# INSPECTION REPORT

# Somerset County Council

**15 December 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.
• adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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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# INSPECTION REPORT

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1.  The Somerset Adult Learning and Leisure Service (the service) of Somerset Local Authority is part of the community directorate of Somerset County Council.  Since April 2001, core funding has come from the Somerset Learning and Skills Council (LSC).  The service also obtains grants from external sources and additional funding from the LSC.  The service offers around 3,750 vocational and non-vocational courses annually in over 400 venues including schools, libraries and community centres.  In 2004-05, the service had almost 24,000 enrolments.  Women accounted for 75 per cent of enrolments, and minority ethnic groups for 7 per cent.  Approximately 8 per cent of learners declared a learning difficulty and/or disability.  The service offers courses in health and social care, science and mathematics, horticulture, information and communications technology (ICT), beauty therapy, sports and leisure, and visual and performing arts.  It also offers history and social sciences, language, literature and culture, business administration, and education and training courses.  Its preparation for life and work provision includes English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy and numeracy, independent living and leisure skills, access programmes, family learning and community development.  Most of the courses leading to qualifications are accredited through the Open College Network (OCN) or by other examining bodies.  Courses are mostly delivered over 36 weeks, for two hours a week, over three terms.  The service also offers some short two-hour and three-hour tasters and six-hour day courses.

2.  The group manager, the head of the service, is responsible for the overall management of the service, supported by three senior managers.  The areas of learning are managed through a team of 11 curriculum managers and team leaders.  The service organises its provision through five main administrative centres throughout the county.  The service employs some 250 permanent staff and 550 part-time tutors.  Some part-time co-ordinators have a lead responsibility for an area of learning.  A further 58 tutors deliver courses in partner organisations including a sports partnership, a community centre, an early years childcare and development partnership, an organisation for young people, a charity for disadvantaged children and Sure Start.  The service also subcontracts some of its provision to Yeovil College, Strode College and Somerset College of Arts and Technology.

3.  The county of Somerset has a population of 507,500 of which 75.8 per cent are aged 19 or over.  Just over 25 per cent of the population is aged 60 or over.  According to the 2001 census, 1.2 per cent of Somerset's population came from a minority ethnic background compared with 2.3 per cent for the Southwest region.  The unemployment rate in September 2005 was 1.2 per cent compared with the national average of 2.3 per cent and the figure for the Southwest of 1.4 per cent.  In Bridgwater, the Sydenham ward remains a deprived community with high levels of poverty.  In the recent index of multiple deprivation, West Somerset ranks as the 110th most deprived authority of 355 in England.

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS                                    Grade 3

4.  **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory**.  The service's leadership and

management and its approach to equality of opportunity are good.  Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory.  The provision is good in health, public services and care and in community development.  Provision in ICT, leisure, travel and tourism, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work and family learning is satisfactory.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.**  The self-assessment process involves most staff and many learners.  Each area of learning evaluates its contribution to the service's annual objectives.  Some staff do not contribute sufficiently to the self-assessment process, however, and the process does not sufficiently involve part-time tutors and subcontractors.  The self-assessment report is detailed and suitably critical.  It does not sufficiently analyse the quality of teaching and learning, although it identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.  Inspectors judged some areas identified in the report's strengths to be no more than normal practice.  Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report are too descriptive and are not sufficiently evaluated.  The grades given to the areas of learning in the self-assessment report matched those of the inspectors in five out of eight instances.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.**  The service has implemented a comprehensive quality review process to support the continuous improvement of its own provision and that of its subcontractors.  It closely monitors the quality review action plans.  It has well-established arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning.  The service manages change well and has successfully reorganised the management of the curriculum in response to weaknesses identified through formal review processes.  The service regularly conducts risk assessments of its premises and has service level agreements in place for all of its subcontracted provision.  Development plans are clear and reflect the improvement priorities of the service as a whole.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning
- strengthen the self-assessment process
- increase the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons
- improve the monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- maintain the level of local provision
- improve the sharing of good practice
- further integrate literacy, numeracy and language skills provision into the curriculum
- widen the range of literacy, numeracy and language skills provision
- strengthen operational management

# GRADES

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

| Leadership and management | 2 |
|---|---|
| Contributory grades: | |
| Equality of opportunity | 2 |
| Quality improvement | 3 |

| Health, public services and care | 2 | |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Complementary health services* <br> Adult and community learning | 75 | 2 |
| *Social care* <br> Adult and community learning | 75 | 2 |
| *Early years* <br> Adult and community learning | 17 | 2 |

| Information and communications technology | 3 | |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *ICT for users* <br> Adult and community learning | 1,382 | *3* <br> 3 |

| Leisure, travel and tourism | 3 | |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Sport, leisure and recreation* <br> Adult and community learning | 1,122 | *3* <br> 3 |

| Arts, media and publishing | 3 | |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Dance* <br> Adult and community learning | 211 | 3 |
| *Music* <br> Adult and community learning | 140 | 3 |
| *Fine arts* <br> Adult and community learning | 650 | 3 |
| *Crafts* <br> Adult and community learning | 684 | 3 |
| *Media and communication* <br> Adult and community learning | 13 | 3 |

| Languages, literature and culture | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Other languages, literature and culture* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 1,034 | 3 |

| Preparation for life and work | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *ESOL* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 275 | 3 |
| *Literacy and numeracy* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 134 | 3 |
| *Independent living and leisure skills* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 484 | 3 |
| *Access programmes* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 121 | 2 |

| Family learning | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Adult and community learning* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 118 | 3 |

| Community development | | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Adult and community learning* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 220 | 2 |

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7.  The inspection took place between October 10 and December 15, 2005.  Inspectors made four visits to the service during this period.  Between 10 and 12 October, inspectors observed teaching and learning in six out of the eight areas of learning.  Between 19 and 22 October and 22 and 24 November, inspectors observed activities in family learning and community development.  The main inspection took place between 5 and 15 December, 2005.  The inspection judged the effectiveness of leadership and management within the service.  Inspectors also graded provision in eight areas of learning where the numbers of courses running were sufficient to support a firm evidence base.  These were health, public services and care, ICT, leisure, travel and tourism, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work, family learning and community development.

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of inspectors | 21 |
| Number of inspection days | 156 |
| Number of learners interviewed | 609 |
| Number of staff interviewed | 228 |
| Number of subcontractors interviewed | 16 |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 180 |
| Number of partners/external agencies interviewed | 52 |
| Number of visits | 4 |

# KEY FINDINGS

## Achievements and standards

8.  **Retention and achievement rates are high on most courses in health, public services and care, and on accredited courses in sport, leisure and recreation**.  In health, public services and care, the overall retention rate was 95 per cent in 2003-04 and 2004-05.  In sport, leisure and recreation, the overall retention rate was 98 per cent in 2003-04 and 99 per cent in 2004-05.  In health, public services and care, the overall achievement rate was 86 per cent in 2003-04 and 89 per cent in 2004-05.  In sport, leisure and recreation, the overall achievement rate in 2003-04 was 95 per cent and 96 per cent in 2004-05.

9.  **In arts, media and publishing, the standard of many learners' work is good**.  Individual work shows a high degree of personal interpretation and much work demonstrates a high level of creativity and experimentation.  Adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities create many good examples of artwork and, in food preparation, produce meals of a high standard.

10.  Learners benefit significantly from learning in sport, leisure and recreation, in art, media and publishing, in preparation for life and work, in family learning and in community development.  **In art, media and publishing, learners apply the wider benefits of learning well**.  They have gained in confidence and self-esteem.  Many have produced good-quality items for friends and family and some have received commissions for their work.  **In sport, leisure and recreation, the enhancement of learners' health and wellbeing is good**.  Learners have improved their general physical health and exhibit good motor skills.  **In ESOL, learners achieve their personal goals well**.  They develop skills for good integration into British life and take part successfully in many daily activities.  **In literacy and numeracy and on return to learn courses, learners display good levels of motivation and participate fully in sessions**.  They acquire skills which they use in other areas of their lives.  **In family learning, the development of learners' skills to support children's learning is good**.  They demonstrate a greater understanding of the activities their children carry out at school and have learnt how to apply these activities in the home.  **In community development, learners' development of skills and knowledge is very good** and enables them to participate well in their communities.

11.  Retention and achievement are satisfactory in ICT, on non-accredited courses in sport,

leisure and recreation, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work, in family learning and in community development.  Overall attendance during the inspection was satisfactory.

12.  **In ESOL, the take up of accreditation is low**.  Almost half of the learners who enrol on ESOL courses do not register to take examinations.

## The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

|  | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health, public services and care | 2 | 11 | 3 | 1 | 17 |
| Information and communications technology | 1 | 11 | 13 | 4 | 29 |
| Leisure, travel and tourism | 3 | 17 | 9 | 2 | 31 |
| Arts, media and publishing | 7 | 15 | 14 | 0 | 36 |
| Languages, literature and culture | 6 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 25 |
| Preparation for life and work | 5 | 15 | 19 | 3 | 42 |
| Family learning | 1 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 16 |
| Community development | 4 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 10 |
| **Total** | **29** | **85** | **78** | **14** | **206** |

13.  **Overall teaching and learning are good in health, public services and care, sport, leisure and recreation, in literacy and numeracy, on return to learn courses, and in community development**.  In health, public services and care, particularly skilled and knowledgeable tutors use a wide range of techniques to develop learners' knowledge and skills.  Tutors use innovative practical exercises regularly to make learning memorable.  In sport, leisure and recreation, tutors demonstrate movements well and adapt them to the needs of the learners.  In literacy and numeracy, tutors successfully encourage learners to extend their learning through a range of challenging and stimulating tasks.  On return to learn courses, tutors are sensitive to the needs of adult learners who have not participated in learning for a considerable time or who may have experienced difficulties in their lives.  In community development, teaching and learning are very good and encourage and inspire learners.  Sessions use a good variety of active learning techniques to develop learners' understanding and knowledge of concepts and skills.

14.  **In health, public services and care, teaching resources are good and promote effective learning**.  Tutors provide imaginative resources to help learners understand new topics.  Tutors regularly produce detailed handouts with good diagrams for anatomy and physiology, massage and reflexology sessions.

15.  **Literacy and numeracy training is integrated well into the ICT courses**.  Tutors use a variety of techniques to combine and develop reading, writing and number skills with ICT.  Tutors plan sessions well and produce detailed schemes of work, which they change and update regularly during the course in response to learners' needs.

16.  **In ESOL, tutors use good language teaching strategies to promote learning at the higher levels**.  They use a good range of well-paced activities to motivate learners.  They encourage learners to summarise their thoughts regularly and develop learners' intonation skills well.

17.  Courses respond well to the needs of learners.  In ICT, **the response to learners' needs**

**is good**.  The range of courses offered is based on a thorough needs analysis of learners and their reasons for learning.  In **languages, literature and culture, the range of courses is good**.  Learners benefit from a good range of courses in the more popular languages.  The service has devised a coherent three-year curriculum for languages.  **In courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the geographical spread of the provision is good**.  Courses are available across the county in many accessible venues.  **In family learning, programmes support school development well**.  The service enables learners to develop personal confidence and skills to support their children.  **In community development, the service offers a wide range of innovative projects to meet community needs**.

18.  **Enrichment activities are good in languages, literature and culture**.  Learners enjoy the comprehensive range and variety of activities outside the classroom.  These include language circles, visits to cultural exhibitions, study trips, holidays, and links with local twinning associations.

19.  **Strategies to widen participation through partnership working are good in family learning, community development, on courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in ESOL and on return to learn courses**.  In family learning, the service offers a wide range of free taster courses and workshops.  In community development, partnerships are particularly productive and meet the needs and interests of learners and communities.  In ESOL, tutors work closely with companies to enable learners to attend courses.  For adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, working in partnership enables the service to provide more resources and learning opportunities for learners.

20.  **Support for learners is good on courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**.  Support to meet learners' needs is good.  Individual support for learners in the classroom takes account of their particular learning difficulty and/or disability.  Tutors ensure that carers understand in detail the requirements of the courses.  Information about the courses is clear and accessible in different formats.  Some documents use written symbols to assist learners with poor reading skills.

21.  The range of courses is satisfactory and meets the needs of learners in health, public services and care, ICT, sports, leisure and recreation, and arts, media and publishing.

22.  Support for learners is generally satisfactory.  Learners receive an appropriate level of support in most areas.  The service has a range of assistive technology to support learners on their courses.  Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory.  On some courses, information is integrated with the teaching.  Learners receive suitable pre-course information.  Additional support is appropriate.  Learners who have identified the need for extra support with their language, literacy or numeracy skills receive sufficient support in classes or through the service's discrete courses.

