

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Staffordshire LEA**

**18 March 2005**



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

## Staffordshire LEA

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Staffordshire Local Education Authority (the LEA) receives funding from Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the provision of non-accredited adult and community learning activities across the eight district council areas in Staffordshire. The responsibility for this provision lies with the adult and community learning service (the ACLS) which is part of the education and lifelong learning directorate of Staffordshire County Council. The manager of the ACLS is supported by a quality manager, a principal of an adult residential college and a family education officer. The quality manager is directly responsible for a community learning development worker and four district adult and community learning managers, each of whom is responsible for two district council areas and for linking with and monitoring the subcontractors and partners in those areas.

2. The ACLS contracts with seven colleges of further education and two schools to offer formal adult education courses in all areas of learning except for business administration, management and professional. In seven areas, learner numbers were too low to be in scope for this inspection. The ACLS also runs projects with a range of other community and educational organisations. These contracts supply 80 per cent of the provision. The ACLS also directly delivers other activities through its community link work, UK online centres and residential courses within the county. It provides learning at some 320 venues, 253 of which were used in the week of inspection. The ACLS co-ordinates LSC-funded family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning, and community learning provision supported by the community learning fund, which was financed by the LSC in 2003-04. It also delivers outreach information and advice for learners with qualifications below level 2, especially those on First Step community learning programmes.

3. In 2003-04, 21,212 learners took part in LSC-funded activities with the ACLS. Three-quarters of the ACLS's learners are women, although the proportion of men is higher in community link courses at 40 per cent. Most learners are aged over 55, although over 1,000 are under 25 years old. Members of minority ethnic groups account for over 22 per cent of learners in community learning provision, although they account for just over 2 per cent of the local population and about 2 per cent of the ACLS's overall learner intake. Three per cent of all learners have declared learning difficulties and disabilities, although this rises to 13.5 per cent of those in community link work provision and 27.3 per cent of those in community learning provision.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Land-based provision

4. In 2003-04, 561 learners enrolled on land-based courses. Most courses offered are in flower arranging, horticultural subjects or animal care. All the courses are non-accredited. The provision is subcontracted to local colleges across

the county and is delivered in a variety of venues, including the colleges themselves, schools, community centres and village halls. The local specialist land-based college provides 81 per cent of the courses. Courses are run as day or evening classes and vary from one day to 10 weeks in length.

### **Information & communications technology**

5. In 2003-04, information and communications technology (ICT) provision consisted of 63 courses delivered through nine subcontracted partners, making up 2 per cent of the total provision. A total of 437 learners were enrolled. Of these, 53 per cent were women, 4 per cent were from minority ethnic groups and 6 per cent had declared a disability. Twenty-six per cent of learners were aged over 65 and over half the learners were aged over 55. Currently, 451 learners are enrolled. Courses are provided throughout the county in a wide range of venues, including libraries, community venues, schools, colleges of further education and charitable organisations. Most are introductory entry level courses but learners can progress to accredited courses. Courses are advertised in the annual curriculum prospectus and in the local press. They are available during the day and evening, with some classes running on Saturdays. Five UK online centres provide learners from the local community with the opportunity to drop in and gain computer experience without enrolling on established courses. Most tutors work sessional or part-time hours and are employed by subcontracted providers. Four district managers provide the link between the providers and the ACLS.

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

6. The ACLS offers 306 sport and leisure and 56 hospitality courses in subjects including yoga, tai chi, Pilates, keep fit, aqua aerobics, salsa, belly dancing, cookery, cake decorating, sugarcraft and wine appreciation. This area of learning currently represents 31 per cent of the ACLS's overall provision. During 2003-04, 7,594 learners enrolled on courses, of whom 7 per cent were from minority ethnic backgrounds and 3 per cent declared a disability. Nineteen per cent of learners were men. There is no accredited provision. Most courses recruit on a termly basis and run for an average of 10 weeks. Forty-eight per cent of learners receive concessions on fees. Classes take place at 101 venues including further education colleges, adult learning centres, local schools, care homes, and community and day centres. Provision is subcontracted to six further education colleges and two schools which manage the 99 part-time tutors who work between one and seven and a half hours a week. Four district adult and community learning managers are responsible for monitoring the provision.

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

7. In 2003-04, 545 visual and performing arts courses were offered through nine subcontractors, making up 30 per cent of the ACLS's provision. All of these courses were non-accredited. The total number of learners was 4,944 and, of these, 25 per cent were men. The retention rate was 92 per cent. Four per cent of learners were from minority ethnic groups, 3 per cent of learners declared a disability and 20 per cent were aged over 65. Courses are held in 104 centres including colleges, village halls, church halls, schools, community centres and the county's residential college. These are spread geographically throughout the county. Currently, 181 arts and crafts options are on offer. Classes take place mostly during the day and on weekday evenings, with some Saturday classes and residential weekend courses. All tutors are part time, mainly teaching for between two and four hours a week. Classes are generally of two hours' duration and usually run for between eight and 12 weeks. Courses include painting, life drawing, calligraphy, sewing skills, lace making, upholstery, pottery, stained glass, wood carving and jewellery. Residential courses include silk painting, china painting, calligraphy, willow weaving and art.

### **English, languages & communications**

8. The ACLS currently offers 68 courses in modern languages which are taught by 44 tutors. These courses are subcontracted to six colleges of further education and two high schools on 36 sites. Most courses are of two hours' duration and run for between eight and 30 weeks. Language courses include French, Spanish, Italian, German, Welsh, Arabic, Greek, Polish and British Sign Language (BSL). Courses are available at beginners level in all languages, at intermediate level in French, Spanish and Italian and advanced level in German, Spanish and French. All courses are non-accredited. Approximately 80 per cent of language courses take place in the evening. During 2003-04 there were 914 learners enrolled on languages courses, representing 4 per cent of the total learner intake. Sixty-one per cent of learners were women.

## Foundation programmes

9. Foundation programmes are offered during the day, evening and weekend and are aimed at encouraging adults to get involved in learning through First Step courses in areas such as art, craft, cookery, DIY and horticulture. In 2003-04, there were 3,317 learners of whom 1,137 attended courses for less than six hours and 821 were drop-in learners at UK online centres. In 2004-05, 1,245 learners have enrolled. A community development worker supports voluntary and community organisations to apply for funding for courses aimed at targeted groups. Community programmes are run in partnership with specialist voluntary organisations for adults with mental health difficulties and for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. An adult widening participation project based in the rural Staffordshire moorlands aims to encourage people who live in isolated villages to become involved with learning through courses such as family history and an introduction to sign language. Community learning programmes are developed and supported by a full-time manager, two community workers and eight half-time community link workers based in the eight districts. They are managed by a district manager and supported by one of the community workers. Three half-time workers visit learners on community learning programmes to provide information and advice on further learning opportunities. Specialist sessional tutors are employed to teach on community programmes, either directly by the LEA or by the voluntary organisations.

## Family learning

10. The ACLS offers over 300 family learning courses including FLLN, wider family learning including health and fitness, arts and crafts, foreign languages, science, ICT and 'Dads and Lads'. Programmes range from three to 72 hours in length. Some offer accreditation, including the national test in adult literacy and numeracy skills. The LEA also provides funding for schools to deliver family learning courses to their own requirements. Provision is prioritised for schools in areas of greatest disadvantage, and for specific children and their parents or carers within the schools. A project to raise aspirations and invest in skills for employment, funded by the regional development agency, has piloted different approaches in areas of high deprivation. The ACLS delivers family learning through service level agreements with six colleges, the council's early years and childcare service, libraries and schools themselves. It is provided in 250 venues, mostly primary schools but also some secondary schools, libraries, community centres and early years and children's centres. A voluntary organisation delivers a range of programmes, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), in the east of the county. A family learning officer and a co-ordinator with partnership arrangements for strategic planning manage the service. In 2003-04, 3,857 learners took part in programmes. Eighty-seven per cent were women, and 13 per cent were from a minority ethnic group. Forty per cent of the learners were aged 25 to 34 and 30 per cent were aged 35 to 44. Six per cent of learners declared a disability. In 2003-04, 304 courses were delivered. In 2004-05, 1,239 learners have enrolled.



## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	14
Number of inspection days	74
Number of learners interviewed	655
Number of staff interviewed	74
Number of subcontractors interviewed	108
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	114
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	29

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

11. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the ACLS's leadership and management and its arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory, while its approach to equality of opportunity is good. Training is good in family learning, visual and performing arts and media, foundation programmes and land-based provision. ICT and English, languages and communications programmes are satisfactory, but training is unsatisfactory in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel.

## GRADES

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

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

<b>Land-based provision</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Other contributory areas</b>		
- Adult and community learning	561	2

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Using IT</b>		
- Adult and community learning	451	3

## STAFFORDSHIRE LEA

<b>Hospitality, sport, leisure &amp; travel</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Hospitality and catering</i></b> - Adult and community learning	1000	3
<b><i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i></b> - Adult and community learning	6594	4
<b>Visual &amp; performing arts &amp; media</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Other contributory areas</i></b> - Adult and community learning	4944	2
<b>English, languages &amp; communications</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Languages</i></b> - Adult and community learning	914	3
<b>Foundation programmes</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Community learning</i></b> - Adult and community learning	3317	2
<b>Family learning</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	3857	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

12. Retention rates are high on most courses. **They are particularly high on land-based courses, where they are 99 per cent, and ICT courses, where they are over 95 per cent.**

13. Learners achieve high standards of work. **In particular, the development of practical skills in floristry, ICT, hospitality and visual arts and crafts is good.** Learners are encouraged to improve their work, and in several classes achieve levels which exceed their own expectations.

14. **Learners on language courses develop good learning skills, and those on sport, leisure and hospitality courses gain a range of social and health benefits.**

### 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
Land-based provision	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	8
Information & communications technology	0	2	1	3	1	0	0	7
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	2	4	8	10	3	2	1	30
Visual & performing arts & media	3	8	14	1	0	0	0	26
English, languages & communications	1	0	3	5	0	1	0	10
Foundation programmes	0	2	8	3	0	0	0	13
Family learning	2	5	6	5	0	0	0	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>112</b>

15. Teaching is good on most programmes, **particularly in land-based, hospitality, visual arts and crafts, community learning and family learning courses.** Much of the teaching effectively engages learners, including those who are returning to learning after many years, and those who are new to adult learning. Many tutors, especially those in floristry, arts and crafts, inspire learners and challenge them to achieve their personal goals. **Almost a third of teaching on sports and leisure classes is unsatisfactory,** with poor identification of the individual needs of learners. **Safe working practices in computer use are not sufficiently reinforced in ICT classes.** Tutors do not start classes with a safety awareness brief. **In modern foreign languages, inappropriate language teaching methods are used in some classes.**

16. **A wide range of up-to-date and well-maintained specialist resources is available on land-based provision and arts and crafts programmes.** Resources and equipment in the other areas of learning are satisfactory.

17. **All curriculum areas are very effective in successfully engaging learners from a**

**diverse range of backgrounds and communities.** Provision is carefully targeted to meet the needs of all communities in Staffordshire, including remote rural communities and disadvantaged and under-represented groups. The ACLS plans carefully to avoid duplication and fills gaps in provision. Interesting taster sessions encourage new learners. Weekend courses, particularly in arts and crafts, horticulture and family learning, engage those who cannot attend courses at other times.

18. **Good pastoral and learning support is offered on family learning programmes.** Learners on most programmes have good relationships with their tutors. Effective advice and guidance is offered to many learners.

19. **Support for literacy and numeracy is poor on land-based programmes, and insufficient on most other programmes.** Although some initial assessment takes place, it is not thorough enough to identify learners' literacy and numeracy support needs and ensure that these needs are met.

20. **Progress made by learners is insufficiently monitored and recorded,** particularly in sport, leisure and hospitality, modern foreign languages, and community and family learning. **Learners' achievement is insufficiently recorded in ICT.**

21. **Progression routes are not clearly explained to learners on most programmes,** especially in ICT and modern foreign languages. Learners are not always aware of other courses in the county which could develop their skills further. Publicity for other courses is often not clearly displayed in venues.

### **Leadership and management**

22. **The ACLS has very good leadership,** with carefully constructed strategic and operational plans to attract under-represented groups and engage them in introductory learning. **Leadership and management of community and family learning are particularly effective.**

23. **The ACLS collaborates well with a wide range of educational and community partners** to provide a very large number of accessible venues throughout the county. Community link workers thoroughly research local needs, **and innovative strategies are produced for engaging and retaining learners.**

24. The ACLS has a policy and action plan in place for skills for life, the government's strategy for training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, but has been slow to implement them. **Its arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language support are not sufficiently formalised.**

25. **The ACLS has an extremely strong focus on improving the provision.** A comprehensive and clear quality assurance system is in place and is beginning to bring about improvements. Most areas have benefited from this, **although insufficient quality assurance procedures are in place in sport, leisure and hospitality.**

26. Equality of opportunity is good. Learners from a diverse range of environments and backgrounds are welcomed, and are kept safe from bullying and harassment throughout the provision.

27. **Tutors' and learners' performance is not measured thoroughly enough.** Although learners make progress, this is often not clearly recorded. Learners are not always sure what skills they have developed. Too little information on previous learning and skills is collected in fitness classes. Teaching sessions are observed, **but action plans are not in place to rectify identified concerns.**

28. The ACLS works closely with the local LSC and the LEA. **However, insufficient emphasis is given to adult education at county corporate level,** especially to measures to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

## Leadership and management

### Strengths

- very good leadership
- extensive and effective collaboration with partners
- extremely strong focus on improving the provision
- wide range of provision carefully designed to attract traditionally under-represented learners

### Weaknesses

- insufficient emphasis on adult and community learning at county corporate level
- inadequate arrangements for the assessment and provision of literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficiently thorough measurement of performance through quality assurance

## Land-based provision

### *Other contributory areas*

#### *Strengths*

- very high retention rates
- high standard of work in floristry
- good teaching
- good use of specialist resources
- good use of weekend courses to widen participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- weak identification of learners' literacy and numeracy support needs

## **Information & communications technology**

### ***Using IT***

#### *Strengths*

- very high retention rates
- good development of practical ICT skills
- particularly effective partnerships to widen participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient recording of learners' achievements
- poor reinforcement of safe working practices for computer use
- insufficient promotion of further learning opportunities

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

### ***Hospitality and catering***

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of knowledge, practical skills and social benefits
- high retention rates
- good teaching
- successful engagement of a diverse range of learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- inadequate recording and monitoring of progress
- inadequate initial assessment
- insufficient quality assurance

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

#### *Strengths*

- good health and social benefits for many learners
- wide geographic spread of classes to meet local needs

#### *Weaknesses*

- much unsatisfactory teaching
- inadequate recording and monitoring of individual learning
- poor initial assessment
- ineffective quality assurance

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

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

#### *Strengths*

- good development of technical, design and personal skills
- high retention rates
- very good teaching and learning
- well-targeted provision to meet local needs

#### *Weaknesses*

- inadequate action-planning for improvement following teaching observation

## **English, languages & communications**

### ***Languages***

#### *Strengths*

- well-developed independent and collaborative learning skills
- wide geographical spread of provision to meet local needs
- good support for part-time tutors

#### *Weaknesses*

- inappropriate teaching methods in some classes
- inadequate identification and recording of learners' progress

## **Foundation programmes**

### ***Community learning***

#### *Strengths*

- good teaching
- very effective initiatives to widen participation
- well-designed programmes to meet individual and community needs
- good management

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient recording of achievement and progress
- insufficient additional support for literacy, language and numeracy

## **Family learning**

### *Strengths*

- good teaching and learning
- extensive and diverse range of provision
- good learning and pastoral support
- good strategic and operational management

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient assessment of individual needs and monitoring of progress



### **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT STAFFORDSHIRE LEA:**

- being able to drop in at any point - 'it's easy to attend the courses'
- that it is 'the best two hours of the week'
- the daylight opening hours
- having interesting topics to discuss with the group
- gaining confidence
- the friendly, non-threatening atmosphere
- the wide range of accessible programmes
- being motivated and inspired by tutors and other learners
- learning being fun

