INSPECTION REPORT

North Tyneside LEA Adult Learning Alliance

12 November 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.

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North Tyneside LEA Adult Learning Alliance

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. North Tyneside LEA Adult Learning Alliance (NT LEA ALA) was created in August 2004. A part of the education and cultural services directorate of North Tyneside Council (the council) comprises the adult basic education, adult and community learning and work-based learning divisions of the council, together with the adult learning services provided by a community college and a high school. The training provided by the work-based learning division was inspected separately by the ALI in August 2003 and is outside the scope of this inspection report. Training is funded by the Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The council has responsibility for overall financial management on behalf of all NT LEA ALA's members.

2. NT LEA ALA provides adult and community learning services throughout North Tyneside. It provides courses at 49 sites in 13 areas of learning. In 2003-04, a total of 7,304 learners enrolled on courses offered by members of the NT LEA ALA. The main areas of learning are, information and communications technology (ICT), sport and leisure, visual and performing arts, English, languages and communication, foundation programmes, and family learning.

3. NT LEA ALA is managed by an assistant chief education officer, supported by three service managers from the council, the principal from Longbenton Community College and the headteacher from John Spence High School. There are six curriculum leaders and three curriculum co-ordinators. There is also an adult and community learning manager, an adult basic education manager and a quality assurance manager. There are 70 part-time tutors.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

4. There are 1,492 learners on over 80 ICT courses provided at entry to level 3. Over 60 per cent of the learners are women and over 20 per cent are learners over 60 years of age. Many of the entry-level courses are non-accredited. More than half of the courses are at entry level or level 1. The courses are mainly based on applications software such as word processing, but some are more specialist such as digital photography. Courses take place in two large learning centres attached to local schools and a further 15 smaller centres including libraries and community centres near to where the learners live. The lower-level courses are mainly free to learners and many are available during the day or in the evenings during weekdays. There is a small amount of weekend provision. A small number of courses have been run for specific employers and for older learners. Approximately 500 of the learners are on widening participation programmes. There are two main curriculum co-ordinators and 32, mainly part-time, tutors.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

5. Sport and leisure courses are provided at 15 venues in North Tyneside including secondary schools, sports centres, church halls, and community centres. Learners participate in a range of mainly non-accredited courses including driving theory, keep fit and aerobics in various forms, fly dressing for anglers, various types of yoga, self-defence for women, pilates, tai chi and chi kung, and bridge. Most of the courses are open to all learners but some, such as swimming, are designed for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Several courses are aimed at older learners. Courses take place throughout the daytime and in the evening and last from one whole day of activities to 60 hours. Most classes are between one hour and two hours in duration and are run between 20 and 30 weeks of the year during school terms. On some courses learners can progress from initial taster courses through beginners to advanced. In other courses, learners progress to higher levels of attainment alongside beginners. There is a small number of accredited courses. These include a general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) in physical education and work-related short courses. Work-related courses such as the pool and beach life guard qualification are designed to enable learners to pursue careers within the sport and leisure industry. In the current year, 705 learners have made 1,566 enrolments on 30 courses. On accredited courses there have been 84 enrolments, and on the non-accredited courses 1,482 enrolments. Approximately 20 per cent of enrolments are men. Currently 16 per cent of learners have a disability. All tutors are part-time employed status and are managed by staff in each of the provider's partner providers. Each partner is responsible for recruiting staff, managing the programme of courses and quality assurance.

Visual & performing arts & media

6. In 2003-04, there were 1,555 enrolments on the visual and performing art courses, 16 per cent of whom were on accredited courses. Since September 2004, there have been 1,443 enrolments by 587 learners. At the time of inspection 30 per cent of the learners are men, 14 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 61 per cent are aged over 65. Courses are held in 14 learning centres across the district including community centres, church halls, leisure centres and community colleges. There are currently 26 arts and crafts courses provided and include flower arranging, painting, soft furnishing, photography, sewing, dance, guitar, Northumbrian pipes, woodwork, calligraphy, pottery, interior design and soft toy making. Classes take place during the day and on weekday evenings with some available on Saturdays. The 34 tutors are part time, mainly teaching between two and four hours a week. Five of these tutors work more than eight hours each week. Classes are of two-hours' duration and generally run between 10 and 12 weeks.

English, languages & communications

7. There are currently 43 courses in this area of learning of which 23 are accredited, including 26 modern foreign language courses, 10 British sign language (BSL) courses, four courses for learners with impaired hearing, one English A level course and two creative writing and reading courses. Currently, 65 per cent of courses are held during the evening. Classes take place once a week for two hours over 12 to 30 weeks. Family learning sessions are run during summer terms. Courses are located at 10 venues across the borough, including five community centres, three schools and two colleges. There are 22 part-time language tutors, managed by a full-time programme manager and a curriculum co-ordinator appointed on a temporary contract for five hours a week.

8. In 2003-04, there were 1,033 learners of whom 726 were on non-accredited courses. Since September 2004, 472 learners have been recruited, of whom 75 are new learners and 254 learners enrolled on accredited courses. Learners can register on modern foreign language courses run from beginner to advanced levels for Spanish and French and at beginners level for Italian, Russian and Portuguese, BSL courses at stages 1 and 2, lip reading courses, and English A level and creative writing courses. Approximately 74 per cent of the learners are women, 1 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 8 per cent have declared a learning disability. Thirty-eight per cent of the learners are aged 25-50 and 58 per cent are over 50.

Foundation programmes

9. There are currently 731 learners on literacy and numeracy courses and 220 learners on independent living and leisure courses. There are 114 literacy and numeracy courses taking place at five open learning centres and 18 community venues including libraries and community centres. There are 45 independent living and leisure skills courses taking place at one open learning centre and at six community venues including sheltered workshops and a residential home. Apart from the six-week taster courses, learners can join classes at any time. Classes run for two hours and take place throughout the day and evening. Of the literacy and numeracy provision, 64 classes can lead to a nationally recognised qualification, and 37 can lead to accreditation at level 2.

Family learning

10. In 2003-04 there were 230 learners enrolled on family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) programmes and 283 learners on wider family learning. At the time of inspection, 44 FLLN learners were enrolled on 18 accredited courses and 26 on non-accredited courses. The FLLN courses are accredited at entry level 3 and at level 1. At the time of inspection, there were 96 learners enrolled on wider family learning courses. Courses are offered at 26 venues throughout the county at a range of venues including 22 primary schools. Courses are held, predominantly, during the day or immediately after school ends, though there are occasional weekend events. All courses are part time and range from two hours to 66 hours in duration.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	12
Number of inspection days	59
Number of learner interviews	451
Number of staff interviews	82
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	76
Number of partner/external agency interviews	25

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

11. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, information and communications technology (ICT) and visual and performing arts and media are good. Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, English, languages and communications, foundation programmes and family learning are all satisfactory. NT LEA ALA's leadership and management of the provision is satisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity and to quality assurance are also satisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

Information & communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT		
⁻ Adult and community learning	1492	2

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation		
⁻ Adult and community learning	705	3

Visual & performing arts & media		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Crafts		
- Adult and community learning	301	2
Other contributory areas		
- Adult and community learning	286	2

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
English		
- Adult and community learning	26	3
Languages		
- Adult and community learning	331	3
Translating and interpreting		
- Adult and community learning	145	3

Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy and numeracy		
- Adult and community learning	731	3
Independent living and leisure skills		
- Adult and community learning	220	2

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	166	3

KEY FINDINGS
Achievement and standards

12. **There is much good achievement, attainment and retention.** Achievement is good in ICT. Attainment and achievement are good in English, languages and communications, and in visual and performing arts. Learners achieve high standards of work in craft and build very good portfolios in art. Attainment in literacy and numeracy, independent living and leisure skills and family learning is good. Attendance is good in leisure, sport and recreation.