23.  Some observed teaching was weak in ICT, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, ESOL and courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.  **In ICT, aspects of teaching were unsatisfactory**.  In some sessions, learners make little progress.  Tutors teach the group together and take little account of learners' different abilities and learning styles.  Tutors are often too quick to take control of learners' computers.  **In arts, media and publishing, teaching is insufficiently structured in many sessions.**  The pace of some sessions is slow.  Many tutors do not set clear objectives at the

beginning of the session or review them at the end. Tutors make insufficient use of questioning to check learners' understanding. Some tutors emphasise technique and skills' acquisition too much at the expense of the creative process. **In languages, literature and culture, the target language is insufficiently used**. Tutors speak too much English and are too quick to use English when resolving learners' difficulties. The teaching often focuses too much on individual words and does not demonstrate or encourage the use of new vocabulary in a relevant context. **In ESOL, insufficient attention is paid to the learning needs of individuals on lower-level courses**. Tutors select too many whole-group learning activities and use too many worksheets. In many sessions, tutors provide learners with insufficient opportunities to practise their oral skills. These learners have insufficient time in sessions to practise and maintain their levels of skill. **On courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, more able learners are insufficiently challenged**. Tutors do not set specific targets to enable more able learners to develop their skills further or to take advantage of progression opportunities. They do not select a suitable range of activities to engage all learners productively.

24. **Insufficient use is made of information and learning technology (ILT) in languages, literature and culture**. Most classrooms have interactive whiteboards with reliable access to the internet. Few tutors use this technology sufficiently to present learning materials in an attractive and memorable way.

25. **Initial assessment arrangements are insufficient in health, public services and care, sport, leisure and recreation, ESOL, and on courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**. In health, public services and care, the process is unclear for both tutors and learners. Few learners have had sufficient initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills, and not enough initial assessment of vocational skills takes place. In sport, leisure and recreation, tutors do not fully understand the initial assessment process and the results are insufficiently documented. In ESOL, in some remote locations, learners do not receive immediate initial diagnostic assessment and some individual learning plans contain insufficient detail to identify long-term learning goals. On courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the initial assessment of learners' existing skills and competences is insufficient. Learning targets are not based on the assessed levels and abilities of learners.

26. **In family learning, opportunities to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of learners are insufficient**. The assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs is insufficient on taster and short courses. Some tutors do not have the skills to identify and support adult literacy and numeracy needs. The integration of literacy and numeracy is insufficient on return to learn courses, where tutors do not have sufficient skills to effectively meet learners' needs.

27. The recording of learners' progress is ineffective in ICT and insufficient in sport, leisure and recreation, and in languages, literature and culture. **In ICT, the use of individual learning plans to record learners' progress is ineffective.** Tutors rarely use individual learning plans to set targets and monitor learners' progress. **In sport, leisure and recreation, tutors rely too much on informal feedback to learners on their progress rather than giving formal feedback.** Tutors often do not record learners' progress on the documents provided. **In languages, literature and culture, initial assessment tests are infrequently used to place learners on the most appropriate course or to measure progress**. The personal learning goals on individual learning plans do not include specific

targets.

28. **The range of provision is narrow in literacy and numeracy, and on courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**. Most literacy and numeracy courses are targeted at learners who wish to gain accreditation at level 2. Opportunities to learn at lower levels are insufficiently promoted. For adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the curriculum offer and progression opportunities are narrow. Most learners attend for two hours weekly, and few attend more than this. Few learners have had the opportunity to choose other courses.

29. **In the west of the county, community development is insufficient**. This area has high levels of deprivation. The service has recruited one-third of its target for learners within the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities provision in the west of the county. Few learners here are involved in community development learning.

## Leadership and management

30. **Strategic leadership is strong**. Managers provide clear strategic leadership to sustain and develop the service. The adult learning plan contains many of the council's priorities. The management style is open, with a significant emphasis on performance and co-operation to achieve the service's objectives. The service uses a clear strategy to co-ordinate communication to ensure that key messages reach the appropriate staff. The service has a clear identity, vision and objectives which staff, tutors and partners understand well.

31. **The management of change is good**. The service has successfully implemented a new management structure. Curriculum managers have full responsibility for each area of learning. It introduced these changes thoughtfully and carefully. The service regularly monitors managers' progress to evaluate the effect of change on the service as a whole.

32. **Partnership arrangements are productive**. The service uses an impressive range of internal and external partnerships well to enhance the range of learning opportunities and resources. The partnerships help to support learners, to increase the recruitment of learners who do not traditionally participate in learning and to enable more efficient use of resources and teaching accommodation. The service recruits a high proportion of new learners.

33. **The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is good**. It is central to the values and culture of the service and provides an ambitious framework for its activities. The council has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that provide a good framework for the adult and community learning service. Policies are regularly updated and the council's priorities are reflected and developed well within the objectives of the service.

34. **An impressive programme of successful and innovative initiatives widens participation and promotes social inclusion well**. The service has developed projects using a range of funding sources. It plans these in close partnership with local and national organisations. Projects include work with neighbourhood learning to target priority areas for council regeneration work, and for participation in national projects.

35. **The service makes good use of a comprehensive quality review process to support continuous improvement**. Annual reviews include provision managed by the five main centres, a sample of curriculum areas and each of the subcontracted providers. The review process is extremely thorough, clearly identifies key strengths and areas for development, and leads to the development of detailed, measurable action plans. The service closely monitors these action plans and the review process makes a good contribution to improvements across the range of service provision.

36. Operational management is satisfactory. **Curriculum management is good in health, public services and care, ICT, and languages, literature and culture**. Overall curriculum management has improved since the reorganisation. There remain some confused lines of accountability and communication. Managers do not use management information sufficiently to monitor recruitment, retention and achievement rates. Data held at the curriculum level does not always match that held centrally.

37. Resources for learning are satisfactory. The main adult learning centres are of a very high standard. Clear and detailed service level agreements for the use of these premises are in place. Most classrooms are satisfactory. Accommodation at some community venues is poor. **Technical support is inadequate in ICT.**

38. Staff development is satisfactory. An overall staff development plan identifies staff training priorities and reflects the business needs from the adult learning plan. Staff and tutors attend an appropriate range of training and development activities. Appraisal and review arrangements for part-time tutors are less established than those for full-time employees.

39. The service's response to the skills for life strategy, the government's initiatives on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, is satisfactory. It has developed and implemented a clear strategy. This strategy is in the early stages of implementation.

40. Arrangements for the identification of and support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory overall. The service uses appropriate tests to identify learners' needs. Some variations exist in the quality of implementation of these arrangements.

41. The council has made a satisfactory response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The council has a race equality scheme in place. Equal opportunities data is available for each area of learning. The service does not consistently monitor the performance of different groups of learners, curriculum areas or of the different regional centres.

42. Support for learners is satisfactory. It includes the provision of childcare, transport, equipment and fee remission. The differentiation manual on provision for learners at different ability levels gives tutors some excellent support material to meet individual learning needs.

43. Most buildings have been re-modelled and 16 centres provide full access to learners with restricted mobility. A good range of assistive equipment is available. Good management of health and safety ensures that audits and risk assessments are regular and support the setting of high standards within the council's accommodation.

44.  The service makes satisfactory use of a range of data to target under-represented learners.  It currently retains some of its annual budget to respond to ongoing needs analysis and support the successful recruitment of new learners.

45.  Course planning and session content do not adequately reflect diversity and equality issues.  There are some good examples of integrating literacy and numeracy into the curriculum to support the skills for life strategy, but this is at an early stage of development.

46.  Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory overall.  An annual quality improvement plan clearly identifies the service's quality assurance processes, key themes, priorities and a timetable for each year.

47.  The service has a well-established process for the observation of teaching and learning.  All observers receive training.  Regular meetings take place to moderate observations across curriculum areas and across the service as a whole.  Observers receive particularly helpful and detailed feedback on each observation.

48.  Satisfactory subcontracting arrangements are in place with local colleges of further education and voluntary sector providers.  The service appropriately reviews the service level agreements annually.

49.  The arrangements for collecting learners' feedback are satisfactory.  Complaints are reviewed annually for trends and actions taken.  Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory for externally accredited courses and the service meets the requirements of awarding bodies.

50.  The self-assessment process is satisfactory and involves the use of a wide range of evidence.  The process does not yet sufficiently involve part-time tutors and the subcontractors.  The self-assessment report is detailed and critical.  It focuses insufficiently on the quality of teaching and learning, but it does identify some strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

51.  **The implementation of quality assurance arrangements across many aspects of the provision is incomplete**.  The planning of teaching and learning observations is insufficiently detailed.  Some actions plans following observations do not relate sufficiently to the action points identified on the observation feedback form.  **Teaching observations and some quality improvement arrangements in family learning are incomplete.  On some community development programmes, the observation of teaching and learning is not in place** and the overall monitoring of the quality of provision is insufficient.  **In arts, media and publishing, some quality improvement processes are insufficiently established.**  Opportunities to share good practice in some curriculum areas remain insufficient.

## Leadership and management

### Strengths

- strong strategic leadership
- good management of change
- productive partnership arrangements
- good promotion of equality and diversity
- successful initiatives to widen participation
- good use of a comprehensive quality review process for continuous improvement

### Weaknesses

- incomplete implementation of aspects of quality assurance arrangements

## Health, public services and care

*Strengths*

- high retention and achievement rates
- good teaching and learning
- good resources to promote effective learning
- good curriculum management

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient initial assessment arrangements

## Information and communications technology

*ICT for users*                                                    *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good integration of literacy and numeracy
- good response to learners' needs
- good curriculum management

*Weaknesses*

- unsatisfactory aspects of teaching
- ineffective recording of learners' progress
- inadequate technical support

**Leisure, travel and tourism**

*Sport, leisure and recreation*                                      *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- high retention and achievement rates on accredited courses
- good enhancement of learners' health and wellbeing
- good teaching

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of initial assessment
- insufficient recording of learners' progress

**Arts, media and publishing**

*Strengths*

- good standards of work
- good application of the wider benefits of learning

*Weaknesses*

- insufficiently structured teaching in many lessons
- insufficiently established aspects of quality improvement

**Languages, literature and culture**

*Other languages, literature and culture*                    *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good enrichment activities
- good range of courses in French, Spanish and Italian
- good curriculum development

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of the target language
- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- insufficient use of ILT

## Preparation for life and work

### *ESOL*      *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- good language teaching strategies to promote learning at higher levels
- good use of partnerships

*Weaknesses*

- low take up of accreditation
- insufficient assessment to guide learning
- insufficient attention to individual learning needs on lower-level courses

### *Literacy and numeracy*      *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- good teaching and learning

*Weaknesses*

- narrow range of provision
- inadequate use of data

### *Independent living and leisure skills*      *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work
- good geographical spread of provision
- good individual support to meet learners' needs
- good use of partnership working

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient challenge for more able learners
- insufficient formal assessment to guide learning
- narrow curriculum offer and progression opportunities
- poor use of data to monitor the quality and sufficiency of provision

### *Access programmes*      *Grade 2*

*Strengths*

- very good gains in confidence and achievement of personal learning goals

- good teaching and learning
- good partnership arrangements for return to learn programmes

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient integration of literacy and numeracy

## Family learning

### Adult and community learning                                    Grade 3

*Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills to support children's learning
- good programmes to support school improvement
- good strategies to widen participation

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient opportunities to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of learners
- incomplete quality improvement arrangements

## Community development

### Adult and community learning                                    Grade 2

*Strengths*

- very good development of skills and knowledge to enable learners to participate in their communities
- very good teaching and learning to encourage and inspire learners
- wide range of innovative projects to meet community needs
- particularly productive partnerships to meet the needs and interests of learners and communities
- strong application of equality and diversity by learners in their communities

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient community development in the west of the county
- insufficient monitoring of the quality of provision
- insufficient sharing of good practice in community development

## WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL:

- the supportive tutors
- the local venues
- the ability to gain skills and increase levels of confidence
- 'I can communicate better with my child'
- 'it makes me get out of bed in the morning'
- the social aspects of attending classes
- 'the project kick-started my life'
- 'I can communicate better with others now'
- the quality and range of resources at the main centres

## WHAT LEARNERS THINK SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of weekend courses
- increase the length of lessons
- the range of courses
- 'reduce the length of time between terms'
- the amount of information available for the next level course
- the induction procedures

## 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<br><br>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<br><br><br><br><br>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.<br>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 2

**Strengths**

- strong strategic leadership

- good management of change

- productive partnership arrangements

- good promotion of equality and diversity

- successful initiatives to widen participation

- good use of a comprehensive quality review process for continuous improvement

**Weaknesses**

- incomplete implementation of aspects of quality assurance arrangements

52.  Strategic leadership is strong.  The service is part of the newly formed community directorate.  Managers provide clear strategic leadership to sustain and develop the service.  The management style is open, with a significant emphasis on performance and co-operation to achieve the service's objectives.  The service uses a clear strategy to co-ordinate communication and ensure that key messages reach the appropriate internal and external staff in many dispersed locations.  The service has clear identity, vision and objectives which staff, tutors and partners understand well.  It has produced a detailed adult learning plan in consultation with managers.  The plan links very closely to the objectives identified by Somerset County Council and to regional and national priorities such as those identified in the strategic area review.  The service uses this plan as the basis for delegation of responsibilities and to provide a transparent measure of performance.  The arrangements for scrutiny make an effective contribution to the governance of the service.  A recently established adult learning advisory group reports to the scrutiny committee and provides expertise.

