

INSPECTION REPORT

Hertfordshire LEA

08 December 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

Hertfordshire LEA

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Hertfordshire County Council is contracted by the Hertfordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the provision of adult and community learning. The provision is the responsibility of the county council's children, schools and families department and is managed within the department by the learning in the community unit (the service). The service also has responsibility for out-of-school hours learning, extended schools and counselling provision.
2. All of the adult and community learning provision is subcontracted, with the exception of some recent classes in family learning. There are external contracts with the four general further education colleges in Hertfordshire and with a local university. Provision has been newly commissioned with nine providers in the community. There are internal service level agreements with the county council's youth service and community information service (libraries).
3. The organisation of the children, schools and families department is currently being revised. At the time of the inspection, the acting head of the service reports to the assistant director of the development division. The head of service is supported by a planning manager, a quality and development manager, and an equalities co-ordinator. The post of skills for life and family learning manager is currently vacant. There are fractional full-time co-ordinators for family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and for traveller education. The service contributes to the costs of community learning organisers located in each of the four general colleges of further education. The community learning organisers work alongside the council's four community education development officers who operate in four geographical regions in the county.
4. Most of the programmes are non-accredited, primarily first-step courses for widening participation, courses for personal development, with some more advanced programmes for skills updating. Courses are offered in all areas of learning, but some have very few enrolments. Information and communications technology (ICT), hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, visual and performing arts and media, English, languages and communications, foundation programmes, and family learning were inspected.
5. In 2003-04, there were approximately 17,000 enrolments by 4,214 learners on 1,200 separate courses. Some 384 tutors are employed by subcontractors. Courses take place in over 200 locations in the county.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

6. Provision in ICT is subcontracted to three colleges of further education, a local university and the county council's community information service. During 2003-04 there were 59 courses which enrolled 818 learners. Since September 2004 there have been 40

HERTFORDSHIRE LEA

courses which enrolled 323 learners, of whom 7 per cent declared a disability, 30 per cent were men and 7 per cent were from a minority ethnic group. At the time of the inspection, there were 198 learners enrolled on 34 courses. Courses are mainly at beginner level and none are accredited. Courses range in length from one-hour drop-in sessions to programmes of 15 weeks' duration, and they are mainly offered at community venues such as libraries, community centres and a social centre for the blind. There are 16 part-time tutors.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

7. Provision in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel is subcontracted to four colleges and the council's youth service. In 2003-04 there were 2,475 enrolments, of which 74 per cent were women. Between September and December 2004 there were 1,605 enrolments. At the time of inspection, most learners are on sport-related programmes with 48 learners on hospitality courses. Seventy-six per cent of learners are women, 2 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups, and learners who have declared a disability account for 3 per cent of the total. Courses are mainly located at college premises and community sites, including schools and health centres. At the time of inspection there are 108 courses offered at 32 venues. The courses include yoga, bridge, tai chi, Pilates, keep fit, wine appreciation and cookery. One course leads to a nationally accredited qualification in expedition and leadership skills, the rest are non-accredited. Most courses recruit on a termly basis and last for an average of 10 weeks. Courses are mainly offered during the evening with a limited provision during the day and at weekends. Sixty-two part-time tutors teach on these courses, for between one and 12 hours a week.

Visual & performing arts & media

8. The service subcontracts with the four further education colleges and a local university for this area of learning. In 2003-04 there were 1,983 enrolments in visual arts and 654 in other contributory areas. At the time of inspection there are 1,321 enrolments in 101 courses, of which 1,034 are in visual arts and 287 are other contributory areas. All courses are non-accredited and typically run from one to three hours a week. Courses include sculpture, jewellery, ceramics, drawing, oil painting, textiles, guitar, raqs sharqi, ballroom dancing and printmaking. Forty-six venues are used, including college main centres, community centres, secondary schools, a district council leisure centre, an arts centre, a healthy living centre and a university faculty centre. Seventy-six per cent of the current learners are women, 27 per cent are aged over 60, and 8 per cent are from a minority ethnic group. There are 129 tutors.

English, languages & communications

9. The provision in English and modern foreign languages is subcontracted to three colleges of further education. During 2003-04, 1,430 learners enrolled on courses and at the time of the inspection, there were 1,551 enrolments, of which a third are men. At the time of inspection, the service offered 51 courses in modern languages and two in creative writing, which are taught by 42 tutors. Courses are located across 17 sites, mainly in the western part of the county. In the eastern part of the county, similar courses are provided directly by another college of further education. Most courses last between 10 and 15 weeks. Language courses include French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. These are available at beginners' level in all languages and at intermediate and advanced level in some locations for French, German, Italian and Spanish. Over three-quarters of the language courses take place in the evening.

Foundation programmes

10. The delivery of programmes in foundation is subcontracted to two main providers. The substantial provision is at a specialist centre located on a college campus in St Albans, the other is a collaboration between a college in the north of the county and the local learning forum. In 2003-04 there were 650 learners enrolled on foundation programmes and at the time of the inspection there are 305 enrolments. Most of the programmes are for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, and there is also a small provision of English for speakers of other languages. Courses range from full-time to short taster and other part-time provision, in collaboration with charity and self-advocacy groups. Some courses take place in community and sports centres. The provision in St Albans is open to young and adult learners with a wide and diverse range of learning difficulties and disabilities.

Family learning

11. Provision in family learning is primarily subcontracted to the colleges of further education with a few classes recently delivered directly by service staff. In 2003-04, 2,214 learners were enrolled on 201 courses. None of these courses led to a certificate. At the time of inspection, 103 learners are attending 15 courses and 86 per cent are women. Parents, carers and foster carers attend the sessions. There are three kinds of courses in the family learning programme. Wider family learning courses and workshops for two to four hours, FLLN workshops, which last from two to 12 hours, and introductory courses such as keeping up with the children, which last from nine to 13 hours. Most courses take place during the afternoon and evening and a family fun workshop takes place on Saturday mornings at a local football club to encourage dads to attend with their children. Courses are mainly delivered in schools. The service has a full-time manager post for family learning, which is currently vacant, and a part time co-ordinator. There are 22 tutors. Four community education development officers manage wider family learning in the community.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	14
Number of inspection days	108
Number of learner interviews	548
Number of staff interviews	32
Number of subcontractor interviews	98
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	55
Number of partner/external agency interviews	14

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

12. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, leadership and management are unsatisfactory and quality assurance is very weak. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Provision is good in foundation programmes and satisfactory in ICT, visual and performing arts and media, and English, languages and communications. Family learning is unsatisfactory and the provision in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel is very weak.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality assurance		5

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i> - Adult and community learning	198	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		5
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> - Adult and community learning	1577	5

Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Arts - Adult and community learning	1034	3
Other contributory areas - Adult and community learning	287	3
English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Languages - Adult and community learning	1551	3
Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Independent living and leisure skills - Adult and community learning	305	2
Family learning		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	103	4

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

13. **Learners work at an appropriate level and make satisfactory to good progress in ICT, visual and performing arts and media and modern foreign languages.** In modern foreign languages, learners demonstrate well-developed skills in independent and collaborative learning.

14. **Many learners increase their confidence significantly.** The development of personal and social skills is particularly good in visual and performing arts and media. In foundation programmes, learners make good progress towards the achievement of their personal goals and improve their social skills.

15. In some family learning classes, learners develop good parenting skills, **but there is insufficient emphasis on adults improving their own literacy and numeracy skills.** In some health and fitness classes, learners are not maintaining or improving their fitness, or acquiring new or improving existing skills to any significant extent.

