

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Essex LEA**

**11 June 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 and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

## Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, **or**
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Essex LEA

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Essex is one of the largest local authority adult and community learning services in the country, with some 47,368 learners and 74,926 enrolments in 2002-03. Essex County Council established a new directorate of Learning and Social Care in 2002. The post-16 education and lifelong learning service group was disbanded in December 2003 and services were moved to other service groups. As there is no longer an education department, only a Schools' Service, the adult and community learning service became part of a new service group, Libraries, Culture and Adult Learning (LCAL) in January 2004. The key priorities for the adult and community learning service include increasing demand for learning, meeting local needs through partnerships, widening participation, raising literacy and numeracy skills and achievement of adults, and developing learning skills in the workplace.

2. The adult and community learning service has a unique method of direct delivery through Essex County Council's adult community colleges. The colleges were established in 1993, with delegated funding and governing bodies in order to meet local needs in a large and diverse county. The head of adult and community learning manages the service while the college principals manage the colleges. The head of adult and community learning attends monthly LCAL service strategy group meetings and weekly meetings with the head of LCAL and the cabinet member for Lifelong Learning and Libraries. Funding for adult and community learning comes directly to the county council as a single contract from Essex Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Essex County Council also provides funding to support the adult and community learning service.

3. The adult and community learning service is delivered through nine adult community colleges and one residential adult college, with centres in most towns and in over 250 venues across Essex. A very small proportion of work (1.5 per cent) is contracted out to two further education colleges, a national voluntary organisation and a national organisation for women. Courses are offered in all areas of learning, but in construction, engineering, technology and manufacturing, and retailing, customer service and transportation, the programme is small. At the time of inspection the service employed some 2,234 staff. Of these, a small full-time central support team is based at County Hall and all other staff are based at the colleges and centres. Of these some 1,700 are part-time tutors. Each college has a management team, comprising a principal, vice-principal(s), curriculum co-ordinators, team leaders and administrative managers. Staffing structures vary, depending on the size of the college and the area it covers.

4. Essex is a diverse area that contains some very affluent areas alongside those that are among the most deprived in the country. While the unemployment rate is low at 1.9 per cent, people in some areas in the county have very poor literacy and numeracy skills. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 3.29 per cent, compared with 7.9 per cent nationally, but there are significant variations across the area, with a higher concentration of people from minority ethnic groups in

towns and districts nearer London. In a commissioned survey in May 2003, approximately 21 per cent of residents interviewed said that they, or a member of their household, had taken part in adult and community learning activities.

5. In 2002-03 there were 19,658 learners on accredited provision and 26,603 learners on non-accredited courses. There were 74,926 enrolments on some 6,800 courses. Of these learners, 34,985 were women and 955 were from minority ethnic groups.

6. At the time of the inspection, there were 24,409 enrolments on approximately 2,500 courses funded by Essex LSC. The inspection covered all areas of learning but in hairdressing and beauty therapy only the accredited provision was inspected because of the timing of the inspection. The last week of the inspection coincided with the last week of provision for many courses.

## **SCOPE OF PROVISION**

### **Sciences & mathematics**

7. Essex adult and community learning offers courses mainly in mathematics. General certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) in mathematics account for most of the provision and they are offered in all areas across Essex. In the current year there are 444 learners on courses and 329 of these are women. Three colleges offer a greater range of provision, including an advanced level course in mathematics, GCSE human biology and GCSE environmental science. They are developing their provision to meet new demands. For example, as a result of a needs analysis in 2002-03, one of the colleges ran a very successful advanced level course in geology. There are a small number of non-accredited courses in science, which are short courses that range from bite-size courses of three hours to short courses of 20 hours. The courses are related to aspects of astronomy, anatomy, geology, ecology and meteorology. Some of the non-accredited provision is provided through residential courses.

### **Land-based provision**

8. There are 239 learners in this area, of whom 110 are on accredited courses. One hundred and fifty-one learners are studying floristry and 88 learners are on horticulture courses. Last year 963 learners took classes in this area and 865 have enrolled so far this year. Dog-grooming courses are also offered but none were running at the time of the inspection. Residential environmental conservation courses are offered at one centre but these are being offered on a non-residential basis for future years. The accredited courses are at level 1 and 2 in floristry and at level 1 and 2 in horticulture. Non-accredited courses are available at a range of levels. Floristry and horticulture are available across the county. All of the staff are part time and the courses in each area are the responsibility of the curriculum manager in each college. Tutors advise and guide learners before entry and will refer them to more appropriate provision if the proposed course does not suit the learners' needs. Most courses last from six to 30 weeks, for between two and three hours a week, and are available during the day or in the evenings.

## **Business administration, management & professional**

9. There are 451 learners, of whom 199 are working towards qualifications related to teaching. Provision in this area is predominantly teaching qualifications, ranging from a local accredited level 1 qualification to a level 4 nationally accredited qualification. There is also a range of book-keeping courses and computerised accounting courses, with some GCSE and advanced level accounting and business studies courses. Most courses run for 30 weeks, with some running for 15 weeks. The courses are run at all main colleges and at some schools through the day, twilight and evening. The level 4 courses run predominately on Saturdays. All tutors are part time. It is mostly staff employed by the adult and community learning service who work towards to level 4 qualification. Most learners on the teaching assistants' course are women aged from 35 to 59 years old. Over the current year, 1,359 learners have participated in courses.

## **Information & communications technology**

10. Information and communications technology (ICT) courses are offered in all of the adult community colleges. Each college has a management team that plans the local curriculum. Staffing structures vary depending on the size of the college and the area it covers. At the time of inspection there were 5,969 learners attending 295 courses running in 66 venues. Approximately 66 per cent of the courses are accredited and 54 per cent of the learners are on courses leading to qualifications. Sixty-eight per cent of learners are women and 37 per cent are over 60 years old. There are 159 teaching staff and most of them are part time, on permanent contracts, which are subject to annual variations.

11. Courses include introductory taster sessions, leisure use of computers, such as digital imaging and family history on the internet, as well as courses leading to recognised qualifications in using common desktop applications. Courses include one-session introductory tasters and others lasting from two to 34 weeks, and they run during the day, twilight and in the evenings, generally for two or three hours each week. There are a few courses offered on Saturdays, both as one-session tasters and standard-length courses in community venues and at main college sites. Some sessions are held in purpose-built centres, others are held in local community centres and other community venues, such as church halls, primary schools and specialist centres for learners with disabilities. Some sessions use fixed computers in dedicated workspaces, while for other courses the service provides portable computers.

## **Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**

12. A wide range of non-accredited sport and leisure courses is offered, including badminton, keep fit, swimming, yoga, Pilates, tai chi, aikido, bridge, gymability, and tennis. There is a very small programme of hospitality courses, including cookery, cake decorating, sugar craft, and wine and spirits. Only four hospitality courses were running at the time of inspection. There are 59 accredited courses, including swimming teaching, life-saving, sports injury and food hygiene. Courses are offered from beginner to advanced levels. Courses are run on college main sites and in community venues such as schools, community centres, village and church halls, swimming pools and sports halls.

13. In 2003-04, of the 7,103 learners enrolled on courses, 83 per cent are women and 2 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Learners over 60 years of age represent 31 per cent of the total number of learners in this area. In 2003-04, there were 668 courses registered, which represented a 2.2 per cent increase on the previous year. Approximately 200 tutors are employed in the curriculum area and these are managed by part-time team leaders.

## **Hairdressing & beauty therapy**

14. There are 1,705 learners enrolled on a combination of accredited and non-accredited hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapy courses. The main focus of the provision is on beauty and holistic therapy courses, which include aromatherapy, reflexology, Alexander techniques, Indian head massage, shiatsu and homoeopathy. Accredited courses account for 35 per cent of the provision and are offered at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Courses take place at the main college sites, as well as local church halls and community centres. Courses are of a variety of lengths. At the time of inspection most non-accredited courses had been completed and inspectors were unable to observe this aspect of the provision. Ninety-four per cent of learners are women and there are very few learners from minority ethnic groups.

## **Health, social care & public services**

15. In 2003-04 there are 2,939 learners on a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes across the county. Accredited courses include a range of childcare courses at levels 2 and 3, first-aid courses, foundation certificate in health and safety, a range of counselling courses at levels 2, 3 and 4, and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 in early years and care. There are 116 learners on the new NVQ at level 2 programmes. In 2002-03, 53 per cent of learners were on accredited courses and currently 74 per cent of learners are on accredited courses. Accredited courses last from six to 30 weeks and attendance varies from between six to two and a half hours each week. Some of the courses extend into another academic year. Non-accredited courses include stress management, understanding children, fire safety and fire marshal training and introductory counselling courses. Courses are offered in the day and in the evening across the county. Sessions are run in community colleges, workplaces, a library and community venues. Most tutors are part time.



## Visual & performing arts & media

16. Visual and performing arts courses are offered at main colleges and at 266 other venues across the county. Most of the courses are visual arts and crafts, with a small number of music and performing arts classes. Classes run from one to 36 weeks in the mornings, afternoons and evenings, seven days a week. Arts and crafts courses include watercolour painting, textiles, interior design, silk painting and stained glass. The small number of performing arts classes include drama, music and dance. Most of the programme is non-accredited with a small number of accredited courses. In 2003-04, there are 7,870 learners and 10,317 enrolments, which represent approximately 19 per cent of the total enrolments for the county. Of the learners, 80 per cent are women, 1 per cent are under 19 years old, 63 per cent are 19 to 59 years old and 36 per cent are over 60 years old. Less than 2 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. There are 305 tutors employed part time or full time, and 231 are trained teachers.

## Humanities

17. The humanities provision varies from college to college, although a broad range of subjects is covered across the county. In the current year there are 1,651 enrolments in this area and 1,147 learners. Courses are offered at GCSE and/or advanced level in archaeology, government and politics, history, law, philosophy, psychology and sociology, and one centre runs an access to higher education course. Of these courses, 72 per cent are non-accredited and consist largely of history courses, including family history and local history courses, many of which are short courses. During inspection week, 44 of the 60 courses running were accredited. Courses are offered as day and evening classes and there are also Saturday, residential and summer school courses.

## English, languages & communications

18. This area of learning includes modern foreign languages, English language and literature, British Sign Language (BSL) and English as a foreign language. Of the 7,393 learners who enrolled in this area in 2003-04, 3,866 were in learning at the time of the inspection. Courses are offered during the day and evening at all of the main centres and 65 per cent of provision is accredited. In modern foreign languages, most courses lead to Open College Network (OCN) accreditation. Most accredited English provision is at GCSE level, with advanced level courses available in some locations. Courses are offered in the day and evening in all main centres and there are some Saturday classes and bite-size taster sessions at locations across the county.

## Foundation programmes

19. The foundation programmes include literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

20. Basic literacy, numeracy and language courses take place on main sites, in outreach centres, in the community and in partnership venues. Twenty per cent of the programme is offered in the evening, and a small number of courses at twilight. The length of courses ranges from three-hour initial assessment sessions and courses of less than 12 hours, to programmes of 120 hours, with most lasting between 12 and 59 hours. Sessions last from one to three hours. An annual residential summer school is held at the end of the academic year for 30 learners from across the service, and some colleges extend the teaching year by offering short summer schools locally. Courses are offered from entry level to level 2 and learners may join programmes at any time during the year.

21. There were 4,278 learners and 7,445 enrolments on 1,010 courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL in 2003-04. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,386 learners still in learning. Fifty-five per cent of learners are enrolled on literacy courses, 22 per cent on numeracy courses and 23 per cent on ESOL programmes. The area has attracted proportionally more male learners than other areas since September 2003, with 1,315 of them, compared with 2,963 female learners. Some 60 per cent of learners are between 19 and 59 years old. Asian and Chinese learners represent the largest minority ethnic group.

22. Skills for life programmes are part of the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. In the LEA, these are managed by a full-time co-ordinator in all but one college, where there is a part-time appointment supported by a full-time outreach worker. There are approximately 177 part-time staff across the service. Most colleges have one full-time tutor, funded through the LSC's additional capacity-building money. There is a full-time central support team manager for skills for life at County Hall, who is responsible for strategic management, response to national local initiatives, and support for the skills for life team.

23. Essex County Council's adult and community learning provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is available in nine of the colleges and in a range of community venues, partner organisations and residential homes across Essex. At the time of inspection there were 299 classes. In 2003-04, 3,161 learners enrolled on courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,422 learners still in learning. Most courses take place during the day and last for 32 weeks each year. Most learners attend classes for between one and three hours each week. Most of the courses are at pre-entry level and some are linked to pre-entry curriculum targets. Other are at entry level and linked to the core curriculum for literacy and numeracy. In 2002-03, 58 per cent of the provision was funded from the further education funding stream. Approximately 50 per cent of all learners who enrolled in 2002-03 worked towards qualifications such as independent living skills, self-advocacy, literacy and numeracy. The programmes are managed by a skills for life co-ordinator. There is a county-wide learning disabilities task group and each

college has a full-time, or substantial part-time, manager for this area. Curriculum co-ordinators or team leaders have specific responsibility for the management of programmes related to adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (ALDD). There are 139 part-time teaching staff. Learning support assistants, volunteers and carers are involved in the support of learners in most courses.

### Family learning

24. Family learning provision has developed significantly. A wide range of projects and programmes in family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN), as well as wider family learning activities, have been initiated across the county. A family learning manager in the central support team is responsible for managing the service that is planned and delivered through family learning co-ordinators in each of the adult community colleges. Childcare is available in most centres and a mobile facility is available.

25. In 2002-03 there were 1,420 enrolments on all family learning programmes, with over 112 courses and projects with partners, including the education action zones, 63 schools, social services, health services, Essex early years service, pre-school playgroups, parenting agencies and local football clubs. In 2003-04, there are 1,188 learners on FLLN courses, and 1,299 enrolments on wider family learning provision. Ninety-four schools are now included in a total of 119 venues in local communities.

26. Much of the FLLN learning is provided through arts and crafts, health, beauty and first-aid programmes. Story sacks are used extensively across the provision. Wider family learning provision includes parenting skills. Some learners gain accreditation in literacy or numeracy, and many courses provide the opportunity to gain other qualifications in basic food hygiene and first aid.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	33
Number of inspection days	183
Number of learner interviews	952
Number of staff interviews	352
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	185

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

27. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, Essex LEA's provision in land-based programmes, hair and beauty, foundation programmes and in family learning is good. Its provision in science and mathematics, sports and leisure, health, social care and public services, visual and performing arts, humanities, and English, languages and communications is satisfactory. The provision in ICT and business administration, management and professional is unsatisfactory. The LEA's leadership and management of the provision are good. Its approach to equality of opportunity and its arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory.