53.  The management of change is good.  In March 2005, the service moved from the lifelong learning department to the community directorate.  At the time of inspection, the service had successfully completed the first phase of a major organisational change.  It has now implemented a new management structure.  Curriculum managers now have full responsibility for each area of learning across the service, whereas the service used to be managed on a geographical basis.  The service introduced this change to resolve weaknesses it had identified in the management of the curriculum, and to position itself to respond rapidly to changing priorities for adult and community learning in Somerset.  Changes were introduced thoughtfully and carefully, and the service managed the concerns and expectations of staff well.  The well-established meetings structure promotes good communication, co-operation and the sharing of good practice between departments within the directorate, between managers and within curriculum teams.  All employees have a detailed annual appraisal to review performance, identify developmental needs and to set objectives.  The service conducts six-weekly supervision meetings to monitor managers' progress and to support performance between appraisals.  This process has helped managers to carry out the new responsibilities that they have taken on since the

reorganisation of the service. It enables senior managers to evaluate closely the effect of these changes on the service.

54. Partnership arrangements are productive. The service uses an impressive range of internal and external partnerships well to enhance the range of learning opportunities and to provide learners with more facilities. Partners include voluntary sector organisations, disability organisations, residential homes and community groups. They help to support learners, to increase the recruitment of learners who do not traditionally participate in learning and to enable more efficient use of resources and teaching accommodation. The proportion of new learners in the service is high. Partners understand well the mission and values of the service and how their organisation contributes.

55. Operational management is satisfactory. In more than one-third of the areas of learning inspected, curriculum management was identified as a strength. Overall curriculum management has improved since the reorganisation. In many areas, staff work effectively together to provide a co-ordinated curriculum that meets the needs and interests of learners. According to the service's own self-assessment report, the provision in sports, leisure and recreation has improved significantly. There remain some confused lines of accountability and communication. Some tutors report to adult learning co-ordinators rather than curriculum managers. Managers do not use the management information sufficiently to monitor recruitment, retention and achievement rates. Data held at the curriculum level does not always match that held centrally.

56. Resources for learning are satisfactory. The main adult learning centres are of a very high standard. The service provides courses held in leisure and community centres, village halls and schools. Clear and detailed service level agreements for the use of these premises are in place. Most classrooms are satisfactory. Accommodation at some community venues is poor with little outside lighting, little ventilation and insufficient heating. The service has recently purchased a lot of new equipment. A database of resources helps to ensure good access to specialist equipment. Technical support is inadequate in ICT.

57. Staff development is satisfactory. An overall staff development plan identifies staff training priorities and reflects the business needs from the adult learning plan. The plan allocates budgets against each priority and distinguishes between corporate training and individual training. Staff and tutors attend an appropriate range of training and development activities including teacher training, training for literacy and numeracy subject specialists, leadership training, recognising and recording progress and achievement, disability awareness, inclusion, interactive whiteboard and presentation training. Thirty-nine per cent of tutors hold teaching qualifications at level 4 and a further 18 per cent are working towards teaching qualifications. The service uses information days for tutors well to communicate key information and to enable tutors to share good practice. All tutors receive a detailed staff handbook. Appraisal and review arrangements for part-time tutors are less established than those for full-time employees.

58. Since 2004, the service has been able to provide its own literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. Arrangements for the identification of and support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory overall. The service uses appropriate tests to identify learners' needs. However, some variations exist in the quality of implementation of these arrangements.

59.  The service's response to the skills for life agenda is satisfactory.  It has developed a clear strategy, which is in its early stages of implementation.  The service has arranged staff development for skills for life tutors and many have already completed this training.  The service has initiated two projects to integrate literacy and numeracy into ICT and return to learn courses.  The service has yet to evaluate the effect of these projects.  It plans to apply this model to other areas of learning.

## Equality of opportunity <span style="float:right">**Contributory grade 2**</span>

60.  The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is good.  It is central to the values and culture of the service and provides an ambitious framework for its activities.  The service is alert to external priorities.  It has clearly positioned itself to widen participation, to work with learners who experience significant barriers to participation and to support the broader aims of the council's lifelong learning strategy.

61.  The council has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that provide a good framework for the adult and community learning service.  Policies are regularly updated and the council's priorities are reflected and developed well within the objectives for the service.  Policies include exemplars to guide understanding and action-planning.  Examples include guidance on how to recognise and deal with racist incidents.  The complaints procedure is detailed.  The service deals with complaints effectively.  It evaluates all complaints.  The equal opportunities co-ordinator for the service provides effective leadership within the service and works through the council's structures and working groups, with council equality champions and advisers, to promote equality and diversity.  The appointment of project workers to champion the needs of learners with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups supports the promotion of equality and diversity across the curriculum.

62.  The service's accommodation strategy demonstrates its commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity.  It has made a good response to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.  The service has made significant investment in the main 18 adult learning centres across the county.  Most buildings have been re-modelled and 16 centres provide full access to learners with restricted mobility.  A good range of assistive equipment is available.  Good management of health and safety ensures that audits and risk assessments are regular and support the setting of high standards within the council's accommodation.  Adult learning centres are welcoming, well furnished, incorporate colour schemes which assist visually impaired learners and offer inclusive learning environments.  The service has successfully improved the accessibility of learning across a widely dispersed and largely rural county.  Currently, one-third of learners travel less than one mile to attend courses in some 400 centres.  Considerable improvements have been made to signage and the use of the Somerset total communication symbols highlights the service's welcome for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.  An effective marketing strategy provides well-designed, accessible promotional material for the service.

63.  An impressive programme of successful and innovative initiatives widens participation and promotes social inclusion.  Projects have been developed using a range of funding sources.  The service works in close partnership with local and national organisations.  Projects contribute to the service's community development and family learning to offer an increasing number of new learners the opportunity to learn new skills, gain confidence and experience the benefits of learning.  Projects include work with neighbourhood learning to

target priority areas for council regeneration work, and participation in national projects including work with doctors to prescribe learning.  'Learning notes' courses use music technology to provide learning and progression opportunities for specific target groups including learners with disabilities.  'Shed loads of learning' targets mainly men and has introduced over 400 men to learning.  Partnership work also provides a good opportunity to develop a coherent lifelong learning service across the county, delivered by a range of providers.

64.  The service has made a very effective contribution to the government's 'every child matters' initiative, by outlining examples of its work with children, parents and carers in a well-designed leaflet.  For example, the service outlines how positive parenting, return to learn and inter-generational workshops support children and young people to 'make a positive contribution'.

65.  The service makes satisfactory use of a range of data to target under-represented learners.  It currently retains some 40 per cent of its annual budget to respond to ongoing needs analysis and support the recruitment of new learners.  In 2004-05, 47 per cent of all learners were new, and in the current year the proportion of new learners has already increased to 55 per cent of the total intake.

66.  Support for learners is satisfactory.  The service employs 60 learning support workers to meet the learning needs of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.  Learners' support includes the provision of childcare, transport, equipment and fee remission.  There are some good examples of assessment and learning materials for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.  The differentiation manual, covering provision for learners with different ability levels, gives all tutors some excellent support material to meet individual learning needs.

67.  The council has made a satisfactory response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.  The council has a race equality scheme in place.  It has achieved the level 3 equality standard and evidence from the service was recognised as good practice within the accreditation process.  Equality and diversity impact measures provide challenging action plans for the service and guide target-setting and support recruitment strategies.  Participation by minority ethnic groups has increased from 2 per cent of total learners in 2003-04 to 6 per cent in 2004-05.  Equal opportunities data is available for each area of learning but it is not yet used fully to plan the curriculum.  The service does not consistently monitor the performance of different groups of learners, curriculum areas or of the different regional centres.  It has no overview of how each area of learning is performing in relation to the equal opportunities profile of its location.  The service recognises this weakness in its self-assessment report.

68.  Course planning and session content do not adequately reflect diversity and equality issues.  Some good examples exist of the integration of literacy and numeracy into the curriculum to support the skills for life strategy, but this is at an early stage of development.

## Quality improvement                                  **Contributory grade 3**

69.  The service makes good use of a comprehensive quality review process to support continuous improvement of its internal and subcontracted provision.  Each review takes place over a week and includes observations of teaching and learning, interviews with key staff and learners, an examination of relevant documents, including schemes of work,

session plans and individual learning plans.  Rates of retention, achievement and equal opportunities data are also analysed.  Each year, reviews cover provision managed by the five main centres, a sample of curriculum areas as identified in the quality improvement plan and each of the subcontracted providers.  The review process is extremely thorough, clearly identifies key strengths and areas for development and leads to the development of detailed, measurable action plans.  The service closely monitors these action plans and the review process makes a good contribution to improvements across the service.

70.  Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory overall.  An annual quality improvement plan clearly identifies the service's quality assurance processes, key themes, priorities and a timetable for each year.  A detailed and well-used quality manual, available in a range of accessible formats, usefully outlines key service policies, procedures and documents.  It also provides a wealth of additional information for tutors and managers, and provides a consistency of approach across the service.

71.  The service has a well-established process for the observation of teaching and learning.  All observers receive training.  Regular meetings take place to moderate observations across curriculum areas and across the service as a whole.  Observers receive particularly helpful and detailed feedback on each observation.  The best observations highlight clear action points for each tutor's development.  The service keeps a central record of all observations and checks whether action points are followed up with tutors.  The observation process works particularly well in ICT, where managers carefully plan the observation schedule and specialist ICT staff carry out the observations.  Analysis of the observation of teaching and learning grades given by inspectors by geographical area identifies very little difference in the quality of teaching and learning across the county.

72.  Satisfactory subcontracting arrangements are in place with local colleges of further education and voluntary sector providers.  The service's quality review process has significantly contributed to improvements in the subcontracted providers' own quality assurance arrangements.  The service appropriately reviews the service level agreements annually.

73.  The arrangements for collecting learners' feedback are satisfactory.  The service samples learners' views in an annual questionnaire, which it carefully analyses and follows up with appropriate actions.  County councillors attend the termly learners' forum meetings and report learners' views directly to the council.  Although learners' attendance at these meetings is low, records indicate that the meetings provide a good forum for the discussion of key concerns affecting learners, with some effective and timely responses by service managers.  Complaints are reviewed annually for trends and actions taken.

74.  Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory for accredited courses and the service meets the requirements of awarding bodies.  Useful internal moderation meetings across the service help to ensure the quality of assessment practices, with helpful suggestions for improvements by individuals and teams.

75.  The service sets targets for recruitment, retention and achievement rates at service and curriculum level which it regularly reviews.  The service also takes part in an annual assessment exercise to moderate the service's performance against that of other councils' adult and community learning providers.  This involves the use of a wide range of performance indicators, which helps the service usefully to identify strengths and areas for

improvements.

76.  The self-assessment process is satisfactory.  It involves the use of a wide range of evidence, including observations of teaching and learning, tutor evaluations, findings from the review process, learners' views and management information data.  The service aims to provide every member of staff with the opportunity to assess and evaluate their role against the service's aims and targets.  The process does not sufficiently involve part-time tutors and subcontractors.  The self-assessment report is detailed and critical.  It focuses insufficiently on the quality of teaching and learning, although it matches some strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.  Inspectors judged some areas identified by the self-assessment as strengths to be no more than normal practice.  Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the service are descriptive and insufficiently evaluative.  The service has commissioned a report to improve the quality of the self-assessment process.

