurance was very weak. Training in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel; visual and performing arts and media; English, languages and communications; and family learning was satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, leadership and management and quality assurance were good and equality of opportunity was outstanding. Community development programmes were also good.

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	5

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3

Visual & performing arts & media	3

English, languages & communications	3

Family learning	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	1
Quality assurance	2

Community development	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

8. **Retention rates are good on all courses.**

9. **Achievement on accredited adult and community learning courses is good.** On non-accredited courses it is satisfactory.

10. **Achievement is also good on accredited and non-accredited family learning courses.** Learners attain their primary learning goal of increasing their confidence when working with their children or grandchildren.

11. The learners make good use of their newly acquired skills, confidence and qualifications for the benefit of their community. Their learning helps to build the capacity of their communities and regenerate their neighbourhood.

Quality of education and training

12. There is **much good teaching and learning.** Fifty-six per cent of the teaching is good or better. Most teaching is well planned and there is a good range of practical activities. In family learning sessions, there is good participation by learners, and children and adults learn effectively. Learning activities and sessions reflect diversity in society very well.

13. **A good range of learning resources** is used effectively. Tutors use well-produced worksheets and practical resources such as craft materials to motivate adults and children. Accommodation is generally satisfactory, although there is some use of unsuitable, child-sized furniture by adults.

14. The service has taken **very effective action to attract learners from deprived communities.** It encourages and helps communities to research their needs effectively. It has increased men's participation significantly, although it did not reach the target it set itself. The service has united members of different ethnic groups by encouraging them to learn together. Learners from minority ethnic groups are well represented on learning programmes. In 2003-04, 26 per cent of the learners were from these groups as compared with 15 per cent in the overall population of the borough.

15. Learners receive satisfactory information, advice and guidance through a good partnership arrangement with a local provider that specialises in careers advice for adults.

16. **Initial assessment is inadequate.** Insufficient guidance has been given to subcontractors about suitable ways of carrying out initial assessments and diagnosing learners' learning needs.

17. **Individual learning plans are not used well.** Some targets are insufficiently challenging and too vague. The service does not set learning outcomes as benchmarks against which to measure attainment on non-accredited courses.

Leadership and management

18. There is a **very clear and strong strategic direction and leadership** of the provision. The service's strategy is to secure the provision and build the capacity of the colleges and voluntary-sector subcontractors rather than provide the service directly.

19. The service has made effective changes. It transferred most of its provision to local colleges soon after the previous inspection. It has dealt with all the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection and improved the provision considerably. It has made substantial investment from its own resources.

20. There are **excellent partnerships with colleges and voluntary-sector subcontractors**. The learners now have more good-quality learning available locally and access to extra support and funds to help them to continue with their courses. The service has secured substantial funds from a variety of sources and distributes them prudently to build providers' capacity. The service's support has enabled many developments to take place.

21. There is **good management of the subcontractors**. Contracts are detailed. Subcontractors are selected very carefully for their capability and their location. Officers from the service give good support and monitor the subcontractors' performance effectively. The subcontractors meet and sometimes exceed the challenging targets for recruitment, retention and achievement set by the service. There is good staff development and ongoing support. Communications are good. There is a clear annual plan for the provision, but there is insufficient provision in the summer months.

22. **The service makes very good use of data to target under-represented groups**. The use of data was a weakness at the previous inspection. Since the previous inspection, the service has invested in a management information system that is used to provide comprehensive reports for staff and subcontracted providers. Managers use it regularly to analyse the take-up of provision, measure performance, identify gaps and formulate plans. The data is used in conjunction with population data from the council and participation data from local colleges. There is very effective targeting of learners from deprived wards. In 2003-04, 88 per cent of enrolments were new learners, of whom 53 per cent were from disadvantaged wards.

23. Equality of opportunity and social justice is at the heart of the service. There is very good promotion of equality of opportunity through the subcontracting process. All subcontractors are required to explain how their provision contributes to equality of opportunity. Learners are given appropriate support. Many classes have an additional tutor or support worker to meet the specific needs of the learners.

24. The **childcare provision is excellent** and used extensively by the learners. The subcontractors request crèche provision from communi-crèche, part of the extended learning service, and it is provided. The service is well resourced and has 15 lead crèche workers and 58 sessional workers.

