INSPECTION REPORT

Nottingham City Council Adult and Community Learning Service

22 April 2005

ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Nottingham Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) is part of the city development department of Nottingham City Council (The council). ACLS contracts with Nottingham Learning and Skills Council and has made a successful bid to the European Social Fund for provision that will commence in September 2005. The structure and placement of ACLS within the council is currently under review. The ACLS team is led by the strategic learning and skills manager who is supported by a project leader, two development officers, two project development workers, a family learning development officer, a finance and contracts officer, an information officer and general administration staff.

2. Nottingham has 15 wards in the 10 per cent most deprived nationally, as measured by the index of multiple deprivation, and is ranked as the seventh most deprived local authority nationally. ACLS's strategy is to identify and support learners who are disadvantaged or not traditionally involved in learning in identified areas and wards with high levels of deprivation. Its aim is to work with partners and community organisations promoting equality and inclusion, developing those returning to learning and aiding their transition to a more formal learning experience.

3. Most of ACLS's regular provision is identified in the business plan. It also encourages voluntary and community sector organisations to propose and bid for funding for a range of locally based learning activities. To be successful the bid must meet ACLS's strategic priorities. A key function of ACLS is to support these organisations to monitor, develop and improve their performance. ACLS subcontracts its provision internally and externally. Subcontractors include Learning Works for Women, First Data, Take One, Greenfield Training, Fairham Community College, New College Nottingham, South Nottingham College, The Workers' Educational Association and a range of small voluntary and community sector organisations. Through partnership arrangements with Basic Educational Guidance in Nottingham (BEGIN), ACLS works with providers delivering literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) training. ACLS contracts Guideline Career Services to provide learners with information, advice and guidance on opportunities for progression. Last year ACLS contracted with a total of 120 community providers. Most of this short-term provision involved a small range of providers at any one time.

4. The city of Nottingham has a population of over 250,000, according to the 2001 census. The unemployment rate in Nottingham in February 2005 was 3.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.3 per cent. In some wards the unemployment rate is as high as 8 per cent. The city has below average literacy and numeracy skills and standards of adult educational achievement, particularly at key stages 1, 2 and 3. Over 1,500 asylum seekers are supported in accommodation in the city.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS   Grade 4

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** ACLS's leadership and management and arrangements for quality improvement are inadequate. Its arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. Training is satisfactory in information and communications technology (ICT), and visual and performing arts and media. Foundation programmes and family learning are inadequate.

6. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report contains much useful information about ACLS's work and the recent changes it has made. Although the report does accurately identify some of the weaknesses in leadership and management found by inspectors, it overestimates some of the strengths. The report candidly assesses the position in relation to quality improvement, recognising that ACLS is at an early stage in raising standards across all of its providers. Inspectors were unable to agree with claimed strengths in relation to retention and achievement because of the unreliability of ACLS's data.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a poor position to make improvements.** ACLS has over one-fifth of its established posts unfilled. Pending the completion of a review of the council's learning and skills service, this will remain the case. ACLS does not have an established and effective quality assurance system. Within the past six months, much work has been done to develop a range of quality assurance systems but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness. ACLS does not have complete data and cannot set meaningful and realistic targets for improving the provision.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE:

- ensure sufficient capacity to manage the provision effectively
- implement effective quality improvement procedures to improve teaching and learning
- improve the reliability of management information
- provide effective curriculum management

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality improvement	4

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT Adult and community learning	122	3

Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Arts Adult and community learning	27	3
Crafts Adult and community learning	20	3
Dance Adult and community learning	15	3
Music Adult and community learning	8	3

Foundation programmes		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy Adult and community learning	65	4
Numeracy Adult and community learning	38	4
ESOL Adult and community learning	9	4

Family learning	4
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Adult and community learning	74	4

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. Not all areas of learning were inspected. ACLS offers programmes in land-based construction, business administration, management and professional, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, hairdressing and beauty therapy, health, social care and public services and English, languages and communications. There were either too few learners or too few classes and tutors in these areas at the time of the inspection to maintain a representative sample. Inspectors visited ACLS only during the week of the inspection.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	40
Number of learners interviewed	122
Number of staff interviewed	67
Number of employers interviewed	1
Number of subcontractors interviewed	25
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	34
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	6

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. The data recorded on the management information system is accurate but far from complete. Reliable data on learners' retention and achievement is not available.

10. **ICT learners on drop-in courses have very good progression.** Of the 122 learners who have completed courses since August 2004, 116 have progressed on to work-based courses, full-time education or voluntary work. Learners produce work that is highly individualised and of satisfactory quality.

11. **Visual and performing arts and media learners benefit from the good development of personal and social skills.** They gain personal fulfilment through their studies. Standards of work are satisfactory and learners in most classes make the progress expected of them.

12. **Learners on foundation programmes develop good personal skills** and are able to increase their confidence and self-esteem. They make progress from one level to the next or to other learning opportunities within ACLS, at further education colleges or in

employment. Attendance during the inspection was low at 52 per cent.

13. **Learners on practical sessions in family learning develop self-confidence** and are highly motivated by the activities. They are able to describe clearly their views and opinions about their own learning needs and the positive aspects of their children's development. The standard of work in practical sessions is satisfactory. Attendance during the inspection was only 50 per cent and the average class size was low, at four learners.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Family learning	0	0	2	3	5
Foundation programmes	0	3	4	2	9
Information & communications technology	0	1	4	1	6
Visual & performing arts & media	0	2	3	1	6
Total	**0**	**6**	**13**	**7**	**26**

14. Teaching is satisfactory for ICT learners, with the best sessions being planned well to take account of each learners' needs. Staff are patient, friendly and welcoming, and act as role models for learners. Learners have regular access to information advice and guidance from specialist practitioners, which is particularly effective in encouraging learners to progress. In the weaker sessions, class objectives are not defined and teaching resources are poor. **Target-setting and monitoring of learners are poor on most level 1 courses.** No targets for achievement of units or courses are set in each individual workshop.