## GRADES

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality assurance		3

<b>Sciences &amp; mathematics</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Mathematics</i> - Adult and community learning	444	3

<b>Land-based provision</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Horticulture and agriculture</i> - Adult and community learning	88	2
<i>Floristry</i> - Adult and community learning	151	2

<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Business administration</i> - Adult and community learning	252	4
<i>Teacher/trainer awards</i> - Adult and community learning	199	4

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i> - Adult and community learning	5969	4

<b>Hospitality, sport, leisure &amp; travel</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Hospitality and catering</i></b> - Adult and community learning	45	None
<b><i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i></b> - Adult and community learning	7058	3
<b>Hairdressing &amp; beauty therapy</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Beauty therapy</i></b> - Adult and community learning	1705	2
<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Other contributory areas</i></b> - Other government-funded provision	112	3
<b>Visual &amp; performing arts &amp; media</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Arts</i></b> - Adult and community learning	1528	3
<b><i>Crafts</i></b> - Adult and community learning	6342	3
<b>Humanities</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>History and genealogy</i></b> - Adult and community learning	735	3
<b><i>Sociology and psychology</i></b> - Adult and community learning	412	3

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>English</i> - Adult and community learning	143	3
<i>Languages</i> - Adult and community learning	3723	3

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy</i> - Adult and community learning	1312	2
<i>Numeracy</i> - Adult and community learning	525	2
<i>ESOL</i> - Adult and community learning	549	2
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> - Adult and community learning	2422	2

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	1188	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

28. **In 2002-03, accreditation was available on some 43 per cent of the Essex adult and community learning programmes. Accreditation has grown dramatically over the past three years and is still rising. Achievement rates on most of these accredited courses are good and are improving at all levels.** In 2002-03, the overall achievement rate was 76 per cent. Retention and achievement targets have been exceeded. Success rates are also improving. However, there are wide variations in achievement and retention rates across the county.

29. **Achievement and retention rates on non-accredited adult and community learning courses are also very good.** In 2002-03, the overall retention rate was 91 per cent. Although overall retention rates are high, there are low retention rates on accredited provision in humanities, averaging 66 per cent over the past three years, and in mathematics and science.

**30. Learners participating in most of the adult and community learning programmes achieve a wide range of personal goals.** They gain confidence, develop their self-esteem, feel proud of their achievements and overcome their fear of learning something new. Learners apply new skills in their everyday lives at home and at work, learn how to assess their own progress, become independent learners and learn to identify their own learning goals. Learners in information and communications technology are able to apply new technology in their everyday lives and, for many learners, the courses provide an opportunity to reduce their sense of isolation in an increasingly technological world. In visual arts and crafts, learners achieve high standards of practical work and develop good technical skills, which show an understanding of a range of materials. Learners in beauty therapy courses develop good skills and a professional approach to their work. On modern foreign language programmes, learners are able to make good progress.

**31. Achievement is unsatisfactory on accredited courses in visual and performing arts, in advanced level accounting courses, on the new level 4 teaching qualification and in humanities.**

**32. The modularisation of the modern foreign language provision at level 1 has resulted in improved achievement rates and learners value their qualifications.** Significant numbers of learners progress to level 3, where they develop the ability to express complex ideas and opinions in lively debates with native speakers.

**33. On English programmes, learners develop confidence and good communication skills linked to personal and professional ambitions.** Some learners have work published, plays that they have written are performed, and they develop links with artistic communities. Many learners develop an enthusiasm for literature.

**34. Learners develop very good skills in family learning programmes.** They are able to better support their children and improve their own personal and employment skills. They gain a better understanding of their children and are able to participate more effectively in their children's education and development. They also gain a range of qualifications.

**35. On foundation programmes, there are very good pass rates for national tests.** In 2002-03, 62 learners passed the test. In the current year, 384 learners have already passed the test.

**36. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a range of complex learning needs, develop the confidence and skills to become active participants in a variety of learning and social situations.**

**37. Essex LEA promotes the achievements of its learners.** A group of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities participate in a craft fair alongside local professional artists. Another group is responsible for the maintenance of hanging baskets at a local railway station. Celebrations of learners' achievements include a high-quality virtual exhibition CD of artwork, which the LEA uses to promote art and craft courses to new learners.

38. **On most programmes, attendance and punctuality are good.** There is good monitoring of attendance and tutors are in regular contact with learners, and they are aware of reasons for their learners' absence.

### Quality of education and training

39. **Overall, 65 per cent of the teaching and learning sessions observed by the inspectors were judged to be good or better, 26 per cent were satisfactory and 10 per cent were unsatisfactory.** There is too much unsatisfactory teaching in business administration, management and professional and ICT.

40. **On science and mathematics, land-based provision, hairdressing and beauty therapy, sports and leisure, and foundation programmes, the teaching is mostly good.** Courses are well planned, managed effectively, sessions are stimulating and learners are very motivated. Beauty therapy courses provide a good range of practical demonstration, which is well supported by good handouts. In the best lessons across the adult and community learning service, there is good rapport between tutors and learners, and tutors recognise different abilities and needs sensitively. There is an emphasis on independent and collaborative learning. Tutors have good subject knowledge and create appropriate learning environments.

41. **Sports and leisure learners experience a lot of good teaching and learning, and 78 per cent of the sessions observed were judged good or better.** Tutors meet individual learning needs effectively and learners benefit from better health, increased stamina and improvements in their quality of life.

42. **In humanities and modern foreign languages, learners enjoy lively debates and a wide range of enrichment activities, including foreign exchanges and study trips.** In humanities there is good learning. Learners are enthusiastic about learning for its own sake and for their self-development. Learners are enthusiastic and excited by their courses.

43. **In the best sessions in visual and performing arts, learners use skills creatively and develop personal responses from their own ideas.** There are very good learner-centred projects, which tutors plan around learners' interests.

44. **In foundation programmes, teaching and learning are good.** Tutors use a variety of multi-sensory approaches, and learning materials are stimulating and related to the learners' needs and interests.

45. **The weaker sessions in modern foreign languages were slow and there was insufficient planning to meet individual learners' needs.** Handouts were uninspiring and lessons did not sufficiently challenge learners. There is limited use of target language teaching and over-reliance on English in many classes, which does not allow learners to



reach their full potential. However, in some of the best sessions, particularly at the higher levels, learners were able to communicate effectively, consistently used the target language and demonstrated excellent verbal and written skills.

**46. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching in business administration, management and professional programmes.** Tutors are uncertain of their subjects, there is insufficient involvement of learners in discussions, some inappropriate teaching methods, insufficient use of individual learning plans, and not enough use is made of initial assessment to plan learning.

**47. Much of the teaching on ICT courses is unsatisfactory.** Inspectors judged 24 per cent of sessions to be unsatisfactory. Sessions are often unimaginative and do not involve the learners sufficiently. Tutors do not promote learners' independence or encourage them to interact and support each other. There was a limited range of teaching methodologies and little checking of learners' understanding.

**48. Resources are good in ICT, with up-to-date hardware, good software and particularly good resources for learners with additional support needs.**

49. There is wide variation in the use and availability of resources in science and mathematics.

50. The adult and community learning service has implemented an effective health and safety risk assessment plan and audits related to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 across the county. Most centres have made many improvements.

**51. The accommodation for some courses in sports and leisure is poor,** particularly in community venues outside of the main college centre.

**52. There is insufficient pre-course information and assessment for GCSE mathematics.**

**53. Pre-course information is inconsistent in ICT.** Some learners are on the wrong level of course. Information about courses is sometimes late and some learners are not fully informed about course requirements and costs.

**54. There is inconsistent and sometimes insufficient assessment in a number of learning programmes.**

**55. In business administration, management and professional there is poor NVQ assessment practice.** There is insufficient observation in the workplace by qualified assessors and an over-reliance on personal reflective statements. The range of evidence in learners' portfolios is not sufficiently diverse and there is some poor action planning.

**56. In visual and performing arts, there is insufficient recording of learners' progress.** Some courses have no formal monitoring of progress. Learning plans are often too general and personal learning goals are insufficiently identified. In many cases, learning plans do not sufficiently use learners' prior experience to assess their needs.

57. **Formal assessment is inadequate in ICT.** The quality of assessment relies heavily on the skills of individual tutors.

58. **In sports and leisure courses there is inconsistent monitoring and recording of learners' progress and achievement.** There are a variety of monitoring and recording methods. Some tutors fail to monitor progress or overall achievement. There is insufficient negotiation of learning objectives with learners.

59. **There is inconsistent formal monitoring of health screening and risk assessment in sports and leisure courses.**

60. **In hairdressing and beauty therapy, and health and social care programmes, there is insufficient initial assessment of literacy, numeracy and language needs.** Needs are often identified from coursework and there is little routine assessment of literacy, numeracy and language support needs.

61. **Essex adult and community learning provision is very effective in meeting the needs and interests of a wide range of learners.** All areas of learning have been responsive and have developed a flexible and responsive offer of courses. These widen participation by attracting new learners, including many who have traditionally not participated in learning or who need to develop the skills to support themselves in life or work. The service has consciously focused on the need to change from a demand-led curriculum to a needs-led curriculum.

62. **Flexible mathematics provision widens opportunities to acquire skills in mathematics.** GCSE mathematics courses offer numeracy learners the opportunity to progress and support workforce development.

63. In ICT, sports and leisure, visual and performing arts, English, modern foreign languages, and in humanities, **there is a good geographic distribution of diverse and inclusive programmes.**

64. **Foundation programmes are innovative and closely linked to the learners' personal, economic and social needs.**

65. **Family learning programmes work collaboratively and establish strong partnerships with community, statutory and voluntary sectors.** This work has resulted in recruitment targets for family learning being exceeded for the second year. A wide range of FLLN programmes, as well as wider family learning activities have been set up across the county. Family learning has grown from 925 learners in 2002-03, to 1,299 learners in the current year.

66. The service has responded to the need for NVQ provision. Although this is a small aspect of the total provision, and much of it is currently unsatisfactory, significant improvements have taken place very recently in understanding and putting into place appropriate procedures to support this work.

67. **Learners receive good levels of support on most courses.** Careful attention is given to the learners' individual needs. Learner support roles are identified in colleges. A learner support fund has increased significantly in the past three years. Some of the centres provide crèche facilities.

68. **There is a very good range of support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities,** and the colleges provide a good range of specialist software and equipment, including improved access to support learners.

### Leadership and management

69. **There is very effective collaborative work across the adult and community learning service.** The service is delivered by nine community colleges and their local centres, and one residential college. A complex set of arrangements enables the needs of the rural communities, large towns and a range of differing socio-economic communities, to be served. Communications are generally effective between the county council's central support team and the local colleges and centres. There is a shared commitment to raise the overall quality of adult and community learning provision across Essex.

70. **There is good leadership of a complex and diverse service.** Strategic planning of the adult and community learning service is thorough and detailed. Individual college plans are appropriately aligned to county council's priorities. The service has been very effective in acquiring a wide range of funding streams.

71. **The achievement of targets is good.** The LEA has exceeded all of its targets. Over the past three years retention rates have improved and enrolments on accredited learning programmes have risen dramatically. Achievement rates are good and improving at all levels.

72. College governors are enthusiastic and keen to ensure that their colleges continue to meet local community needs. Working groups are mostly effective and well attended.

73. **Arrangements for staff development are mostly good and staff speak highly of the training opportunities offered.** Individual college plans reflect adult and community learning service priorities but the service has yet to develop an overall staff development plan. The proportion of fully qualified tutors is low given the growing number of accredited programmes.

74. Performance management is effective and the performance management review system is based on the achievement of broad county council and individual college targets.

75. **There is good management of land-based provision and hairdressing and beauty therapy.** Family learning programmes are well led and managed effectively, and there is strong management of foundation programmes. There is satisfactory management of most other areas.

76. **There is unsatisfactory management of the small NVQ programme.** This represents less than 1 per cent of the total provision and has only recently been started. There is no operational strategy for the delivery of NVQ programmes, and no clear analysis of staffing needs.

77. **There is insufficient use of management information.** The system is mostly reliable and produces accurate data, but the standard of data entry at some colleges is poor. Curriculum co-ordinators and tutors have had limited training in the use of data for decision-making. The adult and community learning service does not routinely produce reports on learner achievement by level of qualification, nor use equal opportunities data as part of course reviews.

78. **The service has been slow in developing meaningful indicators to measure achievement on non-accredited programmes.** However, a pilot project is currently taking place.

79. **The service has responded well to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001** and it has made many improvements to buildings. A good amount of work has been done to raise awareness of discrimination against people with declared disabilities and the development of support for learners with special needs.

80. Actions plans in response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 have been drawn up at both college and service level. However, progress has been slow and regular reporting on equality and diversity does not yet take place on all management and governing body meetings across Essex.

81. **There is much successful work with a range of partners to widen the participation in learning of new and hard-to-reach learners.** There is a strong awareness of the need to promote sustainable cultural change across the community to promote lifelong learning and social inclusion. FLLN programmes have been particularly successful in attracting many new and hard-to-reach learners. A wide range of projects with vulnerable communities as well as a mobile teaching unit provide a range of opportunities for new learners.

82. The basic skills strategy is well developed within foundation programmes, but it has yet to sufficiently influence support for learners across the curriculum.

83. **There is insufficient planning of the traditional adult and community learning curriculum to reflect cultural diversity.** Colleges have been slow to focus on developing a stronger awareness of equality and diversity in course planning. Observers do not report on equal opportunities within the service's lesson observation scheme. This limits opportunities to provide direct support for tutors to develop good practice.

84. **There is a good quality assurance strategy.** A quality assurance handbook provides a clear quality assurance framework and annual action timetable, and it is used by all colleges in the county. The county's quality assurance group, which includes vice-

principals of all the colleges, validates each college's self-assessment report.

**85. There is inconsistent implementation of quality assurance arrangements in some areas.** The quality of course reviews is not consistent and there are a number of weaknesses in assessment practice across the county. There are considerable variations in the quality of completion of learning plans and in the recording of outcomes.

**86. Lesson observation is well established and effective in most areas.** However, inspectors identified some over-grading and an insufficient number of evaluative judgements within observation systems for the areas that have been identified with significant weaknesses during inspection.