77.  The implementation of quality assurance arrangements across many aspects of the provision is incomplete.  The planning of teaching and learning observations is insufficiently detailed.  The current service requirements to observe tutors over a three-year cycle are insufficient.  It is not always sufficiently clear whether planned observations have actually taken place.  In some instances, action plans following observations are insufficient and do not relate sufficiently to the points identified on the observation feedback form.  At times, the grade given is too high in relation to the weaknesses.  Subject specialists do not regularly observe tutors.  Teaching observations and some quality improvement arrangements in family learning are incomplete.  On some community development programmes, the observation of teaching and learning is not in place and the overall monitoring of the quality of provision is insufficient.  In arts, media and publishing, some quality improvement processes are insufficiently established.  The service collects examples of good practice which it disseminates to tutors.  Opportunities to share good practice in some curriculum areas remain insufficient.  Tutors' course reviews are insufficiently detailed.  The service has recently organised training to support improvements in the quality of its provision.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

**Health, public services and care**                    **Grade 2**

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| ***Complementary health services*** <br> Adult and community learning | 75 | 2 |
| ***Social care*** <br> Adult and community learning | 75 | 2 |
| ***Early years*** <br> Adult and community learning | 17 | 2 |

78.  The service offers heath-related courses in aromatherapy, massage, anatomy and physiology, body massage, baby massage and remedial massage.  It also offers a reflexology diploma, an Indian head massage diploma and qualifications in basic first aid, foundation first aid, first aid at work, emergency first aid and first aid for child carers.  The service also offers a full-time access to nursing course.  Social care courses include an introduction to counselling, the foundation course in counselling, introduction to conflict resolution and workshops on dementia.  Early years-related courses include a level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) in early years care and education, working with children at level 2 and the level 2 NVQ teaching assistants' course.  Courses are available in 18 adult education centres, local schools, town halls, care homes, day nurseries and a hotel.  They range from short workshops to courses lasting 36 weeks and are generally of two hours' duration.  In 2004-05, 511 learners were enrolled on accredited courses and 639 were enrolled on non-accredited courses.  Since September 2005, 367 learners have enrolled.  At the time of the inspection, 167 learners were in learning.  In 2005-06, almost two-thirds of learners were new.  Eighty-two per cent of learners are women and two-thirds are aged 30 to 55.  About 7 per cent of learners are from a minority ethnic background.  The curriculum manager has overall responsibility for the planning and management of courses.  The service employs a further 30 part-time tutors.

*Strengths*

- high retention and achievement rates
- good teaching and learning
- good resources to promote effective learning
- good curriculum management

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient initial assessment arrangements

## Achievement and standards

79.  Retention and achievement rates are high.  According to the service's data, in 2003-04, the overall retention rate was 95 per cent.  In 2004-05, the retention rate on non-accredited courses was 98 per cent and 93 per cent on accredited courses.  The overall in-year retention rate for 2005-06 is 96 per cent.

80.  In 2003-04, the achievement rate was 93 per cent on non-accredited courses and 79 per cent on accredited courses.  In 2004-05, the achievement rate on non-accredited courses was 96 per cent and the achievement rate on accredited courses rose to 83 per cent.  The pass rate for learners completing courses in 2005-06 was 100 per cent in basic first aid, emergency first aid appointed person, first aid for child carers and on the foundation food hygiene certificate.

81.  Learners display good professional skills in massage and reflexology and demonstrate good knowledge of anatomy and physiology.  Learners' work is of a high quality.  Attainment is good on level 3 accredited programmes.  On counselling courses, learners demonstrate high levels of skill, appropriate attitudes and a good understanding of the links between theory and practice.  Attendance during the week of the inspection was very high.

## The quality of provision

82.  Teaching and learning are good.  More than three-quarters of the sessions observed were good or better.  Particularly skilled and knowledgeable tutors use a wide range of techniques to develop learners' knowledge and skills.  Tutors plan and structure sessions carefully and include a good mix of theory and practical exercises to engage and challenge learners.  Tutors in first aid sessions use well-structured demonstrations with clear oral and written instructions.  Learners demonstrate much enthusiasm for their learning.  Tutors on the child protection course ensure that their teaching promotes professional standards in childcare.  Learners apply these standards well through role-play activities.  Tutors use innovative practical exercises regularly to make learning memorable.  In practical sessions, tutors make good use of individual coaching to ensure learners develop the necessary skills to a professional standard.  In massage and reflexology sessions, learners wear appropriate clothing and demonstrate professional consultation, recording and massage techniques.

83.  Teaching resources are good and promote effective learning.  Tutors provide imaginative resources to help learners understand new topics.  In a mathematics session on the access to nursing course, the effective use of simple models enabled learners to understand fractions, volume and geometric shapes well.  The detailed course notes available on the child protection course are particularly relevant and useful.  Learners use them to produce their own policies and procedures and as a resource to inform their work colleagues.  Tutors regularly produce detailed handouts with good diagrams in anatomy and physiology, massage and reflexology.

84.  The range of courses is satisfactory and meets the needs of learners.  Progression routes are clear.  In first aid, the courses range from basic first aid to advanced qualifications.  Courses in dementia training lead to a level 2 NVQ course in care.  In complementary health, courses enable learners to progress from level 1 to level 3.  For learners who have gained experience in schools, through the service's accredited helping in schools course, as volunteer teaching assistants, the service offers progression to the NVQ teaching assistants' course at level 2.  The service provides taster sessions during adult learners' week on careers in social work, teaching and nursing.

85.  The monitoring and recording of learners' progress is satisfactory.  Tutors conduct progress reviews on most courses.  On the access to nursing and the level 2 NVQ teaching assistants' course, progress reviews take place regularly and tutors use these effectively to adapt their planning.  On some courses, progress reviews are carried out too far towards

the end of the course.  Learners on the child protection course have their progress review at the end of the course.  Individual progress reviews take place informally for some learners.  Course planning does not include sufficient time in specific courses for progress reviews to take place at regular intervals for all learners.  The use of individual learning plans is satisfactory.  Tutors and learners use individual learning plans more effectively on the longer vocational courses than on shorter courses.

86.  Support for learners is satisfactory.  On most courses tutors provide appropriate support.  Learners on the access to nursing course benefit from frequent tutorials.  Funding for childcare support has enabled some learners to attend their course.  Learners receive sufficient support where they have been identified as having literacy and numeracy skills development needs.  Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory.  Learners receive appropriate information on progression opportunities.

87.  Initial assessment arrangements are insufficient.  The process is unclear for both tutors and learners.  Learners on the numeracy module of the access to nursing course do not have an initial assessment of their number skills.  Few learners have had sufficient initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills.  Insufficient initial assessment of vocational skills takes place.  The service has identified this weakness in its self-assessment report.

## Leadership and management

88.  Curriculum management is good.  The manager has developed the curriculum in response to learners' and employers' needs.  Communication is good, with regular meetings taking place.  Performance management is good.  Tutors receive good individual coaching on aspects of their performance and share good practice well.  Arrangements for the induction and support of new tutors are good.  Staff development activities are relevant to learners' and tutors' needs.  Recent activities have included training on how to use the interactive whiteboard and how to use presentation software.  The area of learning uses workshops well to introduce new procedures and documents.  Quality improvement is good.  The observation of teaching and learning is well established.

89.  Resources are satisfactory.  Learners have good access to computers and the internet for their research.  Many classrooms have been refurbished.  The main centres have a good range of equipment including interactive whiteboards and data projectors.  Learners receive course textbooks to keep for the duration of their course.  Tutors hold relevant qualifications and have suitable experience.

90.  Links with employers are satisfactory.  Tutors organise courses which meet employers' needs and the training requirements for their staff.  The partnership between the LEA, Somerset early years, play and childcare service and the Somerset Skills Alliance, works effectively to use funding to engage care and childcare businesses in improving their business management skills.  A partnership is in place with Sure Start to offer parenting and baby massage courses.

91.  Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.  In many sessions, equality and diversity are promoted.  Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities.  There is good access to facilities for all staff and learners with restricted mobility.  The service employs a disability worker who works closely with all the main centres to promote inclusion.

92.  The self-assessment process included the views of staff, learners and some partners.

The self-assessment report identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses found by the inspectors, but does not include enough evaluative detail.

## Information and communications technology　　　　**Grade 3**

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *ICT for users* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 1,382 | 3 |

93.  ICT represents about one-quarter of the service's provision.  In 2004-05, 5,478 learners enrolled on 699 courses.  At the time of the inspection, 1,382 learners had enrolled on 231 courses in 2005-06.  Almost two-thirds of the courses lead to qualifications at levels 1, 2 or 3.  Accredited courses include basic computer literacy courses, an examination-based qualification in information technology (IT), courses accredited by the OCN and e-digital competence certificate courses.  The service offers courses in traditional office-based software, digital photography and website design.  About 10 per cent of the courses integrate literacy, numeracy and language.  Courses run from three to 30 weeks during the daytime and the evening.  They are available in dedicated learning centres, schools, community centres and at learning centres run by partner organisations.  In 2004-05, 32 per cent of learners were men, 38 per cent were aged over 60, 3 per cent were from minority ethnic groups and 8 per cent declared a disability.  Seven per cent of the provision is subcontracted to two partner organisations.  The service employs 120 part-time tutors.  A full-time curriculum manager has overall responsibility for this area of learning, supported by four part-time co-ordinators.

## *ICT for users*　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good integration of literacy and numeracy
- good response to learners' needs
- good curriculum management

*Weaknesses*

- unsatisfactory aspects of teaching
- ineffective recording of learners' progress
- inadequate technical support

## Achievement and standards

94.  Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory.  According to the service's data, in 2004-05, the retention rate was 86 per cent on accredited courses and 91 per cent for non-accredited courses.  In 2004-05, the achievement rate was 60 per cent for accredited courses and 87 per cent for non-accredited courses.  Overall, attendance is satisfactory.

95.  The standard of learners' work in sessions is satisfactory, and appropriate to the level and stage of the course.  Learners gain skills in standard office software applications which they use either at work or to help their children.  They are able to use the internet for personal research and to send e-mails.  In digital photography sessions, learners learn about compositional aspects of photography, alongside the technical requirements of using the

camera and image manipulation software.

## The quality of provision

96.  The integration of literacy, numeracy and language with ICT training is good.  Tutors use a variety of techniques to combine and develop reading, writing and number skills with ICT.  Learners start the course by taking a diagnostic test, the results of which tutors use well to adapt the teaching to the needs of the learners.  The sessions are well paced and use examples from the learners' own experience to develop their ICT and literacy and numeracy skills.  Tutors plan these sessions well and produce detailed schemes of work which they change and update regularly during the course.  In sessions, tutors encourage learners to develop their own learning skills rather than provide them with step-by-step instructions.  Tutors vary activities in sessions and make effective use of group discussion to develop learners' oral skills.  Learners demonstrate good skills in these sessions.

97.  The service responds well to learners' needs at all levels.  The range of courses offered is based on a thorough needs analysis of learners and their reasons for learning.  In many courses, tutors adapt and carefully document the standard schemes of work according to learners' needs.  Tutors regularly adapt their handouts so that learners can use the instructions on their computers at home.  On a one-day course, tutors have devised alternative versions of the same exercises to enable learners to practise their skills at home according to the version of the operating system and software on their own computers.

98.  The range of provision across the county is satisfactory.  A framework has been developed which ensures that course content is consistent across the county.  The curriculum strategy has identified several different groups of learners in Somerset and has designed courses to meet their needs.  The service distributes information on courses around the county through libraries and in local newspapers.  It delivers courses for a number of employers, on company premises within and outside the county.  Learners find the enrolment process straightforward.  Information and guidance about progression is provided by course tutors towards the end of the course.

99.  Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.  Just over two-fifths of sessions observed were good or better.  Most sessions were satisfactory.  In the better sessions, tutors use a range of teaching methods to maintain learners' interests.  They make effective use of interactive whiteboards and data projectors to give short tutorials.  In these sessions, tutors ensure that learners complete tasks which challenge and interest them.

100.  Some aspects of teaching are unsatisfactory.  Many sessions observed were unsatisfactory.  In the sessions that were satisfactory or better, some aspects of the teaching were occasionally unsatisfactory.  In the weaker sessions, learners make little progress.  They do not have the opportunity to develop their skills and are unable to work independently.  Tutors teach the group together and take little account of learners' different abilities and learning styles.  In some sessions, learners have no reference materials for the software application they learn to use and rely on oral instructions.  Tutors are often too quick to take control of learners' computers.

101.  The use of individual learning plans to record learners' progress is ineffective.  Tutors rarely use individual learning plans to set targets and monitor learners' progress.  Tutors usually refer to them only at the beginning and end of the course.  Tutors do not routinely keep a systematic record of learners' progress against detailed learning outcomes for the

course.  Their understanding of the procedures for recognising and recording progress and achievement is insufficiently developed.  The courses which integrate literacy and numeracy use good documents to monitor learners' progress but other tutors do not use those documents.