13. **Retention is good** in ICT, visual and performing arts, and non-accredited courses in English, languages and communications. However, **retention and achievement are poor** on some accredited courses in this area of learning.

Quality of education and training

14. **Teaching and learning is generally good.** Sixty-nine per cent of lessons were graded good or better. Teaching and learning in visual and performing arts, literacy and numeracy and family learning is good. Coaching of individual learners in ICT practical classes is a strength, and in leisure, sport and recreation, tutors take good account of learners' individual needs through differentiated activities. In English, languages and communication, tutors make particularly effective use of a wide variety of learning activities to enhance learners' skills. Tutors plan their teaching of independent living and leisure skills very well to meet the broad range of learners' individual needs and make good use of information technology (IT) to develop learners' independent study skills. Portfolio-building in visual and performing arts is strong.

15. **There is inadequate identification, recording and monitoring of individual learning goals.** Initial assessment and review of learner progress is weak in ICT, leisure, sport and recreation, and family learning. Individual learning plans are weak in English, languages and communications, and in literacy and numeracy. The outcomes of continuous assessment in some visual and performing arts are poorly recorded.

16. **There is insufficient focus on the health benefits of exercise in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel.** Many tutors do not explain to learners how and why particular activities can improve their fitness and lifestyles.

17. **In English, languages and communications, advice and guidance is weak.** Learners' needs are not assessed at enrolment and there is no formal learner induction.

Leadership and management

18. **Strategic planning is good** and NT LEA ALA participates fully in a wide range of planning forums. Relevant plans, produced by different levels of management, are cohesive and clearly reflect service priorities. Effective consultation takes place with partners to plan

the provision and achieve operational objectives.

19. **The provider makes good use of partnerships to widen participation.** Effective links are in place with both statutory and voluntary groups working within the community. Needs identified by partners, through surveys and links with community workers, are used well to provide a range of projects to support the social inclusion agenda of NT LEA ALA. Recruitment to community-based learning projects is good for new and hard-to-reach learners. There are some particularly effective partnerships in leisure, sports and recreation, and in family learning.

20. **There is insufficient co-ordination of the curriculum.** There are too few links between the aims and objectives of each programme and the provider's priorities. Insufficient analysis takes place to establish which courses will support each of NT LEA ALA's priorities, how success will be measured and how improvements to the range of programmes will be introduced. Arrangements to ensure that the literacy, numeracy or language support of learners enrolling on non-specialist courses are insufficiently clear.

21. **There is insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity.** Learners' understanding of the provider's policy is not checked or reinforced through curriculum planning or delivery. There is not enough use of appropriate images or publicity materials to promote a socially inclusive environment.

22. Many quality assurance practices inherited by the newly formed NT LEA ALA are satisfactory, and the provider has created an effective task group to plan how these can be integrated. Arrangements to monitor overall achievement and retention rates across the service are satisfactory. Arrangements for assessment and internal verification of accredited courses are also satisfactory. The most recent self-assessment report drew on contributions from all the previous organisations to provide an accurate assessment of the overall quality of the newly merged provision.

23. **The quality assurance procedures do not ensure continuous improvement.** Observations of teaching are not sufficiently widespread and are not systematically used to build on strengths and rectify weaknesses. Learner feedback and course evaluations are not used adequately to identify trends or develop service-wide improvements.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic planning
- good partnerships to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient curriculum co-ordination
- insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity
- insufficient emphasis on continuous improvement

Information & communications technology

Using IT

Strengths

- good retention and achievement
- effective end-of-course advice to promote learners' progression
- good coaching of individual learners in practical classes
- wide range of community-based provision

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment
- insufficient curriculum management

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good attendance
- effective differentiation of exercise activities
- very well-targeted work-related learning courses
- effective partnerships

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on the health benefits of exercise
- ineffective initial assessment
- insufficient progress recording
- inadequate observation of teaching and learning
- weak curriculum planning and co-ordination

Visual & performing arts & media

Crafts

Strengths

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

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation at some venues
- poor recording of assessment in non-accredited courses

Other contributory areas

Strengths

- good attainment and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- good retention
- very good portfolio-building

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation at some venues
- poor recording of assessment in performing arts

English, languages & communications

English

Strengths

- good achievement and attainment
- high retention on non-accredited courses
- good range of learning activities to enhance skills

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on some accredited courses
- inadequate individual learning plans
- inadequate advice and guidance

Languages

Strengths

- good achievement and attainment
- high retention on non-accredited courses
- good range of learning activities to enhance skills

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on some accredited courses
- inadequate individual learning plans
- inadequate advice and guidance

Translating and interpreting

Strengths

- good achievement and attainment
- high retention on non-accredited courses
- good range of learning activities to enhance skills

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on some accredited courses
- inadequate individual learning plans
- inadequate advice and guidance

Foundation programmes

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good attainment
- good teaching and learning
- particularly well-equipped learning environment
- well-managed, flexible provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient learning materials
- inadequate individual learning plans
- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good attainment
- very well-planned teaching to meet individual needs
- good use of IT to develop learners' independent study skills

Weaknesses

- poor promotion of equal opportunities in learning sessions

Family learning

Strengths

- good attainment of personal and learning skills
- good teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- inadequate identification, recording and monitoring of individual learning goals
- insufficient co-ordination of family learning

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT NORTH TYNESIDE LEA ADULT LEARNING ALLIANCE:

- 'being able to support my children in the classroom and at home'
- 'feeling part of the school'
- the crèche facilities
- learning about other cultures in language classes
- 'working at your own pace'
- convenient venues, close to home
- the social benefits to attending courses
- being able to attend at times to fit in with changing shift patterns
- the enrolment process

WHAT LEARNERS THINK NORTH TYNESIDE LEA ADULT LEARNING ALLIANCE COULD IMPROVE:

- the provision of free course material
- the length of some courses
- advertising of courses
- the information provided about individual courses
- assessment of learners' prior knowledge
- the parking facilities
- the provision of exercise, fitness and yoga classes through the summer