16. Attendance is satisfactory and retention is good overall and particularly good in courses in modern and foreign languages.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	0	9	7	2	1	0	19
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	2	8	11	5	1	1	28
Visual & performing arts & media	1	3	16	5	2	0	0	27
English, languages & communications	0	4	4	10	1	2	0	21
Foundation programmes	0	2	5	2	0	0	0	9
Family learning	0	1	3	5	0	0	0	9
Total	1	12	45	40	10	4	1	113

17. **There are good working relationships between tutors and learners in most adult and community learning classes.** Individual taster sessions are particularly effective in ICT. They enable complete beginners to gain an initial insight into different aspects of computing in a familiar and non-threatening environment.

18. **There is some good teaching in visual and performing arts and media,** where the energy, skills and enthusiasm of the tutors support learners to meet challenging targets. Good handouts support skill development and tutors demonstrate their skills well.

19. **There is some good teaching and learning on FLLN workshops and introductory courses.** However, tutors make insufficient reference to adult learning in the joint sessions.

20. **In foundation, the curriculum planning is particularly effective** in meeting individual needs. Appropriate and clear targets are set and achievement is reviewed at the end of each session.

21. **There is good use of learning support assistants in foundation programmes.** Assistants are included in the planning of lessons and make an active and positive contribution to learning.

22. **There are imaginative strategies to consult and communicate with learners in foundation programmes,** including videos which use musical, signing and other visual cues to communicate.

23. **The service offers a good range of beginners' courses in modern foreign languages.** The short courses are particularly effective in attracting not only learners new to languages but also adults who are new to adult and community learning.

24. There is a wide range of first-step courses to widen participation in family learning.

The local radio and football fun workshops are successful in attracting more men to the programme.

25. In information technology (IT) the resources for learning are good. Most venues for sport and recreation classes are appropriate, but some classes are taught in facilities which are too small for the number of learners. There are some very good specialist facilities in visual arts but also in some outreach centres the art studios do not have visual displays and several rooms are not well decorated. Accommodation is mostly suitable for language learning, but some specialist equipment is below standard. Most of the tutors are adequately qualified and maintain their competence through professional development activities.

26. Learning materials vary in quality. Paper-based resources in IT are good. They make effective use of images captured from the screen which enable learners to connect what they are reading with what they see on their computer screen. In sport and leisure some materials are well designed and easy to use, while others are outdated photocopies from books. In family learning there are very few adult resources for teaching sessions.

27. Overall there is too much unsatisfactory teaching. Some 52 per cent of observed sessions were graded good or better. Thirteen per cent of sessions were less than satisfactory. In the less successful classes, tutors pay insufficient attention to meeting the needs of all learners. In some visual and performing arts and media lessons, questioning is ineffective and knowledge and understanding remain unchecked. Some modern foreign languages tutors use too much English and translation work, which reduces opportunities to develop the learners' oral skills.

28. Much of the teaching and learning is poor in sport and leisure. Demonstrations are poor, there is little variation in the teaching methods and insufficient attention is paid to adapting activities to meet the needs of individual learners.

29. Accommodation and facilities for some learners on foundation programmes are inadequate. The sensory room is cramped and the ceiling in a poor state of repair. The toileting, changing and shower facilities are inadequate. The pavement surrounding the centre is uneven and there are potholes in the immediate vicinity of the main entrance.

30. There is insufficient assessment and recording of learners' progress in ICT. Planned outcomes of learning are often expressed in terms which are too broad to make them measurable. Learners' progress is not formally and systematically assessed by teachers.

31. The use of assessment for planning and monitoring of individual learning is unsatisfactory in sport and leisure. In some classes, health and medical screening is not completed and in others it is not used effectively. There is little formal recording of learners' fitness or skills levels at the start of a course, and little recording of progress during courses.

32. Planning to meet individual learning needs is weak in visual and performing arts and

media. There is very little initial assessment, and in most classes, learners' starting points are not identified.

33. **Initial assessment is ineffective in modern foreign languages.** Many tutors do not adequately record learners' previous linguistic experience in either the taught language or in other languages as a basis for course planning and lesson planning.

34. **There is insufficient monitoring of learners' progress in visual and performing arts and media.** Lesson plans and schemes of work make insufficient use of specific and measurable statements to define what learning will take place and the standard of work expected. Methods of assessment are not identified.

35. **There is insufficient recording of learners' progress in family learning.** No individual learning plans are used to record achievement. Little use is made of initial assessment but some informal assessment takes place.

36. **In leisure, sport and recreation the range of provision is insufficient to meet the needs of individuals and the community.** There are insufficient family learning programmes in literacy and numeracy.

37. **Opportunities for progression for learners on foundation programmes are not well developed.** At the main subcontractor's site there are limited opportunities for learners to access other curriculum areas of the college and its facilities, although recently some learners have attended the horticulture and small animal care programmes.

Leadership and management

38. **There has been effective management of change during the process of service realignment.** Good use has been made of consultancy, and key posts have been created for the management of the service. Coherence has been given to key strategic documents, and closer links have been made between council, service and partners' planning cycles. Partner organisations and subcontractors recognise and value the changes made to the service structure and operation.

39. **The service has developed good provider networks** across the county, involving all major subcontracted and external providers, community groups, and voluntary associations. There are also good links with other departments of the council, including information services, the youth service and schools, and productive links with the borough and district councils within the county.

40. **The service makes good use of partnerships and projects to widen participation.** The local learning forums are particularly effective in identifying learning needs within the community. Programmes have been developed to meet the needs of priority groups such as travellers and people with major caring responsibilities. IT tasters include sessions in languages spoken in the local community.

41. The management of resources is satisfactory. The service is complying with the

requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and has recently completed its disability statement. Some classes are held in rooms which are difficult to access for learners with restricted mobility. There is an action plan to ensure that the service complies with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

42. The management information systems used by the service are satisfactory. However, because of weaknesses in data systems before 2003-04, the service does not yet have reliable data from enough years of provision to carry out performance trend analysis for service improvement.

43. **The management of subcontracted provision is ineffective.** While there are clear and detailed contracts governing provision to be delivered for the service, these are not routinely monitored or signed off and despatched to providers in a timely fashion. Curriculum management is weak in most areas of learning. There are ineffective arrangements for the sharing of good practice, for subject-specialist staff development, or for informed subject-specialist planning of provision at county level. Most subcontractors do not sufficiently acknowledge the funding or other support provided by the council in their prospectuses, and most learners are unaware of the council's involvement in the provision of courses.

44. **The service does not make adequate provision for the diagnosis or delivery of literacy, numeracy and language support across the county.** In four of the six areas inspected, learners' needs were not adequately identified at enrolment or during initial assessment or induction. During observed classes there were literacy and numeracy needs identified by inspectors which were not met by tutors.

45. **There is insufficient use of data to monitor and evaluate equal opportunities.** Targets for the recruitment of priority groups set in a three year development plan have not been revised in the light of provider performance. Little use has been made of data to compare the performance of different groups of learners.

46. **The arrangements for quality assurance are insufficiently established.** The service is over-reliant on individual subcontractors' own quality assurance arrangements. An annual contract monitoring visit is carried out but this is insufficiently rigorous in assessing the standards set and achieved by the subcontractor. The service does not routinely receive minutes or copies of providers' quality assurance documents or reports.

47. The service relies on each subcontractor's own lesson observation schemes and in some cases these have only very recently been implemented. **There has been no monitoring of the effectiveness of these schemes** and no checking of the grade profiles which result from them. Some lesson observations are carried out by staff who are not area of learning specialists.