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25. At the previous inspection, quality assurance was poor. Since then, the service has introduced **very comprehensive new quality assurance arrangements** to improve the provision. It has developed a quality assurance handbook and disseminated it to all the providers.

26. The self-assessment report is thorough and accurate. It identified all the weaknesses in the provision and understated the strengths. The self-assessment process involved all the partners and subcontractors.

27. The resources and premises of the subcontractors have been audited well. The audits of individual learning plans and initial assessments are thorough and have identified weaknesses correctly.

28. The service has invested significantly in training its own and subcontractors' staff. The training in observation of teaching and learning is good. This has developed the capacity of the subcontractors to conduct observations themselves. All the teaching and learning is currently being observed by an external consultant.

29. There are regular and effective course reviews. Learners and the service's partners are asked for their views on the effectiveness of courses. The design, marketing and delivery of courses are changed to better meet learners' needs. There is an open and transparent process for evaluating courses and examining standards of learners' work.

30. There is effective sharing of good practice.

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

Leadership and management

Strengths

- very strong and clear strategic direction
- particularly effective partnerships with the colleges and voluntary-sector subcontractors
- good management of the subcontractors
- very good use of data to identify and target under-represented groups
- good arrangements for providing information, advice and guidance
- outstanding access to childcare provision
- excellent promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities with subcontractors
- very effective quality assurance arrangements

Weaknesses

- insufficient provision in the summer months
- insufficiently effective strategies to increase men's participation in learning

Community development

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- much good teaching and learning
- good range of learning resources
- effective action to attract learners from deprived communities
- strong curriculum management

Weaknesses

- unsuitable furniture in some learning centres
- inadequate initial assessment
- ineffective use of individual learning plans

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 2

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

Strengths

- very strong and clear strategic direction
- particularly effective partnerships with the colleges and voluntary-sector subcontractors
- good management of the subcontractors
- very good use of data to identify and target under-represented groups
- good arrangements for providing information, advice and guidance
- outstanding access to childcare provision
- excellent promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities with subcontractors
- very effective quality assurance arrangements

Weaknesses

- insufficient provision in the summer months
- insufficiently effective strategies to increase men's participation in learning

31. There is a very clear and strong strategic direction to the service. Soon after the previous inspection, the service transferred all its provision except family learning to two subcontracted colleges. This process was carried out quickly and effectively. A clear strategy was developed to secure the provision and build the capacity of voluntary-sector partners, rather than providing learning directly. This vision was shared with the partners through the Kirklees learning partnership. The learning partnership is very effective and the service has a very prominent role in it. Officers of the service have taken key roles in several sub-groups. There is good cross-party support from council members. The officers and staff are very committed, hardworking and passionate about their role. They promote adult and community learning very effectively. The service takes its responsibility very seriously. In at least two cases, other providers were unable and unwilling to take the financial risk of taking on a lead partner role in providing community learning. The service took on the role of accountable body in the contracts with the funding agencies. This involved taking large but calculated risks to ensure that sufficient funds and resources were available to secure the provision. The service has also successfully encouraged its partners to develop a strategic vision for their own communities. The service's vision is backed by substantial investment of its own resources.

32. The service has particularly effective partnerships with colleges and voluntary-sector subcontractors. These directly benefit learners by providing good-quality learning on

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their doorstep and extra support and funds to help them access it. There is a well-thought-out and carefully implemented commissioning process and the service has offered contracts to some new voluntary-sector providers that have good links with some of the areas most deprived communities. As well as developing work in line with the key priorities of the funding agencies, the partners have identified their own needs and developed courses to meet them. For example in one ward, there are courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) specifically for men. In other wards there are courses in healthy eating and exercise, and child protection. There is a good mix of programmes, including family learning, information and communications technology and community needs such as radio production and courses for female Asian fitness instructors. The service has adopted an outstanding approach to needs analysis. It has involved the local people, enabling them to research and articulate their long-term needs. There is a great deal of openness, trust and honesty, and mutual respect among the partners. Equal value is attached to colleges and voluntary-sector subcontractors. Strategic plans, self-assessment reports and individual learners' records are shared in order to plan the learning. There are well-thought-out business and development plans that fully consider sustainability and the long-term capacity of the providers. The service provides valuable expertise, resources, time and staff development for the voluntary-sector subcontractors. It makes substantial grants to subcontractors for improving learning environments including meeting the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001), purchasing equipment for learning, and providing funds to help learners with the costs of learning.

