

INSPECTION REPORT

Liverpool City Council

14 October 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
- **learnndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Liverpool City Council Adult Learning Service (the service) contracts with the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council for the provision of accredited and non-accredited adult and community learning. Provision is offered directly by the service and through a subcontract with Homelink.
2. Courses take place in 250 venues. These include four neighbourhood learning centres, nine primary schools, 13 secondary schools, libraries, children's centres, community centres and social clubs across the city. Overall, there is a balance of day and evening courses with some weekend provision. Most courses in secondary schools take place in the evenings.
3. The head of service is responsible for the management of adult and community learning. She reports to the senior management team and the executive director of Liverpool City Council's children's service. The head of service is supported by six senior managers. There are 65 full-time staff, 53 part-time staff and 350 sessional tutors.
4. In 2004-05, there were 21,377 learners, of whom 74 per cent were women and 8 per cent were from a minority ethnic group. Five per cent of learners declared a disability.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 4

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** Family learning provision is good and arts, media and publishing is satisfactory. Information and communications technology (ICT), retail and commercial enterprise, leisure, travel and tourism, languages, literature and culture, and preparation for life and work are all inadequate. The service's leadership and management and quality improvement arrangements are also inadequate. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

6. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process involves managers at all levels in the organisation. Tutors are invited to contribute but are not required to do so. There is insufficient involvement of sessional tutors in the self-assessment process. Curriculum self-assessment reports and the subcontractor's self-assessment reports are moderated by management teams and used to contribute to the overall report. This process is not sufficiently self-critical.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a poor position to make improvements.** There is weak curriculum management in five areas of learning. Inspectors found much unsatisfactory teaching in all but one programme area. Twenty-one per cent of all the lessons observed during the inspection were inadequate. This is a very high percentage. Curriculum managers have not made a satisfactory start to tackling these problems. Assessment practice, resources and health and safety are significant weaknesses in many programme areas. The service has a poor record of making improvements to benefit learners.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL:

- improve curriculum management
- raise standards of teaching and learning
- share good practice more effectively
- improve arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs
- improve arrangements for health and safety

GRADES

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

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

Information and communications technology			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i>		4	
Adult and community learning	1,231	4	

Retail and commercial enterprise			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Beauty therapy</i>		4	
Adult and community learning	481	4	
<i>Hospitality and catering</i>		3	
Adult and community learning	374	3	

Leisure, travel and tourism			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		4	
Adult and community learning	871	4	

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance Adult and community learning	397	4 4
Crafts Adult and community learning	825	3 3

Languages, literature and culture		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other languages, literature and culture Adult and community learning	977	4 4

Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL Adult and community learning	238	4 4
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	289	4 4

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning Adult and community learning	473	2 2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. Seven areas of learning offered by the service were reported on and graded. There were too few learners in health, public services and care, science and mathematics, agriculture, horticulture and animal care, social sciences, business administration and law, for these areas to be reported on and graded separately.

Number of inspectors	18
Number of inspection days	87
Number of learners interviewed	186
Number of staff interviewed	116
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **Learners develop good skills.** In ICT, learners are able to produce business documents, shop over the internet and use e-mail. In beauty therapy, learners with mental health difficulties achieved good results in a reflexology lesson and were able to carry out reflexology movements on each other with the tutor's support and encouragement. Catering learners have gained employment in local bakeries after successfully completing their course. Learners in a belly dancing class used a veil for the first time and displayed natural grace and fluidity of movement.

10. **Achievement is good on family learning programmes and for learners following accredited qualifications in ICT.** In 2004-05 on family learning courses, the retention rate was 96 per cent and the achievement rate on accredited courses was 97 per cent. The overall success rate was 93 per cent. On short, non-accredited courses, learners achieve their personal learning goals. They become confident in helping their children, for example using a weekend shopping trip to explore shape and colour. In 2002-03, the success rate for accredited ICT courses was 48 per cent. This rose to 61 per cent in 2003-04. Data for 2004-05 was not available during the inspection. The success rates on the basic computer literacy course and on an examination-based qualification in information technology (IT) were particularly good.

11. **The standard of learners' work in sports is poor.** In most classes, learners do not maintain or improve their fitness. Few learners acquire new skills or improve skills.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Information and communications technology	0	10	14	6	30
Retail and commercial enterprise	0	8	7	4	19
Leisure, travel and tourism	0	3	5	7	15
Arts, media and publishing	0	8	12	1	21
Languages, literature and culture	0	5	3	4	12
Preparation for life and work	1	8	10	4	23
Family learning	0	8	2	1	11
Total	1	50	53	27	131

12. **There is a good range of provision for learners in ICT, beauty therapy, sports, dance and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).** Many beauty therapy courses accommodate learners' personal and care arrangements. There are opportunities for progression and learners are encouraged to take them. Learners can take part in a wide range of taster programmes, many of which lead on to accredited courses. In dance, there is a good balance of day, evening and weekend provision. ESOL learners benefit from the productive links that the service has made with other organisations and agencies. These links have facilitated the running of courses in a number of community venues to attract hard-to-reach learners. There is also a good range of venues for ICT courses.