48. **The service does not directly collect feedback from learners.** There is insufficient monitoring to ensure that subcontractors are collecting and using feedback effectively to improve provision.

49. **The service's self-assessment report is incomplete** and is not an effective tool for improvement. The reports for most areas of learning lack coherence and many of the strengths are no more than normal practice. The report pays insufficient attention to the leadership and management of the service and there is insufficient involvement of all interested parties in the self-assessment process.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- effective management of change
- good development of provider networks
- good use of partnerships and projects to widen participation

Weaknesses

- ineffective management of subcontracted provision
- inadequate provision of literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficient use of data to monitor and evaluate equality of opportunity
- insufficiently established quality assurance system
- incomplete self-assessment

Information & communications technology

Using IT

Strengths

- particularly effective individual taster sessions
- good resources for learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient tutor assessment and recording of learners' progress
- ineffective contribution by specialist IT tutors to curriculum management

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- no significant strengths identified

Weaknesses

- much poor teaching and learning
- inadequate use of assessment in planning learning and monitoring individual progress
- insufficient range of provision to meet the needs of individuals and the community
- weak curriculum management and leadership
- inadequate observation of teaching and learning

Visual & performing arts & media

Arts

Strengths

- good standard of work
- good development of personal and social skills
- much good teaching

Weaknesses

- weak planning of learning to meet individual needs
- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient use of quality assurance to improve teaching and learning

Other contributory areas

Strengths

- good standard of work
- good development of personal and social skills
- much good teaching

Weaknesses

- weak planning of learning to meet individual needs
- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient use of quality assurance to improve teaching and learning

English, languages & communications

Languages

Strengths

- well-developed skills for independent and collaborative learning
- good retention in 2003-04
- widespread provision for beginners' languages

Weaknesses

- ineffective initial assessment
- inadequate collaborative planning
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Foundation programmes

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good achievement of personal goals and social skills
- effective curriculum planning to meet individual needs
- good use of learning support assistants
- imaginative strategies to consult learners

Weaknesses

- some inadequate accommodation and facilities
- insufficient opportunities for progression

Family learning

Strengths

- some good teaching and learning in workshops and introductory courses
- wide range of first-step courses to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- insufficient focus on meeting the needs of adults
- weak curriculum management

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HERTFORDSHIRE LEA:

- the friendly and enthusiastic tutors
- the opportunity to try something new - 'the course gave me confidence to have a go'
- the chance to develop knowledge and skills
- the small classes with individual attention
- good feedback from tutors - 'I learnt a lot about how I've been going wrong'
- the companionship - meeting other people and making new friends
- the convenience of local centres

WHAT LEARNERS THINK HERTFORDSHIRE LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- the length of courses - 'the course is almost over before we've begun'
- the lack of classes continuing through the summer months
- the opportunity to study at different times of the day and at weekends
- the amount of paperwork and not knowing what use is made of it
- the accommodation in some classes - it is cramped

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HERTFORDSHIRE LEA:

- improve standards in teaching and learning
- fully establish procedures to monitor learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited provision
- implement an overall strategy for the county-wide development of provision in adult and community learning
- ensure the recently appointed adult and community learning team is appropriately resourced and supported in maintaining the momentum of change
- strengthen the management and monitoring of subcontractors
- find alternative funding routes for the provision at the Springfield site
- develop a more systematic approach to the provision of literacy, numeracy and language support
- fully develop and implement service policies and procedures for quality assurance
- extend opportunities to share good practice at curriculum level

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- effective management of change
- good development of provider networks
- good use of partnerships and projects to widen participation

Weaknesses

- ineffective management of subcontracted provision
- inadequate provision of literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficient use of data to monitor and evaluate equality of opportunity
- insufficiently established quality assurance system
- incomplete self-assessment

50. There has been effective management of change during the process of service realignment. The senior manager of the service and the senior officers directly responsible for adult learning have an open and constructive management style. Hertfordshire County Council has a strong commitment to the development of an effective adult and community learning service, including increased involvement and support from the elected portfolio holder. Key posts have been created for the management of the service, for the provision of quality assurance, for management information and data research, for the development of family learning and skills for life, and for the maintenance of equality of opportunity across the service. In most cases, the posts were filled shortly before inspection. Good use has been made of consultancy to improve the service. At the end of 2003, the service collaborated in the commissioning of an extensive review of the management and delivery of adult education in the county, and work has begun to respond to key weaknesses identified in the report.

51. During the recent changes to the service, coherence has been given to key strategic documents, and closer links have been made between council, service and partners' planning cycles. There is a clear three-year adult learning development plan, which links closely to the county best-value performance plan, the local LSC council strategic plan, the Hertfordshire prosperity forum economic development strategy for Hertfordshire, and the Hertfordshire adult learning partnership operational plan. The service has also brought about considerable improvements in the ways that data is gathered and reported, and provision planned. A new management information system was purchased in 2003 and is now successfully used to gain a wide range of useful learner and demographic data. Partner organisations and subcontractors have been given support to work with the new management information system. Data is now used to make informed planning decisions for the service and subcontractors and partners have good access to their own data. Partner organisations and subcontractors recognise and value

the changes made to service structure and operation.

52. The service has developed good provider networks across the county, involving all major subcontracted and external providers, community groups, and voluntary associations. There are also good links with other departments of the council, including information services, the youth service and schools, and productive links with the borough and district councils within the county. Under the auspices of the children, schools and families department of the council, the service has developed the roles of community education development officers who work closely with schools and community organisations to provide adult and family learning opportunities. The service also provides funding to support community learning organiser posts in each of the four subcontracted colleges in the county. In 2002, service managers were instrumental in the development of the Hertfordshire adult learning partnership, which provides a management and co-ordinating body for the 10 county learning forums, also founded and supported by the county council. Forum meetings provide good opportunities for discussions of local needs and enable active debate and partnership working among providers and those commissioning provision. The service manager is a member of the partnership management group and provides reports to and from the children, schools and families department. In addition, the community learning organisers and the community education development officers attend each of the learning partnership meetings and provide good links between colleges, schools and voluntary sector providers. There are effective links between the business community and the adult learning providers, with the Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce acting as host for the Hertfordshire adult learning partnership.

53. The service contracts with several other departments and sections of the council for the provision of services, such as management information support and commissioning, and with a number of departments, such as the youth service or the Hertfordshire young mariners' base, for provision of courses. There are satisfactory internal service level agreements in place to govern these contracted services, which are reviewed and renewed annually.

54. Staff development and induction are satisfactory. There is a good induction for service employees. Tutors, community learning organisers and other delivery staff are subject to the induction and staff development conditions of their respective employers. The service does not monitor or advise subcontractors on employment conditions for tutors or other staff.

55. The management information systems are satisfactory. A new learner database was purchased in 2003, and managers can now use data to plan provision and carry out informed needs analyses at regional and county levels. However, because of weaknesses in data systems before 2003-04, the service does not yet have reliable data from enough years of provision to carry out performance trend analysis for service improvement.

56. The management of subcontracted provision is ineffective. While there are clear and detailed contracts governing provision to be delivered for the service, these are not routinely monitored or signed off and despatched to providers in a timely fashion. At the

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time of inspection, none of the colleges that deliver most of the courses had received a contract for 2004-05. Curriculum management is weak in most areas of learning and there are ineffective arrangements to provide for the sharing of good practice, for subject-specialist staff development, or for informed subject-specialist planning of provision at county level. There is insufficient recognition of good practice, or action to deal with continued poor practice, among subcontractors. Most subcontractors do not sufficiently acknowledge the funding or other support provided by the council in their prospectuses, and most learners are unaware of the council's involvement in the provision of courses. Learners' comments, compliments and complaints are not routinely fed back to service managers or to elected members, either directly or through subcontractors. A new planning and commissioning process was introduced for 2004-05, which requires providers to set out details of courses to be delivered, and provides clear targets for retention and achievement within the provision. At the time of inspection, it was too early to tell whether these measures were affording closer management of provision.