33. The partners work to each other's strengths. They attract learners and provide learning through the most appropriate provider. There are several examples of colleges providing learning in learners' own communities. The service has secured substantial funds which it distributes prudently to build the capacity of its subcontractors. It has funded some development and support work in the colleges, and has increased its ESOL and literacy and numeracy provision in the colleges and in the community. There is valuable counselling and outreach development work with the communities, including literacy, numeracy and language support.

34. The service's management of its subcontractors was a weakness at the previous inspection. It is now good. There is a detailed contract with each subcontractor, and the commissioning process is open and transparent. All key partners are involved in deciding who is awarded the contract. The bids are dealt with integrity and honesty, and the unsuccessful providers are given clear feedback. Before the commissioning process starts, there is a thorough audit of the providers' capability using a comprehensive checklist called the quality threshold. The providers are carefully chosen for their ability to meet the targets and their geographical closeness to the community. The officers give good support to the subcontractors to develop bids, research needs and influence key players. Sustainable growth is encouraged. Subcontractors are given time to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes rather than being rushed to meet course delivery targets. There is good staff development and support. For example, 19 staff including several from the subcontractors, are being funded to take qualifications in teaching, information, advice and guidance, additional learning support, and observation of teaching and learning. Communications are good. There is regular feedback and

contact through e-mail, by telephone and in person. There is a yearly plan for the provision with a clear philosophy that is effectively communicated to all subcontractors. The subcontractors are set challenging targets for recruitment, retention and achievement. These are being met and in some cases exceeded. A monitoring officer checks the subcontractors' performance against the targets. Where necessary, subcontractors are given timely and effective support with data and other curriculum matters. They get detailed feedback on their progress, and are offered the training they need at an early stage. Some of the subcontractors' contracts have been suspended but they are invited again to bid when they are ready. Others have been terminated. There is effective promotion and marketing of learning through the partners.

35. There is very good use of data to identify and target under-represented groups. The use of data was a weakness at the previous inspection, but the service now has good data and uses it effectively. Since the previous inspection, the community education service has set up a management information system to provide comprehensive reports for staff and subcontracted providers. Many of the staff have been trained to use the system. It is used regularly by the managers to analyse the take-up of provision, measure performance, and identify gaps in the provision. The data is used in conjunction with population and deprivation data from the council, and participation data from local colleges. The service uses the data sets to identify the needs of disadvantaged communities. For example, in one area there was no family learning available. A successful proposal led to taster sessions being arranged at a community venue in partnership with a local college. The service has set targets for the recruitment of learners from deprived wards and exceeded them. In 2003-04, 88 per cent of enrolments were new learners, of whom 53 per cent were from disadvantaged wards. Data is also used to support funding bids. The service is well prepared to meet the requirements of the LSC. There is a single simplified enrolment form that meets the needs of all customers including various funding agencies. It has reduced bureaucracy enormously and benefited the learners and subcontractors. There is excellent guidance for the subcontractors on each data field, its importance and how the subcontractors could help to collect the data. The service was able to meet all the inspection requirements, although it is unable to monitor learners' destinations yet.

36. The service has good arrangements for providing learners with information, advice and guidance through a specialist subcontractor. The service has long recognized the importance of this provision, and the contract has been in operation since 1996. It includes a detailed service level agreement which sets challenging targets that the subcontractor has met. The subcontractor's staff have all had mandatory training on skills for life issues. They can identify learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs, and refer them to an appropriate provider. A named worker visits each group of learners as their course begins and offers them individual guidance interviews. Inspectors saw such interviews taking place in one of the centres and judged them to be effective. Information, advice and guidance are an integral part of all new courses offered by voluntary-sector subcontractors. All the subcontractors see the information, advice and guidance service as being beneficial to learners. The service manages the specialist subcontractor well, and both evaluate the effectiveness of its services. The subcontractor aims to continually improve the standard of its services, and is trying to

improve the rate of return for its learner surveys.