15. Teaching for visual and performing arts and media learners is satisfactory. Tutors in the successful lessons are energetic and enthusiastic and develop learners' skills through a sequence of progressive activities. The weaker sessions are tutor-led and do not encourage the active participation of all learners.

16. **Foundation programmes are not sufficiently planned, developed or monitored.** Tutors in the weaker sessions do not sufficiently relate the results of initial assessment to the planning of learning. Most groups of learners do not have effective individual learning plans, and specific timebound targets are not identified. Progress reviews do not identify the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills. Tutors in the better sessions give constant feedback and provide a good range of activities to stimulate learners to work on their own needs and levels.

17. **Family learning programmes are not planned sufficiently to meet each learner's needs.** Lessons do not provide a sufficient variety of work. The weaker lessons are tutor-led and the learners are mainly passive. In mixed-ability sessions, some tasks are too difficult for learners and others are too easy. Learners do not have a sense of ownership of their targets and individual learning plans, and many do not contribute any of their own comments.

18. Learners generally receive good support, **particularly in ICT, and visual and performing arts and media.** Learning in ICT classes is planned to suit each learner's needs and learners who most need help receive additional in-class support. Visual and performing arts and media learners benefit from a team of volunteer support workers. Foundation learners have good access to childcare and are well aware of the personal support

available. In family learning programmes, support is satisfactory. Learners are provided with impartial advice and guidance, and are directed to appropriate courses.

19. Resources across the whole provision are generally satisfactory. ICT learners use standard commercial equipment. Learners on music courses use modern sound recording equipment. Foundation learners have access to basic materials and ICT facilities. Family learners use a wide variety of materials in their practical sessions. However, in some centres adult learners use unsuitable furniture designed for children. Poor **attention is paid to health and safety on ICT courses in drop-in venues**, particularly to the legislation regarding visual display units. In one centre, children have easy access to computer equipment and trailing wires which are unprotected.

Leadership and management

20. **The council has a clear strategic focus on providing learning opportunities to meet local priorities.** The key priority is the provision of programmes, known as first steps, which aim to equip prospective learners with the confidence and ability to progress to further learning or employment.

21.   **ACLS has established extensive community partnership and networking arrangements.** It has contracts with 64 community providers, most with venues in the city's areas of deprivation. ACLS provides good support to established and new organisations committed to empowering their staff and offering easily accessible learning opportunities to local communities. The adult and community learning provision is designed to reach the most marginalised local residents, in targeted areas of deprivation, and to engage them in a range of appropriate learning programmes.

22. **ACLS does much good work to promote developments in equality of opportunity and diversity.** Members of minority ethnic groups have a good participation rate and often move from their initial classes, which may be traditional, into further learning or employment. ACLS produces regular management reports on the impact of provision in specific post code areas of deprivation. It has a good equal opportunities statement which focuses clearly on making learning accessible to people with multiple disadvantages and challenging all types of discrimination. **However, ACLS does not carry out enough formal monitoring or recording of equal opportunities and diversity information,** for example in teaching and learning resources, marketing information and project documents.

23. **Management information is inadequate.** ACLS has improved its management information system over the past two years, and the data recorded on the system is accurate. However, the records are far from complete. Reliable data on learners' retention and achievement are not available. Managers are restricted in monitoring the performance of providers, or the service as a whole.

24. **Some aspects of the provision are insufficiently managed.** ACLS has over one-fifth of its established posts unfilled. Pending the completion of a review of the council's learning and skills service, this will remain the case. The self-assessment report acknowledges the adverse effect that this is having on the support for, and monitoring of, providers. Arrangements for curriculum leadership and planning are inadequate in several areas of learning. ACLS has recently established a curriculum and mapping group, involving stakeholders, which is concerned with ensuring sufficiency of provision. However, within ACLS, the curriculum is not sufficiently co-ordinated.

25. **ACLS does not have an established and effective quality assurance system.** It is not possible to measure quality improvement. Within the past six months it has carried out much work to develop a range of quality assurance systems. Some of these systems have been implemented. However, ACLS has incomplete data and cannot set meaningful and realistic targets for improving the provision.

26. ACLS satisfactorily identifies and meets, learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs overall. The provision of support is good in some areas, such as ICT, but this standard is not uniformly maintained on other courses, such as foundation programmes.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic focus for the provision
- extensive development of community partnerships and networking
- much good work to support equality of opportunity and diversity development

Weaknesses

- inadequate management information
- insufficient formal monitoring of equal opportunities and diversity information
- insufficient management of some aspects of the provision
- insufficient quality assurance

Information & communications technology

Using IT

Strengths

- very good progression from ICT drop-in short courses
- good access to learning for disadvantaged and under-represented groups
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor attention to health and safety in ICT drop-in workshop venues
- poor target-setting and monitoring on most level 1 courses
- weak internal verification at one provider

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good development of personal and social skills
- effective partnerships to widen participation
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- ineffective curriculum co-ordination
- poor arrangements to improve teaching and learning