**87. Self-assessment has been effective and has improved the quality of teaching and learning.** The self-assessment report is thorough and self-critical. Each college produces its own report and then the central support team incorporates this in an overall report. Development plans offer a clear direction for improvement and targets have been set for improvement. The reports provide an accurate self-assessment of most of the issues identified during the inspection.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- highly effective collaborative work across the adult and community learning service
- good leadership and strategic planning
- good achievement of targets
- successful partnerships to widen the participation of new and hard-to-reach learners
- effective self-assessment to improve the quality of teaching and learning

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient use of management information systems
- insufficient use of equal opportunities data to measure and improve performance
- insufficient planning of the curriculum and teaching to reflect equality and diversity
- inconsistent implementation of quality assurance arrangements

## **Sciences & mathematics**

### ***Mathematics***

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement in GCSE mathematics
- some good teaching
- flexible mathematics provision widens opportunities to acquire skills

#### *Weaknesses*

- some poor retention on accredited courses
- wide variation in the availability and use of resources
- insufficient pre-course information and assessment for GCSE mathematics

## **Land-based provision**

### ***Horticulture and agriculture***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- high standard of learners' work
- good teaching and learning
- good management of curriculum

#### *Weaknesses*

- low pass rates on accredited horticultural courses
- inappropriate classrooms for some subjects

### ***Floristry***

#### *Strengths*

- good management of curriculum
- good teaching and learning
- high standard of learners' work
- good retention rates

#### *Weaknesses*

- inappropriate classrooms for some subjects

## **Business administration, management & professional**

### ***Business administration***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates on most courses
- extensive range of good learning materials

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor achievement rates
- unsatisfactory teaching
- insufficient management of the curriculum

### ***Teacher/trainer awards***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates on most courses
- extensive range of good learning materials

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor achievement rates on level 4 teaching qualifications
- unsatisfactory teaching
- poor NVQ assessment practice
- inadequate management of the curriculum

### **Information & communications technology**

#### ***Using IT***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- very good initiatives to widen participation
- good resources

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor teaching
- inadequate formal assessment
- inconsistent pre-course guidance

### **Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**

#### ***Leisure, sport and recreation***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates, particularly for accredited provision
- good teaching and learning
- good geographical distribution of diverse and inclusive programmes
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- some poor accommodation
- inconsistent monitoring and recording of learners' progress and achievement
- inconsistent formal recording of health screening and risk assessment



## **Hairdressing & beauty therapy**

### ***Beauty therapy***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention and achievement rates on accredited courses
- effective teaching on accredited courses
- good opportunities for learners to progress to more advanced and specialised courses
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs

## **Health, social care & public services**

### ***Other contributory areas***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- good achievement rates
- effective strategies to widen participation in care

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient resources
- inadequate initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs
- inadequate sharing of good practice
- poor management of NVQ programme

## **Visual & performing arts & media**

### ***Arts***

#### *Strengths*

- high standards of learners' work
- very good learner-centred projects in arts and crafts classes
- good support for new learners
- good outreach provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- inadequate information to enable learners to progress

## **Crafts**

### *Strengths*

- high standard of learners' work
- very good learner-centred projects in arts and crafts classes
- good outreach provision
- good support for new learners

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- inadequate information to enable learners to progress

## **Humanities**

### ***History and genealogy***

#### *Strengths*

- good learning
- good planning of learning programmes in response to local needs
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor retention rates on accredited courses
- weak assessment and review of practice
- ineffective curriculum management to improve teaching and learning

### ***Sociology and psychology***

#### *Strengths*

- good support for learners
- good programme planning in response to local needs
- good learning

#### *Weaknesses*

- ineffective curriculum management to improve teaching and learning
- weak assessment and review of practice
- poor retention rates on accredited courses

## English, languages & communications

### *English*

#### *Strengths*

- effective development of personal and learning skills in English
- good response to local needs

#### *Weaknesses*

- some poor learning environments
- inadequate sharing of good practice across the county

### *Languages*

#### *Strengths*

- good progression by many learners to higher-level qualifications in modern foreign languages
- good response to local needs in modern foreign languages

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient differentiation in teaching methods to meet the needs of modern foreign language learners
- some poor learning environments
- inadequate sharing of good practice across the county

## Foundation programmes

### *Literacy, numeracy and ESOL*

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- innovative programmes closely linked to learners' personal, economic and social needs
- strong leadership and curriculum management

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient variety and use of teaching and learning materials
- some inadequate induction

### ***Independent living and leisure skills***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- extensive and diverse range of courses that meet community needs
- well-led and well-managed provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- inconsistent recording of learners' progress
- some inadequate accommodation

### **Family learning**

#### *Strengths*

- good skills development for learners
- innovative provision for hard-to-reach learners
- well-led and managed family learning provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- inconsistent assessment and review
- insufficient advice and guidance for progression

## WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ESSEX LEA:

- developing new skills later in life
- a sense of achievement - 'the feel-good factor'
- dedicated, helpful staff and good tutors who are friendly and inspire confidence
- the good response to negative feedback on the previously poor quality of premises and resources
- learning without pressure and working at their own pace in a relaxed atmosphere suitable for adults
- facilities to study near home
- the social side of learning
- many opportunities to improve their confidence and motivation and improve their physical and mental well-being
- never feeling embarrassed or intimidated
- friendly classmates who help each other
- the crèche facilities
- good study skills support
- having transport provided
- 'it's given me a better quality of life - I feel enriched'

## WHAT LEARNERS THINK ESSEX LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- initial advice and guidance
- the paperwork - 'I can't see the point in it'
- travelling long distances to find appropriate courses
- more higher-level courses
- longer courses to have more time to learn
- the high number of examinations
- the lengthy breaks for holidays
- some inappropriate classrooms
- the quality and amount of equipment in some classes
- more practical courses
- better enrolment arrangements
- more use of information technology (IT)

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR ESSEX LEA:

- further develop quality assurance arrangements to bring about continuous improvements
- further develop the observation of teaching and learning
- reduce the number of unsatisfactory teaching and learning sessions in some areas of learning
- improve the management and delivery of NVQ programmes to support workforce development priorities for the service
- improve the sharing of good practice
- further improve resources and accommodation
- further develop the curriculum management of small areas of learning
- further develop the use of the management information system to bring about a better understanding of trends across the county
- improve the integration of equality and diversity into curriculum planning and into teaching and learning
- further develop the strategy for literacy, numeracy and language skills to help develop teaching and learning across the curriculum and particularly in vocational 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	
<b>Provider</b>	<b>Provider</b>	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
<b>Learner</b>	<b>Learner</b>	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
<b>Teacher / trainer</b>	<b>Tutor</b>	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	<b>Mentor</b>	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
<b>Learning goals</b>	<b>Main learning goals</b>	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.
	<b>Secondary learning goals</b>	These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	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
<b>Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome</b>	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.
<b>Subject-based programme</b>	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.
<b>Issue-based programme</b>	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.
<b>Outreach provision</b>	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.
<b>Neighbourhood-based work</b>	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.
<b>Community regeneration</b>	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.



<b>Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning</b>	
<b>Community capacity building</b>	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.
<b>Active citizenship</b>	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make a conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

#### Strengths

- highly effective collaborative work across the adult and community learning service
- good leadership and strategic planning
- good achievement of targets
- successful partnerships to widen the participation of new and hard-to-reach learners
- effective self-assessment to improve the quality of teaching and learning

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient use of management information systems
- insufficient use of equal opportunities data to measure and improve performance
- insufficient planning of the curriculum and teaching to reflect equality and diversity
- inconsistent implementation of quality assurance arrangements

88. There is highly effective collaborative work across the adult and community learning service. Essex County Council's adult and community learning provision is a part of the newly formed service group, Libraries, Culture and Adult Learning. The adult and community learning service provision is delivered by nine adult community colleges and their local centres. A complex set of arrangements enables the LEA to serve the needs of rural communities, large towns and a range of differing socio-economic communities. The service generally works well. County staff and staff at the colleges work well together. There is a shared commitment to raise the overall quality of adult and community learning provision across Essex. Opportunities to collectively plan, identify good practice and share risks are viewed positively. Tensions about the perceived lack of college autonomy still exist, but the adult and community learning manager works closely with the college principals to resolve any concerns. Communications are generally effective, despite the large distances between centres and the heavy reliance on part-time teachers. E-mails are extensively used to ensure teachers are kept up to date. There are a large number of effective cross-county task groups, such as the health and safety and strategic planning groups. Membership is drawn from staff at each college and the adult and community learning service's central support team. Principals and their staff have a significant involvement. The adult and community learning service has produced a set of well-written policies and supporting paperwork. However, in some areas the move towards standardisation is inconsistent. For example, a commonly agreed approach to using individual learning plans is not working effectively.

89. There is good leadership of a complex service. Essex County Council has a strong commitment to the development of an effective adult and community learning service. The adult and community learning service's new mission statement partially mirrors the aspirations of the LSC, but still retains a traditional adult and community learning focus.

Its strategic planning is thorough and detailed. Development plans are clearly written and contain a wide range of targets. Individual college plans are appropriately aligned to the county council's priorities. The adult and community learning service works collaboratively with a wide range of partner organisations to meet the needs of hard-to-reach learners, such as those in the probation service, school health authorities and the voluntary sector, and it has good strategies to widen participation. The adult and community learning service is very effective in acquiring a wide range of funding streams. Local needs analysis is effective and directly helps to develop changes in the curriculum offer. The adult and community learning service is involved in establishing strong links with employers and has a number of innovative workforce development programmes, such as the provision of life skills training in the workplace. Its financial management is satisfactory. Colleges receive delegated budgets. Expenditure and income are closely monitored. Class sizes are high in comparison with other adult and community learning providers.

90. The LEA successfully exceeded all of its targets for 2002-03. Over the past three years retention rates have improved steadily and there has been a dramatic increase in learners' enrolments on accredited qualifications, from 18,435 to 25,973 and rising. Achievements rates on these courses are good and improving at all levels. High-level retention and achievement targets, chosen to illustrate continuous improvement, are unambitious. For example, in 2002-03 the LEA exceeded the LSC's targets for 2005-06. There are headline targets for learners' recruitment and retention rates, but few colleges set these at course level. The LEA has been slow to develop meaningful indicators to measure achievement on non-vocational courses, but it has introduced a pilot project. Learners following NVQs make slow progress. The provision has expanded too quickly, without the necessary infrastructure.

91. Governors are enthusiastic and are keen to ensure that their colleges continue to meet local community needs. The understanding of quality assurance issues is growing. Some governing bodies have long-term vacancies. Working groups are mostly effective and well attended. Some governors are concerned that the service is moving away from traditional adult and community learning values and they are frustrated at the lack of local autonomy. In the past two years, Essex County Council has been very proactive in improving the standard of accommodation at the main college sites. However, in most areas of learning some of the teaching rooms are poor. The attention paid to health and safety issues is satisfactory. New course proposals are risk assessed, but the monitoring of compliance is not always effective.

92. The LEA's arrangements for staff development are mostly good. Staff speak highly of the training opportunities offered. Part-time teachers are entitled to eight hours' paid training a year. Although individual colleges have well-developed staff development plans, the service has yet to develop an overall staff development plan. Individual college development plans reflect adult and community learning service priorities, and also include identified local training needs. Most of the teachers are part time and 86 per cent have achieved a basic level teaching qualification or higher. However, with high numbers of learners now following vocationally accredited courses, the proportion of fully qualified teachers is low. The head of the adult and community learning service

## ESSEX LEA

appraises college principals effectively. The performance management review system for their appraisal is based on the achievement of broad LEA and individual college targets. The colleges are well led and there are examples of very good curriculum management. Overall leadership and management in the curriculum areas are satisfactory, although in the weaker areas there is a greater variation in standards of teaching. There is poor management of the NVQ programmes, which represent less than 0.5 per cent of the total provision.

93. There is insufficient use of management information systems. The management information system produces mostly reliable and accurate data. The data-capture systems operated by each of the colleges are independent, but the adult and community learning service's central support team is able to collate the data weekly. The standard of data entry at some colleges is poor. Curriculum co-ordinators and teachers have received limited training in the use of data for decision-making. The analysis of headline data is satisfactory, but weak at the more detailed level. For example, the central support team does not routinely produce reports on learners' achievement by level of qualification or use equal opportunities data effectively as part of course reviews. Colleges collect data on learners' progress, but there is no detailed analysis of whether curriculum pathways are working effectively or not. A detailed termly report on learner data is useful, but does not refer to progress against targets. However, some principals make good use of this data at the local level. Future plans include an upgrade of the central management information system to provide real-time analysis, development of relevant individualised programmes and the introduction of an effective model for costing courses.

94. The adult and community learning service works successfully with a wide range of partnerships to widen the participation of new and hard-to-reach learners. There is a strong awareness of the need to promote sustainable cultural change across the community. This work effectively promotes lifelong learning and social inclusion. Much of this work successfully uses a range of funding sources to maximise provision and build capacity within the service. FLLN programmes have been particularly successful in attracting many new and hard-to-reach learners. ESOL provision is slowly developing. Work with the Bangladeshi community in one area has started and there is a recent initiative to develop ESOL courses for restaurant and shop workers. The LEA has used promotional material in over 30 community languages to promote this initiative, although outside this project little publicity in community languages is available. There are numerous examples of good practice, including very effective work with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Projects with the travellers' community provide practical skills training to help travellers engage in work and everyday life, including driving theory test courses developing computing skills and driving theory. The mobile teaching unit provides a wide range of adult learning opportunities for new learners. Project work has helped develop the publication of a toolkit to support outreach activities.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

95. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is satisfactory. Essex County Council has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that provide a framework

for the adult and community learning service. Recent developments within the council include the launch of a guide to direct staff and managers to key information on diversity issues. The complaints procedure is detailed and complaints are handled effectively. The adult and community learning service's central support team is developing its own structure for identifying, promoting and monitoring equality of opportunity across Essex within this framework. The equality and diversity group works with the county group on key areas of work, including the introduction of new legislation. A county senior manager for equality and diversity has been appointed for the adult and community learning service and an additional specialist co-ordinator for age and disability has been appointed recently, both of which are part-time appointments. The senior manager has been on long-term sick leave and action plans are at an early stage of development. Each college has a member of staff responsible for ensuring that equality and diversity issues are dealt with and that the service complies with current legislation.