KEY CHALLENGES FOR NORTH TYNESIDE LEA ADULT LEARNING ALLIANCE:

- improve the management and co-ordination of curriculum areas
- develop quality assurance systems to ensure continuous improvement, especially in teaching and learning
- implement effectively the equal opportunities values in management practices and curriculum delivery
- make better use of individual learning goals in planning and reviewing learners' progress

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 3

Strengths
- good strategic planning
- good partnerships to widen participation

Weaknesses
- insufficient curriculum co-ordination
- insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity
- insufficient emphasis on continuous improvement

24. Strategic planning is good and NT LEA ALA participates fully in a wide range of planning forums. Relevant plans, produced by different levels of management, are cohesive and mutually supportive. For example, the overall aim for the adult education service is defined in the council's corporate performance plan as providing residents with access to a wide range of learning opportunities. This plan is used to define the four clear priorities of widening participation in learning, improving adult literacy and numeracy, raising adult achievement and improving the infrastructure of adult learning. These priorities have been used to produce a three-year development plan containing precise operational objectives, such as achieving a 16 per cent increase in the number of learners enrolled on adult literacy and numeracy courses each year, and providing a community learning centre within 10 minutes' walk of any North Tyneside resident. Effective consultation takes place with a good range of partners to plan the provision at each level. For example, at the corporate level there is good co-operation with other statutory organisations such as the youth service, local LSC and with a voluntary development agency that represent the interests of local community and voluntary groups. There is close co-operation with relevant partners to achieve the operational objectives. For example, NT LEA ALA provides literacy and numeracy training to learners on New Deal programmes delivered by another provider. NT LEA ALA also has effective links with many community centres and uses these to plan and provide learning in a wide range of accessible community venues. This network is expanding, particularly in the ICT curriculum area where NT LEA ALA is close to achieving its objective of accessible learning near to residents' homes. An ICT infrastructure plan is in place to provide access to electronic learning resources for tutors and staff at these centres. There is close co-operation and joint planning with the library service. For example, NT LEA ALA provides courses at many libraries and the library service's book purchasing plans are linked to the demand for textbooks and other learning resources.

25. All staff within NT LEA ALA are kept up to date about the provider's strategic priorities and the actions needed to achieve them. For example, there are well-attended termly briefing days for part-time tutors. These are used effectively to provide staff with current

information about the development of the NT LEA ALA.

26. Management of resources is satisfactory. There are sound arrangements for financial management. The funding available to NT LEA ALA has been well targeted among alliance members based on provisional budgets produced earlier by the LSC. Similarly, NT LEA ALA has devolved the neighbourhood learning fund to local education, learning and employment partners but closely monitors spending to ensure that it is in line with NT LEA ALA's objectives. There are satisfactory teaching resources across most areas of the curriculum. Some locations have good access to ICT equipment and audiovisual systems such as ceiling-mounted projectors. Some sports exercises courses take place in large leisure centres during the daytime alongside classroom-based activities such as flower arranging and learners from one area have been encouraged to take courses in another.

27. Arrangement are satisfactory for staff training and development. Staff have sufficient access to additional learning to help meet the provider's aims and objectives. For example, tutors have attended training on how to identify learners who need additional support with literacy and numeracy, and on providing information, advice and guidance on learning and work. Some staff have also been supported to achieve teaching qualifications. NT LEA ALA has recently used a local university to analyse the overall learning and development needs of its staff and the resulting report is currently being considered.

28. The overall management of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Improvement in adult literacy and numeracy levels is a priority for the service and it focuses its resources on providing a range of appropriate courses in community venues. It uses effective taster and starter courses, particularly in ICT, to attract new learners and also uses the family learning programme to attract parents through their children's interest in new technology. NT LEA ALA provides some training to other outreach learning providers in how to identify learners needing additional help with literacy and numeracy.

29. There is insufficient co-ordination of the curriculum. There are not enough links between the aims and objectives of each programme and the provider's priorities. Insufficient analysis takes place of which courses will support each of NT LEA ALA's priorities, how success will be measured and how improvements to the range of programmes will be introduced. Overall targets for retention and achievement have been decided without adequate communication and discussion with those responsible for achieving them. Many staff are unaware of how retention is defined and measured. There is insufficient flexibility to manage different performance levels in courses of different types, different durations and different aims. There are no appropriate arrangements to ensure that learners enrolling on non-specialist courses who require literacy, numeracy or language support always have their needs identified and receive appropriate support. Many staff do not know how to request learning resources to help them to teach their classes more effectively. Some tutors provide resources at their own expense. Curriculum leaders and co-ordinators have been appointed only very recently. Their roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined.

Equality of opportunity   **Contributory grade 3**

30. The provider makes good use of partnerships to widen participation. Effective links are in place with both statutory and voluntary groups working within the community. Meetings with partners take place on a monthly basis to identify training and support needs within the community. Information and needs identified by partners, through surveys and links with community workers, are used well to provide a range of projects to support the social inclusion agenda of NT LEA ALA. Recruitment to community-based learning projects is good for new and hard-to-reach learners. A mobile unit equipped with computers is used in areas with a low uptake of adult learning to provide taster days and course information. NT LEA ALA works closely with community projects that involve teenage parents, asylum seekers and under-represented groups. A successful project linked with a group representing the elderly population to provide computer training, numeracy and literacy has attracted national acclaim for its innovative approach.

31. NT LEA ALA has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy that applies to all learners and staff. Community colleges within the NT LEA ALA each have their own policies that are extended to include adult and community learning. The policies give clear guidance on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. Detailed procedures deal with bullying and harassment. However, there is no overall procedure to ensure that equality policies are systematically applied throughout the whole of NT LEA ALA. Procedures for dealing with complaints are satisfactory and learners have an adequate understanding of the process. Where complaints have been made they have been dealt with promptly and effectively. NT LEA ALA has identified the priority of equality of opportunity in the new management structure and has established an equality of opportunity group chaired by a member of the senior management team.

32. Access to most premises is satisfactory and access audits have either been carried out or are in the process of being completed. The provider has responded to the findings of the audits and in the current year has adapted premises by the installation of automatic doors and ramps. Some learning centres have been re-developed or moved to improve access and the overall standard of accommodation available to adult learners with particular needs. NT LEA ALA provides a good range of aids and modified equipment to help learners. In most cases individual needs are assessed and effectively met. Most learning centres are equipped with induction loop systems to support those with a hearing impairment. Portable loop systems are sometimes used at outreach centres, but in one learning centre learners found this difficult to use.

33. Staff have received comprehensive training in how to implement the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and have a clear understanding of the practical applications within their curriculum areas. However, training in the wider discrimination legislation is not effective and there has been no routine reinforcement of initial training. Lesson observations do not report on equality of opportunity to help them develop good practice.