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good development of personal skills
- good arrangements to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning, development and monitoring of learning
- insufficient curriculum management

Family learning

Strengths

- good development of learners' self confidence in practical sessions
- good engagement of under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning to meet each learner's needs
- insufficient reviewing and recording of learners' progress on programme
- insufficient curriculum management

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE:

- 'that we can study for a course that is not available elsewhere'
- 'that we're not treated as students but as friends'
- 'the relaxed and friendly atmosphere'
- 'that we go home and know that we have achieved'
- 'that we gain loads of confidence'
- 'the very supportive tutors'
- 'the chance to return to learn in later life'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE COULD IMPROVE:

- 'the four-month closure of some courses for the summer break'
- 'the availability of ICT reference materials'
- 'the reliability of some of the ICT equipment'
- 'the low chairs and tables at some school venues'

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

Single term used in the framework	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Provider	Provider	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges.
Learner	Learner	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
Teacher/ Trainer	Tutor Mentor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them
Learning goals	Main learning goals Secondary	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. These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
Personal and learning skills	Personal and learning skills	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 4

Strengths

- clear strategic focus for the provision
- extensive development of community partnerships and networking
- much good work to support equality of opportunity and diversity development

Weaknesses

- inadequate management information
- insufficient formal monitoring of equal opportunities and diversity information
- insufficient management of some aspects of the provision
- insufficient quality assurance

27. The council has a clear strategic focus on providing learning opportunities to meet local priorities. The adult and community learning provision is designed to reach the most marginalised local residents, in targeted areas of deprivation, and to engage them in a range of appropriate learning programmes. The key priority is the provision of programmes, known as first steps, which aim to equip prospective learners with the confidence and ability to progress to further learning or employment. This strategic focus includes the engagement of parents in family learning. In addition, ACLS is actively involved in local strategic partnerships which influence the provision of learning opportunities for adults in the Nottingham area.

28. ACLS has developed extensive community partnerships and networking arrangements. It has contracts with 64 community providers, with a dominance of venues in the city's areas of deprivation. ACLS provides good support to established and new organisations committed to empowering their staff and offering easily accessible learning opportunities to local communities. Staff are good role models, often recruited from local areas, and provide empathetic support for learners with whom they identify. ACLS constantly encourages innovative courses such as communication and therapy through music, delivered by Nottingham Musicspace Trust to parents and their profoundly deaf children. Successful networking matches support such as free crèche facilities to learning opportunities, enabling learners to participate in learning in accessible venues in the heart of communities. The project officers and development workers have extensive knowledge of local communities, enabling them to identify gaps in the provision for under-represented groups. The expertise of ACLS's staff members is invaluable in supporting community providers through the application process and is clearly judged against specific criteria. Staff have high workloads due to three of the eight posts being vacant and extensive audit work for the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 being carried out, which is restricting capacity building and slowing developments.

29. ACLS's strategy for identifying and meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs is satisfactory overall. In some areas, for example in ICT, the provision is

good, but in others, for example on foundation programmes, the standard is not uniformly maintained on all courses.

30. Resources are satisfactory. Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced in their area of learning. ACLS has plans to ensure that, where necessary, staff take teaching qualifications. Some of the venues used for ICT lessons contain inappropriate furniture but, in most areas, the physical and learning resources in use are satisfactory. The council has recently changed its policy of not contributing towards ACLS's administration costs. The absence of reliable data relating to the retention and achievement of learners makes it difficult to make a judgement in relation to value for money.

31. For much of 2004, the senior post within ACLS was vacant. The post was filled in November 2004, and in the ensuing six months significant actions have been taken to improve the provision. A number of initiatives, such as the formation of groups for equality action and information learning technology (ILT) strategy, are now well underway to bring about improvements. Nevertheless, some significant weaknesses remain in leadership and management.

32. Management information is inadequate. Data on learners' retention and achievement is far from complete, with much information waiting to be recorded on the management information system. ACLS has made improvements to the management information system over the past two years, and the data recorded on the system is accurate. Management reports are well presented. Reliable data on learners' retention and achievement is not available, however, making it difficult for managers to set realistic targets. Providers do not record, in a consistent manner, learners who withdraw from courses. Insufficient data inhibits the ability of managers to make informed decisions and restricts the scope for managers to monitor the performance of providers, or ACLS as a whole. Managers have recognised this as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

33. Some aspects of the provision are insufficiently managed. ACLS has over one-fifth of its established posts unfilled. Pending the completion of a review of the council's learning and skills service, this will remain the case. The self-assessment report acknowledges the adverse effect that this is having on the support for, and monitoring of, providers. Arrangements for curriculum leadership and planning are inadequate in several areas of learning. ACLS has recently established a curriculum and mapping group, involving stakeholders, which is concerned with ensuring sufficiency of provision. However, insufficient curriculum co-ordination takes place within ACLS. Insufficient effective staff development planning takes place overall. ACLS has just started to identify the professional development needs of providers. It has carried out no strategic analysis of the staff development needs of the central team. Within the central team, arrangements for the conduct of performance reviews are satisfactory. Staff have good access to health and safety training. ACLS has put effective arrangements in place for the supervision of staff within the central team. Insufficient performance review has been carried out at the Learning Works centre.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 2