96. The service has responded well to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. Audits across the service have been carried out and many improvements have been made including improved access for learners with disabilities and the purchase of specialist software and equipment to support them. Colleges have made good responses based on clear identification of individual priorities. For example, one college identified the need to focus on learners with visual impairments and purchased a range of appropriate equipment. In 2002, the 'learning to include' group was formed to look specifically at disability, and it has met quarterly since then. A good amount of groundwork has been accomplished in terms of raising awareness of discrimination against people with declared disabilities and the development of a support structure for learners with special needs. In response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, equality and diversity impact measures were identified in 2003 and action plans were drawn up at college and service levels. Progress has been slow. For example, regular reporting on equality and diversity does not take place on all management and governing body meetings across Essex.

97. The LEA has implemented a number of equality of opportunity initiatives. The colleges have identified learners' support roles and they all use a learner support fund to provide financial assistance to learners on low incomes. Measures covered by the fund include assistance with course fees, the purchase of course materials, the payment of crèche or child support fees, and the transport costs for learners with access difficulties. From 2001-02 to 2002-03, the drawdown from the fund almost trebled, from £59,369 to £176,301 and it is set to increase again in 2003-04. In 2002-03, the learner support fund was used to assist 1,090 learners across the county. Some colleges have crèche facilities, while others refer learners with childcare needs to registered providers in their area. Some of the colleges have started to use the icon of a pram in their prospectuses to signal when a course has crèche support. At the time of the inspection approximately half of all crèche fees are subsidised.

98. There is insufficient use of equal opportunities data to measure and improve performance. The LEA recognises this in the most recent self-assessment report. Equal opportunities data is available for each area of learning, but it is not used to help develop planning and to develop strategies to attract learners from minority ethnic groups. There

are low levels of participation by minority ethnic groups. For example, in visual and performing arts and humanities, less than 2 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups and in most other areas less than 3 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. There are few targets to rectify the low recruitment rate. There is no monitoring and evaluation of the performance of different groups of learners or of the different colleges. There is no overview of how each college is performing in relation to the equal opportunities profile in its location.

99. There is insufficient planning of the traditional curriculum to reflect equality and cultural diversity. Colleges have been slow to respond to the need to analyse and develop the curriculum, and to include a stronger focus on awareness of equality and diversity within the content of lessons. As part of the lesson observation scheme, observers do not report on equal opportunities. This limits opportunities to provide direct support for teachers in developing good practice.

100. While the literacy, numeracy and language strategy is well developed within foundation programmes, there is insufficient development of this strategy to support learners in other areas of learning. Although careful attention is given to the needs of individual learners and support for all learners is good, there are variations in the identification and provision of additional support needs in literacy, numeracy and language, and in the arrangements for initial assessment.

101. Equality and diversity training has included disability awareness, race relations training, ALDD awareness and dyslexia awareness. However, there is no evaluation of this training at county level and no analysis of take-up of staff development activities to help develop a staff development strategy across the county.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 3**

102. The adult and community learning service has a good quality assurance improvement strategy and it is committed to a policy of continuous review and improvement in the standard of teaching and learning. A quality assurance handbook provides a clear quality assurance framework that all colleges in the county use. The framework includes the requirement to set and monitor standards and targets, annual course reviews, regular audits and self-assessment reports. An annual timetable lists the actions to be taken throughout the year. The adult and community learning service has a central quality assurance manager and, in addition, each college has its own quality assurance manager. The vice-principals of each college are members of the county's quality assurance group that validates each college's self-assessment report. The activities of this group have increased the profile of continuous improvement with staff and partners. Training has taken place for all staff and has included specific training for governors who carry out their own self-assessment.

103. The adult and community learning service sets numerous targets, including those for recruitment and learners' retention and achievement. It has collected detailed data on learners for several years and has analysed this as part of its quality assurance process. Retention and achievement on accredited courses are very good and have



improved to a high level in the past two years. Retention has exceeded 80 per cent for all course levels since 2001-02, and achievement exceeded 70 per cent for the same course levels in 2002-03. The targets set for retention have been exceeded in the past two years. Retention on non-accredited courses is also high.

104. There is a well-established programme of lesson observations. New tutors are observed teaching during their first term and a third of all tutors are observed teaching each year. Some colleges exceed this target. Observers have been trained in lesson observation and some colleges have used external consultants. However, in some areas of learning, lesson observations have been over-graded and do not make evaluative judgements. Teams from other colleges moderate results before judgements are shared with tutors. Some tutors have improved rapidly with support and mentoring from more experienced tutors and with further training. Follow-up observations take place to measure these improvements. A detailed lesson form is completed at each observation but the written comments on some of them are vague. The profile of lesson grades awarded by internal observers is similar to the inspection profile.

105. Internal verification systems are clear and well structured and their implementation is particularly good in one area of learning. Staff providing accredited courses are qualified and experienced in working with external awarding bodies. They hold regular meetings and respond promptly to comments in external verifiers' reports.

106. The self-assessment report is effective, thorough and self-critical. The LEA collects and analyses information from each area of learning and each college produces a report. The central management team then produces an overall report and a separate report for leadership and management. Development plans at all levels give clear directions for improvement, supported by targets for development. The reports are an accurate self-assessment of most of the issues identified by the inspection.

107. The implementation of quality assurance arrangements is inconsistent. An annual programme of course reviews includes an analysis of learners' retention and achievement data, learner feedback and lesson observation reports. The quality of the reviews is inconsistent. In some, insufficient attention is given to the analysis of data, and to other data, including that obtained from learners' views and lesson observations. Good teaching identified through lesson observations is not always brought to the attention of all teachers to help improve the overall quality of teaching. Common weaknesses have not been identified, such as poor initial advice and guidance given to learners, poor recording of learners' progress, inconsistent initial and formative assessment and learner review. Course self-assessment leads to an action plan but the quality and effectiveness of these plans are variable. For example, although training in assessment and reviews take place, local adaptations to documents have led to variations in the amount and quality of information recorded about an individual's learning needs. This results in inconsistencies in the quality of review, with weak target-setting in many areas. It is central policy for the individual learning plan not to be used for non-accredited courses of less than 20 hours. Those tutors who recognise its value on longer courses use the individual learning plan well to identify needs and evaluate progress. For other learners, the checklist of outcomes that replaces the individual learning plan for shorter courses is

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## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Sciences & mathematics

Sciences & mathematics		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Mathematics</i> - Adult and community learning	444	3

### *Mathematics*

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement in GCSE mathematics
- some good teaching
- flexible mathematics provision widens opportunities to acquire skills

#### *Weaknesses*

- some poor retention on accredited courses
- wide variation in the availability and use of resources
- insufficient pre-course information and assessment for GCSE mathematics

### Achievement and standards

108. There are low retention rates on accredited provision, with an average rate of 69 per cent in 2002-03. The overall achievement rate for accredited courses was 73 per cent. The largest course by far is GCSE mathematics and 50 per cent of learners achieved grades C or above. There were no non-accredited courses running at the time of inspection. However, retention on non-accredited courses has been consistently high at 94 per cent or above for the past three years. Learners achieve good standards of work and make good progress.

### Quality of education and training

109. There was some good teaching and 67 per cent of sessions observed were graded good or better. The best lessons were well structured and organised, and learners demonstrated purpose and focus. Tutors used a variety of stimulating teaching activities and learners were active and engaged. Many of the sessions observed were revision lessons. In one session the tutor had a clear plan for working through the more difficult parts of the syllabus, which had been previously identified by the learners. The tutor thoroughly assessed the learners' knowledge and was very encouraging. Tutors' files were comprehensive and covered all aspects of the course, information about learners' progress and identified individual needs.

110. The range of provision is small but provides an important programme of flexible mathematics courses across the county. All areas provide GCSE mathematics. In some areas it is the only non-school provision available. There is a wide range of ages among the learners and courses cater for a variety of needs. There is some progression from numeracy and family learning classes for mothers wanting to give mathematics support to their children. The courses provide an important route for younger learners into further training and job opportunities. For others, the courses support personal and professional development

111. The availability and use of resources vary widely. While most tutors are experienced and have a range of suitable qualifications, the standard of accommodation varies widely and much of it is only suited to teaching background knowledge. There are insufficient resources to promote a variety of learning styles or independent study. Science tutors often provide additional resources such as videos and software themselves. The standard of handouts given to learners is high. Some rooms did not have basic facilities and there was no access to IT on many sites. Many rooms were dull and depressing and there were few wall displays to enliven the environment.

112. There is insufficient pre-course information, advice and assessment on GCSE mathematics courses to ensure that learners are aware of the demands of the course. Some diagnostic testing takes place when learners are already on the course. The setting and marking of work is inconsistent. A few teachers give little or no written feedback to inform learners of their strengths or weaknesses. The standard of coursework assessment is satisfactory and meets external requirements.

113. All learners receive a course information sheet at enrolment and further information at the first class. Learning support is available at some centres and learners are encouraged to make their learning needs known through an initial assessment. A number of learners are receiving support for dyslexia. Some tutors run workshops on Saturdays.

## **Leadership and management**

114. There is no specialist co-ordinator for this small area across the county and tutors are supported either by humanities or foundation team leaders. Tutors are responsible for the organisation of their own courses and local management is effective. Some tutors have considerable experience and expertise but there is little sharing of good practice. There is no overall strategy for the development of science and mathematics programmes.

## Land-based provision

Land-based provision		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Horticulture and agriculture</i> - Adult and community learning	88	2
<i>Floristry</i> - Adult and community learning	151	2

### *Horticulture and agriculture*

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- high standard of learners' work
- good teaching and learning
- good management of curriculum

#### *Weaknesses*

- low pass rates on accredited horticultural courses
- inappropriate classrooms for some subjects

### *Floristry*

#### *Strengths*

- good management of curriculum
- good teaching and learning
- high standard of learners' work
- good retention rates

#### *Weaknesses*

- inappropriate classrooms for some subjects

## Achievement and standards

115. Retention rates on non-accredited courses are good. The overall retention rate for courses across the county is consistently over 90 per cent for the past three years. In 2002-03, the retention rate had risen to 96 per cent and is 95 per cent for the current year. Retention on accredited courses is also good and the rate is currently 88 per cent.

116. Achievement on accredited horticulture courses is low. Although overall pass rates have improved from 41 per cent in 2001-02 to 60 per cent in 2002-03, the horticultural

gardening certificate had very low pass rates. Only 21 per cent achieved the full award in 2002-03, although most learners achieve some modules of the award.

117. There is a high standard of learners' work. Classwork in floristry is very good. Learners use previously taught knowledge to improve their own performance, and contribute their own thoughts and designs into their work. Photographic evidence is used effectively to illustrate learners' work and the high standard of their portfolios. In many classes the standard of work is well above the level of the course.

### **Quality of education and training**

118. Teaching and learning are good. Classrooms for some subjects are inappropriate. Lessons are well planned and interesting and tutors use their industrial experience effectively to illustrate the content of lessons. Learning is good and most learners quickly assimilate knowledge and develop good practical skills. Learners develop very good skills. In a garden design course, learners produced a very high standard design after only 10 weeks on the course. Floristry learners consistently produced high-quality flower arrangements, which showed very good application of taught principles and individual creativity within the designs.

119. The programme is responsive and designed to complement the provision by other providers in the area. There is good use of learners' feedback to improve the service, to develop the overall programme and to improve the content of individual courses. Most of the courses are at entry level and level 1, and progression opportunities are limited, with few courses at level 2. Learners wishing to progress beyond this programme are referred to other local organisations. All learners on the floristry courses are women, while in horticulture they are predominantly men. There are few strategies to rectify the gender imbalance in these programmes.

120. Assessment on accredited programmes is satisfactory and is carried out within the awarding body guidelines. Tutors ensure that portfolios are clearly produced and easy to follow. Learners' progress is monitored effectively using simple monitoring sheets. Progress on non-accredited courses is monitored informally by tutors, usually through the learners' practical work. Individual learning plans have recently been introduced for courses of over 20 hours' duration but these are not yet used effectively.

121. Advice and guidance is satisfactory before enrolment and learners are offered good information about the range of further opportunities available across the county. Literacy, numeracy and language support is available for learners, although they do not often take it up. Tutors give the learners good support in the production of portfolios.

122. The classes are held in many locations across the county and, although most the accommodation is suitable, a few floristry classes are taught in rooms without water and with carpet-tiled floors, which makes it difficult to keep the flowers conditioned and to tidy up at the end of lessons. There are no drawing boards for garden design courses and learners have to work with very limited design materials and equipment. Tutors are

suitably qualified and most have many years of relevant industrial experience.

### **Leadership and management**

123. The area is managed within the visual arts and crafts programme, and although curriculum managers and team leaders are not specialists in the land-based occupations, this does not adversely affect the management of the area. There is a good relationship between managers and tutors to support the good work in this area.

124. Cross-county meetings are effective and there has been much improvement in the standardisation and consistency of practice across the county. Communication between managers and tutors is good. Regular team meetings are well documented, action plans are followed up and tutors who are unable to attend meetings are sent copies of minutes. The self-assessments produced across the county and summarised at the county level are accurate. Quality assurance of the teaching programme is based around a good lesson observation system and less formal tutor support visits by curriculum managers. Tutors whose lessons are graded less than satisfactory are offered guidance and support to improve their performance. A number of tutors have benefited from this in recent years.

**Business administration, management & professional**

<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Business administration</i></b> - Adult and community learning	252	4
<b><i>Teacher/trainer awards</i></b> - Adult and community learning	199	4

***Business administration***

*Strengths*

- good retention rates on most courses
- extensive range of good learning materials

*Weaknesses*

- poor achievement rates
- unsatisfactory teaching
- insufficient management of the curriculum

***Teacher/trainer awards***

*Strengths*

- good retention rates on most courses
- extensive range of good learning materials

*Weaknesses*

- poor achievement rates on level 4 teaching qualifications
- unsatisfactory teaching
- poor NVQ assessment practice
- inadequate management of the curriculum

**Achievement and standards**

125. Retention is good and in 2002-03 was 79 per cent for accredited courses and 98 per cent for non-accredited courses. Retention is good across all courses for this year, although retention on the level 4 teaching qualification has dropped from 16 learners to nine at one college.

126. Achievement is poor for advanced level accounting courses, with an average rate of 55 per cent across the county. Achievement on the new level 4 teaching qualification

in 2002-03 was poor at an average rate of 51 per cent across the county. Achievements across the county vary considerably. For example, on the level 4 teaching qualification it ranges from 25 per cent to 70 per cent.