13. **In family learning, the curriculum is managed well and there is good teaching and**

learning. Learners with additional needs are well supported.

14. Much of the teaching in most programme areas is poor. Sixty per cent of lessons observed in non-accredited ICT provision were inadequate. They were poorly planned, lacked pace and direction, and failed to challenge learners. In some lessons, tutors did not have sufficient subject knowledge, and in others, they gave inappropriate instructions. In sport there are too few teaching and learning activities, and too much reliance on tutors' instruction and demonstration of exercises. Some high-risk activities are inappropriate for learners. Tutors pay little attention to correct performance, and do not sufficiently monitor learners' posture and exercise technique. Teaching in many entry level literacy and numeracy classes is inadequately planned. Learners at levels 1 and 2 often attend entry level groups for help with specific needs. Most tutors of these groups do not have enough specialist knowledge to plan adequately for such a wide range of learners. Initial assessment information is not sufficiently used to plan learning. Work in English classes is sometimes at the wrong level, with learners insufficiently challenged or finding the tasks too difficult. Many ESOL lessons are tutor-centred and do not allow learners enough opportunities to practise the target language. Learners are not set individual targets, and their progress is not adequately monitored. In one lesson, there were no pair- or group-work activities, but the tutor went through the structure exercises and provided the correct answers, often speaking over the learners.

15. Assessment practice is inadequate in most programme areas. In crafts, there is little evidence of a consistent system of initial assessment, or of ongoing recording of learners' needs or their skills in the craft activity. ICT learners do not always receive an initial assessment. Those that do seldom receive a new initial assessment if they progress onto a higher-level programme. Tutors are not always aware of their learners' support needs. Some learners are on courses which are too difficult for them, while others are not sufficiently challenged. Learners studying a modern foreign language are given an informal initial assessment which does not always assess the main language learning skills. Tutors vary in their approach to gathering information about their learners. Some consider learners' previous experience and personal goals, while others merely assess their existing language skills. Tutors do not record this information or use it to assist lesson planning or to meet individual learners' needs. Staff do not fully understand the purpose of initial assessment.

16. There are poor resources to support learning in beauty therapy and in catering. In beauty therapy, there are not enough appropriate trolleys for learners to use to store massage oils and equipment or to set up equipment to professional salon standards. Some tutors on non-accredited courses provide their own teaching materials and products, but these are not always suitable and do not meet health and safety requirements. In a few instances, the fabric of the rooms used for catering courses is poor. One area has poor paintwork, missing wall tiles and an uneven floor. One cake decoration lesson, was held in a room with no water supply for washing equipment or hands. In one cookery lesson, equipment had to be borrowed from another room, which wasted time.

Leadership and management

17. Senior managers provide **clear strategic direction**. Staff are well aware of the service's strategic objectives and core values, and staff development is used well to reinforce their understanding.

18. There are **successful initiatives to increase participation by members of under-represented groups**. The service's staff know the local community well, and use their knowledge effectively to remove barriers to participation and inclusion. Projects are run in community locations at times that suit the needs of learners. The service works closely with a wide range of community organisations. For example, there is a successful partnership with an organisation run by disabled people to develop the skills and confidence of disabled people so that they can move from learning at a day centre into learning at community-based settings.

19. **There is weak curriculum management in five areas of learning**. Communication between middle managers and sessional tutors is generally poor. New tutors are not well supported. Much of the provision is characterised by unsuitable learning venues and inadequate learning resources. Courses have been cancelled with little notice. **Middle managers do not use data sufficiently to analyse trends or to identify underperforming courses**. Inspectors found much unsatisfactory teaching in all but one curriculum area. A fifth of the lessons observed during the inspection were inadequate, a very high proportion. The average attendance rate was just 77 per cent. Curriculum managers have not satisfactorily begun to tackle these problems.

20. There is **poor management of literacy, numeracy and language needs on accredited programmes**. Learners do not always receive an initial assessment of their learning needs before they begin their studies. Staff are not always aware of their learners' basic skills needs until they have begun their studies. There is no formal system for providing literacy, numeracy and language support during the learners' programmes. Provision for meeting learners' additional needs is particularly poor in ICT. Initial assessment is carried out on some non-accredited programmes, but it is poor in sports and modern foreign languages.