34. Data collected by NT LEA ALA on gender, ethnicity and disability shows that the profiles of staff and learners broadly matches that of the local community. Data is not currently

used to compare the performance of different groups or the effectiveness of each of the learning centres. There is no analysis of the staffing structure to identify whether the profile reflects the local population. Data is not used effectively to set targets and there is no analysis to identify the retention and achievement of particular groups for planning decisions. Some recent broad targets have been identified, but it is too early to make judgements on proposed initiatives.

35. There is insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity. Learners are given information on equality of opportunity in a handbook at the beginning of their course that adequately outlines NT LEA ALA's policy. However, learners' understanding is not checked or reinforced. There is too little use of appropriate images or publicity materials to promote a socially inclusive environment. Marketing materials are not produced in a variety of formats or different languages. Tutors are provided with a handbook that outlines their responsibilities to the learner and identifies their key roles. However, insufficient emphasis is given to equality of opportunity, which is restricted to one paragraph and gives no guidance on how NT LEA ALA's policies and procedures should be implemented.

Quality assurance   Contributory grade 3

36. NT LEA ALA has inherited many of the quality assurance policies and procedures used by its predecessors. It has created an effective task group to examine how these practices should be integrated. The task group is using a good process based on developing a common core of mandatory procedures for all aspects of the provision. For example, it is developing common procedures and policies on equality of opportunity, assessing learners' satisfaction and managing data and leaving local flexibility for administrative procedures. An overall framework of how quality assurance will operate at different levels of NT LEA ALA and the education and cultural services directorate has also been developed.

37. Arrangements to monitor overall enrolment, and achievement and retention rates across the service are satisfactory. For example, the senior management team receives regular reports on achievement rates, the number of enrolments and those still in learning at different stages of the programme. Where appropriate, these are compared with service-wide targets and objectives.

38. Arrangements for assessment and internal verification on accredited courses are satisfactory. The NT LEA ALA partners are still using the procedures they had in place before NT LEA ALA was created. However, these adequately meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. Currently there are no arrangements to standardise practices and adopt common procedures.

39. NT LEA ALA has satisfactory arrangements for involving staff in the self-assessment process. For example, tutor briefing meetings were well used to consult part-time tutors about the strengths and weaknesses of their curriculum areas. Staff involvement in self-assessment was identified as a high priority for the senior management team who managed the consultation thoroughly. The most recent self-assessment report was

completed in July 2004 and covered the period leading to the creation of NT LEA ALA with input from all the previous organisations. It provides an accurate assessment of the overall quality of provision. It correctly identified most strengths and weaknesses, although many standard practices or relatively minor activities have been incorrectly identified as additional strengths.

40. There is insufficient emphasis on continuous improvement. Observations of teaching are not sufficiently widespread and are not used effectively to improve the provision. For example, the frequency of observation is only once every two years and in some curriculum areas commenced too recently to be effective. Many tutors have not been observed. There are not enough alternative arrangement to monitor teaching and learning between observations. For example, individual learning plans and schemes of work are not regularly audited or monitored. Observations are often carried out by managers who are not subject specialists. They are unable to give advice on improving teaching and on specific aspects of the curriculum. For example, in sport and leisure there has been too little guidance on the health and safety issues of some exercise routines. There is insufficient action-planning at individual, curriculum or service level to build on the strengths or rectify the weaknesses identified during observations.

41. NT LEA ALA collects learner feedback and compiles data about satisfaction levels. However, this is not used adequately to identify trends or develop service-wide improvements. For example, of those comments that are negative, most identify only the inappropriate nature of some accommodation. However, some new locations being used, particularly in arts courses, are still not suitable for the work learners need to carry out. There are insufficient arrangements to report back to learners on how their comments have been used. Course evaluations are generally based on summaries of learners' positive comments and have not been used well to generate actions for improvement.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT ⁻ Adult and community learning	1492	2

Using IT

Strengths

- good retention and achievement
- effective end-of-course advice to promote learners' progression
- good coaching of individual learners in practical classes
- wide range of community-based provision

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment
- insufficient curriculum management

Achievement and standards

42. Retention and achievement are good on most courses. For example, retention rates on the non-accredited courses and the computer literacy and information technology courses are approximately 90 per cent and on an exam-based computer course are 79 per cent. Pass rates on most courses are also good, ranging from 79 per cent to 100 per cent. Pass rates on some of the more advanced courses are lower, with many learners focusing only on gaining skills rather than another qualification. Many beginners show greatly increased confidence with computers.

43. Learners are provided with effective end-of-course advice to promote their progression. Approximately 75 per cent of learners progress to higher levels of study. On some courses, such as digital photography, the standard is higher than required by the awarding body and learners show good creativity as well as technical skills. However, in some courses, learners are not encouraged to practise their IT skills in projects related to their own personal learning goals.

Quality of education and training

44. There is good coaching for individual learners in practical classes. In most lessons, tutors ensure the learning activities meet the wide range of learners' skills and confidence. Learners spend a high proportion of lesson time working individually at the computer. During classes, tutors monitor learners well and intervene when appropriate. In the best lessons tutors have good discussions with learners about the causes of problems and unexpected results and suggest new ideas. Some tutors encourage learners to work in pairs to help each other solve problems. There is much good teaching and learning, with 70 per cent of the observed lessons either good or very good. Lessons are well planned and many schemes of work include details of how resources and practical activities are to be used to develop good practical skills and knowledge. Tutors successfully use a variety of effective and imaginative teaching methods to meet learners' needs. Good use is made of visual presentations and questioning to help learners understand applications and quickly develop skills in the use of software packages. Learners work is carefully marked and written and verbal feedback given to help learners' progress. During a good digital photography lesson the tutor organised a number of complementary activities including demonstrations, group work, computer tasks and a whole-class debate to identify how to make best use of software to edit photographs. All tutors are appropriately qualified and either hold or are working towards a teaching qualification.

45. A wide range of community-based courses at various levels are used effectively to widen participation. The provider works well to ensure that most learners have access to a learning centre close to where they live. In addition to the software applications courses there is increasing provision of specialist courses such as genealogy and digital photography. Effective use is made of short courses to encourage more inexperienced learners to use computers. There is a small but growing provision to meet the requests from local employers.

46. Learning materials are generally good and help learners to progress at an appropriate pace. However, there are some inconsistencies in the quantity and quality of learning materials between different learning centres. Not enough use is made of IT-based learning materials. Computer hardware and software are of a high standard. In many rooms there is data projection equipment that most tutors use effectively to demonstrate software applications. Learning centres have broadband internet connections. Some accommodation is of a particularly high standard with well-designed rooms that can be used for a variety of learning situations. However, some accommodation is too small. Tutors are not able to move easily between learners to provide support, and there is not enough room between computers for learners' notebooks. The chairs in some classrooms cannot be adjusted and tutors do not remind learners to move around to avoid discomfort.