57. Through historical arrangements, nearly a quarter of the adult and community learning budget is committed to the specialist foundation provision for adult learners at the Springfield site. While the continuation and further development of foundation provision for adults is a strategic priority for the council, future opportunities to review and redistribute the operational budget in response to service priorities are restricted until agreement is reached on securing alternative sources of LSC funding to support the specialist provision.

58. The service does not make adequate provision for diagnosis or delivery of literacy, numeracy and language support across the county. In four of the six areas inspected, learners' needs were not adequately identified at enrolment or during initial assessment or induction. During observed classes there were literacy and numeracy needs identified by inspectors which were not met by tutors. The county council is developing a skills for life strategy, and the LSC has a strategy for literacy, numeracy and language skills for life in place, but these are not widely applied to adult and community learning, nor are they widely known or understood by managers of subcontracted provision.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

59. The service makes good use of partnerships and projects to widen participation effectively. The service's adult learning plan for 2004-05 identifies a number of priority groups. These include people with disabilities or learning difficulties, men participating in adult learning, and those from minority ethnic groups, including travellers. The plan also makes reference to provision for the elderly, families, those who care for others and people from rural areas. The service has effectively encouraged providers to develop programmes specifically to meet the needs of these priority groups. The local learning forums are particularly effective at identifying learning needs within the community. The service also makes good use of community education development officers to link with local schools and community learning organisers who are based in local colleges but are part funded by the service. The service works in partnership with an effective initial advice and guidance service which helps to ensure that potential learners receive appropriate guidance and are made aware of the opportunities available to them.

60. The service has recognised that it is difficult for people who are carers to participate in training. A project looked at ways in which the service could assist these potential learners. Courses were offered at a number of locations including day centres so that carers could attend them while remaining near those for whom they were caring. The service has also offered these courses at significantly reduced fees. This project has been particularly successful and allows carers to attend courses such as yoga for relaxation, but also to develop skills which will help them to develop their careers should their caring duties come to an end.

61. Particularly effective provision is available for learners with profound learning difficulties or disabilities, although currently this is mainly at one site. The service is committed to developing this provision and is involved in a three-year project aimed at improving choice for these learners so that they do not have to travel to adjacent counties to access courses. There is a good initiative to provide IT taster sessions through partnership with the county's library service. Recently the libraries have been able to offer these tasters in languages spoken in the local community.

62. The service is committed to increasing the number of travellers who attend courses and has developed a project which is well resourced and effectively managed. The project aims to build trust with local communities of travellers and offers individual tuition for literacy and numeracy, as well as support for learners working towards their driving licence theory test. The project's co-ordinator is working towards a level 3 qualification in initial advice and guidance. Other successful projects include IT courses for people living in sheltered accommodation and residential care, do it yourself (DIY) for women, and courses for people with mental health difficulties.

63. The service has developed some imaginative ways to increase participation in family learning. Successful initiatives include work with a local football club to increase participation from men, setting up a local community radio station and a school garden project. One school arranged a visit to a gallery in London for parents and children to learn about story telling through pictures and to help the parents support their children as they learn to read. Many of the projects have led to courses that now form part of the service's regular provision of adult learning. For example, taster sessions in DIY for women proved so popular that longer courses were offered to allow women to build on their skills. In some cases this also led to women participating in courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications in construction.

64. The service is aware of the need to implement the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It has recently completed its disability statement and is complying with legislation but some classes are held in rooms which are difficult for learners with restricted mobility to access. The main site for the provision of courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities has some poor accommodation with difficult access due to uneven ground. There is an action plan to ensure that the service complies with Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The service is still working on impact measures which it plans to integrate throughout its operational plans. Recently all subcontractors were reviewed to check

their understanding and compliance with the Acts.

65. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory throughout the adult learning provision. The service has adopted county council policies and procedures for equal opportunities. The service's staff induction contains useful information on equal opportunities and on the implications of recent legislation. Many tutors have an awareness of issues relating to disabilities. There are examples of subcontractors' staff including strategies for teaching learners with disabilities, in their schemes of work and lesson plans.

66. There is insufficient use of data to monitor and evaluate equal opportunities. The service has only recently appointed an equal opportunities co-ordinator to develop its monitoring systems. Targets have been set and, in many cases, exceeded for each priority group. There is a three-year development plan which indicates how targets for priority groups will develop. However, where the first year's targets have either been significantly exceeded or not met, there has been no adjustment of subsequent years' targets and they are not yet related to individual wards or areas of learning. The service has agreed targets with subcontractors for recruitment from priority groups for the first time in 2004-05. However, many subcontractors are unclear how their success in meeting these targets will affect the funding they receive. The new management information system is able to provide accurate data but as yet little use has been made of data to monitor or compare the performance of different groups of learners. No trends in recruitment, retention or achievement have been identified or analysed.

67. There is a comprehensive service level agreement which requires subcontractors to have policies and procedures for equal opportunities and to meet the requirements of legislation. However, there is little monitoring or evaluation of the implementation of the policies. There is no monitoring of the information given to learners by the subcontractors and the service does not monitor learners' complaints.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 5

68. The arrangements for quality assurance are insufficiently established. The service has recognised this weakness and has recently appointed a quality and development manager who has overall responsibility for the development of quality assurance systems and procedures. A quality assurance steering group has recently been reformed and its terms of reference revised and broadened. The group was originally formed in 2002 but until November 2004 it had not met for 18 months. The group includes representatives from all of the subcontractors and its remit is to guide and review good practice. All subcontractors also attend business development meetings which are held six times a year. The afternoon of each meeting is devoted to workshops which are used effectively for training and the sharing of good practice. Subcontractors greatly value these meetings which also promote good communication, coherent planning and effective working practices.

69. Through its own quality monitoring processes, the service has identified a number of providers that cannot meet its quality requirements and has ceased to contract with

them. Service level agreements include appropriate standards for health and safety and subcontractors pay satisfactory attention to health and safety. However, the service is over-reliant on individual subcontractors' own quality assurance arrangements. An annual contract monitoring visit is carried out but this is insufficiently rigorous in assessing the standards set and achieved by the subcontractor. Few action points are identified and the subcontractors receive only verbal feedback from the visit. Even where serious deficiencies are identified, the subcontractor is not required to produce an action plan to remedy them, and there are no extra monitoring visits to measure progress. None of the service's staff attend the subcontractor's own quality assurance meetings and they do not routinely receive minutes or copies of quality assurance documents or reports.

70. The service recognises that an important component of its ability to quality assure the work of subcontractors is the appointment of area of learning link staff who have the responsibility to oversee areas of learning across all of the subcontracted provision. However, currently these are temporary arrangements which have only been in place for the past six months and in some cases the staff are not area of learning specialists.

71. Currently the service relies on each subcontractor's own lesson observation schemes and in some cases these have only very recently been implemented. As yet, there has been no monitoring of the effectiveness of these schemes and no checking of the grade profiles which result from them. Some lesson observations are carried out by staff who are not area of learning specialists. The service has designed its own lesson observation scheme and training sessions held for staff. However, as yet, the scheme has not been fully implemented. For example, in family learning there are insufficient staff to enable lesson observations to be carried out. In other areas, for example the library service, managers are still devising the most appropriate and effective way to implement the system. The service level agreements require that all tutors work towards a teaching qualification, but no time limit is set for this.