21. There is **inadequate monitoring of health and safety by staff and managers** in the service. Inspectors observed poor practice in the storage of nail solvents and some poor hygiene techniques in beauty therapy. In catering, there is insufficient first aid equipment and staff do not know who the first-aiders are on site, inadequate use of personal protective clothing, and some uneven floors. In one family learning classroom, exposed electrical wiring was a potential hazard to staff and learners.

22. **Quality improvement arrangements are ineffective**. A scheme for the observation of teaching and learning has been in place for three years and was recently reviewed. All tutors are observed at least once every three years. Observations are carried out by curriculum co-ordinators, who have received appropriate training. Tutors receive feedback after the observation and an appropriate action plan is put in place. However, the scheme has not raised the standards of teaching and learning. Grades awarded to learning sessions by inspectors were lower than those given by the service. In some programme areas, tutors have not been observed for several years. Action plans following observations are not rigorously monitored.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- successful initiatives to increase participation from under represented groups

Weaknesses

- weak curriculum management
- insufficient use of management information by middle managers
- poor management of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs on accredited programmes
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety
- ineffective implementation of quality improvement

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Grade 4

Strengths

- good skills development
- good success rates on accredited courses
- good range of learning venues

Weaknesses

- inadequate teaching on non-accredited courses
- inadequate assessment
- inadequate provision for meeting additional learning needs
- poor curriculum management

Retail and commercial enterprise

Beauty therapy

Grade 4

Strengths

- good development of learners' confidence and social skills
- wide range of courses

Weaknesses

- poor teaching and lesson planning
- insufficient resources to support teaching and learning
- inadequate health and safety practices
- ineffective quality improvement

- inadequate curriculum management

Hospitality and catering

Grade 3

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills and knowledge
- good planning of learning

Weaknesses

- poor resources at some centres
- weak aspects of curriculum management

Leisure, travel and tourism

Sport, leisure and recreation

Grade 4

Strengths

- wide range of provision

Weaknesses

- poor standard of learners' work
- inadequate teaching and learning
- insufficient assessment and monitoring of learners' progress
- unsatisfactory initial assessment
- inadequate quality improvement
- inadequate curriculum management

Arts, media and publishing

Crafts

Grade 3

Strengths

- good achievement of practical skills
- good individual support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment
- weak aspects of curriculum management

Dance

Grade 4

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills in dance

- good range of provision

Weaknesses

- some ineffective course and lesson planning
- insufficient monitoring and assessment of learners' progress
- inadequate curriculum management

Languages, literature and culture

Other languages, literature and culture

Grade 4

Strengths

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- good development of provision to meet local demand

Weaknesses

- poor teaching and learning in modern foreign languages
- unsatisfactory initial assessment practices on accredited courses
- weak curriculum management

Preparation for life and work

ESOL

Grade 4

Strengths

- wide range of targeted community provision

Weaknesses

- poor variety of teaching techniques
- inadequate individual target-setting
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress
- poor management of quality improvement processes

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 4

Strengths

- very effective initial assessment
- good targeting of programmes to meet local needs

Weaknesses

- insufficient achievement at entry level
- inadequate planning of teaching in entry level classes
- insufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning

- weak quality improvement

Family learning

Adult and community learning

Grade 2

Strengths

- good achievement
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners with additional learning needs
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient feedback to learners
- insufficient use of individual learning plans to monitor learners' progress

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL:

- the range of courses
- the value for money
- it is friendly and welcoming
- 'amazing what I've achieved in three weeks'
- 'supports my independence'
- 'it keeps my mind ticking over'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- the amount of private space to work
- more course books instead of handouts
- the number of family learning classes during out-of-school hours
- the quantity of paperwork learners have to fill in

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- successful initiatives to increase participation from under represented groups

Weaknesses

- weak curriculum management
- insufficient use of management information by middle managers
- poor management of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs on accredited programmes
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety
- ineffective implementation of quality improvement

23. Senior managers provide clear strategic direction. The service's six strategic objectives are clear and are well aimed at supporting adults to gain the skills and qualifications they aspire to achieve. Staff are well aware of the service's strategic objectives and core values. A range of effective methods is used to communicate the objectives and priorities and they are effectively reinforced through staff development. The service has good links with key partners that understand the service's strategic objectives.

24. Communications between managers are mostly effective. A range of methods is used to keep staff and learners informed. Staff have regular team meetings at which information is imparted and discussed, knowledge is updated, and monitoring actions take place. Staff have an adequate understanding of operational standards and procedures. Records of management meetings are available on the service's intranet. However, at several community centres, staff have no access to e-mail. There is insufficient communication between some curriculum managers and tutors, and the planning and teaching of courses is adversely affected by this. Communication with external partners is good.