47. Initial assessment is inadequate. Many learners do not complete sufficient diagnostic testing to identify their existing skills and to establish personal learning goals against which progress can be measured. Some learners are not sufficiently confident to

complete external assessments. On-course assessment is satisfactory and meets awarding body standards. There is clear, supportive feedback from tutors that is appropriate to learners' age, knowledge and ability. Most learners are aware of their progress and know what they need to do to improve. However, staff do not use a standard method to record learners' progress.

48. Information is readily available and new learners are generally given good advice as to the most appropriate courses. Tutors are responsive to the needs of learners with learning disabilities and learning centres provide good support, including the provision of large keyboards, software to assist learners with visual impairments and workstations which can be adjusted in height to accommodate learners in wheelchairs.

Leadership and management

49. There is insufficient curriculum management. Recent major changes to the management of the learning centres has not allowed sufficient time for new managers to bring about consistent practices in internal verification and other procedures across the borough, and to help tutors share good practice. Currently, there is not enough consistency in the content and delivery of the courses. There are wide variations in the ways in which tutors monitor and record learners' progress. Learners do not take sufficient responsibility for monitoring their own progress through effective use of their individual learning plans and records.

50. Learning centre managers set appropriate targets for retention and achievement. These are reviewed by managers and tutors at end-of-course reviews and changes are implemented when necessary. Good use of is made of partnerships with schools and local communities to identify demand for new courses.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation - Adult and community learning	705	3

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good attendance
- effective differentiation of exercise activities
- very well-targeted work-related learning courses
- effective partnerships

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on the health benefits of exercise
- ineffective initial assessment
- insufficient progress recording
- inadequate observation of teaching and learning
- weak curriculum planning and co-ordination

Achievement and standards

51. Attendance is good. In eight out of 10 sessions observed, attendance averaged 80 to 85 per cent. In the other two sessions, attendance averaged more than 75 per cent in the eight weeks since September 2004. This is particularly significant given that learners pay weekly for the sessions they attend, and many of the participants in exercise classes are older learners whose health often limits the frequency of their participation.

52. Achievement and attainment are satisfactory overall and good in a small number of courses. In most classes learners acquire new knowledge and skills and can perform exercises, postures and movement sequences to the standard required. Where achievement is good, learners can identify how the learning or fitness helps to significantly improve their lives. For example, fitness and yoga courses have helped some older learners manage conditions such as arthritis. Learners also improve their social contacts.

Quality of education and training

53. Tutors carry out effective differentiation of exercise activities. Most tutors in exercise and yoga classes explain to learners, at appropriate points during sessions, how they can reduce the impact or intensity of the more strenuous exercises. Throughout the sessions tutors give learner groups good guidance on how to adapt exercises or postures to take account of conditions such as high blood pressure, impaired flexibility or injured backs.

54. Work-related learning courses are very well targeted. The provider has identified, through the analysis of labour market information, several specific areas where there is employer demand for accredited courses not offered by other local providers. These include pool and beach lifeguard and food hygiene courses. NT LEA ALA has developed effective working relationships with leisure centres, restaurants, cafés, and hotels within North Tyneside, and with other employers in the leisure industry in adjacent areas. Through these links, NT LEA ALA regularly recruits significant numbers of learners. For example, in 2003-04, 100 learners enrolled on eight lifeguard courses and 300 learners enrolled on 25 food hygiene courses, all of which were fully subscribed. Pass rates on these courses are good, varying from between 95 and 100 per cent. Other provision in this area of learning meets many of the needs of the local community. In addition to work-related courses, swimming provided for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities is particularly innovative. However, the overall programme does not provide enough progression between courses.

55. Most lesson plans and schemes of work are adequate. Sessions are well structured and paced to provide an appropriate level of challenge. Tutors are effective in motivating learners to participate and continue to attend. In sessions that are good or better, tutors use a good variety of teaching methods and engage learners fully in learning new skills and developing their fitness. In many sessions, however, there is insufficient emphasis on individual coaching.

56. Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory and in some cases are good. All the accommodation is sufficiently spacious and ventilated with suitable floors and other equipment such as mats. Two facilities were of a very high standard, one a new sports centre and another a local community centre. Staff have satisfactory access to training and development. The provider is supporting several staff to develop their qualifications.

57. Information about the availability of courses is widely distributed and is sufficient to enable learners to make informed choices. In some cases learners have difficulty in obtaining more detailed information before the start of courses. Course inductions are well recorded and learners have an adequate understanding of what they will learn and how courses will be taught. They also understand how they can access the various types of support available. Induction does not sufficiently cover how tutors ensure equality of opportunity during the courses.

58. There is insufficient focus on the health benefits of exercise. Many exercise tutors do explain to learners how and why particular activities contribute to improved flexibility, muscular endurance, cardio-vascular efficiency, posture, strength, or their ability to relax.

There is not enough work by tutors to improve learners' understanding of how their muscles and joints work, to help them to better maintain and improve their fitness, general health and well being. Tutors generally emphasise only the performance of exercises and postures and the completion of exercises or movement sequences.

59. Initial assessment is ineffective. Insufficient learner information is collected. Most tutors do not collect information on learners' current health, medical and recent exercise history to establish their suitability for a particular exercise regime and to help the tutor adapt their delivery of the course. The provider has developed a document to record health and medical information, but this is not widely used. Tutors do not collect information such as learners' body weight, body dimensions, strength, speed, flexibility or psychological state. This means that tutors are not able to effectively monitor the achievement of course objectives related to such measures. There is no recorded discussion with individuals about what they want to achieve from courses and no clear identification of personal learning objectives.

60. Insufficient recording of progress takes place. Leisure course diaries are used as individual learning plans. The use of these documents to record progress is ineffective. In some cases they are not used and in other cases the learning objectives specified on the individual learning plans, against which progress is evaluated, are not clearly expressed or measurable. In addition, the design of the document does not allow a sufficient range of progress to be recorded. This does not enable tutors and learners to discuss progress effectively. On one course a tutor has designed a much better document for recording progress, but this good practice has not been shared with other tutors. Most tutors do not maintain their own more detailed progress records of learners' attainment and achievement.

Leadership and management

61. Effective partnerships have been established with other departments in the council including social services, environment, and sports and recreation, and providers such as community centres. NT LEA ALA collects information about the needs of local residents and employers through these providers and uses the information to develop provision. A partnership with one provider, for example, has enabled the development of an effective, innovative swimming programme for adults with significant learning difficulties and disabilities. The partnership with recreation service has enabled the development of the pool and beach lifeguard qualification courses. These partnerships are also used to publicise the provision to potential learners. Environment staff, for example, visit restaurants and cafes and other food industry employers to distribute information about food hygiene courses.

62. The self-assessment report is generally accurate and identified many of the weaknesses found by inspectors. However, inspectors identified additional strengths, and judged some of the strengths to be no more than normal practice.

63. Observation of teaching and learning is inadequate. Some of the forms used to record observations do not give staff enough space to write appropriate, useful

feedback. Comments on completed forms do not always support the grade given for teaching and learning. The process is often carried out by non-specialists who are unable to identify health and safety issues or provide enough guidance for effective action-planning. Inspectors gave lower grades for learning sessions than those on the observation forms.