34. ACLS does much good work to promote developments in equality of opportunity and diversity. Regular management reports are produced on the effect of provision in specific post code areas of deprivation. Participation by members of minority ethnic groups is good. The equal opportunities statement is good, focusing clearly on making learning

accessible to people with multiple disadvantages and challenging all types of discrimination. ACLS's employees have a clear and detailed equal opportunities and diversity policy. The new equality and diversity group held its first meeting in March 2005. ACLS implemented a comprehensive toolkit of useful standardised paperwork in March 2005, following an extensive consultation with community providers. In 2004, two of ACLS's staff and representatives from the community and voluntary sector who were all trained as Disability Discrimination Act 1995 auditors jointly visited 65 community venues used by ACLS. Arrangements at the centres were audited and improved. ACLS has already allocated most the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 improvement funds to this work. Its staff have attended a range of equality and diversity training which is recorded in their personal files. Learners at community venues receive particularly effective specialist information, advice and guidance. An experienced and knowledgeable guidance worker is very successful in encouraging learners to remain engaged in learning by identifying and promoting further appropriate opportunities. Following their initial participation in traditional and stereotypical classes, members of minority ethnic groups often progress confidently into further learning or employment. For example, some older Asian women who started on a sewing course joined an ESOL learning group, and young African-Caribbean men who joined music courses found good employment in the media industry.

35. Provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities is a key service priority for ACLS, and the development plan written in July 2004 has been reviewed twice to take account of the developments in this area. These include increasing the provision for learners with mental health, autism, challenging behaviour or multiple, profound and complex needs, filling gaps in progression and exploring the potential for pre-E2E provision. ACLS appointed a co-ordinator for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities in July 2004 and participation by such learners has increased from 1 per cent to 5 per cent in the past four months. Improved induction and initial advice and guidance encourages learners to identify their individual needs and the self-declaration of learning difficulties or disabilities is being promoted. Twenty providers attended a two-day conference held by ACLS in March 2005. Of the 1,275 learners recorded on ACLS's computerised system for August 2004 to March 2005, 56 have a disability and 39 have a learning difficulty.

36. ACLS carries out insufficient formal monitoring and recording of equal opportunities and diversity information. It carries out much informal and inconsistent activity and recording, providing a resource for review and evaluation that is incomplete and difficult to access. Teaching and learning observations are insufficiently detailed and do not check resources for gender, age and race stereotyping, the use of language or physical accessibility. Provision is not marketed by ACLS or featured on the council's website. ACLS carries out informal monitoring of its providers' marketing materials, which are mostly paper based, bright and laid out well, with appropriate visual images and good use of accessible language. Take One's studios do have a good website featuring success stories of their learners. No alternative materials such as videos, CDs or audio-tapes are available to provide equality of access to information for many disadvantaged learners such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities, limited literacy abilities or learners who speak English as an additional language. ACLS does not effectively monitor the completion of project documents and gaps exist in the equality and diversity sections of providers' approved applications. ACLS's staff members' vast range of local knowledge is frequently and effectively communicated verbally, and log-sheets are used in some project files for recording equality and diversity notes.

Quality improvement   **Contributory grade 4**

37. ACLS does not have an established and effective quality improvement system to ensure continual development. However, it has worked in the past six months to develop some quality improvement measures, some of which it has implemented. For example, ACLS has strengthened its system for observing teaching and learning, although this system is not yet fully effective and ACLS is unable to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors graded a significant proportion of the lessons observed as unsatisfactory.

38. Learners are asked to reflect on their experiences, including the identification and achievement of their planned programme and learning goals. This feedback now forms an essential part of the development workers' role. However, ACLS does not collate or use the information to ensure overall quality improvement at a strategic level.

39. ACLS has established a quality task group and is implementing a quality toolkit for newly contracted provision. The toolkit includes a standardised individual learning plan and a final review. As yet, it is too early for any final reviews to have been completed, so it is not possible to judge their effectiveness.

40. ACLS has rewritten and updated the self-assessment report it produced in 2004 to take account of the significant amount of development work it has carried out in the past six months. The previous report did involve consultation with providers, who were asked to complete short self-assessment reports. In the updated report, produced early in 2005, the consultation involved the local learning partnerships to improve the previous report. The final draft was not circulated among the providers. The report contains much useful information about the work of ACLS and the recent changes. Although the revised self-assessment report accurately identifies some of the weaknesses in leadership and management, it overestimates some of the strengths. The report candidly assesses ACLS's position in relation to quality improvement, recognising that ACLS is at an early stage in raising standards across all providers. Some of the area of learning reports do not draw out the distinctive features of the area. Inspectors did not confirm claimed strengths in relation to retention and achievement because of the unreliability of data. Inspectors did identify some of the other strengths and weaknesses claimed in the self-assessment report, but also identified strengths and weaknesses in most areas which were not in the report. Inspectors found insufficient connection between the subcontracted providers' self-assessment reports and the main report. The main self-assessment report graded all of the areas of learning as satisfactory. Inspectors found two of the four areas of learning inspected to be satisfactory and two to be inadequate.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology   **Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT		
Adult and community learning	122	3

41. ACLS arranges ICT training in venues throughout the city. Courses are provided through in-house provision and by First Data, which is a major subcontractor. Learners can take long and short courses in introductory to level 1 accredited programmes. First Data provides short introductory courses offered as drop-in workshop at a variety of local community venues, many of which offer free childcare. The workshops introduce learners to ICT through digital photography and production of greeting cards and information leaflets. Longer nationally accredited courses in the use of information technology (IT) are available at three sites. An ICT computer maintenance course is available at a local community college. One centre offers long and short courses specifically for women. All learners have access to information, advice and guidance and additional literacy, numeracy and language skills support. At the time of inspection, 122 learners were enrolled on ICT programmes.