25. The service failed to achieve its learner recruitment targets for learners in 2003-04, reducing associated income, which amounted to approximately £200,000 or 5 per cent of its total income. Targets for 2004-05 were achieved or exceeded in most areas. Recently, the service's contractor failed to deliver its promotional literature to approximately half the targeted homes in the city. Recruitment in 2005-06 is 33 per cent below that expected.

26. Staff development and training are satisfactory. Staff have had good training in learner support and in teaching and learning skills. Two hundred and forty staff received in-house training last year, with some attending several training events. Not all part-time staff attend training events. Areas for development are identified well from staff appraisal and from national developments in adult and community learning. The appraisal system meets the needs of full-time staff and the service's business requirements, but there is insufficient appraisal of sessional tutors.

27. The standard of accommodation is satisfactory. Some is new and purpose-built, such as the new learning centre in Toxteth and a new learning facility in Norris Green. Other accommodation consists of older buildings, which in some cases are coming to the end of their useful life. Access for learners with restricted mobility is good in most buildings, but restricted in some of the older buildings.

28. Financial management and deployment of staff and accommodation are satisfactory. The service applies rigorous financial and management processes to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of resources.

29. There is weak curriculum management in five areas of learning. Communication between middle managers and sessional tutors is generally poor. New tutors are not well supported. Much of the provision is characterised by unsuitable learning venues and insufficient resources. Courses have been cancelled with little notice. Middle managers do not use data sufficiently to analyse trends or to identify underperforming courses. Inspectors found much unsatisfactory teaching in all but one curriculum area. A fifth of the lessons observed during the inspection were inadequate. The average attendance rate was just 77 per cent. Curriculum managers have not satisfactorily begun to tackle these problems.

30. Middle managers make insufficient use of management information. Data on learners' recruitment, retention and achievement is used effectively by senior managers and some middle managers to plan for improvements. Senior managers receive reports on the performance of curriculum areas and consider them in detail. However, data is not used sufficiently by managers to monitor and understand trends at neighbourhood level. For example, managers do not analyse the patterns of learner recruitment in particular areas of the city. The performance of programmes and curriculum areas by geographical region is not well analysed or understood. Management information across the service is accurate, but it is not timely. For example, the retention and achievement rates for 2004-05 were not available during the inspection. Tutors' understanding and use of data is poor.

31. There is poor management of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs on accredited programmes. Learners do not always receive an initial assessment of their learning needs before they begin their studies, and staff do not always know what their learners' basic skills needs are until courses begin. There is no formal system for providing literacy, numeracy and language support. Provision for meeting learners' additional needs is particularly poor in ICT. Initial assessment is carried out on some non-accredited programmes, but it is poor in sports and modern foreign languages.

32. There is inadequate monitoring of health and safety by staff and managers. Inspectors observed poor practice in the storage of nail solvents and some poor hygiene techniques in beauty therapy. In catering, there is insufficient first aid equipment, staff do not know who the first-aiders are, there is too little use of personal protective clothing, and some floors are uneven. In one family learning classroom, exposed electrical wiring was a potential hazard to staff and learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

33. There are successful initiatives to increase participation by members of under-represented groups. Many groups that are often excluded from adult learning are provided with good opportunities to attend programmes. Staff know the local community

well, and use their knowledge effectively to remove barriers to participation and inclusion. Projects are run in community locations at times that suit the needs of learners. The service works closely with a wide range of community organisations. For example, there is a successful partnership with an organisation run by disabled people to develop the skills and confidence of disabled people, enabling them to move from a day-centre environment to more community-based settings. In a family learning project with bilingual families, learners explore Liverpool and, at the same time, develop language skills and build confidence.

34. The service routinely collects data on the age, gender and ethnicity of learners and uses it at a strategic level to monitor the effect of the equality and diversity policies. Realistic annual targets have recently been set for the recruitment of learners from under-represented groups. Although data is shared with curriculum managers, it is not yet sufficiently used to set targets and plan provision at neighbourhood or community level. Retention, success and progression data is not analysed separately for learners with disabilities.

35. The service has a satisfactory range of equality of opportunity policies and statements that are up to date and conform to current legislation. There is no policy covering bullying and harassment which relates specifically to learners. However, all tutors agree a set of ground rules with their class, and a learner booklet covering harassment is issued to all learners.

36. A range of equal opportunities training events has been offered to staff. Few sessional tutors attend these events. A new course on 'Valuing Diversity' has been designed and will be offered to staff from November 2005. Equality and diversity matters are not regularly included in staff newsletters and are not a fixed agenda item at management meetings.