64. Curriculum planning and co-ordination are weak. There are no criteria, guidance or targets to help managers interpret the provider's strategy and aims as it applies to this area of learning. There is therefore no reference point to enable managers to prioritise and make consistent decisions about what courses should be put on the programme. NT LEA ALA collects information to assess local interest in particular activities, but the analysis of recruitment is insufficiently developed. For example, most of the learners are women and no action is planned to enrol more male learners. No member of staff has direct responsibility for ensuring that the programme is coherent and makes best use of resources. If learners provide ideas for courses and these are not provided, they are not given enough feedback on why this is so.

Visual & performing arts & media

Visual & performing arts & media		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Crafts		
‑ Adult and community learning	301	2
Other contributory areas		
‑ Adult and community learning	286	2

Crafts

Strengths

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

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation at some venues
- poor recording of assessment in non-accredited courses

Other contributory areas

Strengths

- good attainment and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- good retention
- very good portfolio-building

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation at some venues
- poor recording of assessment in performing arts

Achievement and standards

65. A high standard of work is consistently achieved by learners in craft classes. Learners' progress is very well recorded in their portfolios and in displays of their work. On the craft courses, learners carry out a wide variety of demanding tasks. In the woodwork class learners use industrial-standard machinery with confidence. Some learners in the sugarcraft and photography classes develop their skills for commercial use outside the classroom. Learners assess well their own and other learners' work in order to improve it. Additional activities to extend the learners' experience include visits to workshops, galleries and exhibitions. Many learners exceed their own learning goals and surpass their tutors' expectations. For example, one learner has completed a commission

for a well-known fashion designer and other learners have contributed to displays of sculpture in public places.

66. Learners in both arts and performing arts courses attain and achieve well. They work independently and some take part in local exhibitions of work. Learners' work is of a professional standard, combining technical competence with well-expressed and identifiable creative ability. In a fine arts course, learners successfully achieved qualifications that they considered to be too difficult when they started the course. In dance classes learners master intricate step sequences particularly well and are able to learn and perform complete dances each session to a very competent level. Learners in a guitar playing class learnt to accompany the tutor as he sang at different tempos to develop their skills in observation of timing and playing as a group.

67. There is very good portfolio-building in art. Learners use comprehensively produced portfolios of work as reference tools to plan independent and further learning and to develop personal projects.

68. Retention rates are good on all accredited and the smaller number of un-accredited courses. In 2003-04, over 90 per cent of arts and craft learners were retained with some courses running at 100 per cent.

Quality of education and training

69. Good teaching and learning is provided across the area of learning by well-qualified and appropriately experienced tutors, some of whom are practising professionals. Tutors use a good range of teaching styles to meet learners' needs including appropriate methods to integrate learners with mobility and learning difficulties. For example, the tutor in a line dancing class had modified step sequences to suit those learners who preferred simpler balancing techniques. Power tools in a woodworking class are matched to the requirements of those with physical disabilities. Tutors provide very clear demonstrations to motivate learners. In a tango class, the tutor combined the learning of very complex dance steps with an examination of musical performance as a whole. Well-organised differentiated teaching integrates learners at all levels on both accredited and non-accredited courses. In an art class, learners were successfully working at GCSE and advanced studies (AS) levels. Learners in a particularly effective and innovative flower arranging class were encouraged to analyse and discuss their creativity, design and colour awareness.

70. A satisfactory range of courses is provided at many learning centres across the district. Some courses, such as sugarcraft, sewing, and woodwork for women, have been provided recently to widen participation. However, for those learners who want to progress to accredited courses, not enough provision is available. In some learning centres there are no facilities to provide performing arts courses.

71. Some accommodation is unsuitable. One class has too many learners. Some classes have poor lighting. Tables in some classes are too low for cutting-out purposes in a

sewing skills class. In one music class, the tutor was obstructed from observing the learners play their instruments by the furniture. In one main learning centre, parking for people with mobility difficulties is not adequate. Some craft rooms have poor storage facilities.

72. Assessment is poorly recorded on non-accredited courses. Initial and continuous assessment is carried out well by most tutors. However, this is generally verbal and informal. Some tutors use their own paperwork to describe continuous assessment and feedback. In some classes, progress is reviewed periodically throughout the course to monitor individual learners' development. However, in a small number of classes, there is very little assessment of any kind taking place. In accredited classes, tutors keep in-depth, detailed assessment records that fulfil awarding body criteria and keep learners up to date on their progress.

Leadership and management

73. The area of learning is managed satisfactorily. Learning centre managers confirm improvement in communication across sites following the creation of NTALA. Staff work well together to plan the provision. Data is now collected and recorded centrally. Tutors are supported well by local managers, including those who work at several centres, both large and small. The new tutor handbook provides staff with good information on the provider's aims and objectives and their own specific responsibilities. All learning centres have wheelchair access and ground-floor provision. However, some buildings are difficult to access from the car parks, many of which are poorly lit. Some centres provide courses for those learners who would not normally enter formal education. The self-assessment report is generally accurate. However, it did not identify all of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

English, languages & communications

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
English		
⁻ Adult and community learning	26	3
Languages		
⁻ Adult and community learning	331	3
Translating and interpreting		
⁻ Adult and community learning	145	3

English

Strengths

- good achievement and attainment
- high retention on non-accredited courses
- good range of learning activities to enhance skills

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on some accredited courses
- inadequate individual learning plans
- inadequate advice and guidance

Languages

Strengths

- good achievement and attainment
- high retention on non-accredited courses
- good range of learning activities to enhance skills

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on some accredited courses
- inadequate individual learning plans
- inadequate advice and guidance

Translating and interpreting

Strengths

- good achievement and attainment
- high retention on non-accredited courses
- good range of learning activities to enhance skills

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on some accredited courses
- inadequate individual learning plans
- inadequate advice and guidance

Achievement and standards

74. Learners achieve well, and develop good skills, improved self-confidence and self-esteem. For example, on a course to help learners cope with hearing loss, older learners maintain their lip-reading skills and communicate better with workers in health services. In BSL classes, learners are able to use hand shapes with confidence to communicate with colleagues at work, children in school and with their families. Learners on English programmes develop good writing and analytical skills. Learners on modern foreign languages courses are more confident in using the target language with family, friends and on holiday abroad. Learners develop good speaking and listening skills and some achieve excellent pronunciation skills and an extensive vocabulary. Learners have a good understanding of language structures and greater awareness of cultures in other countries.

75. Retention is high on non-accredited courses at 90 per cent, and ranges from 86 per cent for Spanish, to 98 per cent for French and 100 per cent in a creative reading class.