## Leadership and management

102.  The management of the curriculum is good.  A clear and comprehensive curriculum strategy provides a coherent and relevant range of courses across the county.  The service has ensured that course content is the same throughout Somerset with common course outlines and schemes of work.  Team meetings are held on a regular basis and are thoroughly minuted.  Staff development sessions focus closely on curriculum development.  The observation of teaching and learning is rigorous and grades are thoroughly moderated.  All teaching observations conclude with an action plan which is time bound and agreed by both the observer and tutor.  The grades given through the service's own observation system broadly match those given by the inspectors.

103.  Internal verification systems are satisfactory and ensure that standards of assessment are consistent across the county.  The service has no system to assure the quality of printed course material, some of which is of poor quality.

104.  Resources in the service's centres are of a high quality.  All classrooms have suitable office furniture, interactive whiteboards or data projectors.  The computers are modern, many with flat-screen monitors, and most have up-to-date software.  The service has an appropriate strategy for replacing and upgrading computers.  Connections to the internet are fast and reliable.  The quality of resources in other centres used by the service varies, with some centres having unsuitable chairs and poor lighting.  All ICT classrooms are accessible to learners with restricted mobility.  Equipment to improve access to learning includes tracker balls, large keyboards and hearing induction loops.  Most tutors hold a teaching qualification and a qualification in ICT.  Tutors on the integrated literacy and numeracy courses have, or are taking qualifications in, literacy and numeracy.

105.  The self-assessment process is inclusive and involves tutors and the views of learners.  The strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report are insufficiently evaluative and contain too much description.  The report does not include an analysis of the grades from observations of teaching and learning.  The findings in the self-assessment report broadly match those identified by the inspectors.

106.  The technical support for ICT equipment is inadequate.  Maintenance tasks are not consistently completed in a timely fashion.  Dirt on the rollers of computer mice make it difficult for learners to achieve the necessary control to navigate websites.  The configuration of learners' computers is often different throughout the same centre.  This makes it difficult for tutors to describe to learners where to find particular programmes of files.  Different versions of software are installed at different locations.  Some upgrades to software are performed without the tutors' knowledge.  In these circumstances, tutors have course materials for the wrong version of the software to give to learners.

**Leisure, travel and tourism**                                                **Grade 3**

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *Sport, leisure and recreation* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 1,122 | 3 |

107.  The service offers courses in tai chi and chi gung, bridge, yoga and Pilates. Accredited courses are available in teaching swimming, pool life-guarding, exercise and fitness and coaching in specific sports.  Accredited courses account for one-fifth of the provision.  Courses are available at beginners' and improvers' levels.  Non-accredited courses are between 15 and 35 weeks in duration, while accredited courses vary in their duration and are available mainly at weekends.  Taster sessions last for between six hours and six weeks.  Classes take place in village halls, community centres, schools, leisure centres and in 21 adult learning centres.  In 2003-04, 4,491 learners were enrolled and in 2004-05, 2,629 were enrolled on 428 courses.  At the time of inspection, 1,122 learners were enrolled on 103 courses.  Eighty-five per cent of learners are women and about 4 per cent of learners are from a minority ethnic background.  Almost half of the learners are aged between 30 and 55.  The service subcontracts some of its provision to Somerset Active Sports (SASP) and Somerset Physical Activities Group (SPAG).  A curriculum manager has overall responsibility for this area of learning.  The service employs 73 part-time tutors.

## *Sport, leisure and recreation*                                                *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- high retention and achievement rates on accredited courses
- good enhancement of learners' health and wellbeing
- good teaching

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of initial assessment
- insufficient recording of learners' progress

## Achievement and standards

108.  Retention and achievement rates on accredited courses are high.  According to the service's data, the overall retention rate on accredited courses was 98 per cent for 2003-04, and 99 per cent for 2004-05.  The overall achievement rate was 95 per cent for 2003-04 and 96 per cent for 2004-05.

109.  The enhancement of learners' health and wellbeing is good.  Learners have improved their general physical health, including flexibility, mobility and stamina.  They exhibit good motor skills.  Learners demonstrate their skills through complex tai chi movements without the assistance of the tutor.  They display a high standard of performance and confidence in yoga.  Learners who have been referred to the service by their own doctor have made good progress.  Some have developed sufficient fitness through exercise and weight

reduction that they can walk substantial distances without resting. Learners identify that they relax better and are less stressed. They benefit strongly from the social side of the courses.

110. Retention and achievement are satisfactory on non-accredited courses. Attendance and punctuality during the inspection were satisfactory.

## The quality of provision

111. Teaching is good. Almost two-thirds of the sessions observed were good or better. Tutors prepare and manage the learning well. They demonstrate movements well and adapt them to the needs of the learners. Tutors observe learners' performance closely and actively encourage learners to help each other learn. Tutors provide detailed course notes. In yoga, learners receive a DVD to enable them to practise with visual support in their homes. In a tai chi session, the tutor regularly made good use of video to record learners' progress, and replayed the recording to the learners to reinforce learning.

112. The range of courses provided to meet learners' needs is satisfactory. The service offers courses in many local centres, and sessions are held at times to suit learners. The balance between day and evening, and weekday and weekend courses is good.

113. Support for learners is satisfactory. Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners receive clear information about their courses before they start. Tutors ensure that learners have sufficient information on progression opportunities. Learners who are referred to the service by their doctor receive a good level of personal support. All learners receive an appropriate level of support with regard to their own welfare and personal development.

114. The initial assessment of learners is insufficient. Tutors do not fully understand the initial assessment process, the results of which are insufficiently documented. The service does not check that learners have fully completed the health questionnaire and their individual learning plan. Tutors do not sufficiently integrate learners' individual learning goals into the overall course objectives.

115. The recording of learners' progress is insufficient. Tutors rely too much on informal feedback to learners on their progress and often do not record learners' progress on the documents provided. Tutors pay little attention to the individual progress of learners. In examples where tutors had recorded learners' progress, they had used checklists which did not include specific detail of areas for improvement for individual learners.

## Leadership and management

116. The management of the curriculum is satisfactory. The service has improved the quality of provision in this area. Communication between the curriculum manager, learning co-ordinators and main centre managers has improved significantly. Tutors generally request their own staff development. The service also provides some specific staff development. The handbook for tutors is comprehensive.

117. Resources are satisfactory. Classrooms and exercise rooms are appropriate for the range of sporting and leisure activities. Mats and blocks are readily available. Tutors hold appropriate qualifications and have suitable experience.

118.  Risk assessment arrangements, and health and safety monitoring are satisfactory. Tutors and managers conduct a risk assessment for each course and venue and carry out regular health and safety checks.  In a few cases, tutors do not ask learners about any changes in their health which may affect their capacity to take exercise.

119.  The process for the observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory.  It is sufficiently rigorous and feedback contains sufficient detail to indicate strengths and weaknesses in teaching.  New tutors are observed during their first term.  Tutors use the results from course evaluations to feed back areas for improvements to the curriculum manager.

120.  The self-assessment process included the views of tutors and learners.  It did not include the views of partners.  The self-assessment report does not identify the strengths and weaknesses found by the inspectors.  The report does not include sufficient evaluative detail to identify actions for improvement.

121.  Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.  Learners are aware of, and have a basic understanding of, the service's equal opportunities and diversity policy.  All centres are accessible to learners with restricted mobility.

## Arts, media and publishing                      **Grade 3**

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *Dance*<br>  Adult and community learning | 211 | 3 |
| *Music*<br>  Adult and community learning | 140 | 3 |
| *Fine arts*<br>  Adult and community learning | 650 | 3 |
| *Crafts*<br>  Adult and community learning | 684 | 3 |
| *Media and communication*<br>  Adult and community learning | 13 | 3 |

122.  The service offers courses in arts, crafts, dance, music, media and art appreciation. Most courses run for two hours a week, for 25 to 35 weeks over three terms.  Courses are available throughout the day and evening on weekdays.  Saturday courses and short taster courses take place occasionally.  Just over 80 per cent of the courses are art and crafts courses.  The service offers 22 accredited courses in drawing and painting, jewellery making, stained glass, machine embroidery and pottery.  Non-accredited courses include painting and drawing, a range of craft subjects, singing, traditional music, digital photography and a range of dance courses.  Provision is available at levels 1 and 2, and many courses are of mixed ability and open to all.  During 2004-05, 2,522 learners were enrolled.  At the time of the inspection, 1,698 learners had enrolled on 163 courses across the county.  Eighty-two per cent of learners are women, 6 per cent have declared a disability and/or learning difficulty and 3 per cent are from minority ethnic groups.  The proportion of new learners in 2004-05 was 48 per cent.  During the first term of 2005-06, 31 per cent of learners were new to adult learning.  Courses are co-ordinated from the five main centres and delivered in the main centres and in over 100 community venues which include schools, village halls and community centres.  The county-wide provision is managed by two subject-specialist curriculum managers who work on a job-share basis.  The service employs 90 part-time tutors.

*Strengths*

- good standards of work
- good application of the wider benefits of learning

*Weaknesses*

- insufficiently structured teaching in many lessons
- insufficiently established aspects of quality improvement

## Achievement and standards

123.  The standard of many learners' work is good.  In a small number of examples, it is outstanding.  Individual work shows a high degree of personal interpretation and much work demonstrates a high level of creativity and experimentation.  The development of

technical skills is good.  Learners carry out practical activities with confidence.  They use a wide range of techniques to produce high-quality quilts.  In music and singing, learners participate with energy and enthusiasm.  They perform complex musical pieces competently.  Beginners in stained glass sessions make excellent progress.  In the best sessions, learners work directly from observation and produce challenging and vibrant work.  However, in a small number of sessions, an over-reliance on copying and the use of secondary source material inhibits creativity.

124.  The application of the wider benefits of learning is good.  Many learners identify the significant effect that learning has had on their lives.  They place high value on the social wellbeing promoted by regular attendance.  Many learners maintain frequent social contact with other learners outside of sessions.  Learners gain in confidence and self-esteem.  Many produce good-quality items for friends and family.  A few receive paid commissions for their work.  Good examples of group and community projects include large-scale stitched and ceramic projects for public places, performances for local festivals and community venues and patchwork sashes embellished with embroidery for use by stewards at local exhibitions.

125.  Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory.  According to the service's data, the achievement rate for 2004-05 was 54 per cent for externally certificated qualifications and 62 per cent for non-accredited courses.  Retention rates in 2004-05 were 98 per cent on accredited courses and 83 per cent on non-accredited courses.  The attendance rate during the inspection was 84 per cent.

**The quality of provision**

126.  The range of provision is satisfactory.  The service provides a range of courses in arts and media in its main centres and at many community venues throughout the county.  Access to courses in isolated communities is good.  Courses are predominantly non-accredited at beginners' and intermediate levels.  The range of courses complements that of other local providers.

127.  Support for learners is satisfactory.  The service is responsive to learners' needs and provides additional support where required.  Posters advertising the availability of support are displayed in many centres.  Tutors provide satisfactory levels of individual support in sessions.  In a photography session, the individual support provided enabled learners with autism to participate fully and make useful contributions.  Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory.  Pre-course information is clear and tutors ensure that learners receive suitable information on progression opportunities.

128.  Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.  Much observed teaching was satisfactory, and none was unsatisfactory.  The range of quality in teaching and learning is, however, very wide.  Good sessions, and some outstanding sessions, were observed, in which skilful and knowledgeable tutors expertly delivered well-planned provision.  In these sessions, a good balance of activities effectively develops technical and creative skills.  These sessions have good pace, energy and a sense of excitement.  Teaching is insufficiently structured, however, in many sessions.  In over a third of sessions, inspectors observed weaknesses in planning and structure.  The pace of some sessions is slow.  Learning takes place, but sessions do not flow coherently with a clear beginning, middle and end.  In some cases, it is difficult to establish when the class actually starts.  Many tutors do not set clear objectives at the beginning of the session or review them at the end.  The conclusion of many sessions is weak.  Little reference is made to plans for the following

week or how activities will link and progress. In some sessions, tutors dominate and do not encourage learners to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Tutors make insufficient use of questioning to check learners' understanding. Many tutors do not plan or deliver tasks to respond to the full ability range of their learners. In some sessions, tutors emphasise technique and skills acquisition too much at the expense of the creative process.

## Leadership and management

129. Leadership and management of arts, media and publishing courses are satisfactory. Improvements have followed the recent changes in management. A curriculum framework has been developed to establish the consistent use of programme titles and levels. Documents and record-keeping have improved. The monitoring of course records is generally satisfactory. Team meetings are regular. Opportunities for staff development have improved. Targets for recruitment of learners to first-step, personal development and accredited courses are set and monitored regularly. Nearly two-thirds of the learners' personal development targets have been already met.

130. Internal verification for accredited courses is satisfactory. Moderation meetings are well planned and ensure that assessment and records of learners' progress follow the service's procedures.