37. There are satisfactory arrangements to identify and provide for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. Staff from the careers service and the subcontractors have a good awareness of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. The staff from the two colleges visit the centres to conduct needs analyses. Learners are given appropriate support, including individual help and additional tuition, in the colleges. Many of these arrangements are new and it is too soon to judge their effect.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 1

38. Learners have outstanding access to childcare. In the summer term of 2003-04 alone, 191 learners used the crèche facilities to enable them to attend the classes. Subcontractors can request crèche provision from communi-crèche, which is part of the service. The service is well resourced and has 15 lead crèche workers and 58 sessional workers, 10 of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The quality of communi-crèche is assured by an external inspection team. The service thoroughly checks venues and staff before the sessions begin. Crèche provision is free to learners. It is paid for by the subcontractors and subsidised by funding from the regional development agency. Crèche staff have access to good staff development opportunities and all lead crèche workers have taken courses leading to national certificates in adult literacy and numeracy. Communi-crèche has a good library of resources for crèche workers. These are culturally diverse and include dual-language books, multi-cultural book bags and race awareness bags. Communi-crèche also helps to build the capacity of communities by targeting childcare training in areas where it is difficult to recruit crèche workers. In one area, 16 people started training and four are now employed by communi-crèche. The service evaluates its provision. It identifies any gaps and by doing so effectively meets the needs of most learners. Seventy-six per cent of the learners recruited in 2003-04 said they were completely dependent on the crèche provision to be able to attend their course. However, sickness cover is not always available for crèche staff. Personal support for learners is satisfactory. The service keeps a register of specialist equipment that can be loaned to learners. The take up of this service is not currently monitored, but there are plans to remedy this.

39. There is excellent promotion and monitoring of subcontractors' arrangements for equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity and social justice are at the heart of the service and are promoted through the subcontracting process. Subcontractors are required to explain how their provision contributes to equality of opportunity. The service supports them well during the bidding process. It provides comprehensive paperwork including clear criteria for assessing bids and a question and answer document, and it runs bidding workshops. It has developed a very good quality threshold that subcontractors must pass in order to receive funding. The quality threshold is discussed with subcontractors at quarterly monitoring meetings. Subcontractors provide appropriate support for learners. Many classes have an additional tutor or support worker to meet the specific needs of the learners.

40. The service meets the participation targets set for its provision by the LSC, including

targets for the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups, those with disabilities and men. Some of its larger subcontractors have targets in their contracts but the smaller ones do not. The service is good at encouraging all subcontractors to use data to plan and monitor their provision. It offers training on using and interpreting data. Although there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of male learners, the service has not met its own target. The under-representation of priority groups was a weakness at the previous inspection.

41. The service works to the equal opportunities policy of the council. Since the previous inspection, it has made satisfactory progress towards developing a learner entitlement policy. This includes a section on complaints, compliments and comments.

42. There is appropriate wheelchair access for learners in all the venues used by the subcontractors. The service offers small grants to subcontractors to improve the learning environment in the centres. Learners' needs are met with sensitivity. For example, classes for Muslim women do not run during Ramadan.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

43. At the previous inspection, the service's quality assurance was judged to be poor. Since then, it has introduced comprehensive new arrangements which are beginning to affect the quality of learners' experience. However, some of these are not yet fully established and it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

44. The self-assessment report is thorough, accurate and self-critical. It accurately identified all the weaknesses in the provision, but understated its strengths. The self-assessment process involved all partners and subcontractors. It has been an educational and reflective process for all concerned. For example, all the subcontractors were asked to evaluate their service and grade it against each element of the key questions. The findings from the self-assessment reports were used effectively to compile an overall report for the service.

45. The service has developed a comprehensive quality assurance handbook and implemented it across all its subcontractors. It identifies all the key processes and interactions with the learners, and establishes mechanisms for improving the service. There is effective and timely support for the subcontractors. There is a good range of quality thresholds that the subcontractors have to pass before they are offered a contract. The subcontractors' resources and premises are audited well. Audits of individual learning plans and initial assessment documents are thorough. They have identified weaknesses correctly and there is a carefully considered action plan to improve practice. Recently the service has produced a detailed handbook to guide tutors through the learning processes and their role in them. There is good awareness of the 'Common Inspection Framework' by staff, managers and subcontractors. The service produced a comprehensive post-inspection action plan in response to the previous inspection. Its development plan is also good.