127. Most of the learners have attended previous courses and are either progressing from one level to another or have moved into this area from ICT and other areas of learning. Learners' standard of work across all of the courses is satisfactory. Learners are punctual for their classes, and class registers show that attendance on most courses is consistently good.

### **Quality of education and training**

128. Tutors have produced an extensive range of good learning materials. These are current and produced to a professional standard. Tutors are encouraged to develop their own materials and to share these with colleagues. Tutors make plenty of resources available to learners. For example, one tutor had two suitcases full of brochures, books, newsletters and specialist journals for the learners to borrow. There are some unqualified assessors and training for many of the NVQ teams across the county has been delayed.

129. Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners on some of the teaching assistant courses are well supported and there is support for those with dyslexia and visual impairments. Learning materials are adapted and additional time is given for assessment. Learners report that the additional support has made it possible to progress and gain qualifications, as well as improved their confidence and self-esteem.

130. A considerable amount of teaching is unsatisfactory and only 62 per cent of observed teaching was satisfactory or better. Some tutors are uncertain of their subject and the tutors and learners recognise this. In many lessons there is insufficient involvement of learners in discussion and learners are not encouraged to relate their learning to their own experience. Tutors use some inappropriate teaching methods. For example, tutors read text out for learners to write down even though there are handouts for the session. Tutors often fail to share learning points which arise from individual learners with their groups.

131. There is insufficient use of individual learning plans and initial assessment to plan lessons. In weaker lessons tutors do not clearly identify the objectives and content of lessons, and some tutors do not use equipment or their learning environment effectively. In the better lessons there is good use of pair and group work and some challenging activities. In these lessons tutors make good use of information learning technology to introduce a topic and then reinforce learning.

132. Assessment practice on the NVQ courses is poor. There is insufficient observation in the workplace by qualified assessors. Learners are not always given feedback promptly from assessment. There is over-reliance on personal reflective statements and observational evidence by unqualified assessors in the workplace. Professional discussions are used inappropriately and there is no audio recording of these

discussions. In one instance the professional discussion was actually a review of progress. The range of evidence in learners' portfolios is not sufficiently diverse and the inefficient collection of too much paper evidence, and a complicated cross-referencing system, are a barrier for some learners and even for some assessors. Some assessors also struggle with the system. There is some poor action-planning arising from assessments and learners do not value their progress reviews, which are carried out as part of a tutorial programme. The awarding body has identified some of these issues. Some of the assessment feedback on the level 4 teaching qualification does not reflect assessment decisions.

133. The range of courses has contracted since 2002-03, when there was a variety of small taster courses in business skills, shorthand and business planning. The current programme is predominantly teaching training, book-keeping and accounting, and there is no non-accredited provision in this area.

### **Leadership and management**

134. Course reviews systematically collect learners' and tutors' feedback, and this feedback contributes to the self-assessment process. Staff have a good understanding of self-assessment, although there were some inconsistencies in the judgements from different centres, and inspectors considered some of the strengths identified in the report as no more than normal practice.

135. There is no strategic overview of this area of learning across the county. This area has historically included many other courses connected with other areas of learning. It is perceived by staff across the county as largely concerned with professional development. Developments which have taken place in previous years and which reflected a broader curriculum have not been taken forward into overall development plans.

136. Internal verification and moderation for most of the courses in this area are insufficiently thorough. There is no internal verification of observation of assessors, and sampling across the county is inconsistent. For example, one centre has a procedure for sampling but no plan, while another centre has a plan but this does not match the internal verification activities. There has been no formative internal verification of learners' portfolios. Some internal verifiers are very unsure of the standards and their competence to internally verify the qualification. External verifiers' reports have identified concerns about processes and, although individual centres have responded quickly to action points, there has not been a coherent response across the county to ensure continuous improvement. Some standardisation activities for the teaching assistants have started but these are yet to be shared across the county.

137. Tutors on GCSE and advanced level courses have little support in their centres. For example, there is no identified moderator and no systems for standardisation and marking. In one centre, observation of teaching and learning identified significant problems around learners' progress. Although part-time tutors are invited to team meetings, these are for staff from a number of different areas of learning and do not



provide sufficient subject support.

## Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i> - Adult and community learning	5969	4

### *Using IT*

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- very good initiatives to widen participation
- good resources

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor teaching
- inadequate formal assessment
- inconsistent pre-course guidance

## Achievement and standards

138. The retention rates are good. The retention rate for 2002-03 is 92 per cent for accredited courses and 98 per cent for non-accredited courses. Achievement on accredited courses is satisfactory, with overall achievement rates of 77 per cent for 2002-03. Achievement figures are not yet available for the current year, but inspectors observed some poor progress.

139. There is good achievement of skills and confidence on introductory courses. A satisfactory proportion of learners make significant gains in confidence in the use of IT in their everyday lives at home and at work. For example, learners use new IT skills to support their children's and grandchildren's education, write formal letters, keep accounts for the family business, or simply to reduce a sense of isolation. For others, greater confidence has enabled them to progress on to courses leading to qualifications which have improved their opportunities to gain employment.

140. There is good attendance and punctuality on courses, with an attendance rate of 83 per cent during inspection. Monitoring of non-attendance is good and teachers are in regular contact with their learners and they are aware of their learners' reasons for absence.

## Quality of education and training

141. There are very good initiatives to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups. Many interesting projects in the community encourage new people into education. Some colleges have a well-planned curriculum that encourages new learners into a wide range of introductory and family learning courses. Laptop computers are used to set up courses in community locations far from main centres. Courses for visually impaired learners are held at a specialist centre, which enables learners who cannot study in a main centre to acquire computing skills.

142. Tutors have appropriate levels of skills and most have a basic teaching qualification. They develop good relationships with learners and are generally sensitive to learners' individual learning needs. Handouts to support learning are appropriate.

143. Resources are generally good. Classrooms are generally well equipped with up-to-date hardware and software. Some have interactive white boards and a good range of peripheral devices, such as colour printers, scanners and data projectors. Tutors use a good range of resources to aid learners with disabilities. These include large key pads and touch pads, and software such as text-reading programmes for visually impaired learners. Most centres have good accessibility for wheelchair users, with adapted toilets and automatic doors, and many centres have induction loops for hearing impaired learners. A well-equipped mobile unit takes learning to small villages.

144. However, there are poor IT resources at one school and at three of the main sites. At these locations, workstations are cramped, with slow computers and insufficient storage to save learners' work. Some centres have old versions of software and slow or erratic internet access. A few rooms have inadequate furniture that does not comply with health and safety guidelines. Generally, attention to health and safety is good. Tutors complete risk-assessment forms for each course in most colleges. Technicians are employed in some outreach locations to transport equipment and monitor the health and safety risk. Learners are informed of health and safety issues at induction.

145. Teaching is poor. Only 50 per cent of observed teaching was good or better and 24 per cent was unsatisfactory. In many lessons teaching is unimaginative, classroom management is poor and there is little evidence of learning. Teaching does not involve the learners sufficiently and does not take into account their different learning needs and abilities. Tutors do not promote learners' independence and encourage them to interact and support each other. Tutors use a limited range of teaching methodologies and in many lessons tutors do not check learners' understanding. The quality of course paperwork varies and in weaker lessons there are inadequate course and lesson plans, and tutors do not identify learning outcomes for the course or for individual learners. In better lessons, teaching is well paced, with individually planned learning that challenges learners and enables good attainment. Some good use is made of different activities that build learners' confidence and particularly support learners who are apprehensive about returning to learning.

146. Formal assessment is inadequate. Tutors make insufficient use of formal assessment to plan and monitor learning and to set learning outcomes against which learners' progress can be measured and recorded. There are inadequate procedures for tutors to follow for initial assessment and their quality depends on the skill of individual tutors. In some classes, initial assessment is carried out in the form of an onscreen questionnaire that learners, some of whom do not have any prior computer experience, are invited to complete. A paper copy is available, if requested. The results of initial assessment do not help develop course or lesson planning sufficiently. Monitoring of learners' progress varies across the county. Some learners receive verbal feedback on how to improve but few receive written feedback. On a few courses tutors keep class records of learners' progress, while on other courses there are no formal records. Tutors often record completion of tasks, but not the skills developed or obstacles overcome. On some courses the achievement of personal learning goals is assessed and reviewed effectively.

147. Pre-course guidance is inconsistent. Some colleges issue course outlines before the start of a course but these are always in English and to the same format. Administrative staff give some initial advice and guidance. Some learners are on the wrong level of course, while others join courses at an inappropriate level because that is all that the centre offers. On one course, learners complained that they were not told the full cost of the course when they enrolled and were asked to pay for expensive course books and awarding body registration fees after the course had started. Information is not given out until the first week of some courses.

### **Leadership and management**

148. There are significant variations in the quality of leadership and management of ICT across Essex. A curriculum forum for the county has been set up to discuss issues and share good practice and, while its meetings clearly identify action points and responsibilities, it has yet to be sufficiently effective. Arrangements for tutors to share good practice are inadequate. This is recognised in the self-assessment report and there are plans in place to provide better opportunities to share good practice.

149. Targets are set at individual colleges for ICT. Achievement and retention targets are not set at course level, and they are not sufficiently thorough to evaluate courses or area of learning performance. Staff have insufficient involvement in the setting and monitoring of targets. Quality assurance is insufficiently thorough. The self-assessment process involves staff in all areas but the report is insufficiently evaluative. The observation of teaching and learning has been ineffective in raising the quality of teaching and learning. Internal verification is effective in maintaining the validity of assessments on accredited courses.

## Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hospitality and catering</i> - Adult and community learning	45	None
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> - Adult and community learning	7058	3

### *Leisure, sport and recreation*

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates, particularly for accredited provision
- good teaching and learning
- good geographical distribution of diverse and inclusive programmes
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- some poor accommodation
- inconsistent monitoring and recording of learners' progress and achievement
- inconsistent formal recording of health screening and risk assessment

## Achievement and standards

150. Retention rates are good and in 2002-03 the retention rate was 97 per cent in accredited courses. At 87 per cent, the retention rate was also good on non-accredited courses. In 2002-03, the achievement rate was also good on accredited courses at 85 per cent. In many sport and leisure courses, learners increase their stamina and improve flexibility. In yoga and Pilates classes, many learners benefit from improved posture and more effective breathing. Learners in yoga classes learn relaxation techniques, which help to control stress and anxiety. Some learners achieve particularly high standards of skill and performance in Iyengar yoga and swimming for adult improvers.

## Quality of education and training

151. There is a lot of good teaching and learning, and 78 per cent of sessions observed were good or better. Tutors carefully plan sessions, offer regular feedback, and take account of individual learners' needs. Tutors often circulate around their groups and set tasks at different levels of difficulty, so that learners are able to learn at their own rate. In a yoga class the tutor demonstrated poses of varying levels of difficulty and the learners

could work to their own limits. In a family swimming class parents were given written tasks to enable each child to practise appropriate strokes and to challenge the more able swimmers.

152. There is a good geographic distribution of diverse and inclusive programmes, involving a good range of sport and exercise classes. Many courses have been set up to meet specific community needs, including accredited courses. There is good provision for people with specific needs. For example, specific swimming sessions are provided for wheelchair users, people with learning difficulties and those with more general disabilities, such as rehabilitation after surgery. There is provision for people in residential homes, swimming for Muslim families and swimming for families with asthmatic sufferers. Different levels of difficulty encourage the learners to progress to different or more challenging activities, such as in Hatha and Iyengar yoga, bridge, tai chi, Pilates and accredited swimming qualifications. Yoga learners can now progress through to yoga teacher status in Iyengar. There is a very limited number of hospitality courses.

153. Personal support for the learners is good. For example, in a course for learners aged 50 and over the tutor regularly checks the welfare of those who are absent from her class. In a yoga class, the tutor shows concern and help for all of her learners in what they describe as above and beyond what they expect, and they are extremely appreciative. There is a high level of learner satisfaction with the support that they receive from their tutors. There is satisfactory guidance and support for learners from the management of the centres. Effective pre-course information is provided, often including additional guidance from tutors, for the learners to make an informed choice of course. Most learners feel that they are on the appropriate course.

154. Some of the accommodation in some of the outreach centres is poor. In one swimming class, the pool area had an inoperable heat exchanger for most of the term and this affected the learners' progress adversely because of high temperatures and the lack of ventilation. In a school hall, unruly pupils regularly interrupt a keep-fit class. For some keep-fit classes there are no appropriate changing facilities and poor ventilation. In one school the heating had been turned off and the Pilates tutor had to change the planned activities because of the cold. In other centres the accommodation is adequate and in some it is very good. For example, there is a large pool at a military barracks, which enables three different levels of class to take place simultaneously. A school pool has been adapted and has provided a good resource for swimmers with disabilities. Resources are satisfactory for most courses, although in one cookery class utensils are old and inadequate, and the cookers are dirty and unhygienic. Tutors are generally appropriately qualified and some have a considerable amount of vocational and teaching experience.

155. The monitoring and recording of learners' progress and achievement are inconsistent. Some tutors adapt their own learners' progress sheets to help develop planning. Others fail to monitor progress or overall achievement. There is no agreed effective measure of achievement for yoga teachers. Tutors use generic plans unsuitable for their activity. Planned learning objectives are given to the learners, often with little negotiation. In yoga classes some tutors use the learning plans for aerobics and do not

recognise the different outcomes for these widely different activities. Learning outcomes that are recorded are often imprecise and difficult to measure, and many of these forms remain incomplete. Monitoring of group learning outcomes is carried out in many classes using a standard learner achievement record. This monitoring is not consistent and, in some instances, merely involves commenting on attendance.

156. The formal recording of health screening and risk assessment is inconsistent. In some courses health screening often takes the form of a cursory tick-box exercise, which is of little value in initially assessing the suitability of the course for those with health problems. Some tutors have introduced their own, comprehensive health survey of all their learners that has given them valuable information to plan activities. In other classes health screening has been too superficial for an effective analysis of learners' needs. In some classes risk assessments are carried out by the tutor using a generic form. The assessments are mainly related to accommodation and resources and do not take into consideration the risks of the specific activity.

### **Leadership and management**

157. There are regular team meetings, although they are not always well attended. The communication between managers and tutors has improved and all staff recognise the need to develop more consistent practice across the county.