Using IT

Strengths

- very good progression from ICT drop-in short courses
- good access to learning for disadvantaged and under-represented groups
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor attention to health and safety in ICT drop-in workshop venues
- poor target-setting and monitoring on most level 1 courses
- weak internal verification at one provider

Achievement and standards

42. Complete data for retention and achievement was not available for all of the ICT programmes. However, progression data supplied by a major subcontractor demonstrates that the rate of progression from ICT drop-in short courses is very good. Of the 122 learners who have completed this course since August 2004, 116 have progressed to another work-based course, full-time education or voluntary working.

43. Learners are making satisfactory progress on all courses relative to their prior achievement and learning difficulties. Learners on the ICT drop-in workshops are producing digital images and greeting cards which are highly individualised and of satisfactory quality.

The quality of provision

44. ACLS offers IT courses in a wide range of community venues, which give learners from disadvantaged and under-represented groups easy access to learning. Learners have good opportunities to learn in their own communities and many of their tutors also live in the community in which they teach. One centre offers courses just for women. An adult and community college serving a large housing estate some distance from the city centre provides IT courses for local learners. A wide variety of ICT drop-in workshops are held throughout the city in venues convenient to the learners. Many venues provide free access to childcare. Two centres specifically meet the specialised requirements of those learners with mental health problems and hearing impairment.

45. Pastoral and in-class support for learners is good. Tutors plan classes well to meet the needs of each learner, and some providers are particularly skilful in introducing additional in-class support for those learners who most need help. Staff are patient, friendly and welcoming and act as role models for learners. Learners have regular access to information, advice and guidance from specialist practitioners which is particularly effective in encouraging learners to progress. All learners have access to satisfactory literacy, numeracy and language skills support from specialist tutors. However, the tutors of learners who are completing IT and literacy, numeracy and language skills courses do not communicate sufficiently.

46. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Of the six learning sessions that were observed, only one session was judged to be unsatisfactory and one session was good. In the best sessions, tutors plan well, and clearly identify and meet the individual needs of all learners. In the weaker sessions, class objectives are not defined well and teaching resources are poor.

47. Tutors have satisfactory resources and use them satisfactorily. The ICT drop-in sessions use mobile ICT hardware and software of a commercial standard. The ratio of tutors to learners overall is high, and additional language and learning support workers are available for learners who need them. Two providers give learners access to dedicated personal support workers. In two centres, however, some furniture is not suitable for ICT classes and ILT equipment is not sufficiently available or used. ACLS has identified the courses with regard to ILT and has recently devised a strategy and action plan to improve this aspect.

48. Poor attention is paid to health and safety in ICT drop-in workshop venues, particularly with regard to legislation on working with visual display units. At one venue, learners work with visual display units on trestle tables and at another venue the table height is designed for children, with most learners sitting on unadjustable plastic chairs. In one venue, the mobile ICT facility is set up in a crèche environment. Young children have easy access to the computer equipment and there are trailing wires which are not covered or protected. In the same centre, a fire exit was blocked. The provider had identified these problems in its September 2004 annual report but has taken no action to resolve them.

49. Target-setting and monitoring of learners are poor on most level 1 courses. No targets for achievement of units or courses are set within each individual workshop. Learners on courses in using IT are not clear about what they can realistically achieve within the timescales of the course. Monitoring of learners' achievement is weak. Systems are

unclear and are not kept up to date. Records do not clearly identify the units achieved or general progress by a learner.

Leadership and management

50. ACLS is unable to provide data which accurately records rates for retention, achievement and progression. ACLS, and its subcontractors, carry out insufficient analysis of programme performance. The staff development processes for ACLS's teaching staff are good. Staff have regular supervision meetings with their managers, which contribute to their annual appraisal and to ACLS's production of a staff team development plan. Tutors have good access to training for teaching qualifications, but insufficient attention is given to continuing professional development in ICT-related subjects.

51. Inspectors found a culturally and socially diverse group of learners in most classes reflecting the needs of the local communities. All venues are accessible to wheelchair users.

52. The self-assessment report identifies as strengths areas that inspectors found to be either no more than satisfactory or unsatisfactory. However, two providers have recently introduced their own self-assessment report which realistically reflects the current status of their provision.

53. The internal verification processes in one provider are weak. No records of internal verification since 2003 were available to inspectors. Internal verification of learners' work is not carried out until the end of the programme and while internal verifiers and assessors do meet and discuss matters informally, these meetings are not documented. However, the assessment of learners' work is satisfactory.

Visual & performing arts & media   Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Arts		
Adult and community learning	27	3
Crafts		
Adult and community learning	20	3
Dance		
Adult and community learning	15	3
Music		
Adult and community learning	8	3

54. ACLS offers a range of courses in art and design, crafts, dance, music production and digital imaging. Provision is through a series of partnerships with internal and external contractors, and a number lead to an Open College Network unit qualification at entry level and/or level 1. Typically, accredited programmes run for 15 or 30 weeks. At the time of the inspection, 70 learners were enrolled on courses.

Strengths

- good development of personal and social skills
- effective partnerships to widen participation
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- ineffective curriculum co-ordination
- poor arrangements to improve teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

55. The development of personal and social skills is good. Learners benefit significantly from their studies and gain personal fulfilment. Two learners in a sequence dance class reported increased well being, co-ordination and memory skills as a result of the class. In a vocal production lesson, one young learner spoke highly of his new confidence in presentation and conversational skills.