37. The service has an appropriate race equality scheme as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Progress is reviewed annually. The service has taken steps to implement the Special Educational Needs and Discrimination Act 2001. It has conducted an accessibility audit of all learning sites. Some premises are not accessible to learners with restricted mobility.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

38. There are detailed and comprehensive arrangements for quality assurance which cover most aspects of the learners' experience. Senior managers have a good understanding of quality assurance and are actively involved in promoting quality assurance activities to colleagues in the service.

39. There is an effective system for dealing with complaints from learners. The service uses Liverpool City Council's complaints procedure. The quality assurance manager deals with complaints promptly and maintains a detailed complaints log. Most complaints are satisfactorily resolved.

40. There are effective arrangements for the quality assurance of subcontractors, including service level agreements. Subcontractors are required to implement a scheme for the observation of teaching and learning and to produce an annual self-assessment report for the service. The quality assurance manager meets subcontractors formally and clearly articulates the service's expectations. The service actively promotes training opportunities for subcontractors' staff on self-assessment, teaching and learning, and quality assurance.

41. The service's quality improvement arrangements are ineffective. A scheme for the observation of teaching and learning has been in place for three years and was recently reviewed. Under the scheme, all tutors are to be observed at least once every three years. Observations are carried out by curriculum co-ordinators, who have received appropriate training. Tutors receive feedback after each observation and an appropriate action plan is put in place. However, the scheme has not raised the standards of teaching and learning. Grades given to learning sessions by inspectors were lower than those given by the service. In some programme areas, tutors have not been observed for several years. Managers' monitoring of the action plans that follow observations is not rigorous enough.

42. Feedback is collected from learners three weeks into their course and again at the end. At the end of term, the quality assurance manager produces a report based on this feedback, which managers consider. Action plans arising from these reports are not rigorously monitored to ensure that quality improves.

43. Self-assessment involves managers at all levels in the organisation. There is a satisfactory quality improvement plan which includes detailed plans for tackling weaknesses identified during the self-assessment process. However, many of these had not been completed within the timescales identified. There is insufficient involvement of sessional tutors in the self-assessment process. They are invited to contribute to the self-assessment process, but are not required to do so. Curriculum self-assessment reports and subcontractors' self-assessment reports are moderated by management teams and used to contribute to the overall report. This process is not sufficiently self-critical. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment are overstated or no more than normal practice, and inspectors found many additional weaknesses.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 4

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i> Adult and community learning	1,231	4 4

44. There are 1,231 learners enrolled on 133 courses, including word-processing, spreadsheets, databases, desktop publishing, computerised accounts, computer maintenance and upgrading, and digital imaging. Learners can study courses from beginner level to level 3. Sixty-five per cent of courses are accredited. Courses are taught during the day or evening and, in some cases, at weekends, and range in duration from five hours over one week to two hours a week for 31 weeks. They take place in a diverse range of community locations. The ICT programmes are managed by a curriculum manager and three lead tutors. There are 49 sessional tutors.

ICT for users

Grade 4

Strengths

- good skills development
- good success rates on accredited courses
- good range of learning venues

Weaknesses

- inadequate teaching on non-accredited courses
- inadequate assessment
- inadequate provision for meeting additional learning needs
- poor curriculum management

Achievement and standards

45. Skills development is good. Learners improve their ICT skills and many go on to other courses. They also develop in confidence, make new friends and exceed their aspirations. Learners new to ICT are able to produce business documents, shop over the internet and use e-mail. The work produced by learners is at a level appropriate to the stage and level of the course they are studying. Learners are proud of their progress and achievement. Learners on computer maintenance courses develop problem-solving skills when they learn how to upgrade computers. On some courses, learners develop skills in manipulating photographs. However, learners do not develop appropriate keyboarding techniques in a timely way. A few learners make slow progress. Attendance on courses at the time of inspection was satisfactory at 79 per cent.

46. Success rates on accredited courses are good. In 2002-03, the success rate was 48 per cent. This rose to 61 per cent in 2003-04. Data for 2004-05 was not available during the

inspection. The success rates on the basic computer literacy course and on an examination-based qualification in IT are particularly good.

The quality of provision

47. A good range of community venues provides convenient access to ICT courses which meet the needs of learners in disadvantaged areas. For example, courses are offered in places of worship, community centres, primary and secondary schools, and some purpose-built centres across the city and its suburbs. A mobile learning centre is used to visit workplaces, develop links with support groups, and reach communities that do not have suitable alternative venues. Most courses are offered on different days of the week and staff are careful not to duplicate provision already available in the same geographical area.