### **WHAT LEARNERS THINK STAFFORDSHIRE LEA COULD IMPROVE:**

- the number of cookery classes for day centre learners
- the number of courses to progress to
- the provision of car parking and exterior lighting
- the scheduling of classes - 'they could run all year round, without long summer breaks'
- the access to computers

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR STAFFORDSHIRE LEA:**

- continue to widen participation
- improve guidance on and support for progression routes
- improve literacy, numeracy and language skills assessment
- share good practice
- further establish quality improvement measures
- improve monitoring and recording of progress
- improve initial assessment

## Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

## Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

#### Strengths

- very good leadership
- extensive and effective collaboration with partners
- extremely strong focus on improving the provision
- wide range of provision carefully designed to attract traditionally under-represented learners

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient emphasis on adult and community learning at county corporate level
- inadequate arrangements for the assessment and provision of literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficiently thorough measurement of performance through quality assurance

29. Leadership of the provision is very good. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Senior managers at the ACLS have carefully designed the new management structure. Staff roles are clear and the structure and need for meetings of various groups are well thought through. Thorough minutes are kept of meetings, with clear action plans. Staff are well informed, enthusiastic and work well together. The vision for and planning of the adult and community learning provision is very good and engages with national strategic priorities, regional priorities and local area reviews. The ACLS has a costed and very clear one-year business plan. The monitoring of the adult and community learning delivery plan is well reported at the management board meeting, and progress made against targets is clearly identified. The ACLS has a well-devised e-learning strategy, which is scheduled to be implemented shortly.

30. The ACLS collaborates extensively and effectively with its partners. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Much provision is through contracts with seven further education colleges. The partnerships with colleges are particularly well managed, with agreements for joint observation of teaching and learning and a shared understanding of the role of the ACLS in providing First Step introductory learning. Partnerships at district level closely involve key members including schools, colleges, libraries and voluntary services. These local partnerships effectively involve and increase participation of those traditionally under-represented in learning. Partners meet regularly and share information. District development plans are designed well to meet local priorities. The ACLS clearly identifies gaps and duplication in provision and involves the most appropriate partners to rectify this. District managers have a good understanding of the geographical and demographic characteristics of the districts. Additional funding sources are explored well. The ACLS works very closely with the local LSC and is fully involved in the strategic area review.

31. Information, advice and guidance for learners in direct provision is good. The ACLS gained national accreditation for providing information, advice and guidance in 2004. It produces a wide range of leaflets, booklets and prospectuses. The ACLS extends its services by employing outreach information and guidance workers and carefully monitors this provision by observing their work four times a year. However, in subcontracted provision, some tutors and learners are unaware of progression routes.

32. Curriculum management is generally satisfactory in subcontracted provision, and good in directly managed provision. Retention is very good and much good teaching takes place in most areas of learning, with 67 per cent of observed teaching being good or better and 8 per cent being outstanding. Although 7 per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory, over 5 per cent of this is in one area of learning. An action plan is in place to rectify this. District managers have frequent, clear communication with providers in their areas, and support tutors well. However, insufficient opportunity exists for the sharing of good practice within curriculum areas. In many cases, initial assessment of learners' skills and experience in subcontracted provision is insufficiently thorough and does not support adequate planning of teaching to meet each learner's needs. Some individual learning plans are not used well, and achievement, which is often good, is not recorded in sufficient detail. Observation of teaching and learning practice varies. All observers are trained to observe, but some are not specialists in the areas they observe. Curriculum management has not yet been effective in raising the standard of teaching and learning in sports and leisure. The ACLS is aware of this and is working with staff in the area to devise ways of recording each learner's needs and progress in a way that suits the structure and content of these classes.

33. Staff development is satisfactory. Staff members' training needs are identified through regular and frequent performance reviews and the appraisal process. The ACLS develops its staff and provides support for subcontractors when needed. A series of training events is clearly publicised in the learning plan for staff at the ACLS and its subcontractors. The ACLS provides good induction for its staff and relies on subcontractors' induction and staff development procedures for their own staff. An audit of staff qualifications has just been carried out. In some curriculum areas the proportion of staff with teaching qualifications and relevant skills is too low.

34. Financial management is sound. The ACLS carefully considers the costs of the provision and initiatives. Contracts with providers specify clearly the funding available and possible amounts to be repaid if targets are not met. The ACLS carefully scrutinises bids from providers for support for initiatives and fully considers the needs of learners. Budgets are carefully profiled and monitored each month and the management board receives a quarterly report.

35. The management information system is satisfactory. A recently appointed information manager runs a system capable of providing detailed information about the learners. However, the ACLS has only recently obtained reliable data, and data for previous years is not sufficiently sound for performance trend analysis to evaluate improvement and support planning.

36. The council gives insufficient emphasis to adult and community learning. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. The plans of the education and lifelong learning directorate focus almost entirely on school provision. No explicit reference is made in these plans to raising the standard of teaching and learning in adult and community learning. Targets for adult and community learning provision are limited to recruitment. Councillors understand the importance of adult and community learning but are insufficiently aware of the quality and monitoring of the ACLS. Performance and quality reports on adult and community learning presented to the council are not formal or systematic. However, the management board for lifelong learning monitors provision well.

37. The ACLS's arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language skills support are not formalised. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. The ACLS has a clear skills for life policy and an action plan. This includes training tutors by June 2005 to identify learners with needs and setting up a pilot project. The development of a formal referral process with colleges is scheduled for September 2006. Currently, the ACLS relies on colleges' own systems to identify learners with support needs, and district managers do not obtain enough information on how colleges apply these systems to adult and community learning learners. The ACLS is currently carrying out an audit of the support provided. A new approach to funding additional support is being piloted in one college.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

38. Equality of opportunity is good. The ACLS has carefully designed a wide range of courses to attract and retain learners from all parts of the county who have traditionally been hard to engage in learning. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Several courses have been introduced successfully through talking to groups about what they want to learn, and devising programmes to match local needs. These courses attract new learners by engaging their interest and encouraging them to progress to accredited courses in the partner colleges. Local councillors are closely involved with the identification of these needs. Retention is high on most courses, both for short courses, where this would be expected, and for longer courses running over a term or a year. In some financially disadvantaged areas, flexible arrangements enable learners to pay weekly for classes. Free taster sessions are frequently available to prospective learners. Community link workers build good relationships with communities, which effectively supports their research into local learning interests. Residential colleges are successful in encouraging a wide range of learners to attend courses, often subsidising costs to ensure equal access for all. Specific provision focuses on supporting the needs of ex-mining communities, people with mental health problems and family learning. These courses have created many health, social and community benefits. The LEA helps build sustainable community improvement by providing suitable accommodation for self-supporting and self-teaching community learning groups. These groups come together to share knowledge and expertise in a wide variety of areas, and many learners progress to more formal courses at the ACLS. Currently, not enough young men are enrolled on courses. This is recognised, and strategies to increase numbers are currently being considered.



39. The ACLS has comprehensive equality and diversity policy and action plans. The action plans have been in place annually since 2001, and all actions are implemented and monitored regularly. For example, the most recent action plan records success in setting up outreach work in a disadvantaged area, and other targeted delivery in priority wards. The ACLS analyses the gender, ethnic origin and age of learners across the entire provision, by area of learning and by provider, and takes thoughtful action to target inequalities. The policy is backed up by a clear statement of equalities legislation and guidance, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and codes of practice on age diversity and success for all. Freedom for all from harassment and victimisation is clearly stated in the policies and explained to learners at induction, although not all learners remember this in detail.

40. Staff have been offered training on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which clearly emphasises that the Act supports curriculum delivery and tutor/learner relationships as well as physical accessibility. However, not all staff have taken part in this training. Over the past year, staff have been offered relevant training in awareness of the needs of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, mental health problems and disability. A simply worded disability awareness leaflet is given to learners.

41. Physical access to most classes is satisfactory. However, some sites have areas which are not accessible or difficult to access for learners with restricted mobility.