76. Achievement rates are high for half the learners across this area of learning. In 2003-04 the achievement rate was 100 per cent on both on GCSE English and on Open College Network (OCN) Spanish level 1, 86 per cent on GCSE French and OCN lip reading, 84 per cent on BSL level 1. On BSL stage 2 the pass rate was 50 per cent, significantly higher than the national average pass rate of 30 per cent.

77. Achievement and retention rates are low on some accredited courses. In 2003-04, this affected 12 per cent of learners on accredited courses, including one GCSE Spanish course and GCSE German. Pass rates on these were 37 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. The average retention rate for accredited courses is currently 72 per cent. However, this was significantly lower in 2003-04 for some courses, including GCSE Spanish, one BSL level 1 course, GCSE French and AS level German and French. On these courses the retention rates ranged from 24 to 57 per cent.

Quality of education and training

78. Tutors plan a good range of activities to ensure learners enhance their skills. For example, on modern foreign language courses learners can develop their speaking and listening skills through well-managed role-plays, language drilling activities and well-conducted listening comprehension exercises. In the best sessions, tutors ensure that learners make maximum use of the target language and do not rely on English for communication throughout the learning sessions, even at beginners' levels. On English courses, learners have access a good variety of writing styles for analysis and give each other constructive feedback when sharing homework. On BSL courses, tutors ensure extensive practise through group discussions using new hand shapes and little use of voice. On courses for learners with impaired hearing, story telling is used very well with older learners to practise their lip reading skills.

79. Resources are generally satisfactory. Tutors are appropriately qualified and have good subject knowledge. Language staff have good oral fluency in the target language. Many tutors also have the target language as their first language. Classrooms are equipped with whiteboards or flipcharts and some have overhead projectors and tape players. Textbooks are adequate and tutors produce good learning materials. Accommodation is adequate and located close to learners' homes. All learning centres have hearing loop systems and access for people with restricted mobility. However, in some community centres tutors do not have adequate access to audiovisual aids such as video players. Video cameras are not available to evaluate BSL learners' progress. There is not enough access to IT equipment and internet facilities. At one learning centre, a language class takes place in a room too small for the numbers of learners on the register.

80. Personal support for learners is satisfactory. They are provided with good support by their tutors during lessons and outside. Learners receive suitable amounts of homework that is returned on time and well marked. Twenty-three per cent of learners on stage 1 BSL courses were given financial support for their exam fees in 2003-04. The monitoring of attendance and follow up of absences is thorough and contact is made following absence.

81. A satisfactory range of courses is available with clearly identified progression routes on French, Spanish, BSL and English and the summer term family learning programmes. However, community languages are not available and there is no provision in the workplace.

82. Individual learning plans are inadequate and on a number of courses are not used. Tutors and learners do not fully understand how to use individual learning plans. Individual learning goals are not identified or recorded on the plans. Prior learning is not clearly identified. Goals identified for learner groups are often too general and do not contain timescales or the steps needed for learners to progress. Records of work are not always in place and do not effectively record all achievement including the achievement of soft skills and unexpected outcomes.

83. Advice and guidance is inadequate. Learners are not routinely assessed at enrolment in order to identify their learning needs. Although course information is appropriate, there is no formal induction for learners before they join accredited courses to ensure placement on appropriate programmes. Too little information is given to learners about the amount of homework needed to gain accreditation, portfolio-building and course fees. Some learners join accredited courses with no intention of taking exams. Others are not always aware that they have joined an accredited course. There is no initial assessment to check learners' literacy and numeracy needs.

Leadership and management

84. Staff fully understand the aims and priorities of the provider and staff morale is good. Planning is effective, but it is too early to judge the long-term impact on improvement. Learner feedback is used well during course reviews. However, course evaluations with tutors are not sufficiently formal. Part-time staff are provided with good support. Line managers communicate well with their staff and share their expertise well. Termly meetings help staff share good practice and other information. Interpreters attend BSL staff meetings to ensure effective communication. The observation of teaching does not systematically provide accurate evidence to support the grades given. Inspectors gave lower grades than those in the self-assessment report. There is no action-planning following observation and no identification of needs for staff development. The self-assessment report accurately identified most of the strengths and weaknesses found during inspection.

Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy and numeracy - Adult and community learning	731	3
Independent living and leisure skills - Adult and community learning	220	2

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good attainment
- good teaching and learning
- particularly well-equipped learning environment
- well-managed, flexible provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient learning materials
- inadequate individual learning plans
- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good attainment
- very well-planned teaching to meet individual needs
- good use of IT to develop learners' independent study skills

Weaknesses

- poor promotion of equal opportunities in learning sessions

Achievement and standards

85. Learners on foundation courses attain good skills and make significant progress in achieving their learning goals. Many learners in literacy and numeracy programmes gain nationally recognised certificates in literacy, numeracy and word processing. They develop good personal and social skills, including improved self-confidence, to use their new skills at home and in the workplace. Learners develop the skills to work collaboratively and independently in most classes. They are able to set their own goals and ask for help when needed. Some learners are supported in working towards national vocational qualifications. Those with learning disabilities on life skills courses produce work of a high standard. They develop useful independent living skills that improve their

lives, reducing social isolation and widening the choices open to them. For example, some learners have gained jobs or moved into their own homes. Attendance on life skills courses is excellent at approximately 97 per cent.

Quality of education and training

86. There is much good teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy. Tutors establish very good learning environments in which learners work purposefully to achieve their goals. In literacy and numeracy classes resources are well organised and enable learners to take charge of their learning. On arrival at classes, learners collect their personal files and start work immediately, making full use of the class time. Learners' work is marked and returned quickly, providing prompt feedback to guide further activities. The well-structured booklets used in the literacy and numeracy with IT classes enable learners to work at their own pace. Tutors make good use of enrichment activities to help learners progress. For example, a group of learners has been involved in a writing project and their booklet of poetry and prose is to be published. Members of one family who had all attended learning programmes won a regional award. Learners' achievements are recognised at an annual awards ceremony.

87. In independent living and leisure skills, teaching is well planned to meet individual learning needs. Initial assessment is used very effectively to plan the learning programmes and short weekly progress reviews are used to plan teaching and learning activities for the following week. Tutors use a good variety of appropriate strategies to interest learners and maintain their concentration. Session plans are detailed and most include learning activities at different levels to match individual needs. IT is used effectively to develop good independent study skills. In independent living and leisure skills classes IT is used particularly well to reinforce learning.

88. The learning environments at the main learning centres and most community venues are particularly well equipped. At one learning centre, well-designed displays celebrate learners' successes in basic skills. Most venues are well equipped with computers linked to the internet. In some outreach centres, laptops are used during learning sessions.

89. Teaching staff are well qualified and are encouraged to continue their professional development. Most of the 30 volunteers are trained to a minimum of level 2. Enablers who accompany learners to independent living and leisure skills classes are given well-written guidelines.

90. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory. In independent living and leisure skills courses, good use is made of photographs to record attainment. Accredited courses conform to the requirements of the awarding body.