72. The service does not directly collect feedback from learners but relies on each subcontractor's systems and procedures. There is insufficient monitoring to ensure that subcontractors are collecting and using feedback effectively to improve provision.

73. The service's self-assessment report is incomplete and is not an effective tool for improvement. The report is the first attempt at producing a county-wide report which also provides individual reports on each area of learning. The service has worked hard to encourage subcontractors to produce separate self-assessment reports for adult and community learning. The report for family learning is accurate and self-critical, but the reports for most of the other areas of learning lack coherence, and many of the strengths identified are no more than normal practice. There is insufficient evidence to support many of the judgements. In one area of learning a key weakness identified by a subcontractor had been omitted in the summary document. The self-assessment report pays insufficient attention to the leadership and management of the service and no grades are given for either quality assurance or equality of opportunity. There is insufficient involvement of all interested parties in the self-assessment process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT - Adult and community learning	198	3

Using IT

Strengths

- particularly effective individual taster sessions
- good resources for learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient tutor assessment and recording of learners' progress
- ineffective contribution by specialist IT tutors to curriculum management

Achievement and standards

74. Learners work at an appropriate level and make satisfactory to good progress in most lessons. Most learners report a significant increase in confidence and skill and a desire to continue their learning. Attendance at observed lessons is satisfactory, at an average of 70 per cent. While retention is good, the programme largely consists of short or very short courses.

Quality of education and training

75. Individual taster sessions take place in a range of local libraries and are particularly effective. They enable complete beginners to gain an initial insight into different aspects of computing in a familiar and non-threatening environment. Learners are effectively guided through well-structured sessions where they gain skills and knowledge to enable them to carry out relevant operations on computers. Learners generally make more progress than would be possible in a group learning environment. For example, in one session a learner registered for a new web-mail address, sent and received e-mails, and learnt how to maintain the account. This provision is attracting those who have had little contact with learning since leaving school and who would not attend formal classes. Following attendance at taster sessions, learners are highly motivated and make arrangements to continue and consolidate their learning.

76. The resources for learning are good and in many cases very good. Computers are equipped with large-screen monitors which enable learners to carry out detailed work in

graphic-based subjects. They are configured with up-to-date operating systems and application software which enable learners to work productively in a situation they would find in the workplace. Good connections are available which enable many learners to access the internet at the same time, which ensures that classes proceed without interruption. In other classes, learners made good use of access to a wide range of graphical images. The accommodation for sessions is generally good with bright, well-lit rooms which are well furnished. However, in some community venues, learners sit on inappropriate chairs and have insufficient workspace. Paper-based resources are also good. They make effective use of images captured from the screen, which enables learners to connect what they are reading with what they see on their computer screen.

77. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although observation grades range widely. The better group learning sessions are well planned and effectively managed. Good use is made of question and answer sessions to check on learning, confirm understanding, and to ensure the direction of the lesson builds on learners' previous knowledge and interests. In less successful classes, tutors use a limited range of teaching styles which do not maximise opportunities for learning.

78. Provision in this area of learning is at beginner level and satisfactorily complements other accredited provision available locally. Providers are responsive to the needs of the community and offer specialist introductory courses when requested. For example, courses for people with visual impairment are provided in a social centre for the blind. However, while the overall programme is coherent, insufficient attention has been given to marketing the courses and to progression opportunities in IT.

79. Learners receive satisfactory guidance from tutors. Tutors assess the need for adaptive technology and know how to access it. Tracker balls and large mice are readily available and tutors know how to adjust screen display to help those with impaired sight. There is no formal system for the assessment of literacy, numeracy and language needs. However, some tutors deal with these needs during sessions. The provision of initial advice and guidance is inconsistent. Frontline enrolment staff in one provider are trained and qualified in information advice and guidance, while in another, such guidance work is carried out by inexperienced and mainly temporary call centre staff. There is effective signposting of opportunities for learners to practise their skills.

80. Tutors are appropriately experienced in using the software packages they are teaching. However, many have no recognised teaching qualification. In some group sessions, untrained teachers use a limited range of teaching styles which do not maximise opportunities for learning. Most providers offer the opportunity for teachers to receive training. However, requests for training in the use of specialist software are not always fulfilled.

81. There is insufficient assessment and recording of learners' progress. Limited initial assessment takes place in some lessons, but it is not used to plan programmes. Planned outcomes of learning are often expressed in terms which are too broad to make them measurable. Learners' progress is not formally and systematically assessed by teachers. In some classes, learners make and record assessments of their own progress, but they

are not made sufficiently aware of the tutors' assessment of their progress. In some cases, learners' self-assessment contradicts the assessment by tutors. Learners' work is not routinely marked by tutors to give a clear indication of their progress. In feedback provided through end-of-course evaluations, some learners identified that they are insufficiently aware of their progress.

Leadership and management

82. The planned range of provision and selection of venues is effective in attracting new learners and those from under-represented groups. All venues are fully accessible. Where staff or volunteers have the appropriate language and ICT skills, the range of library taster courses is being developed in community languages.

83. The contribution by specialist ICT tutors to curriculum management is ineffective. Most observations of teaching and learning are carried out by staff who are not specialists in the subject. In one provider, teachers are only given verbal feedback following observations and there is no subsequent action plan for development. The monitoring of schemes of work and session plans is ineffective. In one class, the scheme of work is over-ambitious and learners have insufficient time to consolidate their learning. In another class, the tutor routinely completes the lesson plan at the end of each session. Providers' quality assurance procedures had not identified these shortcomings.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		5
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> - Adult and community learning	1577	5

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- no significant strengths identified

Weaknesses

- much poor teaching and learning
- inadequate use of assessment in planning learning and monitoring individual progress
- insufficient range of provision to meet the needs of individuals and the community
- weak curriculum management and leadership
- inadequate observation of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

84. There is satisfactory achievement in most health and fitness classes, but there is a considerable difference in levels of achievement across the range of classes observed. In classes where achievement is satisfactory, most learners maintain levels of fitness during the course and some increase their mobility and confidence. For example, a learner in Pilates is now able to resume driving a car because of the improved range of movement and confidence gained from the class. In classes where achievement is unsatisfactory, learners are not maintaining or improving their fitness, or acquiring new or improving existing skills to any significant extent. Learners lose the health and fitness benefits gained on courses because of the long holiday periods. At the time of inspection, data for the main accredited course was not available.

85. Retention rates overall are satisfactory. However, most courses only last for 10 weeks. There are very few new learners, with many returning year after year to the same course. There is poor retention in a few classes. For example, in a tai chi class several learners left after the first week.

86. Attendance rates are mostly satisfactory at 70 per cent, but in a few classes attendance is poor.

Quality of education and training

87. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Most sites have satisfactory parking, lighting, signs and access for people with restricted mobility. Accommodation is of varying quality. Some learners attend an outdoor education centre that has good specialist equipment. Most venues are appropriate, but some classes are taught in facilities which are too small for the number of learners and this restricts the scope of what can be taught, and affects the safety of learners. For example, in one class, learners were attempting to hold onto very hot radiators to aid their balance. Most of the tutors are adequately qualified and maintain their competence through professional development activities. There is no mechanism for ensuring that tutors have appropriate qualifications and update as required. In most cases tutors do not have a formal teaching qualification. Most of the equipment is adequate but largely supplied by learners or tutors. Learning materials vary in quality. Some are well designed and easy to use, while others are outdated photocopies from books.