42. Although the ACLS has produced a skills for life policy and an action plan, it has been slow in implementing them. Initial assessment is not effective enough to ensure that learners' additional support needs are adequately or promptly identified. Learners on programmes whose main aim is not literacy and numeracy do not receive adequate support to develop these skills, although learners who ask for help, such as those with dyslexia, do receive it. This weakness has been identified in the development plan, and the ACLS is currently planning improved initial assessment practices.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 3**

43. The ACLS focuses extremely strongly on improving the provision. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Its contracts with subcontractors are comprehensive and precise. Targets are carefully negotiated and specify numbers of learners by gender, ethnic origin and age. They also identify courses in areas of learning and venues. The ACLS gives very clear guidance to providers on how contracts will be monitored. Systematic performance monitoring of subcontractors takes place each term. Well-designed quality assurance requirements are set out both for subcontractors and for courses delivered directly by the ACLS. These include class visits and teaching and learning observation evidence. Providers are supported well through monitoring visits. The ACLS discusses the reports on these visits with providers, and action plans are drawn up. The ACLS's quality manager meets frequently with the district managers to ensure consistency of approach. The self-assessment process and format for a quality improvement development plan are clearly specified. Progress on providers' own

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development plans is checked. Although newly introduced, the quality assurance system is generally thorough and operates well. The ACLS produces good quality assurance paperwork and deals with any identified concerns. For example, it is piloting a common health monitoring form for sports and leisure classes, although the form is not yet used widely across the provision. The ACLS has explained the use of the learning diary, its version of the individual learning plan, to partners and subcontractors. They, in turn, actively encourage learners to complete their learning diaries, even in some practical areas where the documents are often resisted. Overall, the system is leading to improvements for learners.

44. Although the complaints system for direct provision works well and the ACLS responds promptly and effectively to concerns, the requirements of a complaints system are not specified for subcontractors. The ACLS does not collect and analyse feedback from learners across the provision on a systematic basis but relies on the subcontractors' systems and procedures. These are monitored at district level to ensure action on points arising from feedback.

45. The self-assessment process is well structured and inclusive and has improved from previous years. It draws on individual self-assessment reports and other evidence from partners and subcontractors. The report for 2003-04 included a clear and well-constructed development plan, written by the senior staff after a two-day residential meeting to review the evidence. Progress is discussed regularly at senior staff meetings. A summary progress report was produced in February 2005 and good progress has been made.

46. Although the quality assurance processes and self-assessment report provide a good basis for quality improvement, the new system has not been through a full cycle to enable year-on-year comparisons to be made and trends identified. Some gaps were found in the processes for monitoring providers in a few curriculum areas. Teaching and learning observations are not always accompanied by clear action plans and actions are not monitored. In half the areas of learning, important strengths and weaknesses had been missed. Broad agreement was found in the remaining areas. The self-assessment for leadership and management is good and generally accurate. The self-assessment report identified the key points across the ACLS that inspectors found in individual curriculum areas, and the development plan covers these points. Improvements in teaching and learning have not been possible to identify. Observations from different sources in previous years had not been moderated. Teaching grades overall, which were not moderated, were too high, compared with those given by inspectors.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Land-based provision

Land-based provision		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Other contributory areas</b> - Adult and community learning	561	2

### **Other contributory areas**

#### *Strengths*

- very high retention rates
- high standard of work in floristry
- good teaching
- good use of specialist resources
- good use of weekend courses to widen participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- weak identification of learners' literacy and numeracy support needs

### **Achievement and standards**

47. Retention rates are very high. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report. In 2003-04, 99 per cent of learners were retained on their courses. Many courses last for only one day but a significant number are held over longer periods and these are equally successful in retaining learners.

48. Floristry and flower arranging learners complete their work to a high standard. Learners build on their previous knowledge and skills and improve their own performance. They show good understanding of the use of flowers and employ this knowledge effectively to produce imaginative designs. For example, in one session, learners created an upward crescent and each design was individual and very distinctive. Many learners have gained increased confidence in their own skills and produce arrangements that they proudly show in their own homes. In most sessions, learners show good communication and evaluative skills, critically assessing each other's work in a review and discussion of the flower arrangements with which each session ends.

49. Progression routes are satisfactory. A range of non-accredited courses is offered and any learners who want to progress to accredited training are referred to other providers in the county.

## Quality of education and training

50. Teaching is good. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Three-quarters of the lessons observed at inspection were good and none were less than satisfactory. Tutors are well qualified and have good industrial experience. They bring this experience to the classes and inspire the learners to aim for high standards. Tutors complete demonstrations to a high standard and give many tips to help learners improve their own techniques.

51. Good use is made of specialist resources. This is identified in the self-assessment report. A high proportion of the classes are held at the local specialist land-based college where learners have access to a wide range of facilities maintained to a high professional standard. Good use is also made of the county's residential college and its extensive grounds. Courses held at other venues are enhanced by tutors regularly bringing specialist resources such as textbooks, equipment and plant material with them. Learners are able to benefit fully from these classes. In one case where no outside activity was possible, a tutor provided a large amount of plant material to demonstrate and help learners to practise pruning in the classroom.

52. Weekend courses are used well to widen participation. The specialist land-based college runs monthly weekend courses that attract learners who are not able to access courses during the week. It also allows the college to use the complete range of its facilities, which are fully occupied in the week, for these courses. A family learning course is held during these weekends which is particularly successful in engaging a wider range of learners than are usually found on land-based courses. One very good initiative to widen participation is a horticultural project based in a small walled garden and aimed at learners who have severe mental health problems. The project is very successful. Learners show significant improvements in their mental health.

53. Adequate use is made of individual learning plans to record learners' progress and achievement. The plans are based on learners' aspirations and many identify only soft targets such as personal development and confidence. The ACLS is currently planning a system to identify more easily measurable targets.

54. Learners' feedback is used satisfactorily to review individual courses and overall provision. The ACLS uses this information thoughtfully to plan programmes. Managers take care to ensure that courses appeal to learners. Many of the flower arranging courses appropriately include the word 'fun' in their title which attracts many learners, who associate this with non-traditional learning techniques.

55. Initial advice and guidance is satisfactory. Tutors, managers and community workers are readily available to learners who need further advice, although most learners select a course from the part-time course literature.

56. Identification of learners' additional literacy and numeracy support needs is weak. No initial assessment is made and staff have no training in how to identify these learners' needs. The ACLS has identified the need to train staff but has not yet put in place

provision to achieve this. Most of the subcontractors have satisfactory arrangements to help learners with identified additional learning requirements, but at present the needs are not identified.

### **Leadership and management**

57. District managers communicate effectively with the subcontractors. They conduct regular monitoring visits to check the provision against a clearly written contract. A standard agenda is used for these meetings and the manager examines registers, individual learning plans and other course documents. The ACLS's managers also visit lessons on an informal basis as well as carrying out some formal observation of training and learning. They write development plans, which are checked and effectively monitored at the next meeting to identify and implement improvements. For example, one small subcontractor has successfully introduced short weekly staff meetings to improve communication.

58. The LEA has identified that this area recruits most of its learners from groups traditionally involved in learning, and does not attract many learners from the widening participation target groups. A number of projects have been set up to try to increase the proportion of learners from under-represented groups. Some individual projects are successful, such as a horticultural programme in one of the county's identified deprived areas, but insufficient impact has yet been made on recruitment to the more traditional courses.

59. The self-assessment process includes input from all subcontractors and is broadly accurate. The inspection identified one weakness that was not identified in the self-assessment report.

## Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Using IT</b> - Adult and community learning	451	3

### **Using IT**

#### *Strengths*

- very high retention rates
- good development of practical ICT skills
- particularly effective partnerships to widen participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient recording of learners' achievements
- poor reinforcement of safe working practices for computer use
- insufficient promotion of further learning opportunities

## Achievement and standards

60. Retention rates are very high. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Ninety-five per cent of learners are retained on ICT programmes. Attendance registers are regularly and frequently updated and attendance is high. Most tutors have a good relationship with learners and understand the reasons for their absence. Time is made available in lessons for learners who have been absent to catch up on missed work. A tutor at one centre allowed learners who had completed their accredited course to attend lessons as leisure learners while they waited for their next course to start. During these sessions, learners completed project work and consolidated their learning.

61. All learners develop good practical ICT skills. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Most learners achieve their learning goals on non-accredited courses. Learners gain in confidence and self-esteem. They are proud of their achievements, which include e-mailing relatives abroad, using spreadsheets to compile a social club's accounts and designing greeting cards. Learners on the creative computing course produce a particularly high standard of work and one learner successfully used her portfolio to gain a place on a degree course. Most learners can confidently use their computers at home unaided.