91. Learners are provided with appropriate support. Volunteers work in classes with learners who need additional support. Learners with individual support needs are accompanied by an enabler, although some inexperienced enablers from care agencies do not receive adequate direction in what they are expected to do. Tutors work well to

improve communications in learning sessions through the use and interpretation of an internationally recognised signing language. The main learning centre for independent living and leisure skills learners has a good range of aids for disabled learners to use in lessons. Learners with specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, attend a literacy support class. Learners receive information on progression and on how to access help from other agencies from their tutors on request. For example, learners on independent living and leisure skills are referred to further education colleges for advice on progression.

92. Insufficient materials are available in literacy and numeracy courses to reinforce learning. There are not enough learning materials for learners to use at home or at work to repeat and practise new skills. Learners do not have access to an adequate range of real life learning materials relevant to their interests and needs. Their skills are not consolidated in a context relevant to their daily lives.

93. Individual learning plans in literacy and numeracy are inadequate. Most learning plans have only general goals for the whole group and do not have individual aims identified or recorded. Initial assessment is not used to produce individual learning plans. Learning plans do not record learners' interests to help tutors ensure that the context and content of learning activities is relevant and motivating.

Leadership and management

94. Provision is well managed to ensure flexibility. Consistency of procedures across all sites, systematic assessment, marking and organisation of materials, and good formal and informal communication systems between all staff, enable learners on literacy and numeracy courses to transfer smoothly to another course if necessary. Learners are able to vary their pattern of attendance to suit their individual circumstances.

95. Quality assurance procedures are well established and followed by tutors. Initial assessments are checked to ensure learners have been placed on the right programme at the right level and at the most convenient geographical location. Weekly progress reviews for learners on life skills courses are monitored and more challenging targets are set if appropriate.

96. There is insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity. Learners do not fully understand equal opportunities in terms of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, and venues do not have sufficient displays or materials celebrating diversity. Comments by learners and tutors that reinforce gender stereotyping are not challenged or discussed. The implementation of equal opportunities policies during learning sessions is not monitored. In traditionally female programme areas, such as sewing and cookery, there are very few male learners and no strategy is in place to increase participation by men.

Family learning

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	166	3

Strengths

- good attainment of personal and learning skills
- good teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- inadequate identification, recording and monitoring of individual learning goals
- insufficient co-ordination of family learning

Achievement and standards

97. Learners attain good personal and learning skills, including improved confidence in helping children with homework and understanding the teaching and learning processes used in schools. Learners develop good communication and parenting skills to help them work more effectively with their children. Many learners achieve relevant qualifications, some for the first time. Learners also develop good working relationships with the schools and many have increased their involvement through volunteering and joining parent/teacher associations.

98. Learner achievements are satisfactory. Retention and achievement rates in 2003-04 on accredited FLLN was good at 98 per cent and 73 per cent respectively. Wider family learning achievement, however, is not monitored and recorded and there were no achievements in 2003-04. Retention in wider family learning varied from 100 per cent on approximately half of the programmes to only 50 per cent on a relaxation techniques course.

Quality of education and training

99. Teaching and learning are good. Eighty of the nine sessions observed were good or better. Tutors develop strong working relationships with learners and use a good range of teaching and learning methods to meet individual learners' needs. They use play effectively to develop learners' literacy, language and numeracy skills and to help them understand the value of play in the development of the child. Learners are encouraged to question and discuss what they learn. Learners are highly motivated and are fully involved in all learning activities. Joint sessions with children are well planned and particularly effective enrichment activities are arranged for families such as visits to art galleries and libraries, weekend walks and family football matches.

100. Most accommodation is satisfactory. However, some rooms are small and poorly ventilated and decorated. Most rooms are not equipped with such things as flip charts, overhead projection facilities and ICT, and some furnishings are old and unattractive. However, tutors supply colourful, print-based and mixed-media resources including games, books and well-designed handouts. Most tutors are qualified to teach their subject specialism. Although no tutors are qualified to level 4 in literacy and numeracy, a plan is in place to rectify this.

101. There is satisfactory planning of the learning programmes to widen participation. These are designed to meet the needs of families living in areas with high social and economic disadvantage. Schools are targeted on the basis of their achievement of national literacy, language and numeracy targets. NT LEA ALA uses relevant data, information from LEA schools inspectors, government agencies and partnerships with a wide range of primary schools to decide what learning to provide. The provider pays for family learning co-ordinators in some primary schools to consult parents about their learning needs. In one primary school the co-ordinators have arranged a wide range of courses including Indian head massage, gardening and yoga. Feedback from learners helps to shape future programmes. Wider family learning programmes are not planned in conjunction with those related to family literacy, language and numeracy in order to encourage learners to progress between the programmes. Successful programmes, like family computers and French and Spanish, are planned with schools to ensure that they link to the school curriculum where appropriate.

102. Learners receive satisfactory guidance and support. Information leaflets are distributed to learners, and tutors give additional information about progression routes on FLLN programmes. Some FLLN schemes of work identify times in the programme when progression issues will be discussed and some tutors arrange visits to other providers to familiarise learners with other learning. However, progression routes are not sufficiently promoted to encourage learners to plan the next stage of their learning. There is also no recording of learners' progress for management purposes. Two out of 11 primary school venues provide childcare facilities. In addition there are childcare facilities in other community venues and the LEA provides the finances for childminding. All materials required for wider family courses are provided free to enable those on low incomes to attend. Additional learning support is provided and staff know who to contact for this support. Nursery nurses provide additional support for tutors in joint sessions with children and parents.

103. There is inadequate identification, recording and monitoring of individual learning goals. Neither group nor individual learning goals are planned with learners in wider family learner programmes. In these programmes, there is no monitoring of progress towards the achievement of family learning outcomes and newly acquired skills and achievement of learning is not recorded. Initial assessment, learner profiles and progress review processes are used in FLLN programmes, but initial assessment outcomes do not always reflect attainment in class or prior achievement. The individual learning profiles, which identify learning goals, do not reflect the needs of individual learners but the content of the course. Lesson plans and progress review paperwork refer to the skills

levels in the core curriculum, but do not reflect the needs of the individual.

Leadership and management

104. There is insufficient co-ordination of family learning. Family literacy, language and numeracy and wider family learning co-ordinators have different managers and there are no arrangements to ensure regular, structured joint meetings to plan developments. Action-planning for improvement is not carried out, jointly, by the both staff teams, in order to establish a clear direction for improvement across the whole curriculum. Self-assessment is not carried out collaboratively between the teams and the report is not adequately self-critical. The family learning outcomes of wider family learning programmes, such as craft or yoga, are not emphasised by staff and joint staff development meetings are not held to share good practice. Management information is not routinely used in staff meetings to plan action for improvement.

105. Some family learning classrooms do not have access for people with restricted mobility and print-based resources and displays do not reflect diversity. Training has been provided in the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act (1995) and staff understand their responsibilities.