48. Learners are inducted onto courses during enrolment, when they receive information on their roles and responsibilities, basic health and safety guidance and information on equality of opportunity. However, late starters often do not receive a full induction.

49. Teaching on most accredited courses is satisfactory or better. The better lessons are well-planned and enable learners to develop confidence and skills in ICT through extended tasks and activities. Learners work independently and review their progress against personal goals through self-critical evaluation.

50. Sixty per cent of lessons observed in non-accredited provision were inadequate. They were poorly planned, had too little pace and direction, and failed to challenge learners. In some lessons, the tutor did not have sufficient subject knowledge, and in others, the instructions the tutor gave were inappropriate. In one lesson, a new learner was not given any guidance on health and safety or advice on how to adjust the computer chair and monitor. Teaching and learning methods are insufficiently varied to meet the needs of all learners. In the weakest sessions, learners read a manual and followed instructions without a specific aim. Tutors do not adapt learning materials and objectives sufficiently to extend the skills of more able learners.

51. Assessment is inadequate. Learners do not always receive an initial assessment. If they do, they do not usually receive another initial assessment if they progress onto a higher-level programme. Tutors are not always aware of their learners' support needs. Some learners are on courses which are too difficult for them, while others are not sufficiently challenged. On some courses, there is no assessment until the end. Some learners are unaware of if, when, or how they are to be assessed. Feedback on marked work does not tell learners how to improve. There is too little use of individual learning plans across the programme area. In some cases, learning plans are completed at the end of the course, rather than at the beginning. Many tutors do not record learners' progress in sufficient detail. They frequently record the tasks completed but not the knowledge and skills acquired. Assessment information is not used effectively and reviews do not focus on learners' progress or on opportunities to progress to other courses.

52. There is inadequate provision for meeting learners' additional learning needs. Learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are not assessed thoroughly when learners begin a course. Learners and tutors are often unaware of the support available. There is insufficient specialist equipment to support learners with disabilities. In the very few cases where additional learning support needs have been identified, the service is slow in

providing the support required. Learners' progress is hampered by the inadequacy of support and resources, and even basic equipment can take several weeks to arrive. Learners with language needs do not receive support from appropriately qualified specialist staff. Special arrangements are seldom made for examinations. The learning environment in many centres is unsatisfactory. Classrooms have insufficient space between the computers for learners' work, handouts and exercises. There are insufficient aids, such as wrist supports and foot rests. Some handouts are not suitable for learners with language, literacy or numeracy difficulties.

Leadership and management

53. Curriculum management is poor. New tutors do not always receive an induction. There is no recorded health and safety assessment of teaching rooms. Timetables are ineffectively managed. Some centres are poorly equipped to meet learning objectives. For example, there are often too few computers for the number of learners, no printing facilities, inappropriate seating, and cramped work stations. Where interactive whiteboards are available, they are not being used to their full potential. Most tutors have a good technical knowledge of ICT, but not all have a teaching qualification. There is insufficient collection and use of data to plan for improvements. Paperwork is not standardised in format and presentation. New systems are being developed to deal with this, including an effective electronic file-sharing and communication system that will enable resources to be shared. However, it is too early for this to have had a significant effect on learners' experience.

54. Quality assurance procedures do not focus sufficiently on the learners' experience. Observation of teaching and learning has not raised the standards of learning, teaching and attainment. Many lessons are over-graded. Planning of observations is insufficiently rigorous and structured. Some tutors are observed several times and others not at all.

55. The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. There are not enough enrichment activities for learners. Cultural diversity is rarely celebrated. Learning materials do not promote Liverpool's diverse communities. Marketing materials, handouts, notices and exercises are not readily available in community languages or in simple versions for people with low literacy levels. There is poor timetabling of learning sessions to accommodate religious festivals for minority ethnic groups.

56. The self-assessment report identified some of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. Inspectors gave the provision a lower grade than it received in the self-assessment report.

Retail and commercial enterprise**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Beauty therapy</i> Adult and community learning	481	4 4
<i>Hospitality and catering</i> Adult and community learning	374	3 3

57. The service provides aromatherapy, reflexology, Indian head massage, Swedish massage, crystal therapy, shiatsu, acrylic nails and reiki courses at 20 centres across Liverpool. There are 267 learners on accredited courses and 214 on non-accredited courses. Accredited courses are offered at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, mainly at two sites with salons. The non-accredited courses take place in schools, community centres and outreach venues. Ninety per cent of learners are women and very few are from minority ethnic groups. A lead tutor manages the curriculum area. There are 14 tutors for non-accredited courses and five for the accredited courses. Accredited courses run for 16 to 40 weeks and non-accredited courses vary in length.