46. The service has fully recognised the importance of teaching and learning and its role

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in improving standards. The service has invested significantly in training for its staff and subcontractors and in monitoring staff performance. It has measured its own observation grades for teaching and learning against external consultants' grades to establish benchmarks. The external consultants provide a thorough mentoring service for the service's observers. The observers are trained well. The training has developed the capacity of the subcontractors to conduct observations themselves.

47. The service carries out satisfactory learner surveys to help it plan the development of the service. There are regular and effective course reviews which involve learners, tutors and partners. These are minuted and effective action is taken to deal promptly with any weaknesses identified. The service also seeks its partners' views on the effectiveness of courses. Changes are made to the design, marketing and delivery of courses to better meet learners' needs. The service is flexible and responsive. It has listened to its stakeholders and has used all the feedback to make effective changes in a very short period. Good practice is shared and the service acts as an effective enabler and a link between the services.

48. There is satisfactory standardisation of the accredited courses. There is an open and transparent process of evaluating courses with a group of providers and examining the standard of learners' work. The process is supportive and constructive to help the subcontractors improve the provision and share good practice.

49. There is effective use of data to monitor targets and identify areas for improvement. The complaints system is satisfactory but is being changed to enable learners to complain more easily. There have been no complaints.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Community development

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	210	2

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

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- much good teaching and learning
- good range of learning resources
- effective action to attract learners from deprived communities
- strong curriculum management

Weaknesses

- unsuitable furniture in some learning centres
- inadequate initial assessment
- ineffective use of individual learning plans

Achievement and standards

50. Retention rates are good on all courses. For example, during the 2003-04 academic year, on 50 of the 58 courses held, retention rates were over 75 per cent. Most of the family learning courses are short taster courses. However, on the longer courses 80 per cent of learners were retained.

51. The achievement rates on accredited adult and community learning courses are good. On 15 of the 18 accredited courses, 75 per cent of learners gained accreditation. Attainment is also good on accredited and non-accredited family learning courses. Learners reach their primary learning goal of working more confidently with their children or grandchildren. One learner now has the confidence to read books with her children whereas before she only read the television listings. Some learners also become more confident personal readers. Learners in the fourth week of the 'reading friends' course were well prepared to help individual children with their reading in schools. Learners on 'reading friends' and 'helping in school' courses can use their learning with their own children. For instance, learners were well aware of how the pictures in books help children understand the text. All learners carry out a satisfactory end-of-course evaluation to assess their own progress.

52. The courses provide a wide range of benefits to the learners and their immediate

community. For example, school children who have participated in the 10-week 'reading friends' course have improved their reading age by between six months and a year. Learners derive personal benefit from the courses. For example, one learner who works as a school secretary, is following the 'reading friends' course to broaden her understanding of the children's needs. Another, a community warden, sees the course as very good preparation for continuing her training as a non-teaching assistant in her local school.

Quality of education and training

53. There is much good teaching and learning. Of the sessions observed, 94 per cent were satisfactory or better. In the best sessions, teaching was well planned, and the learning objectives were clearly stated and shared with the learners. There was a good range of practical activities. In a family learning session, there was good participation and children and adults were learning effectively. In another session, excellent use was made of a recent radio interview to illustrate the concept of open and closed questions. This was received well by learners and prompted a lively discussion that was managed well by the tutor. Learners understand how the activities will help their children learn, and some share ideas and produce resources for activities at home. In a taster session on child protection, three groups of learners were actively involved in answering questions in a competitive, but relaxed, environment. The weaker sessions were not structured. Learning objectives were poorly formulated, there was insufficient verbal questioning, audiovisual aids were not used effectively and there was insufficient integration of practical work with background knowledge.

54. In many sessions, tutors use a good range of learning resources. There is a wide range of well-produced worksheets and practical resources such as craft materials to motivate adults and children. All learners on the 'reading friends' course are given a ring-binder containing a range of appropriate handouts and learning materials. A tutor running a learning workshop for parents and children had a very good range of fabrics, wool, face paints and coloured card to help children and parents make monster wigs and to add monster characteristics to children's faces. Where appropriate, learners have good access to computers with suitable software.