56. Standards of work are satisfactory, and in most classes, learners make the progress expected of them. In an art workshop one learner, an absolute beginner, has progressed in a short time to produce drawings that show evidence of a good understanding of the techniques of proportion and perspective. In craft sessions, one learner has produced an embroidered cushion using a 'cathedral window' motif, and the same learner has designed and made an intricate gold work piece by using beading and cording.

The quality of provision

57. Effective partnerships with contractors such as Inspire and Take One have enabled ACLS to widen participation and successfully attract learners not traditionally involved in learning. Both contractors attract learners who would not normally return to learning, and

include a significant number of learners from minority ethnic groups. Inspire provides arts and crafts learning opportunities for learners with disabilities, many of whom live in supported housing and some of whom are referred by social workers. Good local knowledge by an internal contractor provides a successful dressmaking course for Asian women.

58. Support for learners is good. Learners at Inspire enjoy effective learning support from a team of volunteer support workers, and individual subject support from tutors on other programmes is readily available. Health and safety is emphasised well in written tests, lesson introductions and demonstrations. Information on learners' entitlements is displayed in every lesson and large print copies are placed in prominent positions in classrooms, and relationships with the information, advice and guidance worker are effective. In music courses, the information, advice and guidance worker is notified of the commencement of a new course and organises a follow-up advice and guidance session on progression opportunities within six weeks of the start. A number of former Take One learners now have prominent positions in the music industry, and one is employed as a tutor on the music production course.

59. Teaching is satisfactory. Over 80 per cent of the lessons observed were satisfactory or better. The more successful lessons are those in which the tutor is energetic and enthusiastic, and has structured sequential activities which allow for the development of skills. For example, in a vocal production class a warm-up is followed by vocal exercises, harmony work and an improvisation to finish. Writing a song is the subject for the second part of the lesson, effectively linking practice with theory. In a sequence dancing class, challenging outcomes and a good pace ensure that mature learners learn a range of new dance steps. The less successful lessons are tutor led and do not permit all learners to be actively involved.

60. Learners receive satisfactory literacy, numeracy and language skills support. Recent work by BEGIN is developing and integrating literacy and numeracy support into the music provision.

61. The quality of lesson planning varies across providers in content and presentation. In some cases, desired outcomes are not sufficiently defined and the lesson is not focused enough. Few plans identify the different needs of individual learners and none allows for tutor evaluation. In the better lessons, tutors have detailed schemes of work and lesson plans and learners have challenging outcomes. One provider tests learners' knowledge of health and safety innovatively using appropriate visual imagery. At another provider, learners are asked to sign against a set of criteria to confirm their understanding.

62. Resources are satisfactory. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified, and all have, or are working towards, a recognised teaching qualification. Learners use a good range of equipment to produce and record music. However, in one centre used for art and design, noise from other parts of the building is distracting. Poor artificial light in the same room makes accurate portrayal of still-life subjects more difficult.

Leadership and management

63. Overall co-ordination of the curriculum is ineffective. ACLS recognises that no strategic overview of provision currently exists in the city, the curriculum is not sufficiently coherent and learners have too few progression pathways. However, the adult and community

learning strategic working group is currently mapping and developing progression pathways across the city to provide learners with a coherent framework of provision.

64. The arrangements to improve teaching and learning are poor. Schemes of work and lesson plans are often not checked until a lesson observation takes place, which is often in the middle of the course. Lesson observation forms concentrate on teaching and do not include judgements on learning and attainment. However, providers have welcomed and are using the recently introduced adult and community learning practical toolkit that provides clear guidance on standard documents and arrangements for quality improvements.

65. The self-assessment report identifies the strengths found by inspectors but does not recognise the weaknesses in the provision.

Foundation programmes   **Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy		
Adult and community learning	65	4
Numeracy		
Adult and community learning	38	4
ESOL		
Adult and community learning	9	4

66. Of the 17 foundation courses offered during the inspection, nine were in literacy, five were in numeracy, one was in mixed literacy and numeracy course and two were in ESOL, and all were offered from entry level to level 1. In addition to the internal provider, Learning Works, First Data, Fairham Community College and the Workers' Educational Association provide learning opportunities. Courses are offered in five community centres, a community college and three local schools. All courses take place during the daytime on weekdays.

67. During the inspection, 112 learners attended foundation programmes. ACLS could not supply data on the number of learners and enrolments since August 2004 or the learner profile regarding gender ratio, ethnicity and declared learning difficulty and disability.

68. The strategic learning and skills manager has the overall responsibility for the area of learning and is supported by BEGIN in operational development and capacity building. Teaching duties are shared by one full-time and one part-time tutor employed by ACLS and six part-time tutors employed by the subcontractors.

Strengths

- good development of personal skills
- good arrangements to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning, development and monitoring of learning
- insufficient curriculum management

Achievement and standards

69. Learners develop good personal skills. Through the learning opportunities available to them they are able raise their confidence and gain self-esteem. Some learners are now able to apply newly gained skills in their everyday lives. For example, some are able to read bills, newspapers and technical instructions and write letters of complaint. Others are now able to communicate better with doctors, help their children with homework and use computing skills and the internet to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Learners make progress from one level to the next or to other learning opportunities within ACLS or in further education colleges, while others gain employment. For example, one learner who received support for dyslexia now has a job as a classroom assistant and acts as a learning advocate within her local community. Another woman with very low self-esteem

and heavy family commitments improved her skills and confidence and became an engineer with a local company. Learners have high levels of satisfaction and highly value the support from their tutors.