131. The management of resources is satisfactory. The service has made significant investment in equipment. Learning centres are welcoming and bright with good displays of learners' work. Most classrooms are satisfactory, but some are unsuitable for specialist activities. In one shared community room, glass cutting and the use of soldering irons took place in a room with a carpeted floor. Some accommodation has poor lighting and insufficient ventilation. All tutors have relevant specialist qualifications and experience. Most hold a recognised teaching qualification.

132. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory. The service conducts the same risk assessment for each course, and has only conducted subject-specific risk assessments for a small number of courses. Arrangements for the testing of electrical equipment, including learners' own equipment, are in place. However, tutors have insufficient understanding of these arrangements.

133. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners can access individual support and suitable adaptive equipment. Examples of individual support for tutors and learners include a tutor with dyslexia who received help from a support worker to write lesson plans and complete learners' progress records. Large print training materials are provided for a visually impaired tutor attending training events. Information about support is widely displayed in the main centres, but is less visible in community venues. All the classrooms are accessible to learners with restricted mobility.

134. The self-assessment report is sufficiently evaluative. Some strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report match those identified by the inspectors. However, many of the areas identified as strengths in the self-assessment report were judged by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. The overall self-assessment grade for the area of learning matched that given by inspectors.

135. Some aspects of quality improvement are insufficiently established. Planning for the observation of teaching and learning is insufficient. Main centre plans comprise a list of

tutors to be observed over a period of time, but it is not clear from these records if the actual observations have taken place. Non-specialist staff carry out most of the observations. The significance of some judgements is not reflected in the grade given for the lesson. Observers give satisfactory grades to lessons with many weaknesses. Managers do not fully identify common weaknesses across the area of learning for the purposes of staff development. Opportunities for sharing good practice are insufficient. Inspectors identified examples of good practice that tutors do not share across the service. For example, some tutors have adapted assessment and monitoring documents to reflect their own established systems. Some of these work particularly well, but are not shared.

136. Arrangements for recording and recognising progress and achievement on non-accredited courses are insufficiently established. Most tutors and learners do not understand how to use the relevant documents. The links between individual learning plans, progress monitoring and assessment are unclear. Individual learning plans often contain vague and immeasurable targets.

## Languages, literature and culture                    **Grade 3**

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *Other languages, literature and culture* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 1,034 | 3 |

137.  The service offers courses in Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Spanish, and British Sign Language (BSL).  Some courses are OCN-accredited at levels 1 and 2.  In 2004-05, the service provided 47 accredited courses for 518 learners in five popular languages in 18 out of 22 adult learning centres.  Over 700 learners enrolled on 51 non-accredited courses across the county.  A further 52 learners enrolled on BSL courses in five centres, mostly at level 1.  Eighty-four learners took general certificates of secondary education in English and Spanish at seven centres.  The percentage of male language learners on courses is almost 10 per cent higher than the service's average for male recruitment.  A high proportion of learners in this area are new to language learning.  At the time of the inspection, 1,034 learners were enrolled on 55 accredited and 56 non-accredited courses at 18 centres.  A curriculum manager has overall responsibility for this area of learning.  The service employs 45 part-time tutors.

## *Other languages, literature and culture*                    **Grade 3**

*Strengths*

- good enrichment activities
- good range of courses in French, Spanish and Italian
- good curriculum development

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of the target language
- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- insufficient use of ILT

## Achievement and standards

138.  Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory.  According to the service's data, the overall retention rate in 2003-04 was 73 per cent, rising to 80 per cent in 2004-05.  In 2003-04 and 2004-05, the achievement rates on accredited courses were 62 and 60 per cent respectively.

139.  Learners make satisfactory progress in sessions.  In some sessions, learners demonstrate high levels of attainment and are often able to apply recent learning in correct contexts.  In sessions where the foreign language is used fully, learners have developed good listening and speaking skills.  By active participation in various types of paired work, learners improve their oral skills and practise new structures of the language effectively.  They write with acceptable grammatical accuracy and use correct vocabulary for the context.  In sessions where too much English and word-for-word translation is used, learners develop their oral skills slowly and do not recall vocabulary.  Some cannot form sentences

at the standard expected from their time on the course.  Tutors do not always correct poor pronunciation and poor intonation.  Attendance and punctuality during the inspection were satisfactory.

## The quality of provision

140.  Learners benefit from a good range of courses in the more popular languages.  The service has devised a coherent three-year curriculum for languages.  The level 1 courses introduce learners to the basics of learning a modern foreign language in the first year.  The second- and third-year courses at level 2 focus learning on everyday activities.  According to the service's data, the progression rate from level 1 to level 2 is high.  The service has attracted a high percentage of new learners over the past three years.  In 2004-05, 63 per cent of learners were new to learning.  At the time of the inspection, 44 per cent of learners were new to language learning.  The service responds well to learners' needs and has established courses in less commonly studied languages such as Chinese and Polish.  The service provides very few language services to local employers.

141.  Learners enjoy the comprehensive range and variety of activities outside the classroom.  These include language circles, visits to cultural exhibitions, study trips to Italy and Spain, holidays in Greece, links with local twinning associations and many social events.  The creative writing groups produce an anthology of their work at the end of each year.

142.  Support for learners is satisfactory.  Learners appreciate the level of support received from tutors in sessions and outside the classroom.  Tutors know their learners very well and are able to give useful guidance and appropriate help.  Learning assistants work very effectively with individual learners in English language classes.  Learners receive appropriate information on progression opportunities.

143.  Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.  Of the sessions observed, most were graded good or better and some were satisfactory.  The range of quality in teaching and learning is, however, very wide.  Tutors prepare their sessions carefully.  They use a reasonably wide range of tasks and activities in paired and whole-group work to engage learners.  Tutors often share the aims and objectives of their sessions with the learners and, in the best sessions, leave sufficient time at the end of the session for a crisp but thorough overview of the key learning points.  In about a quarter of sessions, the teaching and learning is outstanding.  In an advanced French session, learners were already speaking the language to one another and their tutor before the session started.  Several learners then gave interesting presentations in French of a high standard.  Prompts and queries by the tutor ensured that group questions and discussion continued quite naturally in French.  Stimulating learning materials often link appropriate language learning opportunities with relevant cultural topics.  Learners find this particularly interesting and enjoy this combination very much.  In an Italian session for beginners, learners made very good progress without their tutor using any unnecessary English.  In these sessions, learners are keen to help each other express views and opinions in the target language.

144.  In some sessions, the target language is insufficiently used.  Tutors speak too much English.  They are too quick to use English to resolve learners' difficulties in understanding the foreign language, instead of using other expressions in the target language to convey the meaning.  The teaching often focuses too much on individual words and does not demonstrate or encourage the use of new vocabulary in a relevant context.  In these

sessions, learners have few opportunities to practise their oral skills. In some sessions, tutors do not use the target language to give basic commands for group activities and do not count in the target language when placing learners in groups.

145. Insufficient use is made of ILT. Most classrooms have interactive whiteboards with reliable access to the internet. Few tutors use this technology sufficiently to present learning materials in an attractive and memorable way. Tutors who use the interactive whiteboards often use them as conventional whiteboards and do not make use of the printing facilities to supplement learners' own note taking. The service offers regular training in the use of ILT. It has developed some DVDs for learners to practise introductory-level counting and spelling in the most popular languages, including BSL.

146. The recording of learners' progress is insufficient. The service has devised some initial assessment tests to identify new learners' target language skill levels. These tests are infrequently used to place learners on the most appropriate course or to measure progress. The personal learning goals on individual learning plans do not include specific targets. In some sessions, learners record the activities completed but these records show little reference to actual language learning competences. In other sessions, the progress of learners is not recorded. The service recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report.

## Leadership and management

147. Curriculum development is good. The new curriculum framework is clear. The area of learning is well organised with good communication between the many tutors and centre managers. Tutors appreciate the fact that the area of learning is administered by a language specialist. Teamwork is good. Most tutors have been observed as part of the teaching and learning observation process. The comments and grades on observation records closely match the inspection findings.

148. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall, and good at the main centres. Some of the outreach centres have few learning resources and some lessons take place in classrooms which are barely satisfactory. Tutors are well qualified and most have teaching qualifications, or are working towards them.

149. The self-assessment process lacks rigour. It did not include all tutors directly. The self-assessment report does not fully identify key strengths and weaknesses. It is too descriptive and does not include detailed evaluation.

**Preparation for life and work**                                    **Grade 3**

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *ESOL* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 275 | 3 |
| *Literacy and numeracy* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 134 | 3 |
| *Independent living and leisure skills* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 484 | 3 |
| *Access programmes* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 121 | 2 |

150.  Preparation for life and work includes literacy and numeracy, ESOL, courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and access programmes.  Courses take place during the day and early evening.  Most learners attend for two hours weekly.

151.  The service has offered literacy and numeracy courses since 2004-05.  Courses are available in 16 centres.  At the time of the inspection, 134 learners were enrolled on 13 literacy and nine numeracy courses.  In 2004-05, 469 learners enrolled on 54 literacy and numeracy courses.  All learners work towards the achievement of a national qualification. About 5 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups and 82 per cent are women. The service targets most of its provision at learners who wish to gain accreditation at level 2.  About two-thirds of learners are on programmes leading to level 2 qualifications, 20 per cent are on programmes leading to level 1, and the remainder works towards an entry-level qualification.  The service employs eight tutors, of whom three are full time.

152.  The service provides 35 courses in ESOL at 19 different centres.  Most learners work towards externally accredited ESOL certificates in reading, writing and speaking and listening at entry levels 1, 2 or 3.  Some learners take speaking and listening tests at levels 1 or 2.  Learners can take a national test in literacy in reading.  Sixty per cent of learners are men, and most are between the ages of 20 to 35.  At the time of the inspection, 275 learners were enrolled.

153.  At the time of inspection, 308 learners were enrolled on 57 courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in 15 centres.  Seventy learners are enrolled on 26 courses leading to a vocational qualification.  A further 31 courses lead to skills for independent living qualifications.  Courses cover a wide range of subjects including music, computing, managing money and making videos.  Thirty-six per cent of learners are men. All learners are aged 19 or over and 1 per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds.  The service employs 37 part-time tutors, many teaching for two hours weekly.  A further 176 learners are enrolled on nine lip-reading courses in eight centres.  Forty-five per cent of learners are men.  The service employs four part-time tutors in lip-reading.  A full-time curriculum manager has overall responsibility for this area of learning.

154.  The service offers a range of return to learn courses in its main centres and in community venues across the county.  Courses are available mainly in the daytime.  At the time of inspection, 121 learners were enrolled on 16 courses including volunteer support

and training, communication skills and 'make your experience count'. Courses run for three hours weekly over 10 weeks. In 2004-05, 591 learners were enrolled on 72 courses. Eighty-four per cent of learners were women and almost one-quarter were aged 30 or under. The service employs 12 part-time tutors who also provide information, advice and guidance.

*ESOL*                                                                                          *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- good language teaching strategies to promote learning at higher levels
- good use of partnerships

*Weaknesses*

- low take up of accreditation
- insufficient assessment to guide learning
- insufficient attention to individual learning needs on lower-level courses

## Achievement and standards

155. Most learners make good gains in their confidence levels and achieve a range of personal learning goals. These include the development of skills to enable good integration into British life and to take part successfully in activities such as shopping, opening bank accounts, making appointments and visiting the doctor.

156. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory on accredited courses. According to the service's data, in 2004-05, the retention rate was 75 per cent. The pass rate for learners taking national tests in 2004-05 was 80 per cent. Attendance is satisfactory.

157. The number of learners who take national tests is low. Almost half of the learners who enrol on ESOL courses do not register to take examinations. The service has identified this weakness in its self-assessment report and has set targets to increase the number of learners taking national tests.

## The quality of provision

158. Language teaching strategies to promote learning are good on the higher-level courses. In these courses, tutors use a good range of well-paced activities to motivate learners. In a level 1 session, learners worked well in small groups to retell interesting and amusing stories using reported speech. Listeners also practised their intonation skills to demonstrate interest.

159. The service makes good use of partnerships to recruit learners. These include strong links with employers, with examples including courses held on the premises of local seaside holiday centres. Some employers provide transport to enable learners to attend their courses. Initial assessment often takes place on the premises of small and medium-sized companies. Communication with a wide variety of local agencies is good. For example, the service works closely with representatives of minority ethnic groups to recruit learners who speak English as an additional language onto ESOL courses. Courses are available in

specific locations to meet learners' needs.

160.  Advice and guidance are satisfactory.  Most learners receive a high standard of specialist advice and guidance.  A good referral system from a wide range of partners is in place.