## Quality of education and training

62. The ACLS has good partnerships with local providers which widen learner participation. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Courses are provided in a wide range of venues and at a variety of times including during the daytime. This encourages and supports access by learners not traditionally involved in learning, who enjoy the relaxed and hospitable venues and working in small groups. Many centres organise taster sessions to encourage more ICT participation. UK online centres welcome people in the local community to drop in and receive individual tuition on using the internet, e-mail or basic word processing.

63. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons are supported by detailed and flexible plans and clear schemes of work. Tutors offer a high level of individual support and allow learners to work at their own pace. These methods successfully engage learners, many of whom are returning to education after a significant period of time. Learners are enthusiastic and show interest in their work. However, some tutors use language that is too complex to communicate processes clearly to some learners, who are not always able to replicate what they are shown.

64. Most tutors are professionally qualified and have or are working towards a teaching qualification. A wide range of adequate resources is available throughout the learning centres. The equipment is up to date and all computer workstations have internet access. Digital cameras, scanners and networked printers are available at most centres. The standard of accommodation varies and some ICT rooms are uninspiring. Specialist resources are available to learners with specific support needs, although some of this equipment must be requested through the district manager or learning centre manager. One UK online centre provides courses for visually impaired learners, for whom it has a wide range of specialist software and hardware. Most venues use too many poor-quality handouts and offer insufficient additional learning resources.

65. The ACLS's support workers offer satisfactory advice and guidance, and one subcontractor provides tuition and physical assistance for learners with disabilities. Tutors understand individuals' needs and learners are comfortable talking to tutors. Induction covers information, advice and guidance available to learners but is not memorable.

66. Safe working practices for using a computer are covered at induction but insufficiently reinforced in the classroom. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors do not start lessons with a safety awareness brief and learners are unaware of the need to adjust their seat or position their feet correctly. Insufficient safety information about computer operations is displayed in most classrooms, although some learners have handouts detailing correct safety procedures. Some classrooms have inappropriate furniture for computing. Most tutors encourage learners to take a break from the computer monitor during the lesson, but many learners decline and are unaware of the potential dangers.

67. Progress reviews occur regularly. However, achievements are not recorded in sufficient detail to inform the learner of the skills they have developed, even though they

often achieve skills similar to those on accredited courses. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Learners gain confidence without realising that they have developed practical skills which support their progress to more advanced programmes. Assessment and monitoring of progress reviews is satisfactory. No diagnostic testing of learners' literacy and numeracy support needs takes place, although learners complete an initial assessment and their tutor records their individual support needs. Individual learning plans are used inconsistently.

68. Further learning opportunities are insufficiently promoted, although most learners wish to progress to other ICT courses. Progression is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners and tutors are unaware of progression routes and tutors do not clearly promote other learning opportunities or courses at other centres. Insufficient information is displayed in the venues about other available courses.

### **Leadership and management**

69. The ACLS's district managers work effectively with learning centres in the area. They have recently started carrying out audits to verify internally the quality of tutors' paperwork on assessment and progress reviews. However, good practice is not shared across the county and tutors often work in isolation. Regular lesson observations are carried out but no system exists to ensure that new tutors are observed early in their appointment.

70. The ACLS sets and regularly monitors targets for increasing participation. It has satisfactory, established procedures for staff appraisal and continuous development. Although subcontractors contribute significantly to the self-assessment report, most sessional tutors are unaware of it and are unfamiliar with the strategic aims of the ACLS. The self-assessment report for ICT did not include any of the weaknesses identified by inspectors.

71. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory but is not reinforced throughout the learning programmes. All tutors are well aware of current legislation, although very few have attended recent training on equality of opportunity.



## Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Hospitality and catering</i></b> - Adult and community learning	1000	3
<b><i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i></b> - Adult and community learning	6594	4

### ***Hospitality and catering***

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of knowledge, practical skills and social benefits
- high retention rates
- good teaching
- successful engagement of a diverse range of learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- inadequate recording and monitoring of progress
- inadequate initial assessment
- insufficient quality assurance

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

#### *Strengths*

- good health and social benefits for many learners
- wide geographic spread of classes to meet local needs

#### *Weaknesses*

- much unsatisfactory teaching
- inadequate recording and monitoring of individual learning
- poor initial assessment
- ineffective quality assurance

## Achievement and standards

72. Many learners gain good health and social benefits from attending classes. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Many gain greater confidence and a sense of wellbeing, and develop a more positive outlook on life. New learners joining classes are welcomed and the supportive atmosphere helps them to settle easily into the group. Older learners feel less isolated in their communities. Community learners in hospitality and catering improve their self-esteem, gain in confidence and are proud of their

achievements in making dishes which they can share with their families. Fitness learners benefit from increased mobility, stamina, flexibility, co-ordination and balance. Some gain significant relief from medical conditions such as back and joint problems. Older learners particularly benefit from the mental stimulation and improvement or maintenance of memory skills. Their ability to perform everyday tasks involving bending and stretching is improved. As some classes only run for two terms, however, learners lose some of the benefits they have gained. New learners in sugarcraft classes quickly become skilled at making individual flowers and sprays, and work in some classes is of an excellent vocational standard. Learners in cake decorating classes and in some cookery classes also gain good practical skills. Learners on wine appreciation courses gain good skills and knowledge in choosing and buying wines. Cookery courses in colleges and in the community extend learners' choices in trying different food and their knowledge of healthier options. Standards of work in fitness classes are generally satisfactory, as is learners' development of personal and learning skills.

73. Retention and attendance rates are high on hospitality courses. This is identified in the self-assessment report.

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

74. Teaching in hospitality is good, with 70 per cent of observed classes graded good or better. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Better classes are planned to meet each learner's needs, adapting work to stretch all learners in the class. These classes challenge more advanced learners to produce professional-quality work, covering good hygiene practice and referring to relevant legislation. Tutors are enthusiastic, encourage learners to contribute and reinforce their knowledge. In a wine appreciation class, the tutor used appropriate humour and stories to increase learners' enjoyment of learning about the geography and history of wines. In the best fitness classes, tutors use a good range of activities and modifications to support individuals' needs and promote good skill development. For example, the tutor in one tai chi class helped learners to develop knowledge and understanding of the philosophy, history and principles of tai chi and its application to everyday life very effectively, through group discussions, learners' presentations and demonstrations, and probing questions.

75. The geographic spread of fitness and hospitality classes is good and meets local needs. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Classes are provided at over 100 venues throughout the county in a wide variety of local facilities. The ACLS collaborates well with local partners to ensure that provision is not duplicated. Where a gap in programmes is identified, local demand is researched. Community link workers visit local groups to promote courses to people who have not traditionally been involved in learning. For example, people with disabilities at day care centres benefit from sugarcraft and cookery courses. New courses are provided in response to local needs or requests from local groups. The ACLS and its partners participate in local learning festivals in which some learners demonstrate their skills in town centres to encourage new learners. Taster courses are offered before enrolment to assist learners in making informed choices about the suitability of the course. Some tasters lead to the establishment of new courses

and new learners joining existing classes. Some geographical areas have little cookery provision.

76. The standard of accommodation, equipment and resources in hospitality is satisfactory. Practical classes take place in kitchens in schools and colleges, with adequate equipment. In some sugarcraft courses insufficient information is given about the type and cost of equipment learners need to purchase. Many staff are competent and experienced, although too few have relevant qualifications at level 3. Some rooms for fitness classes are cold or dirty or too small for groups to exercise safely. Insufficient equipment such as exercise mats, blocks and belts is available to support and enhance learning in some classes. Learners with restricted mobility have good access at all venues.

77. Advice, support and guidance is satisfactory. Learners are supported well by their tutors. Support for literacy and numeracy is available in some colleges but learners' needs are not always identified. Basic skills provision is offered in community learning venues. However, tutors are insufficiently aware of literacy and numeracy matters. Learners receive insufficient advice on progression opportunities.