55. Accommodation is generally satisfactory. However, the acoustics in one school hall made it difficult to hear the tutor. Adults had to use unsuitable, child-sized furniture in several sessions. This is particularly undesirable for courses that run for four-and-a-half hours in a day.

56. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced and have good access to professional development opportunities. The service encourages all staff, including those from the subcontractors to take part in professional development. It pays the course fees for tutors who have enrolled on initial teacher training programmes. Staff come from a variety of backgrounds and welcome the opportunity to learn from each other and share good practice.

57. The service has taken very effective action to attract learners from deprived communities. It helps and encourages communities to research their own needs effectively. It has increased men's participation significantly by introducing targeted taster courses in family learning in the evenings and at weekends. The service recruits new learners through a network of literacy development workers. Good use is made of taster sessions to allow learners to sample subjects such as child protection before they enrol on a longer course. Satisfactory use is made of learners' feedback to develop progression routes in partnership with other training providers. The service has had a positive impact on schools and the wider community and is regarded well by its partners. It has been able to unite different ethnic groups through the process of learning together. For example, members of two communities with little history of working together attended a joint event on a Sunday afternoon. A bus service took approximately 300 potential learners to various learning centres. Members of minority ethnic groups are well presented on learning programmes. In the 2003-04 academic year, 26 per cent of learners were from these groups compared with 15 per cent of the overall population of the borough.

58. The service has satisfactory arrangements with local colleges to assess learners' literacy and numeracy needs and provide literacy, numeracy and language classes. The subcontractors use a range of methods to identify learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs, but do not always use the outcomes effectively to plan learning. The arrangements are new and it is too soon for them to have taken full effect. The inspectors were not able to observe any of the support sessions.

59. Learners receive satisfactory information, advice and guidance through a partnership arrangement with a local provider that specialises in careers advice for adults. The service has worked hard to develop a network of providers who offer progression opportunities for learners. However, the learners are not always aware of such opportunities. Learners on some taster programmes did not know about the other programmes they could move on to. The service has developed good-quality user-friendly course leaflets but learners are not always aware of these before they enrol on the courses. Some pre-course information is vague and this sometimes leads to confusion among the learners. Some of the benefits of learning are not made clear in the leaflets. The service is dealing with this issue.

60. Assessment overall is satisfactory. Learners are fully involved in assessing themselves. Tutors keep a record of learners' progress but do not give them any formal feedback on their learning. At the end of the sessions learners satisfactorily review and record what they have learnt. On longer courses, learners are given appropriate verbal and written feedback on their assignments.

61. Initial assessment is inadequate. Insufficient attention has been given to producing a range of course-related tests and diagnostic assessments to help tutors identify learners' strengths and weaknesses. Many learners are not given any form of initial assessment. Learners attending tasters and 'reading friends' courses have no formal initial assessment and there are few records of their prior achievement and experience. Insufficient guidance has been given to the training providers about suitable ways of assessing and

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diagnosing learners' learning needs before they start on courses. The service is aware of this weakness and is dealing with it. There is now a good handbook for tutors, with detailed guidance for all subcontractors.

62. Individual learning plans are not used well. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report. Most learners do not have copies of their individual learning plans. They are not fully aware of what the plans contain and how they are used to plan and monitor learning. Some of the plans are incomplete. Some targets are insufficiently challenging and not specific. Insufficient importance is given to using learning outcomes as benchmarks in order to measure achievement on unaccredited courses.

Leadership and management

63. Since the previous inspection, the service has made excellent progress to deal with the weaknesses identified. It now offers strong curriculum management. Learners benefit from the very good co-operative working arrangements among partners. There is an excellent focus on widening participation and attracting people who have not participated in education for some time. The service concentrates on providing good opportunities to encourage specific target groups to start learning. These groups include people who have little previous experience of education, those with few or no formal qualifications, the unemployed or under-employed, people from minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities. Very good learning opportunities are provided to satisfy learners' needs and interests and to contribute to community development and neighbourhood regeneration. Great importance is placed on identifying and removing barriers to learning, such as travel costs and lack of childcare facilities. The service has developed comprehensive quality assurance procedures which it is using to monitor the quality of subcontractors' provision. Good development opportunities are offered to staff working for subcontractors.