88. Information, guidance and support arrangements for learners are satisfactory. Most learners are aware of the guidance and support available. Learners are involved in identifying their own additional support needs at the start of their course. None of the current learners are receiving support for literacy, numeracy or language.

89. Much of the teaching and learning is poor. Twenty-five per cent of lessons observed were graded unsatisfactory or worse. In the weaker sessions, lesson plans and schemes of work do not clearly illustrate individual learning activities or identify a sequenced programme of learning. Demonstrations are poor, there is little variation in the teaching methods and insufficient attention is paid to adapting activities to meet the needs of individual learners. A significant number of classes are running as clubs. Learners enjoy the social aspect of such classes but little learning is taking place. Learners often arrive late and leave early. Many learners attend these classes year after year with little change in their learning activities.

90. The use of assessment for planning and monitoring of individual learning is unsatisfactory. In some classes, health and medical screening is not completed and in others it is not used effectively. Some teachers are not fully aware of the individual medical histories of learners in their class. Initial assessment is not consistently used to plan the training. There is little formal recording of learners' fitness or skills levels at the start of a course, and little recording of progress during courses. Group learning outcomes are too general and are not used to measure learners' progress. Most learners are given some verbal feedback, although few specific goals are set to measure learners' progress. The monitoring of learners' progress is inadequate.

91. The range and provision of courses is insufficient to meet individual and community needs. Access to courses is limited with few classes available in the mornings, afternoons and weekends. Opportunities to join classes are also restricted where learners enrol on courses knowing they can not attend for several weeks, and their place is not made available to new learners. At some centres, existing learners are given booking priority, which restricts access for new learners.

92. There are very few targeted courses. Most of the learners are women and there is no provision specifically aimed at meeting the needs of men. There are few courses that offer learners the ability to progress to a higher level, and many courses do not build on prior attainment and experience. There are very few accredited courses and taster sessions. Courses are available throughout the county, but the curriculum range is narrow. Courses are predominantly in yoga and fitness. A large outdoor education provision is offered during the summer term, but not at other times of the year.

Leadership and management

93. There is insufficient curriculum co-ordination, planning and evaluation and no overall strategic direction for this area of learning. The use of data for planning and making improvements is inadequate. The range of courses has remained the same for a number of years. There is insufficient complementary planning between subcontractors and the service. A curriculum subject expert in adult learning is based at one subcontractor, but little use is made of specialist expertise to develop the programme overall. There are very few partnerships with local leisure departments to enhance the programme. There is inadequate communication between staff in specific subcontractors and between the different subcontractors. The identification and sharing of good practice is insufficient across the service.

94. The management of resources is unsatisfactory. Staffing and accommodation inadequacies identified through learner feedback and by some subcontractors have not been dealt with. There are inconsistencies in the use of risk assessments of activities. At one venue there are inadequate emergency arrangements and some learners have potentially serious medical conditions. At another site, the tutor had not identified hazards associated with the equipment being used. Guidance to tutors on their responsibilities for risk assessment is inadequate, and there is limited monitoring of what risk assessment takes place.

95. Quality assurance of subcontractors is inadequate. There is an over-reliance on the subcontractors' own quality assurance systems. Some significant issues identified by subcontractors were not included in the final self-assessment report. Weaknesses observed by inspectors have not been identified by the service. Some key stakeholders have not been involved in the self-assessment process and some staff are not aware of the findings.

96. The process for observing teaching and learning is inadequate. A number of tutors have never been observed, and some long-serving tutors have only recently been observed. The staff who have been observed do not always receive feedback. The grades given for the few observations that have taken place are higher than the grade profile at inspection. Most session observers do not have appropriate or sufficient subject expertise to identify subject-specific teaching inadequacies, or technical health and safety issues.

97. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Tutors and learners have a

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sufficient awareness of their rights and responsibilities. However, activities to engage new learners are insufficient. No courses are offered specifically to attract learners from under-represented groups.

Visual & performing arts & media

Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Arts - Adult and community learning	1034	3
Other contributory areas - Adult and community learning	287	3

Arts

Strengths

- good standard of work
- good development of personal and social skills
- much good teaching

Weaknesses

- weak planning of learning to meet individual needs
- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient use of quality assurance to improve teaching and learning

Other contributory areas

Strengths

- good standard of work
- good development of personal and social skills
- much good teaching

Weaknesses

- weak planning of learning to meet individual needs
- insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient use of quality assurance to improve teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

98. Learners produce a good standard of work. For example, one learner in his first term made a well-designed large stained glass panel for his office. Learners in textiles have completed sketchbooks and developed swatches of fabric which show good standards of experimental dyeing techniques. In many art classes, learners have improved their observational awareness.

99. The development of personal and social skills is good. Many new learners who have

not been in education for several years have increased their self-confidence. Learners are developing good independent learning skills. Some work at home to complete projects that have been started in sessions, and pass their skills on to members of their family. Learners who would otherwise be isolated, such as elderly residents in sheltered housing, gain self-confidence and social interaction by attending the art and craft class in the day room. However, there is some poor attendance which, particularly in the case of performing arts lessons involving group activities, affects learning.

Quality of education and training

100. Much of the teaching is good or better. In the most successful lessons, the tutors' energy, skills and enthusiasm enable learners to meet challenging targets. For example, in a watercolour and mixed media class, more advanced learners were encouraged to assemble challenging still-life compositions, and their preferred painting styles are known and respected. In a dance class, learners were able to master a complex dance sequence, and were encouraged to draw on their experiences and skills developed in other dance classes. In a musical theatre course, a small group learnt a new song, and with the persistence and encouragement of the teacher they were able to perform not only the song but also associated dialogue and elementary stage movements. Good handouts support skill development and tutors demonstrate their skills well. For instance, a painting tutor showed the group clearly how to mix different hues to get subtle variations in tone and colour with their oil paints. In the less successful lessons, questioning is ineffective and knowledge and understanding remain unchecked. In one lesson, the teacher relied solely on visual observation to confirm learning, and in another the direct questioning was ineffective and did not ensure that all learners contributed to a peer assessment review.

101. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. There is good use of college accommodation with appropriate workshops and some very good specialist facilities. A local university has a wealth of resources and equipment which learners can use. In outreach centres the art studios do not have visual displays and several rooms are in need of redecoration. In two centres there is no access for learners with restricted mobility. In a designated dance space there are no mirrors, and learning and assessment are hindered. In two other dance lessons, slippery floors are a potential health and safety hazard.

102. There is a satisfactory range of courses across the county, with tasters and weekend courses as well as summer workshops. However, daytime provision is limited in the west of the county. The quality of information available to learners varies throughout the county. In some areas, there are no brochures specifically for particular centres. However, in some providers there are effective partnership arrangements where publicity is attractively designed with strong visual images which reflect the local curriculum offer for local communities. The new local learning forums within some boroughs allow a more coherent approach to the local curriculum offer, with resources shared to market the courses. The marketing is targeted at groups such as older learners. Some providers clearly signpost the progression routes with opportunities for accredited courses at local

colleges.

103. Tutors have good working relationships with their learners. They are sensitive to their needs and provide good support in sessions. For example, one learner in a lace making class was given additional time to complete the learning outcomes because of personal difficulties. In a targeted minority ethnic group the tutor took particular care to ensure that all learners understood the dressmaking skills she had demonstrated. In a dance class, a learner who had been seriously ill was supported to enable her to achieve course outcomes. Teachers can request additional learning support for learners if it is needed, but some teachers are not aware of this.