58. There are 374 learners enrolled on 33 catering programmes. Ninety-six learners are on an accredited programme in working with sugar paste. There are 278 learners on non-accredited programmes in cake decorating, ethnic cookery, healthy eating, and wine tasting. Most programmes are in two-hour sessions over 10 weeks. Some, such as cookery for men and healthy cookery for families courses, are targeted at specific groups of learners. There are 15 evening programmes, 17 one-day programmes and one weekend programme. Programmes are provided across the city in 14 community centres, day schools and evening centres. A curriculum co-ordinator manages the 11 sessional tutors who teach on the programmes.

Beauty therapy**Grade 4***Strengths*

- good development of learners' confidence and social skills
- wide range of courses

Weaknesses

- poor teaching and lesson planning
- insufficient resources to support teaching and learning
- inadequate health and safety practices
- ineffective quality improvement
- inadequate curriculum management

Achievement and standards

59. Courses provide good development of learners' confidence and social skills. In one centre, learners are encouraged to participate in centre and local social events. Learners

on introductory courses are encouraged to develop their literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to progress to accredited courses, and the centre has developed good links with a major hotel in the city and with doctors' surgeries, giving learners an opportunity to participate in work experience. In another centre, learners with mental health difficulties achieved good results in a reflexology lesson and were able to carry out reflexology movements on each other with the tutor's support and encouragement.

60. In 2004-05, overall success rates for the provision were satisfactory at 78 per cent, and retention rates improved to 85 per cent. Attendance during the inspection week was low at 66 per cent.

The quality of provision

61. The service offers learners a wide range of courses. There are many taster programmes, which often lead on to accredited courses. Courses are taught in schools and community centres across Liverpool, and learners benefit from being able to study close to their homes. Many courses are designed to accommodate learners' personal and care arrangements. There are opportunities for progression and learners are encouraged to take advantage of them.

62. Arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs are satisfactory. Learners on accredited courses have an initial assessment before they join the programme. Appropriately qualified tutors provide support to learners identified as needing it. However, the effect of this support in raising retention and achievement rates is not recorded. There is no formal initial assessment for learners on non-accredited courses. Some tutors use their own paperwork to individually assess learners' learning styles and support needs.

63. Inspectors observed much poor teaching. In the weakest lessons, teaching and learning activities do not follow the lesson plan. Few lessons adequately recap previous learning. Key points are not used to reinforce learners' understanding. There is insufficient use of the whiteboard to support learning. There is some unimaginative teaching, with tutors talking for long periods without involving the learners. In one beauty therapy lesson, learners were taught an incorrect procedure for carrying out an aromatherapy facial, by applying face masks before the massage, instead of afterwards. In the same lesson, the awarding body's code of practice relating to professional appearance, hygiene and salon dress was contravened. At the end of most lessons, tutors did not leave time to evaluate learning effectively, and some learners drifted out at the end of the sessions. Health and safety procedures are insufficiently reinforced in most lessons. In acrylic nails classes, there is insufficient planning and teaching of the appropriate procedures for the use and disposal of acrylic nail products. Lesson plans and schemes of work are often poor and are not always followed.

64. In the better lessons, tutors used good demonstration and questioning techniques and learners actively participated in the learning process. Lesson plans clearly indicated how learners' individual needs would be met.

65. There are insufficient resources to support teaching and learning in some centres. For example, some salons have insufficient appropriate trolleys on which learners can store massage oils and set up equipment to professional salon standards. Some tutors on non-accredited courses provide their own teaching materials and products. These products

are not always suitable and do not meet health and safety requirements.

66. Few sessions have enough visual aids, videos and textbooks. Tutors often resort to a formal teaching style with very little learner involvement. Learners do not always understand the background knowledge aspects of the work when this formal teaching style is used. In an anatomy and physiology lesson, learners were trying to label a diagram of a skeleton by following instructions from the tutor. Most learners struggled to do this correctly. Some learners struggled with the correct spelling of complex words and were unable to complete the activity.

Leadership and management

67. The service's health and safety practices are inadequate. Salons do not have sterilisation equipment for learners to use. In some lessons, equipment is placed on unprotected and unclean work surfaces. Basic hygiene practices are not enforced. Risk assessments have not been carried out on the use of nail solvents. There are not enough covered waste bins for soiled materials. Staff are inappropriately dressed during practical lessons, contravening awarding body codes of practice.