70. Complete data for measuring retention and achievement was not available at the time of inspection. Attendance during the inspection was low at 52 per cent. Some courses are organised as drop-in sessions and learners tend not to stay for the full duration of the sessions.

The quality of provision

71. ACLS has good arrangements to widen participation through conveniently located learning venues. Learners can attend classes near home, in local neighbourhoods, in community venues such as a well-established women's centre and in local schools. Venues provide safe environments where young and older learners can re-engage in learning in relaxed and familiar settings. Organisations provide community learning across targeted areas and with priority groups across the city. The strategy is successful in targeting geographical areas and communities which are often the most disadvantaged. Good arrangements exist to help learners participate in learning. Learners are able to access childcare in many venues and are provided with bus passes on some programmes. Learners in the women's centre are well aware that they can access support for jobsearch, individual personal problems and ESOL.

72. Resources are satisfactory overall. Most tutors have suitable qualifications and a good level of expertise. Others take opportunities to develop their skills or have planned meetings with managers to discuss further staff development. Learners have access to basic materials and to ICT equipment. Some accommodation is inadequate, with open and very noisy learning spaces and adults having to use seats and tables which are designed for children.

73. Advice and guidance is satisfactory overall. On some programmes, the advice and guidance worker visits groups to advise learners on their next steps in learning. All learners receive an induction and are aware of their commitments to learning and basic health and safety procedures.

74. Learning is not sufficiently planned, developed or monitored. Twenty-two per cent of the lessons observed were judged to be inadequate. In these sessions, tutors do not sufficiently relate the results of the initial assessment to the planning of learning. In some cases, schemes of work are not produced to guide learning. In other cases, short-term goals do not reflect the primary needs of learners. Most groups do not have effective individual learning plans, and the plans that are produced do not identify specific and timebound targets. Some learners do not have access to their plan or do not fully understand the plan's purpose. Tutors in the inadequate sessions use insufficiently developed teaching techniques and methods. For example, they do not pace learning appropriately to enable learners effectively to practise new skills independently. Tutors do not systematically record and monitor learners' progress. Progress reviews do not sufficiently or clearly identify learning targets. Tutors do not monitor progress sufficiently during the sessions and do not give learners enough verbal feedback. However, in the best sessions observed, tutors give constant feedback to learners. They run a good range of activities including individual, pair and group work, and provide a wide range of stimulating and well-contextualised materials to ensure that all learners work to their own needs and

levels. Learners in these sessions make good progress in developing their personal skills. For example, one tutor prepared her session well to accommodate two new learners who had identified their own learning difficulty.

Leadership and management

75. Management of the curriculum in the area is insufficient. ACLS has not produced a skills for life development plan. The subcontracted organisation, BEGIN, is supporting ACLS in preparing an action plan in consultation with providers. An audit of provision has started and communication between providers and with staff is improving, but it is too early to assess the effect on the learner. Managers are unable to access accurate data and information to evaluate and plan improvements and developments of the learners' experience. They do not have a clear overview of the success of programmes and do not monitor learners' performance effectively. Although ACLS has recently introduced a practical toolkit for improvement that is universally welcomed by providers, there is little evidence of improvement in quality of programmes through the process. Observations of teaching and learning do not focus on the development of subject skills and observers do not comment sufficiently on how well learning and attainment take place. Written feedback to tutors does not always clearly reflect what was observed and action-planning for improvement does not specify what tutors need to do to improve the quality of their lessons. Practices for planning, development and monitoring of learning vary in quality and in practice. For example, individual learning plans are not kept sufficiently up to date to be used effectively. Progress reviews are not effective in recording the achievement and progression of learners to plan future learning goals. ACLS has plans in place to rectify this but it is too early to see the effect of these plans on learning.

76. The self-assessment report does not identify most of the strengths and weaknesses identified during inspection. For example, management had insufficient information and data on taster courses and longer programmes, and could not analyse retention and achievement accurately on these courses.

Family learning   **Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	74	4

77. Fifty-four learners are taking part in family learning courses and 20 learners are on family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) courses. Daily courses are provided at 82 community venues in nursery, infant, primary and secondary schools, and community centres throughout Nottingham, predominately in areas of deprivation. Sessions are between two and six hours long and programmes run for between 10 and 22 weeks. Learners gain accreditation for literacy, numeracy and family learning skills. Wider family learning taster courses are used to attract new and diverse groups of learners, as well as those not traditionally involved in learning, and include programmes in sport, family health, languages, cookery, arts and crafts and IT. During the inspection, 58 wider family learning and FLLN courses and a one-day taster workshop were offered.

78. Thirteen tutors teach on the programmes, 12 of whom are women. An ACLS family learning co-ordinator is responsible for managing the provision. Community development managers represent the three local colleges, the Workers' Educational Association and the voluntary community groups, and manage the day-to-day delivery of the courses in partnership with schools, parents and learners. ACLS's development staff work to support the local communities groups.

Strengths

- good development of learners' self confidence in practical sessions
- good engagement of under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning to meet each learner's needs
- insufficient reviewing and recording of learners' progress on programme
- insufficient curriculum management

Achievement and standards

79. Family learning practical sessions develop learners' self-confidence well. Learners are highly motivated by these activities, which help them in bonding with their children and enhancing their parenting skills. The learners can clearly articulate their views and opinions on their children's development and their own learning needs. They can identify the positive aspects of their children's development as well as the difficulties experienced by them in completing tasks. Learners have the self-confidence to discuss this and their learning needs with their tutors and their colleagues.