78. Much fitness teaching is unsatisfactory. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Thirty per cent of observed classes were judged to be less than satisfactory. Schemes of work and lesson planning are poor. Tutors use few modifications of exercises to meet individuals' needs. Some learners are insufficiently challenged while others struggle with activities beyond their capabilities. Instructions and teaching points are insufficiently clear or detailed. Tutors give little explanation of the reasons for, and benefits of, particular exercises or how they can be applied in everyday life. Tutors often stay at the front of the class and perform activities themselves, greatly reducing the opportunities to observe learners. They do not sufficiently identify poor technique or some potentially harmful practices. Learners are not adequately corrected or given individual feedback on ways to improve and optimise exercise benefits. The quality of some schemes of work and lesson plans in hospitality is poor. In some cookery courses, for example, lesson plans are simply lists of dishes with no identification of skills to be developed. Learning outcomes are not identified on some other courses.

79. Initial assessment is poor. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. On many courses, not enough learner information is collected to enable tutors to plan effectively to meet individuals' needs. Not all learners complete a health screening before starting fitness classes. A variety of forms is used but some do not prompt learners sufficiently to describe existing medical conditions or suggest that they seek medical advice. The use made of health screening information, when it is collected, is often ineffective. Tutors do not adequately assess learners' prior knowledge, skills and experience and rely too heavily on learners' own assessment.

80. The ACLS's monitoring and recording of individual learning is inadequate. This is identified in the self-assessment report. The use made of individual learning plans is ineffective. The better plans do have a record of learning attached, detailing skills learners have gained and the progress they have made, but these plans are completed by the learners. Individual target-setting is inadequate and does not form an effective basis

on which to measure learners' progress. In many cases, group and course learning outcomes are the only targets recorded on individual learning plans. These outcomes are often very general and not meaningful enough. Assessment of learners' development is ineffective. Tutors rely too much on learners' own perceptions of their progress. Too few tutors maintain records of learners' progress. Skills development and learning outcomes in cookery practical classes are not always identified, and monitoring learners' gains in skills and knowledge is difficult. Learners are given learning diaries but do not use them much.

### **Leadership and management**

81. Quality assurance is ineffective in improving the standards of provision. The observation of teaching and learning system is not thorough or critical enough, particularly when carried out by non-subject specialists. The ACLS does not adequately record or monitor action plans for identified areas of development and follow-up. The grades awarded by the ACLS are far higher than those given on inspection. Only 3 per cent of lessons observed by the ACLS were graded as unsatisfactory in the self-assessment report. The ACLS does not effectively monitor providers' compliance with aspects of service level agreements such as risk assessments, health screening, tutor qualifications and attendance. Tutors' completion and use of documents for target-setting, individual learning plans, progress records, lesson plans and schemes of work is variable and is not adequately monitored. Recently, the ACLS and its partners have developed prototype documents for initial assessment which are currently being piloted. The ACLS does not collect information about the currency of tutors' qualifications, knowledge and skills, professional development, first aid certificates, or internal staff training by subcontractors. Regular training days are offered but not all tutors attend these. Some subcontractors support tutors in gaining an appropriate teaching qualification. The self-assessment report does not adequately recognise the key weaknesses found on inspection.

82. Good practice is not shared. However, other aspects of management are satisfactory. District managers have a close working relationship with subcontractors. Tutors are supported well by the colleges. The ACLS works effectively with its partners to promote learning to potential learners. Its promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, as are participation rates for learners with a disability and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Learners with restricted mobility find it difficult to enter a few venues. Cookery tutors at day centres are able to adapt courses to meet the needs of learners with substantial physical disabilities through careful advance planning by tutors, who change recipes and methods to enable participation or give assistance with some tasks. Tutors expect that these learners can achieve skills and learners respond well to this. Participation by men is low, although a successful wine class developed out of the strategy to increase the number of men on courses. Few hospitality tutors have attended training in equality of opportunity and diversity.

## Visual & performing arts & media

Visual & performing arts & media		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Other contributory areas</b> - Adult and community learning	4944	2

### **Other contributory areas**

#### *Strengths*

- good development of technical, design and personal skills
- high retention rates
- very good teaching and learning
- well-targeted provision to meet local needs

#### *Weaknesses*

- inadequate action-planning for improvement following teaching observation

### **Achievement and standards**

83. Technical, design and personal skills are well developed in art and design classes. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Learners work at an appropriate level and make swift progress, evidenced in their portfolios and displays of work. They produce a high standard of finished work combining technical competence with creative flair. On craft courses, learners carry out a wide variety of challenging tasks. For example, in a metal craft class, learners renovated the wheel arches of a tractor and refabricated the lightweight panels of a Ferret armoured vehicle. Learners approach their projects confidently and are very articulate in their evaluations of their own and other learners' work. Many exceed their own learning goals and surpass their tutors' expectations. For example, one learner in a life drawing class is preparing to enter her work into an open exhibition after only one year of tuition. Learners are enthusiastic about their progress in reaching the high standard of skills required and often gain additional skills. For example, learners in a watercolour class used a digital camera and a scanner to enhance and experiment with their design plans. Learners are challenged to work independently and some develop their work outside of classes, carrying their skills in arts and crafts into their families and communities.

84. As well as technical progress, learners gain important personal and social benefits. For example, learners in an ethnic dress class practise their English in a purposeful manner. Learners in art and craft classes celebrate their work with displays in centres and by building up portfolios of their paintings and photographs of their craft work. They can progress in their classes and have the opportunity to progress to accredited courses if they wish.

85. Retention rates are good across the area of learning. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. In 2003-04, over 92 per cent of the 4,944 art and craft learners were retained, with retention on some courses running at 100 per cent. At the time of the inspection, retention was similar and attendance stood at 90 per cent.

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

86. Very good teaching and learning is provided across the area of learning. This is partially identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors use a wide range of teaching styles which match the individual skills of their learners. For example, the tutor of a drawing class in a nursing home had devised a separate plan for each of the learners, all of whom had greatly differing disabilities. Confident and clear demonstrations motivate and inspire learners to engage in art and craft skills. Teaching is organised well and learners at all levels are integrated into classes. Beginners are particularly welcomed and quickly produce work of a high standard. Tutors create a safe environment in which learners confidently take their first steps back into learning. In one ceramics and sculpture class, learners successfully work at both non-accredited and accredited levels, which is beneficial to all, motivating them and creating successful peer group learning. Learners in particularly innovative calligraphy and embroidery classes are encouraged to analyse their creativity, design and colour awareness and discuss this in a knowledgeable and exciting way. Clear, constructive, ongoing feedback informs learners of their achievement and how they can progress to new targets. Many learners use learning diaries to reinforce learning and remember correct terminology. The diaries also help the ACLS to develop future courses with flexible schemes of work to fulfil the needs of individual learners.

87. Provision is targeted well to meet specific local needs. This is partially identified in the self-assessment report. Locally accessible venues attract learners who are not able to travel or have restricted mobility. For example, in very remote rural areas, village halls provide large rooms with plenty of light and space. These classes are well attended and offer high-quality provision. Learners get to know their tutors, who understand the concerns of those returning to learning for the first time in many years. The range of courses on offer in arts and crafts is wide and varied, including traditional subjects such as lace making and watercolour painting as well as modern sculpture and silversmithing. Weekend residential courses, which are often delivered by nationally known professional artists, attract many learners from within and outside the county's boundaries. During the summer, a good variety of taster classes gives learners an opportunity to sample a range of courses and allows the ACLS to gauge the potential take-up of new courses. Pre-course information and advertising covers the whole district and learners can communicate easily with local centres. Learners are able to progress within a class and are informed about courses in other centres or with accreditation.

88. Tutors are well qualified and appropriately experienced, and some are practising professionals. Although access for those with restricted mobility is good in most centres, and venues suit local communities well with good furniture and large rooms, access and outside lighting are poor at a few centres. Some car parks have dark, uneven surfaces, or

steps which cause difficulty for learners who need to carry large amounts of work or have restricted mobility. In specialist facilities in colleges and schools, equipment in classes is very good.

89. Learners have their work assessed in arts and crafts every session and are given constructive and clear feedback to reinforce learning. This supports and reassures learners who have returned to study. Some tutors have good systems for monitoring learners' progress, but most keep informal notes or simply remember what learners know. Some learners who are elderly or have extra learning needs are not be able to tell new tutors what they are able to do.