104. Planning to meet individual learning needs is weak. There is very little initial assessment, and in most classes, learners' starting points are not identified. Previous achievements are not recorded against outcomes. There are instances of learners being placed in classes at the wrong level. The quality of lesson planning is variable in presentation and content. In many cases, learning outcomes are insufficiently defined and in one instance are missing.

105. There is insufficient monitoring of learners' progress. In most classes, the recording of learners' progress or achievements is variable. Lesson plans and schemes of work identify activities and tasks but make insufficient use of specific and measurable statements to define what learning will take place and the standard of work expected. Methods of assessment are not identified. Assessment is inconsistent, with no written feedback to support the achievement of outcomes or to help learners improve. In some centres, self-assessment is the preferred method but this is not thorough.

Leadership and management

106. Within the colleges, there are examples of good working relationships between academic departments and community learning staff. The local learning forums have recently begun to have an impact in providing a more coherent regional curriculum offer. However, curriculum planning is not helped by an awareness of the learner market. Over a third of classes scheduled to run in September 2004 were subsequently cancelled.

107. Insufficient use is made of quality assurance to improve teaching and learning. There is insufficient monitoring of lesson plans, schemes of work and assessment records. In one centre the documents are not seen by line managers until almost halfway through the course. Some staff have not been observed teaching. Course review and evaluation is not yet an integral part of the quality cycle. In some cases the analysis of learner questionnaires does not include a detailed timetable for responding to weaknesses. The self-assessment report is not well evidenced and includes contradictory judgements.

English, languages & communications

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Languages - Adult and community learning	1551	3

Languages

Strengths

- well-developed skills for independent and collaborative learning
- good retention in 2003-04
- widespread provision for beginners' languages

Weaknesses

- ineffective initial assessment
- inadequate collaborative planning
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Achievement and standards

108. Learners demonstrate well-developed skills for independent and collaborative learning. Many regularly complete homework, prepare well for classes and, at higher levels, carry out research for individual presentations. Also, some learners practise their language skills together outside of class. Learners collaborate well in class, to support each other's learning. Many are keen to ask questions for interest or clarification. Learners have increased their confidence through working together and appreciate this personal development.

109. Attainment is generally satisfactory, with good comprehension skills and knowledge of vocabulary and idiom at an appropriate level. In some instances, learners demonstrate good development of oral skills for effective communication. Some learners have developed good levels of pronunciation and intonation. In some higher-level classes, learners reach good standards on individual cultural and literary projects. Other learners have not reached appropriate standards, especially in the development of their oral skills. Although they can mostly use basic phrases confidently, they are not yet able to manipulate the language in a creative manner.

110. The retention rate for 2003-04 was good at 91 per cent over a wide range of courses lasting between 10 and 15 weeks. During the inspection, attendance was satisfactory overall and absentees took responsibility for informing tutors and catching up on work missed.

Quality of education and training

111. The service offers a good range of beginners' courses in eight languages. Provision at this level represents 65 per cent of all language courses. The short courses are particularly effective in attracting not only learners new to languages, but also adults who are new to adult and community learning. Participation in languages by men and women has increased. At the time of the inspection, a third of learners were men.

112. Most of the teaching is at least satisfactory. Most tutors prepare lessons well within the framework of a structured scheme of work and establish a good rapport with learners. Tutors give good personal care and learning support and encouragement in class. Subcontractors identify additional learning needs at enrolment. Additional learning support is available but not always adequately monitored. The best lessons stimulate effective learning through a variety of activities which develop a range of language skills. In such lessons, tutors make extensive use of the taught language in a cultural context. In weaker lessons, activities are often too tutor-led and learning is too passive. At times tutors use too much English and translation work, which reduces opportunities to develop the learners' oral skills. In some instances, tutors pay insufficient attention to meeting the needs of all learners. In others, teachers do not correct errors of pronunciation, intonation and basic grammar.

113. Accommodation is mostly suitable for language learning, but some specialist equipment is below standard. For example, some cassette players and TV monitors are poor and some whiteboards are too small for effective teaching. On one of the sites there is very limited access for those with restricted mobility. Most tutors have nationally recognised first-stage teaching qualifications and are either native or fluent speakers of the taught languages.

114. Initial assessment is ineffective. Many tutors do not adequately record learners' previous linguistic experience either in the taught language or in other languages as a basis for course planning and lesson planning. Tutors do not make sufficient use of initial assessment to meet the diverse needs of learners in the group. Most records of achievement do not recognise personal learning objectives.

Leadership and management

115. On a day-to-day basis, the operational management of classes is adequate. Learners are generally satisfied with the way in which lessons are organised and with the service they are receiving. However, collaborative planning in this curriculum area is not effective at a county level and there is no strategic leadership to bring about improvement. Subcontractors do not adequately set and monitor targets for improvement at curriculum level. Few opportunities are available at county level for standardising and moderating the quality assurance processes carried out by subcontractors, such as lesson observation and course reviews. The analysis and follow-up of lesson observation findings and learner evaluations is inadequate for bringing about improvement. The profile of lesson observation grades given by subcontractors is

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significantly higher than that at inspection. Records of lesson observations do not always show follow-up action plans.

116. The service has not yet developed effective processes for sharing good practice in the teaching and learning of languages across the provision. The provision involves a large number of tutors, on many sites. Some tutors feel isolated, with little opportunity to access examples of good practice and banks of shared materials. Staff development organised by subcontractors is largely generic rather than specific to languages. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities to tutors and learners. The service's self-assessment report does not sufficiently identify strengths and weaknesses and does not link with a curriculum-specific development plan.

Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> - Adult and community learning	305	2

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good achievement of personal goals and social skills
- effective curriculum planning to meet individual needs
- good use of learning support assistants
- imaginative strategies to consult learners

Weaknesses

- some inadequate accommodation and facilities
- insufficient opportunities for progression

Achievement and standards

117. Learners make good progress towards the achievement of their personal goals and they improve their social skills. Achievement of learners' primary learning goals and core objectives is good. Many learners have profound learning difficulties and disabilities with complex needs and they learn new skills, increase new confidence in social situations and are able to participate in a variety of learning situations. For example, an autistic learner was unable to remain in a group with other learners at the start of the course, but is now able to participate and interact with others on the programme. Another learner with manipulative disabilities designed a Christmas card in a craft class. It has been adopted as the mayoral card for the borough. Other learners in a dance and movement class staged a public performance at a local community centre. Expectations of learners are high and tutors set achievable, yet challenging, targets.

Quality of education and training

118. The curriculum planning is effective to meet individual needs. Lessons are well planned and schemes of work are detailed with clear aims and objectives appropriate to the needs and abilities of individuals and groups. Most of the lesson plans are meticulous in detailing individual tasks for learners with diverse abilities and needs. Appropriate and clear targets are set and achievement of these targets is reviewed at the end of each session. In one centre, tutors use video recordings of sessions to enable learners with communication disabilities to note the skills they have learnt and the progress they have

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made. Initial assessment is good in most cases. Learners receive a thorough initial assessment, relevant case history notes are reviewed and an individual learner profile is produced. A risk assessment profile is also compiled for learners to identify special dietary, feeding or medical needs and, where appropriate, specific instructions for staff are provided. The comprehensive assessment of learners' needs are effectively used for lesson plans, and needs are continually assessed throughout the learners' programme. Teaching and learning for some very challenging learners is good. In one session an autistic learner exhibited extreme withdrawal behaviour and the tutor and learning support assistants, who were fully aware of the learners' difficulties and needs, used strategies to overcome this and reintroduced the learner back to the group.