80. Learners produce practical work of a satisfactory standard, creating well made objects

such as puppets, cards and storyboards for subsequent use in school and the home. This further enhances the learners' relationships with their children, and their parenting skills by imaginative play and creative story telling.

81. The attendance rate during inspection was only 50 per cent and the average class size is low, at four learners. Data in the computerised information system is incomplete and cannot be used to make accurate judgements about retention and achievement.

The quality of provision

82. ACLS's approaches to engage under-represented groups are good, particularly its work with male learners and ESOL learners. Family learning staff work extensively in partnership with local community providers and schools to identify the needs of communities in areas of high deprivation across the city. The taster programmes and promotional events are well attended by men and women of all ages and from a range of minority ethnic groups. All participate actively in the range of practical activities offered. Learners are provided with a broad range of educational options offered by many providers across the city. Classes are held at 82 venues across the city including local schools and community venues that are accessible for all learners. The mode of attendance is flexible and usually planned to meet the needs of parents and schools. The range of accredited and non-accredited options for learners is satisfactory.

83. Accommodation and resources are generally satisfactory and suitable for purpose. ACLS has recognised that furniture in some schools is inappropriate for adult learners, as only low tables and small chairs are available. An action plan is in place to deal with these problems. Classrooms in many schools are light, colourful and well furnished for adults and children learning together, although very small rooms are used in some venues. Resources are mainly satisfactory, with appropriate workbooks used to support learning in classes. Most tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced and some have attended skills for life training. However, a few are not suitably qualified for teaching family learning groups and are unable to deliver suitable learning activities for learners in need of literacy and numeracy skills support. Some tutors are not appropriately qualified to teach ESOL learners.

84. The Children's Act 2004 is applicable to the family learning provision, and ACLS meets the requirements of ensuring that learners, parents and their children are safe. School staff are present at all family learning sessions and events.

85. Learners receive satisfactory support and guidance. BEGIN provides impartial initial advice, guidance and referral on literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision to all learners and directs them to appropriate courses. Pre-course information for accredited courses and most non-accredited courses is satisfactory.

86. Lessons are not planned sufficiently to meet each learner's needs. Too much emphasis is placed on the pre-defined schemes of work and related lesson plans that link to the national school curriculum. Work in lessons is not varied enough to support the learners' needs identified through initial assessment. Assessment results are not used effectively to plan for and develop learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills or to achieve individual learners' personal learning goals. For example, many learners identify a need to develop their own literacy, numeracy and language skills, but tutors do not use adequate teaching strategies to develop these skills. Some lessons are not structured well and

include too narrow a range of teaching and learning activities. The weaker lessons are dominated by tutors talking at mainly passive learners. In mixed-ability classes, some tasks are too difficult for learners and others are too easy. ESOL learners have difficulty in expressing their understanding in English, but benefit well from translation provided by the bilingual support tutor. However, the role of the bilingual tutor is not always clearly identified on the lesson plans. Tutors' classroom management and control of learners is ineffective in some classes where parents and children are expected to work together to produce practical items. Some children are unco-operative and disruptive, spoiling the lessons for others involved. This is not identified in lesson evaluation or subsequent lesson planning.

87. Learners' progress on their programmes is not sufficiently reviewed or recorded. Learners used diaries on some courses, but tutors complete most of the learners' individual learning plans. The learners have little ownership of the targets and individual learning plans and most them do not contribute any of their own comments. For example, a tutor had crossed out the learning goals written by some ESOL learners and had rewritten them in a more complex language which the learners did not understand. Learners' prior knowledge and experiences are not sufficiently identified for literacy, numeracy, language and other family learning activities. Ongoing classroom assessment of learners' achievements is not used in relation to their individual development needs. Instead it relates to set milestones linked to the national school curriculum activities and the scheme of work. Tutors keep lists of learners' completed activities but do not record how well the learner is progressing and what they need to do to improve. In many classes, end-of-session evaluation by tutors and learners does not take place to reinforce the skills learnt that day.

Leadership and management

88. Courses are planned at accessible local venues to meet community needs. The adult and community learning family learning co-ordinator and the community providers meet regularly to discuss further courses. The community providers are visited regularly by ACLS, and participation and developments are promoted through good working relationships between the parties. The range of short taster courses offered can lead to learners taking part in longer literacy, numeracy and language skill acquisition courses based in family learning settings. In addition, learners in family learning groups are introduced to other vocational-linked skills such as IT, art and crafts, music and cooking.

89. The family learning curriculum is not sufficiently managed throughout ACLS and its community providers. The monitoring of courses is not sufficiently effective. For example, a short course aimed at improving English language skills for Italian parents with children of school age was running with all non-Italian learners. Monitoring of attendance while courses are operating is not systematic and too slow to enable ACLS to deal promptly with low attendance. During the inspection, many classes had registers showing that fewer than 50 per cent of learners regularly attend. ACLS has two systems for the observation of classes for family learning, a quality monitoring process and the new teaching and learning observation system. Some community providers are unclear of the differences between the systems and their purposes. The teaching and learning observation process provides insufficient detail to support continuous improvement. Subsequent action plans for tutors' development have generic targets and are not timebound, although there is frequent communication regarding these. Tutors' lesson planning is not checked to ensure that learners' individual needs are prepared for, whether learners' progress is recorded and how

effectively learning resources are used. Some tutors are unclear of how to set learners targets in their learning plans, despite ACLS offering staff development in this area.

90. The self-assessment report does not identify the key weaknesses found by inspectors. Recorded data, although accurate, was incomplete and did not support strengths relating to achievement and retention.