90. Learners receive satisfactory support. Those with special needs are supported by tutors and integrated well into individual classes. Other learners are well supported in classes, and offered appropriate advice and guidance.

### **Leadership and management**

91. The area of learning is managed satisfactorily. District managers and subcontractors communicate effectively. They meet once a year to set new targets and to review achievements and once a term to share and consider ideas for further development. District managers closely monitor 10 courses each year, looking at registers, schemes of work, lesson plans, venues and attendance. Any concerns are raised immediately with the subcontractors. In larger colleges, a community education co-ordinator forms a link between learners and the ACLS's management in the main site. Learning diaries are now monitored, and the ACLS and its subcontractors carry out useful joint observations of teaching and learning. Tutors are well supported by district managers.

92. All subcontractors regularly carry out observations and keep detailed records of these, particularly noting strengths in teaching. However, if action points for improvement are recorded, no indication is given of when or how these should be carried out or whether they have been subsequently acted on by tutors. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. The ACLS does not have plans in place covering the staff development or further training needed to maintain and further improve the good teaching.

93. Equality of opportunity is good. Learners from different backgrounds, such as asylum seekers, Asian women's groups and learners over the age of 65, are welcomed onto courses and successfully integrated with learning programmes. Fee remission is available for these groups of learners. Twenty-five per cent of learners in arts and crafts are men.

94. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but does not identify some strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection.



**English, languages & communications**

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Languages</b> - Adult and community learning	914	3

**Languages***Strengths*

- well-developed independent and collaborative learning skills
- wide geographical spread of provision to meet local needs
- good support for part-time tutors

*Weaknesses*

- inappropriate teaching methods in some classes
- inadequate identification and recording of learners' progress

**Achievement and standards**

95. Achievement is generally satisfactory. In the better classes, learners are able to communicate effectively and spontaneously in the target language at an appropriate level. They initiate conversations and ask questions to extend their knowledge. Advanced learners manipulate language well and demonstrate good knowledge of idiom. They have good comprehension of demanding literary texts and newspaper articles and can compose complex and interesting pieces in the target language. Most learners report significant gains in their ability to converse with native speakers. Other learners have not yet reached appropriate standards, especially in the development of their oral and listening skills. Although they use basic phrases in rehearsed contexts, they are reliant on written prompts. Some are unable to follow taped dialogues relevant to their level of learning without the aid of a transcript.

96. Retention rates are satisfactory at 80 per cent. Attendance is satisfactory. Tutors are generally aware of the reasons for learners' absence, and learners who miss classes keep up to date by telephone and e-mail.

**Quality of education and training**

97. Learners have well-developed skills in independent and collaborative learning. They make informed use of dictionaries and consult their own lesson notes. They complete homework assignments and prepare well for classes. Advanced learners skilfully research for individual class presentations. Some learners make good use of videos and interactive websites to extend their learning outside class. In one case, a learner corresponded in



French by e-mail with the tutor, who responded speedily with corrections. In class, learners are encouraged to participate by the friendly banter of their fellow learners. They are comfortable about making mistakes and learning from them. Classes provide good mutual support, particularly in cases of mixed-level learning. In these classes, more advanced learners are able to see the benefits of consolidation, while others appreciate the expertise of their more knowledgeable colleagues. Learners with visual or hearing impairments are effectively supported and encouraged by their fellow learners.

98. The ACLS provides particularly good access to beginners' language courses. Good use is made of accommodation in subcontractors' venues. The ACLS works collaboratively with the vocational provision in colleges, and has agreed to focus on non-accredited courses. It has provided advanced conversation classes in response to demand from learners who wish to maintain and enhance their vocabulary and fluency. Community development staff thoroughly research local needs. For example, an introductory BSL course was appropriately arranged to meet the needs of a group of 11 teenagers and adults from a deprived council estate. These learners successfully progressed to an accredited course and deaf awareness training. However, course levels are inadequately described in publicity materials. Progression opportunities exist, but suitable progression routes are often difficult to identify.

99. Resources are satisfactory. Eighty per cent of language tutors have a teaching qualification and most are native speakers or have at least a level 3 subject qualification. Accommodation is good. Buildings are maintained well and most classrooms and community venues are carpeted and have good acoustics. In nearly all classes, learners are seated companionably around a square of tables to facilitate communication. Whiteboards and audiovisual equipment are readily available, although computers are not. Tutors can borrow teaching and learning materials, including relevant videos and compact discs, from subcontractors' resource centres.

100. Inappropriate language teaching methods are used in some classes. Too much English is used for basic instruction and comments, with too much emphasis on translation into English to check comprehension. Translation into the foreign language is used inappropriately when learners are practising a new language. Tutors are sometimes reluctant to correct poor pronunciation and basic grammar errors. Some give insufficient attention to individual, pair and small group work. However, most lessons are well prepared with a good range of learning activities and materials, which are attractively presented.

101. Insufficient initial assessment of previously acquired learning and language skills takes place. The ACLS does not systematically assess the progress made by learners. Some lesson plans and schemes of work list activities rather than learning objectives and assessment methods. Tutors take note of self-identified disabilities and learning difficulties, where these are given on individual learning plans, but no formalised arrangements exist for providing additional learning support. Individual learning plans are not used to support dialogue between learners and tutors on progress made. Learners are unclear about the relevance of individual learning plans to their own learning and not all learners complete them. Those who do, often list their reasons for learning and the

topics they want to study rather than specifying their learning goals. Mid- and end-of-course reviews of achievement are completed by learners without a verifying comment from tutors. Good assessment practice, where it does exist, is not being shared.

### **Leadership and management**

102. Part-time tutors are given good support by community development staff and district managers, who maintain frequent and regular contact with tutors and learners. This benefits learners, who have access to up-to-date guidance and information from their tutors. Tutors working in college settings have the additional benefit of access to curriculum-specific advice. Language tutors have benefited from training in the use of video and e-learning.

103. Operational management of the provision is effective. The ACLS has good templates for lesson plans, schemes of work and course reviews. Observation of teaching and learning is well designed and useful. Although development needs are identified through observation of teaching and learning, observation reports do not include action plans with timescales and the ACLS does not monitor that recommended improvements are actually made. A minority of lesson observations are carried out by language specialists. Learners' and tutors' perceptions are collected as part of the self-assessment process. Learners' views are surveyed but findings are not always analysed sufficiently and effective action plans are not always produced to rectify identified concerns. The self-assessment process did not identify any of the inspection findings.

104. Equality of opportunity is good, with provision that encourages wider participation, accessible venues throughout the county, and appropriate support for learners with physical disabilities.

## Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Community learning</b> - Adult and community learning	3317	2

### Community learning

#### Strengths

- good teaching
- very effective initiatives to widen participation
- well-designed programmes to meet individual and community needs
- good management

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of achievement and progress
- insufficient additional support for literacy, language and numeracy

## Achievement and standards

105. Learners make satisfactory progress towards the achievement of their personal goals. Community learning courses are targeted for First Step learners from communities with limited access to learning opportunities. Learners develop appropriate skills to enable them to re-engage in community activities and progress to further learning. Many learners gain the necessary confidence and skills to participate actively in community and voluntary organisations and progress to further learning. In 2003-04, 64 per cent of First Step learners on community learning courses planned to continue with further learning.

## Quality of education and training

106. Teaching is good, with 77 per cent of observed teaching being good or better. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors plan short sessions very well and employ a wide variety of teaching methods to interest learners. They successfully convey their enthusiasm to learners, many of whom have had little or no previous participation in learning. They demonstrate techniques clearly and use effective questioning to motivate learners. Tutors successfully encourage learners to learn from each other. Learners interact well and focus on tasks. Tutors are well aware of the learning needs of under-represented learners in their communities and use learners' feedback in planning future courses.