161.  Initial assessment is insufficient to guide the development of individual learning plans. In some remote locations, learners do not receive immediate initial diagnostic assessment. Tutors do not always use individual learning plans to guide learning.  Some individual learning plans contain insufficient detail to identify long-term learning goals.

162.  Insufficient attention is paid to individual learning needs on lower-level courses. Tutors select too many whole-group learning activities and use too many worksheets.  In these sessions, learners complete answers to worksheets after hearing the group answer.  In many sessions at this level, tutors provide learners with insufficient opportunities to practise their oral skills.  In some sessions, tutors do not regularly check that learners have understood.  These learners have insufficient time in weekly sessions to practise and maintain their levels of skill.

## Leadership and management

163.  Leadership and management of ESOL courses are satisfactory.  The co-ordination of the curriculum is effective.  Team meetings are frequent and the minutes contain clear action points.  The tutors share their expertise well.

164.  Resources are satisfactory overall.  Most classrooms are easily accessible for learners with restricted mobility.  Some classrooms in community venues are unattractive and some have insufficient heating and external lighting.

165.  Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.  The proportion of learners enrolled from a minority ethnic background is broadly similar to the representation of minority ethnic group members in the county as a whole.  Tutors actively ensure that learners show respect for each other's identities and differences.

166.  Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory.  Observations of teaching and learning are of a good quality and provide a detailed assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each lesson.  Feedback to tutors includes useful evaluation of the use of all four language skills in teaching.  The analysis of feedback from learners is insufficient.

167.  The self-assessment process does not include the views of learners.  The self-assessment report identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses found by the inspectors.  It does not to include an analysis of the quality of teaching and learning, however, and is too descriptive.

### *Literacy and numeracy* *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- good teaching and learning

*Weaknesses*

- narrow range of provision
- inadequate use of data

## Achievement and standards

168.  Learners achieve their personal learning goals well.  They display good levels of motivation, participate fully and actively during their sessions and contribute effectively to discussions and group activities.  They demonstrate high levels of understanding and successfully complete challenging tasks at an appropriate level.  Learners acquire skills which they use in other areas of study, in their jobs and in their own lives.

169.  Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory.  According to the service's own data, the achievement rate on literacy and numeracy courses for 2004-05 was 66 per cent.  The retention rate was 79 per cent.

## The quality of provision

170.  Teaching and learning are good.  Two-thirds of the sessions observed were good or better.  Learners have individual targets based on the outcomes of initial and diagnostic assessment.  Learners agree these targets which are then recorded on individual learning plans.  Learners then follow appropriate individual programmes of learning which successfully encourage them to extend their learning through a range of challenging and stimulating tasks.  In some sessions, learners work collaboratively and successfully to support each other's learning.  A good range of resources are available and appropriate use is made of ICT.  In most sessions, tutors carefully monitor and record learners' progress against their targets.

171.  Arrangements for guidance and additional support are satisfactory.  Individual support for learners is effective.  Tutors are sensitive to the needs of adult learners who have not participated in learning for a considerable time.

172.  The range of literacy and numeracy provision is narrow.  Most literacy and numeracy courses are targeted at learners who wish to gain accreditation at level 2.  Very few learners are at entry level, with few courses specifically designed to meet the needs of learners at this level.  Promotional materials emphasise the opportunity for learners to achieve qualifications at level 2.  Opportunities to learn at lower levels are insufficiently promoted.  Most courses take place in the north and south of the county, with very little provision in the west.

## Leadership and management

173.  Curriculum management is satisfactory.  Roles of managers and lead tutors are not clear and some members of staff are uncertain about their specific roles.  All tutors have an annual professional review which leads to a detailed action plan, and take part in an appropriate range of staff development activities.

174.  The service has made a satisfactory response to the skills for life initiative.  The strategy for skills for life emphasises the development of integrated provision and partnership working to meet learners' literacy and numeracy needs.  The implementation of

the strategy is in its early stages. A small number of integrated courses have been developed. At the time of the inspection, literacy and numeracy training was delivered through return to learn courses and on a number of ICT courses.

175. Resources are satisfactory, with good access to ICT in most centres. Courses take place in accessible and attractive centres. A skills for life resource centre is located in one of the adult learning centres and has a wide range of paper-based and electronic resources. Tutors do not use this centre sufficiently. Tutors hold appropriate qualifications.

176. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Tutors are observed as part of the service's observation of teaching and learning. Detailed action plans are produced following observations which lead to improvement in practice. Insufficient use is made of learners' feedback to improve provision.

177. The self-assessment process is ineffective. Managers do not analyse or evaluate the findings of teaching and learning observations in the self-assessment report. Tutors are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is too descriptive.

178. The use made of data to monitor the quality and sufficiency of the provision is inadequate. Information is not systematically collected on the number of learners enrolled on literacy and numeracy courses. Reports on recruitment produced by the management information system are inaccurate and incomplete. Managers are unable to determine how successfully the service is performing in relation to its recruitment targets. Information on retention and achievement rates is unreliable and is not used by the service to measure the effectiveness of the programme in meeting learners' needs. Data is not used to improve performance. Achievement rates for individual courses are not analysed.

### *Independent living and leisure skills*                                            *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work
- good geographical spread of provision
- good individual support to meet learners' needs
- good use of partnership working

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient challenge for more able learners
- insufficient formal assessment to guide learning
- narrow curriculum offer and progression opportunities
- poor use of data to monitor the quality and sufficiency of provision

## Achievement and standards

179. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners produce many good examples of artwork including detailed watercolours and imaginative flower arrangements. In food preparation, dishes and baked goods are of a high standard. In music, learners perform well. Learners display improved levels of confidence.

180.  The achievement of personal learning goals is satisfactory.  Retention rates are good. Learners attend regularly.

## The quality of provision

181.  Support to meet learners' individual needs is good.  Individual support for learners in the classroom takes account of their particular learning difficulty and/or disability.  Tutors ensure that carers understand in detail the requirements of the courses.  Three disability support workers allocate learning support workers to sessions and ensure that learners receive the identified level of support in terms of assistive technology.  Information about the courses is clear and accessible in different formats.  Some documents use total communication symbols to assist learners with limited reading skills.

182.  The geographical spread of provision is good.  Courses are available across the county in many accessible venues.  Accredited and non-accredited courses are available in a wide range of subjects including sports, arts and crafts, music, cookery and computing.

183.  Partnership working is good.  The service works closely with a range of partners to widen participation and to share resources.  It analyses the needs of partners to identify new courses and to attract learners who have not participated in learning.

184.  Learning resources are satisfactory.  Resources for music courses are good.  Learners have access to a wide range of musical instruments and one centre has a disability sound station which provides a range of sounds for music therapy.

185.  Most observed teaching was satisfactory and none was unsatisfactory.  In many sessions, tutors plan carefully to meet a wide range of learning needs and styles and give positive and encouraging feedback to learners.  The atmosphere in sessions is relaxed and supportive, and learners participate well.

186.  The more able learners are insufficiently challenged.  Tutors do not set specific targets to enable the more able learners to develop their skills further and take advantage of progression opportunities.  In some sessions, tutors do not select a suitable range of activities to engage all learners productively.

187.  Initial assessment of learners' existing skills and competences is insufficient.  At the start of each course, tutors conduct an initial assessment of learners' skills.  They do not always record the outcomes of this assessment in the learners' progress record, however. Learning targets are not based on the assessed levels and abilities of learners.  In many sessions, tutors do not assess the progress made by each learner.

188.  The curriculum offer and progression opportunities are narrow.  Most learners attend for two hours weekly.  Only 28 learners attend more than one course each week.  Few learners have had the opportunity to choose other courses. Progression opportunities are narrow.  In 2004-05, only eight learners progressed from discrete foundation courses into mainstream courses.  However, 73 learners progressed from skills for independent living courses to other courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## Leadership and management

189.  Leadership and management of the area of learning are satisfactory.  Many tutors in this area of learning work on a part-time basis.  Communication is effective.  Staff development opportunities respond well to the needs of tutors.  However, many tutors have not been able to attend some of the training sessions on the adult core curriculum.

190.  Resources are satisfactory overall.  Tutors have a good range of experience and have appropriate qualifications.  Accommodation is satisfactory.  Centres are welcoming and accessible for learners with restricted mobility.  Equipment such as hearing loops, ramps, accessible toilets and lifts are available in most centres.

191.  Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory.  New tutors are observed in their first term of teaching.  The action plan resulting from the observation of teaching and learning is used to guide staff development and the self-assessment process.  The grading and judgements on lesson observation records closely match the findings of the inspectors.  The service conducts careful annual quality reviews.  These reviews highlight areas for improvement in course documents and management.

192.  The self-assessment process does not sufficiently involve tutors.  The self-assessment report identifies many of the weaknesses found by inspectors.  However, it does not analyse and evaluate the observation of teaching and learning.  The 2005-06 development plan contains specific actions to improve many of the weaknesses.

193.  The use of data to monitor the quality and sufficiency of provision is poor.  Data on retention and achievement rates are unreliable.  Data is not used to monitor learners' progression, and is not used well to plan and evaluate the provision.

### Access programmes                                             Grade 2

*Strengths*

- very good gains in confidence and achievement of personal learning goals
- good teaching and learning
- good partnership arrangements for return to learn programmes

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient integration of literacy and numeracy

## Achievement and standards

194.  Learners make very good gains in confidence and achieve their personal learning goals.  They demonstrate good levels of motivation and participate fully and actively in sessions.  Learners contribute effectively to discussions and group activities.  They demonstrate high levels of understanding and successfully complete challenging tasks.  They are able to describe the gains in confidence and the effect on their lives.  Most learners successfully achieve their personal learning goals and acquire skills which they use in other areas of study and in their personal lives.

## The quality of provision

195.  Teaching and learning are good.  Of the five sessions observed, all were good or better.  Individual support for learners is effective.  Tutors are sensitive to the needs of adult learners who have not participated in learning for a considerable time and who may have experienced difficulties in their lives.  Tutors successfully encourage learners to extend their learning through a range of challenging and stimulating tasks.  In some sessions, learners work collaboratively and successfully support each other's learning.  Tutors use a wide range of teaching strategies including group-work and pair-work, and demonstrate very good awareness of different learning styles.  Strategies effectively encourage learners to participate and reflect on their own skills.  In most sessions, tutors carefully monitor and record learners' progress against their targets through the use of learning diaries, mid-course and end-of-course reviews.  In some sessions, tutors provide insufficient written feedback to learners.  Tutors effectively build on the prior experience of learners.  For example, learners' experience as teaching assistants and volunteers in schools is effectively used.

196.  Arrangements for information, advice and guidance and additional support are satisfactory.  Information, advice and guidance are provided throughout the return to learn programmes.  Initial, mid-course and end-of-course individual interviews guide learners towards further learning or employment.  Many tutors are qualified guidance workers.

197.  The integration of literacy and numeracy skills development in return to learn courses is insufficient.  Tutors do not have sufficient skills to effectively meet learners' needs.  The service identifies this weakness in its self-assessment report.  Tutors are working towards a level 3 qualification in literacy and numeracy support.

## Leadership and management

198.  Good partnership arrangements exist on return to learn courses.  The service works closely and effectively with a number of partners including schools, Sure Start centres, community and voluntary organisations, and health and social services to develop provision which is targeted at specific groups of learners.  Return to learn courses have been adapted to meet the specific needs of learners.  The police service and mental health organisations work closely with tutors.  Learning advisers successfully promote the participation of learners not traditionally involved in learning on these programmes.

199.  Each tutor has a regular supervision meeting with their line manager where progress against individual targets is reviewed.  All tutors have an annual professional review which leads to a detailed action plan.  Tutors on literacy support courses are observed by their mentors.  Course reviews are completed in detail at the end of each course and workshop, and include information on progression of learners.

200.  Resources are satisfactory.  Most courses take place in accessible and attractive centres.  Some accommodation for community-based provision is inappropriate.

201.  The self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative.  It matches some of the findings of the inspection team.  It does not give sufficient attention to some of the weaknesses it has identified.

## Family learning                                      Grade 3

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *Adult and community learning* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 118 | 3 |

202.  The service offers family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning courses to families throughout Somerset.  The wider family learning courses are available to all schools and groups regardless of level of deprivation, although provision is targeted to areas of need and priority is given to those learners.  The service offers FLLN courses to schools, Sure Start and family centres in specific areas of deprivation.  The service uses 73 community venues for family learning across the county.  The courses are often delivered by members of the family learning team or tutors in partner organisations.  Courses are held during the daytime, evenings and weekends.  Wider family learning courses are short and last for up to 20 hours.  Accredited FLLN courses are from 16 to 90 hours' duration.  Courses include workshops on play and language, keeping up with the children, early start, family finance, parenting, Share courses, and short or intensive FLLN courses.  Family learning accounts for 6 per cent of the service's overall enrolment.  About 3 per cent of learners are from a minority ethnic background and 85 per of learners are women.  Since September 2005, 1,208 learners have enrolled on family learning courses.  At the time of the inspection, 118 learners were enrolled on 47 courses.  The service employs one part-time family learning adviser, three full-time family learning development workers and two FLLN skills for life tutors.  In addition, over 30 part-time tutors are employed by local primary schools, and organisations such as Early Start to support delivery in family learning.