119. There is good use of learning support assistants. The main centre employs 18 learning support assistants and they are used to support learners on all programmes. Assistants are included in the planning of lessons and make an active and positive contribution to learning in all sessions. For example, in one class for learners who need a high level of sensory input, the learning support assistants effectively use musical instruments to motivate learners. Assistants receive an induction, attend staff development and are included in the staff appraisal process.

120. There are imaginative strategies to consult learners. Managers and tutors recognise the profound communication difficulties of many learners and have introduced imaginative ways of enabling the learner to be heard. Videos are made using musical, signing and other visual cues to communicate. For example, to convey information about the college charter and how to access the grievance procedure. Other documents for learners are also translated into a more accessible format and there is a non-verbal promotional video that is posted on the college's internet. An external observer with experience of learners with disabilities and difficulties, and also with signing skills, is used to interview learners once a term to ascertain their views and help them review their learning programmes.

121. Accommodation and facilities for some learners on foundation programmes are inadequate. Most of the provision takes place on one college site. Here the premises are temporary and have some deficiencies. The sensory room is cramped and the ceiling is in need of refurbishment. The women's toilet is inadequate for the number of learners using the centre. The changing and shower facilities are also inadequate and the centre has no sluice. The pavement surrounding the centre is uneven and there are potholes in the immediate vicinity of the main entrance, which are hazardous for learners in wheelchairs and those with restricted mobility.

122. Opportunities for progression for learners on foundation programmes are not well developed. Although progression for some learners is limited because of their profound disabilities, for others there are limited opportunities to access other college programmes, sheltered work experience and other training programmes. For others, funding uncertainties mean that it is difficult for tutors to plan further progression from successful short courses. The service is aware of this and is working with its partners to improve progression opportunities for learners. For example, one subcontractor has recently appointed an employment and work-experience officer for learners with disabilities. At

the main subcontractor's site there are limited opportunities for learners to access other curriculum areas of the college and its facilities, although recently some learners have accessed the horticulture and small animal care programmes.

Leadership and management

123. At the main subcontractor's site communication between managers, staff and learning support assistants is good. There are weekly staff meetings to discuss learners' progress, the curriculum and other issues. There is an effective course review process that is used for curriculum planning. There are, however, inconsistencies in the monitoring of subcontractors by the service. The main centre of provision has not recently received a visit. There is restricted geographical provision for learners with disabilities across the county. Most of the provision is located at one site and some learners are driven long distances to reach the provision. The service is aware of the imbalance in provision across the county and there are currently a number of initiatives to deal with this. One example is the 'fulfilling lives development project', which is working with partners across the county to improve and develop day centres and other opportunities for learners with disabilities and to integrate learners into mainstream community provision.

124. At the main site, course and learner files are regularly monitored. The main subcontractor has a quality review group that meets once a term and a quality inspector also audits the programmes. All staff are appraised three times a year and appraisals contribute to personal development action plans. Staff development is targeted at the needs of the learners, staff and future curriculum development.

125. Learners are treated with consideration and respect and staff are aware of the learners' needs and the disability issues they face.

Family learning

Family learning		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	103	4

Strengths

- some good teaching and learning in workshops and introductory courses
- wide range of first-step courses to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- insufficient focus on meeting the needs of adults
- weak curriculum management

Achievement and standards

126. In some family learning programmes parents develop good parenting skills. One parent in a 'keeping up with the children' course is now able to understand how her daughter is learning to read and can prepare appropriate materials such as games using phonics to help her dyslexia. Another parent tried out a mathematics activity, using a counting stick at home with her son and he was then able to pass on this skill to a sibling.

127. There is insufficient emphasis on adults improving their own literacy and numeracy skills. There is little data on achievement and retention for 2003-04 and there is no record of non-accredited achievements as few individual learning plans are used to measure outcomes.

128. Attendance was good in most sessions during the inspection, at 83 per cent.

Quality of education and training

129. There is some good teaching and learning on FLLN workshops and introductory courses. Tutors are enthusiastic and plan their sessions thoroughly. The pace is good in several sessions and tutors use a variety of activities to motivate learners. For example, parents are involved in creating ideas to encourage the application of mathematics at home with children. In a session based at a football club, good use was made of ICT to produce an electronic presentation for a tour around the football ground. However, in a number of sessions the materials and activities are too child-focused and there is little time for reflection. Tutors make insufficient reference to adult learning in the joint sessions.

130. There is a wide range of first-step courses to widen participation. Some imaginative wider family learning and workshop opportunities are offered as a first step to learning for parents and carers, such as a session using local radio, football fun and mini mathematics workshops. In a session on dealing with bereavement and separation, parents were able to explore different ways of speaking to their children about sensitive issues, with a trained counsellor. There is close co-operation with the minority ethnic curriculum support service and an English workshop for Moslem women has been arranged which operates alongside a complementary and supplementary school. Community education development officers facilitate local partnerships and work closely with the local health service. There are good links with some schools. The local radio and football fun workshops are successful in attracting more men to the programme.

131. Support for learners is satisfactory. There are crèche facilities for daytime school courses. One college provider gives regular guidance, including handouts of college course material for the 'keeping up with the children' course, but guidance is not given systematically to all learners.

132. Accommodation is satisfactory. Several schools have good equipment and accommodation. There is very good ICT equipment at class meetings in the football club and good access in all venues. Good use is made of games in joint adult and child sessions. However, there are very few adult resources for teaching sessions and the chairs are not suitable for adults in two schools. Some of the teachers are not fully aware of the adult curriculum.

133. There is insufficient recording of learners' progress. No individual learning plans are used to record achievement. The record-keeping is inconsistent. Some learners have a folder to keep their work in but others have no record of what they have been doing in the session. Little use is made of initial assessment, but some informal assessment takes place. For example, parents in a 'keeping up with the children' course are assessed informally through a handwriting exercise. Some parents are able to progress from wider family learning to introductory courses such as 'keeping up with the children,' but there is little evidence of progression from school to other courses and employment.

134. There is insufficient focus on meeting the needs of adults. In some sessions there is no reference to the adult curriculum and the focus is primarily on supporting the child with their learning. There are insufficient resources for adults in most sessions. There are few opportunities for adults to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. At the time of inspection there were no FLLN courses to allow parents to improve their own literacy and numeracy skills and gain accreditation. A significant number of these workshops are delivered by teachers who are not specialists in literacy, numeracy or language.

Leadership and management

135. Curriculum management is weak. The service has experienced a shortage of staff in family learning and the recent appointments have yet to make an impact. There is good celebration of family learning activities through shared events and through a newsletter for schools and parents, but there is no strategic overview for the area of

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learning. Curriculum planning is inconsistent. It is good where strong links have been made with partners such as schools with enthusiastic staff, but there is no overall strategy to ensure that provision is targeted in areas of greatest need.

136. There are insufficient opportunities for adults to progress beyond workshops. Targets for adult achievement are not detailed. For example, the targets agreed with colleges do not make reference to the expected levels of adult achievement in literacy and numeracy. There are no targets for staff training or staff awareness of the adult curriculum.

137. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. One tutor uses a book on Africa to talk to her class about cultural differences. Another class has multicultural initial assessment materials and good language support for learners with no or very little spoken English.

138. Procedures for quality assurance are insufficiently established. A toolkit has been introduced recently which gives guidelines for family learning programmes and includes examples of paperwork which can be used for recording progress and planning courses. This is not yet used in all sessions. There is insufficient systematic monitoring of the outcomes of workshops. The self-assessment report reflects many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors, but few staff were involved in its preparation.