107. The ACLS has very effective strategies to widen participation and engage First Step

## STAFFORDSHIRE LEA

learners. This is identified in the self-assessment report. The widening participation strategy encourages collaborative work with a range of partners and organisations to develop provision in local communities for those who are least likely to engage in learning. The community learning fund has successfully empowered a range of organisations to provide First Step courses to targeted learners in a variety of locations. For example, a community association on a deprived housing estate provides courses such as cooking on a budget. Community link workers identify and develop potential partnerships with voluntary leaders and local communities. They attend ward and other local meetings in their districts and have effective links with local and national organisations which actively contribute to the learners' experience. The ACLS offers courses at appropriate locations in remote rural communities and urban areas across the county to bring learning opportunities to under-represented groups. The partnerships help the ACLS to extend appropriate provision in disadvantaged communities. For example partnerships with mental health charities have led to the provision of introductory courses for new learners with mental health and learning difficulties. A partnership with a women's aid organisation has developed good learning opportunities for this group.

108. Programmes are designed well to meet the needs of individual learners and encourage attendance. This is identified in the self-assessment report. For example, in 2003-04, the retention rate on community learning programmes was 90 per cent. Community link workers in each of the eight districts contact and meet community groups to identify potential learners. Taster courses for First Step learning are designed and organised to meet specific needs. Learners' own interests and aspirations influence the content, timing and location of courses, to increase attendance. The ACLS supports learners to overcome personal barriers in attending the course, for example by providing help with transport and care costs for learners who are carers. Older learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enjoy a range of activities such as dance exercises, ICT and family history.

109. Resources are satisfactory. Most staff are appropriately qualified or are training for relevant qualifications. Much provision is located satisfactorily at community venues such as village and church halls. Health and safety audits have been carried out at all sites.

110. The ACLS identifies its provision of additional support for literacy, numeracy and language as an area for improvement in its development plan. Learners with identified support needs do not receive extra support. The need for learning support is not routinely assessed in sessions and some tutors are unaware of how to deal with learners with such needs. Insufficient staff development takes place to raise awareness and improve tutors' ability to recognise and support these learners. Insufficient formal assessment procedures are in place to ensure learners receive a diagnostic assessment of their needs. Currently, the ACLS refers identified learners to local providers of literacy, numeracy and language courses.

111. Learners' achievement and progress is insufficiently recorded. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Some tutors emphasise recording the achievement of

group objectives but do not identify each learner's progress. In the best sessions, learners effectively identify and record their personal learning goals but in others the recording of progress, particularly on short courses, is often summative and too generalised. Most programmes are short taster courses that are non-accredited, and although learners use diaries to record achievement and progress, they do not use these consistently.

## **Leadership and management**

112. Community learning provision is managed well. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Senior managers and community link workers have a clear vision of the role of community learning in the regeneration of local communities. Managers at local centres are knowledgeable about the communities they serve and many have considerable experience of working in community education. They encourage and support community groups and other organisations to access all the facilities of their centres and the ACLS. Regular meetings at centres enable the sharing of good practice and the full discussion of community matters. Managers ensure that the management committees of community centres have high representation from local communities, which make valuable contributions. Communications between managers and staff across a diverse geographical area are good.

113. Equality of opportunity is good. Community learning programmes meet the needs of local communities and reflect the diversity of the population. Provision is aimed at disadvantaged communities and under-represented groups. Staff demonstrate good awareness of the principles of equality of opportunity in their inclusive teaching styles and understanding of learners' specific needs.

114. Quality assurance is satisfactory. The ACLS makes regular monitoring visits to voluntary and other organisations that have accessed community learning funding. It has well-documented quality assurance policies and procedures and a comprehensive tutors' pack that outlines the procedures. Staff are familiar with these procedures. Observation of teaching and learning is part of the quality assurance process but not all staff have been observed.

## Family learning

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	3857	2

### Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- extensive and diverse range of provision
- good learning and pastoral support
- good strategic and operational management

### Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment of individual needs and monitoring of progress

## Achievement and standards

115. Learners on family learning programmes make satisfactory progress in achieving their learning goals and personal targets identified in their learning plans. However, learning goals are identified by self-assessment rather than by more formal, objective initial assessment methods. Parents gain an understanding of what their children are learning in school and acquire new skills to support them. Parents, carers and children gain the confidence to work independently and together. Adult learners on FLLN programmes have the option of working towards external accreditation. In 2003-04, 50 per cent of learners gained qualifications and 5 per cent passed the national literacy and numeracy skills test.

## Quality of education and training

116. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Tutors demonstrate a wide variety of teaching methods to meet the needs of individual learners. In one FLLN session the tutor identified the learning styles of the learners and planned the session to include a range of activities to reflect their needs in the following week. Seventy-two per cent of the sessions observed at inspection were graded good or better, with no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Tutors plan sessions effectively with clear group objectives, although few learners have individual learning targets identified in lesson plans. Learners receive verbal and written feedback. Adults and children record their own learning targets in learning diaries but these are not reviewed or updated consistently. In the best joint parent/child sessions, tutors demonstrate effective learning support styles as a model for parents. Learners acquire skills that are relevant to their family lives. One group of parents learnt how to stimulate their babies who have additional learning needs, and parents in another session learnt how to help their children prepare for standards tests.

117. The ACLS offers extensive and diverse family learning provision to meet the needs of learners and widen participation. The curriculum in wider family learning is varied and includes science, cookery, ICT, foreign languages, sport, arts and crafts. Some provision is specifically targeted at groups such as fathers, male carers and boys who are not traditionally involved in learning. Learners can attend a residential activity with their children, which provides good opportunities for personal development as well as improving skills.

118. Support for learners is good. Learners receive pastoral support and some schools have a member of staff who provides links between home and school. Counselling is provided on residential weekends to support learners effectively. Additional support is available, including interpretation for speakers of other languages. Information, advice and guidance are integral to longer FLLN programmes. Accompanied visits are arranged to local colleges, libraries and jobcentres to break down barriers. A five-week information, advice and guidance course for parents and carers in an early years centre enables learners to explore their strengths and the opportunities available to them. Progression from FLLN courses is good with 60 per cent of learners progressing to other courses, particularly programmes for training as classroom assistants.

119. Resources to support family learning provision are satisfactory. Most sessions have sufficient additional staffing to support learners and the learning process. Accommodation in schools is satisfactory, although a number of classrooms do not provide suitable chairs and tables for adults. Equipment is suitable to meet the needs of adults and children. The ACLS offers good opportunities for staff development, training and sharing good practice. College tutors delivering FLLN courses are qualified or are training in providing literacy, numeracy and language skills support at level 4. Learners have access to appropriate learning materials for themselves and for use with children at home. ICT facilities are accessible in schools, and a college's 'e-bus' visits classes in two areas, providing good access to information technology equipment. There is some crèche provision. Many programmes do not make provision for care of the pre-school age siblings of the children attending family learning programmes.

120. The ACLS does not carry out enough assessment and progress monitoring to meet the learners' needs. A variety of initial screening and assessment methods are used on FLLN programmes. Some adult learners complete checklists of existing skills related to the learning outcomes, while others have more formal initial assessments of their literacy and numeracy levels. However, further diagnostic assessment is rarely completed to guide individual learning and lesson planning. Learners complete learning diaries but these are often used as records of group activities rather than a method of recording progress towards achievement of learning goals. Learners on wider family learning programmes are not given frequent enough opportunities to identify existing skills, set new individual learning goals and record progress.

121. Strategic and operational management is good. A vision for family learning is shared and well promoted across the county. Strong and effective structures are in place to support the strategy. In addition to a strategic group of partners and providers, a meeting of practitioners takes place each term with schools, colleges, libraries and early years care providers to network and share good practice. A masterclass conference is held annually to showcase innovative initiatives and celebrate success. This is effective and valued by participants. The different funding streams, internal and external, are deployed effectively. Procedures for allocating resources to schools are clear and uncomplicated, and take-up is maximised. All colleges and providers delivering programmes on behalf of the LEA have service level agreements that are carefully monitored. However, when a college then negotiates with a school, there is no written agreement between the two on their relative roles and responsibilities. A family learning officer and family learning co-ordinator manage the provision, give advice and support to providers and manage the observation of teaching and learning.

122. Quality assurance procedures are in place to collect, evaluate and analyse information on courses and learners. These are not yet consistently implemented.

123. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory, with some examples of good practice in supporting learners from minority ethnic communities, learners with disabilities and multicultural curriculum activities.

124. The self-assessment report identified the weakness, but none of the strengths, found by inspectors.