158. There has been insufficient attention to the need to introduce a formal health-screening and risk-assessment procedure across the county. Professional development for tutors is satisfactory but it is often not subject specific. Most tutors take opportunities to get support from the service, to further their professional development through sports and exercise associations. There is satisfactory monitoring of learners' attendance, with managers using this information to help develop course planning and reduce waiting lists on some courses. A new system for recording achievement has been introduced but there has been little training and guidance given to tutors, who are unsure about the validity of the achievement data. Course reviews are consistently completed by tutors and help develop course planning. Self-assessment is detailed and recognises most of the strengths, weaknesses and areas of satisfaction reported in the inspection. The report has specific points for action, with realistic timescales and targets.

## Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Hairdressing & beauty therapy		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Beauty therapy</i> - Adult and community learning	1705	2

### *Beauty therapy*

#### *Strengths*

- good retention and achievement rates on accredited courses
- effective teaching on accredited courses
- good opportunities for learners to progress to more advanced and specialised courses
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs

## Achievement and standards

159. Achievement rates on accredited courses are good. During 2002-03, there is an overall achievement rate of 86 per cent. The retention rate for 2002-03 is also good at 93 per cent. Retention on non-accredited courses for the same period is 95 per cent. Learners develop good skills in beauty therapy and have a professional approach to their work. Those who started their course in January 2004 demonstrate good skills in manicure and pedicure, with a clear understanding of the supporting background knowledge. Attendance is good, learners are punctual and they demonstrate good study skills. Learners' portfolios of evidence are satisfactory and many of them are well presented and have a wide range of diverse evidence.

## Quality of education and training

160. Teaching and learning are good, and in 87 per cent of the sessions observed, teaching and learning were good or better. Classes are well planned, effectively managed, stimulating and include opportunities to evaluate learning. Learners are very motivated.

161. Tutors use a good range of practical demonstrations and give technical information during discussion sessions. In most cases, this is supported by handouts which are well produced. There is a good rapport between learners and tutors. All tutors have a good supportive relationship with learners and recognise their different abilities effectively. There is emphasis on independent and collaborative learning, which is adapted to the



abilities of each learner. Learners are encouraged to display and discuss their work.

162. Learners' progress is monitored effectively and recorded on monitoring documents which identify areas where extra support is needed. However, in some cases, the documents were incomplete. Learners are enthusiastic and motivated about their training and feel a sense of achievement in the work that they produce. Learners submitting work for assessment are given good individual feedback that is constructive and motivating.

163. Staff are well qualified to teach on the programmes and are enthusiastic about their work. All of them have relevant industrial experience. The teaching accommodation and resources are satisfactory, but in a minority of theory classes, the size of the room was too small for the numbers of learners attending.

164. There are good opportunities for learners to progress to more advanced and specialised courses. Many learners are introduced to hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapies through taster courses that are run over short periods of time. Learners are encouraged to consider returning to learning to do more specialist and advanced courses. Many of the learners interviewed who were training at an advanced level had progressed from introductory courses. The number of courses available to learners at an advanced level has significantly increased over the past two years in response to learners' needs. The curriculum range is varied and responds well to the identified needs of existing and potential learners. Many of the learners have progressed into part-time employment in the beauty and holistic therapy industry. Tutors help and encourage learners to gain employment.

165. Learners receive good support from their tutors, who frequently provide them with support and advice to overcome their obstacles to learning. Learners report that tutors are very approachable and create a friendly learning environment. All learners are given a contact telephone number for the learning support co-ordinator, who is available to discuss problems that they may experience during their training. Learners who do not attend a course are contacted to establish the reason for not attending and to establish how the learner could be supported to enable them to return to the course. A learner who experienced problems with short-term memory and a loss of peripheral vision was assigned a support worker to take notes during classes, handouts were produced in large print and magnification software was used for computer classes. If necessary, learners receive individual support in theory and practical work.

166. On accredited courses learners have a personal tutor who reviews their progress regularly. Learners are set targets but these are not clear and do not sufficiently focus on specific tasks to be completed and over what time period. There are some long-term targets which inform learners of when they are expected to complete their qualification. Learners are aware of their targets but in some cases they are not sufficiently challenging to motivate them and drive progress towards their qualification. Learners have a good understanding of when they are expected to achieve their qualifications.

167. Initial assessment of the learners' literacy and numeracy needs is insufficient. All

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learners receive an initial assessment at the start of their course, which takes the form of a self-assessment questionnaire. There is no routine testing for literacy and numeracy skills on most courses. Assessment for numeracy and literacy skills has been recently introduced for a minority of the accredited courses. Learners who have literacy and numeracy needs tend to be identified from their coursework. There are plans to extend literacy and numeracy assessments to all accredited courses that have a high level of written work as part of the qualification. When a learner is identified as requiring additional support, satisfactory support is provided.

### **Leadership and management**

168. The LEA collects and analyses data on retention and achievement and uses it to help develop decisions on the management of programmes and develop the curriculum area. Staff are aware of their targets for retention and achievement and how they can meet them. All staff have a development plan and are encouraged to update and extend their skills. Learners' views are sampled and these reveal a high level of satisfaction.

169. Internal verification is satisfactory. Internal verification takes place frequently and samples a wide range of different evidence. Internal verifiers observe assessors to standardise assessment procedures. There is a long-term sampling plan and an overall monitoring document. Lesson observations take place frequently, with new teachers being observed more frequently. Lesson grades are moderated and the lesson grades awarded during inspection broadly agreed with the grade profiles produced from the lesson observations.

170. The self-assessment report for hairdressing, beauty and holistic therapy failed to identify the weakness found during inspection, but most of the strengths were identified. Most curriculum staff were involved in the self-assessment process and staff perceive the process as developmental and supportive.

## Health, social care & public services

Health, social care & public services		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> - Other government-funded provision	112	3

### *Other contributory areas*

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- good achievement rates
- effective strategies to widen participation in care

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient resources
- inadequate initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs
- inadequate sharing of good practice
- poor management of NVQ programme

## Achievement and standards

171. The retention rate on all courses is good. In 2002-03, the retention rate was 98 per cent and in the current year to date the retention rate is 97 per cent. Retention rates for the relatively small number of NVQ learners are satisfactory. The achievement rates on accredited courses are good. The achievement rate for 2002-03 was 83 per cent. So far in 2003-04, of those learners retained, 95 per cent have achieved a qualification. Examples of learners' work and assignments are of a satisfactory standard, with some learners in pre-school practice achieving the highest grade possible. On non-accredited courses, learners gain increased knowledge, learning skills that enable them to apply theory to practice, practical skills, increased confidence and self-esteem. During the inspection the average attendance was 88 per cent.

## Quality of education and training

172. There have been many effective strategies to widen participation in care. Colleges have carried out a number of initiatives to identify needs in the community, such as the provision of free training for local employers on NVQ awards, health and safety, first aid and counselling in the workplace. Many of these short courses are accredited. In one college, the initiative led to 72 learners participating in an introduction to NVQs programme and 54 learners took part in emergency first-aid courses. Colleges have also

developed productive partnerships with many local care homes and businesses providing domiciliary care. A need for level 2 care training has been identified to meet national targets. NVQ programmes have been set up involving a wider range of learners.

173. Overall the range of courses across the county is satisfactory. The range of qualifications in pre-school practice meets the needs of local learners and there is a good range of counselling courses at different levels and with different awarding bodies. A wide range of first-aid qualifications is also available.

174. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, 56 per cent were good or better and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Most tutors use a wide variety of teaching methods, including group work and workshops, and they effectively use open questioning and guided research to motivate the learners. Most lesson plans did not formally identify the needs of individual learners, although there was an implicit acknowledgement of individual needs in the sessions. In most sessions, regular checks on learning take place and, in the better sessions, tutors provide a good evaluation exercise at the end of the session to reinforce learning.

175. Support for learners is satisfactory. Tutors are dedicated and work hard to support learners. They give extra time to learners who need help or encouragement to complete work, and offer advice or refer learners to appropriate support in personal matters. Where a literacy need is identified, the support is usually provided by the tutor, rather than specialist help. Most tutors provide good-quality advice and guidance on available progression routes. This is sometimes narrow and only relates to courses available within that college. Some learners have used access funds to support their studies.

176. There are insufficient resources. The quantity and quality of resources varies across and within individual colleges. Some colleges have a small library of relevant books, but there are not enough for the number of learners, especially if two similar courses are running at the same time. The range of books is limited and some books are out of date. The quality of photocopied material varies and tutors often provide their own practical equipment. Access to computers for learners is insufficient. Although accommodation is generally satisfactory, at some sites noise, the size of the rooms and the quality of the furniture and inadequate ventilation result in uncomfortable learning environments.

177. There is inadequate initial assessment of individual learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. The assessment relies on the learners identifying their own needs. Some learners have their individual needs identified when they submit their first piece of written work. The standard of initial assessment varies between colleges and between tutors. In some cases there is poor recording of findings. Some tutors assess the learners' preferred learning styles, although this information is not always used to help develop lesson plans. Assessment of the learners' prior learning, experience and skills is inconsistent. Progress reviews are satisfactory and they are held regularly, at least once each term. The formal recording of reviews is sometimes insufficiently detailed and targets do not always include completion dates.

## Leadership and management

178. The sharing of good practice is inadequate. There is no procedure for tutors in the same college or across the county to share good practice, although the management of the area is improving and the introduction of county-wide quality assurance clearly supports a stronger focus on improving teaching and learning.

179. Regular curriculum meetings have recently been introduced but these are not yet effective for sharing practice and developing the curriculum. The promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is limited. Teaching and learning materials in some lessons do not pay sufficient attention to equality and diversity issues and a small number of tutors used inappropriate language to describe some aspects of disability.

180. Management of the NVQ programme is poor. There is no operational strategy for the delivery of NVQ programmes, no clear analysis of staffing needs, including staff development needs, and centres work in isolation. In one college there are too few tutors, qualified assessors and internal verifiers. In one group, a significant number of learners who have been in learning for six months have completed no units or elements and have not received any direct observation assessments. Teaching and assessment for one group started with the most difficult units. In one centre, tutors are not familiar with the standards. There are few standardisation meetings and these do not include staff working on the programmes from different colleges, the number attending is small and there is little exchange of good practice.

## Visual & performing arts & media

Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Arts</b> - Adult and community learning	1528	3
<b>Crafts</b> - Adult and community learning	6342	3

### Arts

#### Strengths

- high standards of learners' work
- very good learner-centred projects in arts and crafts classes
- good support for new learners
- good outreach provision

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- inadequate information to enable learners to progress

### Crafts

#### Strengths

- high standard of learners' work
- very good learner-centred projects in arts and crafts classes
- good outreach provision
- good support for new learners

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- inadequate information to enable learners to progress

## Achievement and standards

181. Learners produce high standards of practical work, develop good technical skills and show a growing understanding of the materials. In a stained glass class learners were able to develop previous designs using a variety of other media, such as collage, paint, copper foil and lead. In music classes there is a high standard of choral and piano work. Learners gain good personal and social skills. They demonstrate increased self-confidence through developing their ideas and working on group projects. Some

learners accept commissions from their family and friends, and others are starting businesses to improve their employment prospects using the skills they have learnt. On accredited courses, portfolio work is well organised and presented. Learners' work is exhibited through local venues in communities across the county. A high-quality virtual exhibition CD of artwork from one college celebrates this achievement well and is used to promote art and craft courses to new learners.

182. The retention rate across the county is 81 per cent, although three colleges fall well below this. At 71 per cent the achievement rate on accredited courses is unsatisfactory when compared with the national rate of 81 per cent. Attendance is satisfactory. The average attendance rate in classes during inspection was 70 per cent, although in some classes it was poor at 30 per cent. Punctuality is good and classes often start early as all learners have arrived and are waiting to start.

### **Quality of education and training**

183. There are very good learner-centred projects in arts and craft classes that allow learners to develop skills and knowledge through their own work. Tutors plan learning around individual projects to reflect learners' interests. For example, one learner had selected a piece of furniture to upholster using a difficult buttoning technique. The learner gave a good explanation of the problems encountered in the process and was able to articulate the successful points well. Learners on accredited and non-accredited courses effectively use contextual referencing and secondary sources to develop ideas and projects.

184. The outreach provision for learners is good. There is a very good range of subjects delivered in many community venues at different levels over a wide area, particularly in arts and crafts. Colleges provide good learning environments. Good partnerships have been established with local charities and arts groups. There are learning shops in two areas that successfully widen participation. Learners can access provision in many remote areas across the county.

185. Support for new learners is good. Tutors are sensitive to the needs of new learners and use friendly and supportive teaching styles to build their confidence. A 'Learning Links' group established at one college is a voluntary support group for new learners. An effective 'buddy' system pairs current and new learners in classes to promote their confidence. The group produces a newsletter for new learners, which promotes the service and shares ideas on inclusiveness and advice on specialist equipment. Additional support requirements for new learners are assessed effectively at enrolment.

186. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors are responsive to learners' initial ideas and skilled at developing their existing knowledge. Tutors support learners by producing very good learning materials and handouts. In the best sessions, learners use their new skills creatively and are starting to develop personal responses from their own ideas. For example, learners in a sculpture class developed and transferred ideas based in textiles and knitting into a casting in plaster. In an ALDD drama class, learners developed

communication and co-operative skills, developed their imagination, their vocal techniques and confidence. In unsatisfactory classes teaching is dull and uninspiring, learning is not sufficiently planned and outcomes are not shared with learners. Most of the classes are tutor-led with little opportunity for the learners to demonstrate their learning. In some classes, the more experienced learners are not sufficiently challenged.

187. Resources and accommodation for visual arts are satisfactory and generally fit for their purpose. Most teaching rooms provide spacious, well-lit and comfortable learning environments. Access is poor to upper floors in older buildings. At some sites, lifts are being installed to provide access for wheelchair users. In some centres, accommodation is cramped, with limited storage for large items of work and poor standards of cleaning, inconsistent heating and poor ventilation. Resources in most outreach centres support teaching well. In one church hall the college has employed a learner as a technician to set up and take down equipment for a soft furnishing session, which enables the tutor to start classes promptly. Specialist art and craft subjects are not sufficiently resourced. Often, tutors bring their own materials and equipment for use in classes. There are well-qualified tutors. Of the 305 tutors, 75 per cent have teaching qualifications, and most of them have good subject knowledge and relevant arts experience.

188. The recording of learners' progress is insufficient. Some courses have no formal monitoring of progress. Verbal feedback to learners is generally good but learning outcomes on non-accredited courses are not recorded, and there is no written record of learners' progress or how learners can improve. Individual learning plans are provided for most learners, but they are too broad and personal learning goals are not always identified sufficiently. In many cases they do not adequately assess or identify learners' previous experience in the subject.