### *Adult and community learning*                        *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills to support children's learning
- good programmes to support school improvement
- good strategies to widen participation

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient opportunities to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of learners
- incomplete quality improvement arrangements

## Achievement and standards

203.  Learners develop good skills to support children's learning.  Learners demonstrate a good understanding of primary school processes and procedures following their attendance at the wider family learning workshops.  They exhibit a greater understanding of the activities their children take part in at school and have learnt how to apply these activities in the home.  They display greater confidence in completing reading and homework diaries.  Many identify that they are more able to visit the school, speak to the headteacher and participate in their children's education.

204.  Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory.  In 2004-05, the retention rate was 92 per cent on non-accredited courses and 86 per cent on accredited courses.  In 2004-05, the achievement rate was low on non-accredited courses and satisfactory on courses leading to national tests in literacy and numeracy.  Attendance during the inspection was high.

## The quality of provision

205.  The range of programmes offered supports school improvement well.  The service has clear targets to engage schools and communities.  Initial engagement workshops attract many families into learning specifically focused on primary schoolchildren's development. The service offers Share programmes in schools to enable learners to develop personal confidence and skills to support their children.  A wide range of courses have been designed in partnership with teachers from local primary schools and are implemented well as part of the wider school improvement strategy.

206.  Strategies to widen participation are good.  The service offers a wide range of free taster courses and workshops.  These informative tasters help parents to understand the national literacy and numeracy strategies for pre-school and reception class children. Examples include work with families that have recently arrived in the United Kingdom.  In a recent project, tutors organised a car boot sale to raise funds for one school and to integrate literacy and numeracy for newly arrived families into the project.  In a further example, an ESOL course has been successfully established for local Polish families. Teamwork with partners is very good.  Tutors share successful initiatives with their colleagues in other parts of the county.

207.  Teaching and learning are satisfactory.  Of the sessions observed, more than half were satisfactory and just under one-third were good or better.  Tutors prepare schemes of work well, and session plans identify learning outcomes which tutors usually share with learners. Learning outcomes do not always relate to adult skills.  Wider family learning session plans do not reflect either the early years or adult core curriculum.  In some sessions, the teaching is lively and interesting.  In a session on the literacy strategy, a tutor engaged a large group of parents by demonstrating fun strategies for counting in twos, fives and 10s. Tutors do not always ensure that the range of activities is sufficient for the ability range of the group.  Many sessions are not challenging enough.

208.  Resources for teaching are satisfactory.  Tutors make good use of ICT to engage learners' interests.  The service has purchased 10 tablet computers for learners to use in FLLN classes.  Learners borrow these for the duration of their course.  Tutors prepare learning packs for all courses that contain useful information and activities for learners to use at home.

209.  Support for learners is satisfactory overall.  Tutors provide clear information regarding progression from shorter courses to other provision, both within family learning and externally.  At the time of the inspection, no learner was in receipt of additional learning support.  Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory.  Impartial external guidance workers visit the longer courses regularly to help learners to identify progression opportunities.

210.  Opportunities to identify the literacy and numeracy skills support needs of adults are

insufficient.  The assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs is insufficient on taster and short courses.  Some tutors do not have the skills to identify and meet adult literacy and numeracy needs.  On wider family learning courses, learners who require literacy or numeracy support often attend the discrete literacy and numeracy courses offered by the service.

## Leadership and management

211.  Leadership and management of family learning provision are satisfactory. Communication is effective.  Opportunities for staff development and training are good. The service works effectively with many partners to engage new learners.

212.  General resources are satisfactory.  Most full-time tutors are suitably qualified.  Many have, or are working towards, a level 4 qualification in literacy and numeracy.  Tutors use their expertise well.  Some part-time tutors do not have sufficient formal qualifications and experience.  Classrooms are appropriate for the activities carried out in them.  Classrooms in schools are satisfactory and furniture is mainly appropriate for adults.  One school has purchased computers and chairs for adult use.  The service has carried out risk assessments of all venues used in family learning.  In a few instances, risks have not been controlled to a reasonable level.  For example, learners in one lesson had hot drinks too close to the children.

213.  Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.  The service makes clear reference to its equal opportunities policy in learners' information leaflets.  Tutors enable learners to discuss equality of opportunity in much detail on the crèche skills course.  Data is not sufficiently used to analyse trends in recruitment and achievement rates of specific groups.

214.  Quality improvement arrangements are incomplete.  Managers and tutors do not have sufficient access to data to analyse learners' progression to other courses.  The observation of teaching and learning is insufficient.  Few tutors have been observed.  The monitoring and recording of learners' progress is insufficiently established.  The self-assessment process did not include the views of tutors, learners or partners.  The self-assessment report is not sufficiently evaluative, although it matches some of the findings of the inspectors.

## Community development                                    Grade 2

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *Adult and community learning* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 220 | 2 |

215.  The service provides community development courses across five areas of the county.  Learning takes place in 31 centres.  The service offers a range of short courses throughout the year from two-day residential training sessions, to one-day taster and longer courses over two terms.  The provision includes subcontracted projects with Barnardos and Young Somerset, joint projects funded through Somerset County Global Grants, and a range of community partners with matched funding through the European Social Fund.  The Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities projects are in their third year.  The grant is awarded through the local LSC and is jointly administered through the adult learning and leisure and the economic regeneration sections of the council.  Since September 2005, 454 learners have enrolled on community development projects and at the time of the inspection, 220 learners were still involved.  Forty-nine Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities projects and 10 Global Grants projects ran during 2004-05.  The service offers three accredited courses.  These include an introductory and level 2 course in Somerset Total Communication, a system of communication signs and symbols for people with learning difficulties, as well as a nationally recognised total communication qualification and a volunteering qualification.

## *Adult and community learning*                                    *Grade 2*

*Strengths*

- very good development of skills and knowledge to enable learners to participate in their communities
- very good teaching and learning to encourage and inspire learners
- wide range of innovative projects to meet community needs
- particularly productive partnerships to meet the needs and interests of learners and communities
- strong application of equality and diversity by learners in their communities

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient community development in the west of the county
- insufficient monitoring of the quality of provision
- insufficient sharing of good practice in community development

## Achievement and standards

216.  Learners' development of skills and knowledge is very good and enables them to participate well in their communities.  Learners who have participated in the setting up of projects are able to identify clearly the knowledge and skills they have developed.  Those learners who have attended volunteering classes or completed a volunteering qualification

participate effectively in community development projects.  Their skills include managing budgets, submitting planning applications, presenting information and negotiating learning and other strategies for their communities.  One successful project established a local credit union in an area of rural deprivation.  The volunteer management team implemented a feasibility study and attended relevant financial training.  The credit union is now self-sufficient and employs a member of the committee on a full-time basis.

217.  Learners develop good social and emotional skills.  A project to promote a multi-sensory experience for learners with profound and multiple learning disabilities has successfully supported learners to develop their social interaction skills and raised awareness and good practice in their carers.  Learners make choices and control anger, often for the first time in their lives.  Carers and volunteers have developed new techniques to both stimulate and calm learners.  In a session to develop skills in the Somerset Total Communication system, learners commented on the development of their self-esteem and confidence.  Their level of skill is high, and some learners progress to level 2 and become tutors or facilitators themselves.  Some learners use the Somerset Total Communication system in mainstream schools and local nurseries as facilitators and support workers, and raise awareness of Somerset Total Communication as a tool for communication.

218.  The standards of learners' work and their levels of skill are high.  In a singing and dancing lesson for non-traditional and inexperienced singers, the group read music notation, sang in harmony and used technical language and methodologies well.  On the accredited courses, the achievement rate is high.  Overall retention is satisfactory.  Attendance was high during the inspection.

## The quality of provision

219.  Teaching and learning are very good and encourage and inspire learners.  Most sessions observed were good or better and a large proportion were outstanding.  None was unsatisfactory.  Sessions use a good variety of active learning techniques to develop learners' understanding, and knowledge of concepts and skills.  In a driving skills session for young learners, many of whom had refused to attend school or had been excluded from full-time education, practical activities take place.  These include a driving board game, a chance to drive at an off-road site with trained staff, videos on road safety and online theory tests.  Learners quickly realised the importance of speed control, attention and respect for other drivers on the road.  In many sessions, learners participate well and often negotiate their own learning.  A facilitator in a signing session encouraged learners to be very accurate and clear in their signing, challenging them to consider how they could use a range of symbols and images to promote understanding to individuals with communication difficulties.

220.  A wide range of innovative projects meets community needs.  In 2004-05, 49 Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities projects ran to build capacity and neighbourhood renewal.  The projects included a group called the Young Promoters.  This mixed-ability group consisted of homeless, disadvantaged young people who had had little opportunity to visit or evaluate live performances.  The learners are now planning a two-day trip to London to visit a mime festival.  Other initiatives have included a 'hidden voices' project run by Somerset Racial Equality, which offered first-step tasters to women not previously involved in learning.  A very innovative project linking with the health authority entitled 'Prescriptions for learning' has been effective in engaging surgeries, health visitors and other support staff to refer people for information and guidance on learning

opportunities.  Projects include learners from a wide range of targeted groups including those aged 16 to 25 years old, those recovering from drug addiction, the homeless, mental health patients, older learners, and those with disabilities.

221.  Support for learners is satisfactory.  Information, advice and guidance are readily available.  Support for literacy and numeracy in sessions is satisfactory.  The monitoring of learners' skills and progress is good.  In a session for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities, initial assessment included photographs, interviews with carers and checking of skills to smile, speak, socialise and make choices.  Meticulous recording of learners' progress supports the selection of stimulation, colour effects, sounds and choice ranges in activities.

222.  In the west of the county, community development is insufficient.  This area has high levels of rural and social deprivation.  Few projects were in operation at the time of the inspection.  A volunteering course enrolled insufficient learners.  The service has recruited one-third of its target for learners in the west of the county.  Few learners in the west are involved in community development learning.  Exmoor community centre provides a focal point for IT training and some projects to engage other learners are at the development stage.

## Leadership and management

223.  Leadership and management of community development provision are satisfactory.  A project co-ordinator manages the community development projects and contracts effectively.  Communication is satisfactory, with regular and close contact made with a wide range of groups and partners.

224.  Partnerships are particularly productive and meet the needs and interests of learners and communities.  Partners include health authorities, the council, government agencies, and a wide range of charity, voluntary and community groups.  The partnerships provide good access for development to groups that do not often engage in learning.  They provide strong links between support services and the communities.  They enable the useful sharing of resources, accommodation, training, funding and a wide range of expertise.

225.  In sessions and in project meetings, equality and diversity are strongly promoted and applied by learners.  Tutors and learners actively reflect on diversity and equality in lessons.  They consider how to implement good practice in equality and diversity in the wider community.  Learners discuss diversity and equality well and demonstrate a good understanding of disadvantaged groups, such as people with mental health problems, those who misuse drugs and alcohol, the homelessness, the unemployed, lone parents and abused individuals.  One group organised a vigil to raise awareness of abuse and its implications for children and themselves.  Learners champion and promote equality and inclusion in their communities through influencing individuals at work, in voluntary organisations, and their families.

226.  The self-assessment process did not involve project staff, volunteers and learners sufficiently.  Some of the key strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report closely match the findings of the inspectors.  Parts of the self-assessment report do not include sufficient supporting evidence.  The report does not fully evaluate the effect of some key strengths.  The service's self-assessment grade is lower than that given by the inspectors.

227.  The quality of provision is not sufficiently monitored.  The service has not observed the quality of teaching and learning or conducted its own quality checks for Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities projects or the Global Grant projects. Tutors do not complete registers and learners do not complete the service's own enrolment process.  It is difficult for tutors and managers to monitor recruitment and learners' progress.  Insufficient analysis of ethnicity, age and gender takes place to monitor the effectiveness of provision.  Some project evaluations contain much good detail.  Others are often late and do not include enough detail to measure the effect of capacity building or the potential for self-sufficiency.  The evaluation of sustainability is insufficient in some projects.  Some projects are not evaluated.  The service has developed a toolkit to improve the monitoring of quality.  It is too soon to evaluate the effect of this development.

228.  Insufficient sharing of good practice takes place.  The formal reporting on outcomes of completed projects and their effect is insufficiently established.