189. There is inadequate information to enable learners to progress. There is limited cross-referencing of the curriculum to identify further opportunities for learners and little evidence from data about learners' progression on courses. Some classes have learners who enrol repeatedly on the same courses, which limits opportunities for new learners to enrol. Some learners on non-accredited courses make insufficient progress and have been enrolled on the same courses over a protracted period.

## **Leadership and management**

190. There is a clear vision for the development of provision. A county-wide group meets to discuss issues and a business plan is being developed. There is good communication across the county. There are regular, well-documented meetings, tutors are well supported by team leaders and administrative support from the main site is available in outreach centres. Health and safety in most centres is satisfactory, although risk assessment is weak in some craft workshops. Learners are not sufficiently made aware of health and safety requirements in some classes.

191. Quality assurance is satisfactory. The views and aspirations of learners are used to develop courses, based on data collected in mid- and end-of-course surveys. The self-assessment process is good and includes consultation with learners and tutors. The self-



assessment report broadly agrees with the inspectors' findings. A system for observing teaching and learning is used widely, but feedback to tutors from observations is not clear. Many tutors have a poor understanding of the importance of identified and measurable learning outcomes. Equality of opportunity is good, with a range of initiatives that respond to community needs and government legislation. Staff members have attended annual training on deaf awareness, cultural diversity and disability discrimination legislation. Staff members have equal access to personal development. Many tutors use a variety of international techniques and concepts in the classroom.

## Humanities

Humanities		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>History and genealogy</i> - Adult and community learning	735	3
<i>Sociology and psychology</i> - Adult and community learning	412	3

### *History and genealogy*

#### *Strengths*

- good learning
- good planning of learning programmes in response to local needs
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor retention rates on accredited courses
- weak assessment and review of practice
- ineffective curriculum management to improve teaching and learning

### *Sociology and psychology*

#### *Strengths*

- good support for learners
- good programme planning in response to local needs
- good learning

#### *Weaknesses*

- ineffective curriculum management to improve teaching and learning
- weak assessment and review of practice
- poor retention rates on accredited courses

## Achievement and standards

192. Retention rates are poor on accredited courses, with an average rate of 66 per cent for the past three years. The overall success rate in accredited provision is also poor at 58 per cent. In some centres retention and achievement rates are much higher and, in some cases, the success of those who sat examinations has been very good. The standard of both oral and written work is generally satisfactory and high in some cases. On non-accredited courses the retention rate is high at 98 per cent, and on these

courses, there is good achievement of learning goals and good development of personal and learning skills. In one non-accredited course, learners worked on individually chosen projects which resulted in good-quality reports. On an archaeology course learners were able to date pieces of pottery and discussed their composition with accuracy.

### **Quality of education and training**

193. There is good learning on all courses. Learners are well motivated and enthusiastic about learning for its own sake and for self-development. They contribute freely to discussions and raise relevant questions about subject details and assessment procedures. Study skills are developed effectively and improve learners' confidence. Most learners arrive punctually at classes and are often reluctant to leave. They bring examples of the way they have used their learning in their own lives. In one psychology class a learner spoke about the way in which her understanding of child development had helped her with a difficult child. Other learners were using memory strategies learnt on the course to help them with their revision. Learners plan holidays to see places and artefacts they have learnt about on history courses. In some classes, learners have been inspired to take the initiative in gathering information independently. The excitement and interest in learning is clearly demonstrated in many of the classes observed.

194. The planning of learning programmes in response to local needs is good. The curriculum is well planned. College managers are well informed of national priority areas and make good use of a range of market information. Course enquiries are logged and analysed, and there is a survey of current learners' further interests. Information from a learning shop for advice and guidance provides monthly reports on the profile of large numbers of enquiries. This has indicated interest in religious studies and the subject has been planned into next year's programme. Work is done to identify the needs of learners in difficult-to-reach communities, as well as those with specific learning needs. Access to higher education provision has been developed in a rural location. Colleges have clear progression routes which have assisted in planning courses to meet learners' needs. In some cases, programme planning is too dependent on tutors' interests and availability.

195. Support for learners is good. Specific learning support needs, including support for visual impairment and dyslexia are met effectively. Study skills courses are offered and they are well attended. There is good practical support for learners on the access to higher education course, including the provision of transport. Tutorial support is good and tutors offer extra classes and give up much of their time to deal with learners' individual difficulties. Learners are encouraged to team up with another learner in a learning partnership, and this builds confidence. Some colleges offer individual advice sessions for learners on accredited courses and there is good pre-course advice.

196. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. Tutors have good subject knowledge and create an appropriate adult atmosphere for learning. In non-accredited history courses, stimulating presentations encourage lively debate among learners. On one course, learners visited four sites of interest during the year. Tutors relate material well to examination requirements in revision classes and take care to build their learners'

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confidence. In weaker sessions, tutors talk too much and do not check learners' understanding and ability to apply their knowledge sufficiently. There is insufficient use of information from learning style assessments to plan teaching which meets individual learners' needs.

197. Resources are mostly satisfactory but vary between classes and centres. A range of handout and book resources are used and on some courses learners have followed up internet references. There is little availability of IT in classrooms and when equipment is requested by a tutor it sometimes does not arrive or does not work. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in some centres. History classes take place in art and woodwork rooms and one class, with a number of elderly learners, takes place on the third floor of a building with no lift.

198. Assessment and review of practice are weak. There are no agreed team or county-wide procedures. There is no moderation or standardisation of assessment except on the access to higher education course. Work on accredited courses is marked sometimes as a grade and sometimes as a score, and it is not always linked to the board's assessment criteria. Some work on accredited courses is not graded at all. In some cases, tutors give inappropriately high marks in the belief that this will increase learners' confidence. Feedback is generally through comments on scripts and there is wide variation in the detail and value of these comments. In one class, a structured feedback grid is used based on course assessment objectives, but this good practice was not shared elsewhere. In a non-accredited class, a diverse range of assessment processes encourage learners' independent research. Individual learning plans are used inconsistently. On non-accredited courses there is wide variation in the clarity and focus of learning outcome statements and the degree to which they are integrated with the learning process.

### **Leadership and management**

199. Curriculum leadership and management are ineffective. Although the interests of humanities are included in one of the county curriculum groups, issues specifically relating to the teaching and learning of humanities have not been dealt with. Staff responsible for managing humanities are seldom humanities specialists. Opportunities for subject specialists to meet are insufficient at local or county level. Arrangements for the sharing of good practice are unsatisfactory. An audit of good practice has been carried out but this focused on processes and systems and did not identify examples of good teaching and learning. There are examples of good practice but they have not been made available to other tutors. For example, one law tutor includes weekly analysis of newspaper accounts of current cases, while a sociology tutor has devised an informative course handbook. Specific training needs for this area have not been identified. The systems for monitoring absence and withdrawals are implemented inconsistently. The self-assessment reports give an honest, open and mostly accurate appraisal of the quality of provision. The availability and use of data on recruitment retention and achievement are good.

## English, languages & communications

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>English</i> - Adult and community learning	143	3
<i>Languages</i> - Adult and community learning	3723	3

### *English*

#### *Strengths*

- effective development of personal and learning skills in English
- good response to local needs

#### *Weaknesses*

- some poor learning environments
- inadequate sharing of good practice across the county

### *Languages*

#### *Strengths*

- good progression by many learners to higher-level qualifications in modern foreign languages
- good response to local needs in modern foreign languages

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient differentiation in teaching methods to meet the needs of modern foreign language learners
- some poor learning environments
- inadequate sharing of good practice across the county

## Achievement and standards

200. Many learners make good progress to higher-level qualification in modern foreign languages. Retention and achievement rates have improved on all courses over the last three years and overall rates are satisfactory. Many learners progress from beginners' level to level 3 in modern foreign languages. Some have holiday homes, others have family and friends abroad and are able to fulfil personal goals. The modularisation of provision at level 1 has improved achievement rates. Learners value the qualifications they gain and are encouraged to continue to the next level. A significant number of them progress to level 3, where they develop the ability to express complex ideas and

opinions in lively debates with native speakers. Learners enrolled on BSL courses at level 1 also gain confidence and value opportunities to develop their personal and professional lives.

201. In English courses, learners develop personal and learning skills effectively. Learners develop confidence through the English programmes that are offered. Some have work published in magazines and community newsletters, while others have submitted articles, stories and poetry to the national and local media. Some learners have written plays that have been performed locally and develop links with local artistic communities. Through their study of poetry, plays and prose, learners develop enthusiasm for a range of literature. They use their new skills to assess and analyse newspaper articles, television programmes and films, and develop their research and independent learning skills. Many learners use the library to research possible routes for publication, while others learn to use the internet and e-mail. Learners develop verbal communication skills and use them in the workplace to make presentations or in job interviews. They also help learners develop social skills and improve communication with family and friends.

### **Quality of education and training**

202. There is a good response to local needs. A good range of opportunities are provided for modern foreign language learners. Every college employs outreach workers, who establish links with community organisations and identify learners' needs and their barriers to learning in order to widen participation and increase responsiveness. This work has resulted in a Spanish for travellers course, language courses for employees of the local district councils, and Arabic provision through links with local mosques. Good partnership working with schools has led to one school obtaining language college status where the college delivers provision in the evening. Progression routes are planned clearly from entry level to level 3, with a wide range of languages on offer across the county. A good variety of opportunities for the learners personal development are available. Many learners participate in a long-established exchange with Backnang in Germany and there is a developing partnership with Annonay in France. Tutors also organise short trips abroad, including a trip to Spain for learners studying Spanish. One college arranges an annual Euro-village event, where people from the local community can spend time in a simulated European village, shopping and eating and using a range of languages. There are international evenings arranged with performances by learners and guest artists. Although some English provision reflects responsiveness to local needs, such as a GCSE English course for staff working for a national bus company, the range of programmes is limited, particularly on non-accredited provision.

203. Although many foreign language classes include learners with a wide range of abilities, they work at the same pace and there is insufficient differentiation in teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners. Overall teaching and learning is satisfactory, although 13 per cent of learning sessions observed were judged unsatisfactory. Some handouts are uninspiring and do not challenge the most able learners. Limited use of the target language and an over-reliance on English in many classes does not allow many learners to reach their full potential, particularly at the lower levels. There is no use of

multimedia resources to create diverse activities within the classroom and resources do not allow learners to engage in independent listening activities. In all learning sessions observed, learners listened to tapes as a whole-class activity, following identical worksheets. Some learners were inactive, having completed the task easily, while the tape was replayed repeatedly to allow other learners to continue. However, at the highest level of language learning, where learners were able to communicate effectively, many learners were engaged and challenged by consistent use of target language teaching and demonstrated excellent verbal and written skills.

204. Some classrooms offer poor learning environments for language learning. Some rooms, particularly in outreach locations, provide a poor learning environment. In some locations they were airless and too small, making it difficult for teachers to circulate and impeding effective group work. The quality of furniture is poor and in some sessions observed, chairs were left on desks, taps were dripping, and noise from external traffic or adjoining rooms impeded the effective development of verbal and listening skills. Listening activities with poor-quality audio equipment were ineffective in this environment. In many locations, there is no suitable space for displays of learners' work or for learners to engage in independent study. There are very few banks of supplementary materials, and almost no multimedia resources for learners to access. In many evening centres there are no photocopying facilities available for tutors or learners.

205. Assessment is satisfactory on accredited provision and there is comprehensive monitoring of provision on courses accredited through the Open College Network. However, there are many inconsistencies in target-setting on non-accredited courses. Some targets are vague and do not have short-term objectives and many individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed.

206. Guidance and support are satisfactory. In many centres there is good informal support and regular contact is maintained with learners who are absent. Crèche facilities are provided at most college sites during the day and there are formal procedures for identifying and meeting additional learning support needs. Some colleges have 'buddy' schemes to support new learners. All colleges employ information, advice and guidance staff and have centre accreditation. However, learners are not always made aware of the level of skill and knowledge required for accredited language courses, particularly at levels 2 and 3.

## **Leadership and management**

207. Staff have a clear understanding of the management structure and communication is good within centres. Guidelines about organisational and administrative requirements are well written and tutors meet every term at well-organised meetings. Minutes are sent to those who are unable to attend. The self-assessment report is satisfactory, although some key weaknesses in teaching and learning strategies in modern foreign languages have not been identified.

208. Most learners receive good individual support and tutors respond sensitively to their individual needs. However, cultural diversity is not promoted in teaching or through

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visual displays.

209. There is inadequate sharing of good practice across the county. Although there have been good initiatives in some colleges to develop effective practice in teaching and learning, these have not been shared effectively across the county. One centre has developed a bank of learning outcomes for non-accredited learning which is well established. However, these have not been used in other centres that offer non-accredited courses and the monitoring of learners' progress and learning outcomes is inconsistent across the county. A county group has recently been established to enable good practice to be shared more effectively but this has yet to have an impact on the experience of learners.



## Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Literacy</i></b> - Adult and community learning	1312	2
<b><i>Numeracy</i></b> - Adult and community learning	525	2
<b><i>ESOL</i></b> - Adult and community learning	549	2
<b><i>Independent living and leisure skills</i></b> - Adult and community learning	2422	2

### ***Literacy, numeracy and ESOL***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- innovative programmes closely linked to learners' personal, economic and social needs
- strong leadership and curriculum management

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient variety and use of teaching and learning materials
- some inadequate induction

### ***Independent living and leisure skills***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- extensive and diverse range of courses that meet community needs
- well-led and well-managed provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- inconsistent recording of learners' progress
- some inadequate accommodation

## **Achievement and standards**

210. There are good retention and achievement rates on all programmes. On literacy,

numeracy and ESOL courses, achievement of personal learning goals is good. Learners increase their literacy, numeracy and language skills, and gain confidence and self-esteem. They are able to apply their new skills in their everyday lives, both at home and at work. For example, they are now able to help children with school work, apply for jobs or write letters of complaint. Learners progress onto higher levels, including GCSE courses. The LEA assesses learners' progress and individual learning goals even at beginner level. Many learners pass the national test and the pass rates have increased significantly. In 2002-03, 68 learners passed the test and in 2003-04, 384 learners have already passed the test at the time of inspection. Retention is very good overall at 93 per cent and has improved by over 7 per cent from last year.

211. On ALDD programmes retention rates and achievement are also good. The retention rate in 2002-03 was 94 per cent and there are effective systems in place at all centres to manage and monitor attendance. Achievement of learners' primary learning goals and core objectives is also good. Learners have complex needs and they gain confidence and learn the necessary skills to be active participants in a variety of learning and social situations. In some craft sessions learners produce very high-quality work, which is for sale to the public. Learners also participate in an art exhibition alongside local professional artists. Another group on a work introduction course are responsible for the maintenance of the hanging baskets at the local railway station. The achievement of learners is celebrated on all programmes and there are displays of good recent work in many classrooms.

## **Quality of education and training**

212. Teaching and learning are good in many literacy, numeracy and language classes, and 69 per cent of observed sessions were good or better. In ALDD, 71 per cent of lessons observed were good or better. The lessons are well managed. Tutors demonstrate good teaching skills and achieve excellent rapport with their learners. Respect for colleagues and trust in the individual are well established. In the best sessions, tutors offer a variety of whole group, pair work and individual activities. In ALDD, tutors use multi-sensory approaches and techniques with a wide range of stimulating materials. They give clear and sensitive instructions to enable learners to complete tasks successfully, and they constantly reinforce previous learning.

213. In many of these classes there is good use of contextual learning, and tutors use imaginative strategies to make learning relevant to the learners' everyday experiences. For example, after one self-advocacy class, learners were taken to a local superstore where they used the skills learnt to practise their independent living skills. In another class, a cerebral palsy learner with severe motor difficulties had written an article for the local parish magazine.

214. In literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes, learners receive good feedback on their homework and take pride in their work. They enjoy helping each other and share learning strategies. Learners can start programmes at any time and receive an initial assessment as they start programmes. Tutors provide the learners with good support.

There are regular, timely and well-focused reviews of progress. Individual learning plans are developed in consultation with the learners, who have a good understanding of their purpose. However, although in many classes new skills are recorded, this is not consistent or sufficiently thorough. There is good support for learners with dyslexia, restricted mobility and the visually and hearing impaired. Good pastoral care is provided, as well as crèche facilities and financial help with transport.

215. Foundation programmes have been very effective and innovative in widening participation and meeting local needs. The wide range of literacy and numeracy initiatives to attract hard-to-reach learners is particularly impressive. Learning opportunities in literacy, numeracy and ESOL have increased significantly and enrolments have trebled since 2000-01. A large number of learners have joined programmes since September 2003, representing 52 per cent of current learners. The programmes offer a good balance in opportunities for developing literacy and numeracy skills. Currently some 516 learners, representing 22 per cent of total provision, are enrolled on numeracy courses.

216. Partners include library and probation services, district councils, residential care homes and local employers, such as a local water board, an engineering firm, and a chicken food factory. Partnership work focuses successfully on establishing provision for literacy, numeracy and language skills support. For example, a college tutor provides this support to a woodwork workshop offered by the probation service. Librarians visit literacy, numeracy and language classes and offer library tours. Partnership with libraries led to the first national pilot for innovative work in the libraries, which is now recognised as a model for good practice nationwide. The area has also formed good relationships with community organisations, such as the Bangladeshi community in Colchester and the Prince's Trust. In two districts, well-planned literacy and numeracy programmes enable army personnel to improve these basic skills and pass the national test. The co-operation with these partners has resulted in a good range of courses which offer a variety of levels, accreditation, locations and progression routes. Partners all testify to multiple benefits which have had a positive effect on their own provision. For instance, partners have developed a greater understanding of the literacy, numeracy and language needs of their client group or employees, and they are now able to deal with these more constructively.

217. There is also an extensive and diverse range of courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a good geographic spread of provision across the county, not only in the main centres but also in residential care homes, community centres, and other outreach accommodation. Provision covers a wide variety of subject areas which are attractively promoted in local communities. There are effective relationships with both statutory and voluntary agencies and a good range of progression opportunities have been developed based on thorough research of needs. A review of progression opportunities has resulted in the introduction of a pilot full-time work skills course.

218. Staff working on foundation programmes are well qualified and experienced. They have good specialist-subject knowledge and also possess a range of relevant additional qualifications, including core-curriculum, diagnostic assessment and specialist training.

219. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Tutors give good individual support to learners and there are arrangements for referral to specialist external agencies if necessary. However, in ALDD programmes there is ineffective use of learning support assistants, carers and volunteers, who often make little significant contribution to teaching and learning sessions.

220. Teaching and learning materials are not sufficiently varied and not appropriately used to match the needs and learning styles of all literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners. For example, materials are largely paper-based and learners have little access to interactive or tactile resources. This applies in particular to numeracy provision. There is insufficient access to and use of ICT and access to the internet. This has a negative impact on the quality of learning, especially in classes where there is a wide variety of needs, and affects the ability of the tutor to meet the needs of all learners.

221. There is some inadequate accommodation for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some classes are held in unsuitable learning environments. For example, a craft and a floristry class are held in rooms with no access to water, and a skills for work class for learners with a severe range of needs is held in a small temporary building with very little space that restricts movement for the tutor and learners. The portable toilet is unsuitable for learners with mobility difficulties. Some other rooms have inadequate ventilation and are sparsely furnished.

222. Overall in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, initial and diagnostic assessment practice is satisfactory and national diagnostic tools are used appropriately. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. However, there is inconsistent recording of learners' progress on some courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although learners' progress is recorded, there is an over-emphasis on meeting group objectives in some classes and insufficient attention is given to recording short-term individual objectives. Learners are not always involved in reviewing and recognising their progress. While many individual learning plans are clear and effective records of progress, some comments are too brief to accurately reflect the small steps in learning that have taken place. Initial assessment of learners is also inconsistent across the provision. The best is comprehensive and thorough and is carried out in partnership with learners, carers and other professional agencies, while other learners' assessment is brief and inadequately recorded.

223. Some inductions are inadequate. Induction is not consistent for all literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners. Tutors are not required to give induction and, in some cases, none is given. Learning agreements are not always presented in formats that are easily accessible to learners with literacy and language needs. Equality of opportunity is not consistently explained at induction. However, in one college learners receive a handbook that clearly presents equality of opportunity in a good range of formats.

## Leadership and management

224. The leadership and curriculum management of foundation programmes is strong and the area is well managed. Essex County's basic skills strategy expresses a clear vision of scope and development requirements. Morale is good among staff who welcome the development of the county-wide strategy. There is good communication between the county council and its providers, with regular and purposeful meetings both at local and county levels. Well-attended and focused termly meetings provide good opportunities for staff to contribute to developments and to share good practice.

225. The observation of teaching and learning is well established. Staff receive good feedback on performance and development needs. Quality assurance is generally good, although some paperwork relating to work for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unduly prescriptive and unsuitable. There is good use of learners' views to help develop curriculum and programme planning and, in some centres, internal verification procedures are effective and help to develop curriculum planning.

226. The in-service staff development programme meets the needs of the teaching workforce well. Tutors have the opportunity to attend national training and subject-specific teacher training. New staff value the mentor scheme and new mentors have access to training on how to mentor new tutors. However, there is some tension between some local and county needs and the priorities set at different levels. Not all managers are using management information systems to plan and evaluate provision. Some experience difficulties in accessing electronic data such as information on retention and progression. Staff are actively involved in the development of the self-assessment report, the most recent of which accurately identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses found during inspection.

227. In many classes staff demonstrate a good awareness of equal opportunities in their inclusive teaching styles and understanding of learners' specific needs. However, cultural diversity is not promoted in teaching or through visual displays. In ALDD provision of craft and ICT classes there is modified and specialist equipment for learners with physical disabilities. In one centre, the learner handbook is produced in an audio format. However, equal opportunities is sometimes only introduced to learners through the learner handbook and learners' awareness of their rights and responsibilities is difficult to assess. There is little evidence of the monitoring of learners' complaints.

## Family learning

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	1188	2

### *Strengths*

- good skills development for learners
- innovative provision for hard-to-reach learners
- well-led and managed family learning provision

### *Weaknesses*

- inconsistent assessment and review
- insufficient advice and guidance for progression

## Achievement and standards

228. There is good skills development. Learners quickly acquire a range of skills to support their children. They achieve a wide range of personal goals, gain confidence and improve their life and employment opportunities. They develop better understanding with their children, participate more in their children's education, and are able to express themselves to teachers and other professionals. Learners acquire literacy, language and numeracy skills by learning alongside their children in school or by joining programmes. Learners have the opportunity to acquire a range of qualifications, including the basic food hygiene certificates, and first aid. Course folders are well planned and well presented. There are opportunities for learners to take the national adult tests in literacy and numeracy. In 2004, 38 learners gained national certificates in literacy and numeracy accreditation. It was not possible to separate achievement data for 2002-03 from skills for life data. At the time of the inspection the attendance rate was 57 per cent. Retention in 2002-03 was 93 per cent and is currently 94 per cent.

## Quality of education and training

229. There is a lot of innovative provision for hard-to-reach learners. Effective collaboration and strong partnerships with the voluntary, statutory and community sectors has resulted in recruitment targets for family learning being exceeded for the second year. College governors act as local champions and support projects to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups. A full range of family learning provision is planned and provided throughout Essex. New learners have been attracted to courses specifically for Asian parents. Story sacks are used extensively. Head teachers are involved and are partners in innovative marketing of provision that

attracts new learners to wider family learning. This includes the use of the learning shops, weekend fun days, visits, taster sessions, workshops, and other innovative projects that support specific targets, including the involvement of local football clubs, and the opportunity to develop circus skills helps to attract men to learning with their children. One project involves developing cooking skills for parents with learning difficulties, and another includes swimming for Muslim women and their children. One well-attended course linked numeracy with art and craft. Following successful learning of multiplication and ratios, parents could enlarge and transfer their children's artwork onto boards and paint them together for permanent display.

230. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and 67 per cent of observed sessions were good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Family learning tutors are well qualified and experienced in teaching literacy, language and numeracy. Most tutors also teach on the skills for life programmes, which is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Specialist subject tutors, including external speakers, are regularly employed to provide learners with access to new and varied learning opportunities and experiences. Head teachers are effective partners and become involved in designing programmes for their parents. Programmes are responsive to local needs. In the better sessions, tutors provide well-structured lessons using a range of teaching methods and materials that reflect the needs and interests of learners. There is good differentiation of materials, and group work to encourage mutual support among learners. Tutors support learners personally and in lessons. They give homework and marking is prompt. Learners work confidently but too little account is taken of preferred learning styles in some lessons. In these sessions there is over-dependence on paper-based resources and inadequate provision of ICT. These sessions often have group outcomes and are tutor-led. For those non-accredited courses under 20 hours where a course objectives checklist is used, learners are insufficiently involved in evaluating their individual progress.

231. Resources are satisfactory. Teaching and learning materials are generally good. In some schools, good ICT facilities to support learning are available for adult use. However, access to ICT is limited in some venues, although laptop computers are available. Additional staff are appointed where individual learners need support or where group numbers are larger. Tutors are well qualified and experienced in teaching adults with literacy and numeracy needs, although there are two vacant co-ordinator posts at present. Accommodation is generally satisfactory. Provision is located in priority areas and the quality of environment varies. Facilities are sometimes too cramped or learning sessions are disturbed by noise. However, learners prefer to attend a venue close to their homes and they appreciate the social benefits of meeting other parents. Class sizes are small.

232. Information, advice and guidance services for learners are satisfactory before enrolment. Information brochures are attractive and user-friendly, and well-trained staff in main centres give detailed course information. Taster and assessment sessions are provided to ensure learners are placed on appropriate courses. Support and induction for learners are satisfactory. Tutors telephone learners if they are absent and give them work to help them study at home. Access funds are provided for childcare and travel.



## ESSEX LEA

Most family learning provision is supported with crèche facilities, with many colleges providing mobile resources to outreach centres.

233. There are inconsistent practices in assessment and reviews of learning. Initial assessment is generally satisfactory, with tutors using national assessment tools and a learning styles questionnaire to negotiate the learners' individual learning goals. However, some tutors devise their own assessments. Information about the learners' prior experience of learning is limited. Tutors do gain close knowledge of their learners' needs but the recording of this is inconsistent. Some lesson plans do not take sufficient account of this initial assessment information. In these cases, group outcomes are planned. Tutors do not use individual learning plans consistently. Some learners are clear about their individual progress and evaluate each session thoughtfully and are involved in their review. In others, learners merely summarise the activities of each session and cannot describe the progress they have made in any detail. In these sessions, learners are passive in evaluating their progress and cannot describe their next steps in learning.

234. Rapid expansion has resulted in more adults being attracted back into learning, but there is insufficient advice and guidance for learners wishing to progress. Tutors or advice and guidance staff identify courses, but these are often already filled by existing learners when application is made, particularly in short art and craft courses. The availability of childcare or travel sometimes limits access to foundation courses. Weekend sessions are well attended, but there is insufficient twilight provision, except at two centres. The colleges were not able to monitor learners' progression in 2002-03, although it will be possible to do this for analysis from 2004.

### **Leadership and management**

235. The provision is well led and managed effectively. Each college has individual targets for FLLN, and wider family learning, that support the overall LSC target. Family learning provision has experienced significant growth over the past two years and benefits from clear strategic direction from central management. Specific funding for family learning co-ordinators was allocated to each college, although there are two vacancies at present. The number of learners has grown from 495 in 2002-03 to 1,188 who have attended programmes in 2004. The number of adults on wider family learning programmes has grown from 925 in 2002-03 to 1,299 in 2004. By the end of the current year the target of 1,500 FLLN learners is expected to be reached. Programmes in many areas benefit from the active participation of partners in both planning and delivery. Head teachers are enthusiastic and communications are good between schools, tutors and centre staff. Finances are well managed. For example, premises in a priority area were refurbished. Risk assessment and health and safety arrangements are properly managed by tutors within the main centres and in provision in external venues. Staff attend national training in assessment and core curriculum.

236. The participation of male learners and those from minority ethnic groups is poor. In 2002-03, the profile of learners was 9 per cent male learners and 3 per cent from minority ethnic groups. Figures for learners with disabilities are not available. All venues



visited were accessible to those with mobility problems and a range of resources are available for those with specific needs.

237. Family learning staff meet regularly and share good practice. Observations of teaching and learning are regular and mid-course and end-of-course evaluations by learners are analysed by each centre curriculum team. Complaints, suggestions and congratulations are logged and analysed as part of the self-assessment process. Course reviews are increasingly and effectively used to plan and effect improvements in programmes. The self-assessment report and development plans closely reflect the findings of the inspection team.