68. Equality of opportunity is covered at induction but not subsequently reinforced. However, learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

69. Quality improvement is ineffective. There have been too few teaching observations in the past two years. Many tutors are not routinely observed. There are no course reviews, and there is insufficient analysis and understanding of the key strengths and weaknesses of the programme area. There are weak internal verification practices. Internal verification is poorly planned. Paperwork is not standardised. There is little capacity for improvement. Many of the weaknesses identified in the 2003-04 self-assessment report have not been tackled. Staff were not sufficiently involved in contributing to the self-assessment process.

70. Curriculum management is inadequate. There is too little sharing of good practice. Managers do not communicate effectively with tutors of non-accredited courses in some outreach centres. New tutors do not receive sufficient guidance and support. Data is not collected or used to make judgements about course and programme performance. Staff are not set challenging targets to improve the provision.

Hospitality and catering

Grade 3

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills and knowledge
- good planning of learning

Weaknesses

- poor resources at some centres
- weak aspects of curriculum management

Achievement and standards

71. There is good development of learners' skills and knowledge. In cake decorating and sugar paste lessons, learners develop a wide range of skills associated with decoration and

the good use of colour and design. They produce high-quality items ranging from complex celebration cakes to novelties, such as the 'bookworm' design. Learners display a high level of commitment to producing good standards of work. They gain knowledge from other learners during lessons. Tutors use photographic evidence well to illustrate achievement. Some learners who have completed these programmes have gained employment in local bakeries. In cookery lessons, learners develop practical skills in preparing ingredients and acquire a good understanding of a wide range of cooking techniques, particularly in the Chinese and Indian cookery lessons. The skills and knowledge learnt also help learners to improve their lifestyle and, in some cases, support independent living.

72. In 2004-05, the retention rate for accredited programmes was good at 88 per cent, and the achievement rate satisfactory at 69 per cent. Attendance during the inspection period was also good at 83 per cent.

The quality of provision

73. Tutors plan and prepare for learning well. Most schemes of work and lesson plans are comprehensive and include clearly identified learning goals. In most lessons, tutors recognise different learning styles and work well to accommodate them. Tutors prepare their learning materials carefully, and they are well presented and appropriate. Many tutors take time to prepare for classes by producing items for display before the start of lessons. This helps to identify the standard to be achieved, acts as a learning resource and saves time for the learners, who can then concentrate on their practical work. In a wine appreciation lesson, there was careful selection of the wines in order to develop learners' tasting skills. Tutors give good individual support and guidance during lessons, meeting individual learners' needs well. Learners develop confidence. Those who return to programmes do not repeat what they have already produced, but develop new skills. Recipes in cookery lessons are adapted to meet individual needs. There is a good explanation of the various herbs and spices used in Chinese and Indian cookery classes.

74. In some lessons, tutors do not question learners enough to check their knowledge and understanding. In a minority, there is inadequate introduction to and evaluation of learning. Tutors make little reference to healthy eating and a balanced diet.

75. The overall range of provision is satisfactory, although most programmes are related to cake decoration. The service has encountered difficulties in recruiting suitably experienced tutors to broaden the range. However, the range available meets the needs of the community and learners. The inclusion of ethnic cookery lessons and courses targeted at specific audiences, such as men and those over 50, promotes good participation by members of under-represented groups.

76. The guidance and support given to learners are satisfactory. Subject tutors effectively carry out initial guidance and enrolment procedures and provide clear information. Initial assessment practices vary between tutors. Some aspects are covered by the enrolment process but many tutors also devise their own initial assessments which they use to identify support needs, as well as medical or physical conditions that could affect learning. These assessments are not consistent and tutors have received little guidance in developing them. Learners who need additional support do not always receive it in a timely way. The service uses free taster days and four-week summer courses to introduce programmes to new learners. This works well and supports wider participation.

77. There are poor resources at some centres. The teaching areas used for cake decoration and cookery lessons are generally good. In a few instances, the fabric of the room is poor. One area has poor paintwork, missing wall tiles and an uneven floor. In a cake decoration lesson where learners were producing a decorated plaque, there was no water supply for washing equipment or hands. Learners in one cookery lesson had insufficient equipment, and had to borrow it from another room, which wasted time. Much equipment is supplied free to learners, although many learners provide their own, especially in cake decoration lessons.

Leadership and management

78. Tutors are responsible for course handbooks, which cover most aspects of the programmes. Monitoring of these has improved and tutors receive good feedback on content and quality. Where necessary, an action plan is developed to improve them. The learners' record of achievement has not yet been fully implemented and some tutors are unsure of its purpose. Some aspects of health and safety are poor. In some instances, first-aid boxes are not available in practical areas. Many tutors do not know who the first-aider is, and learners in some practical classes do not wear any form of protective clothing.

79. Tutors have an adequate understanding of equality of opportunity, although there has been little recent training. There are good examples of learners with disabilities being integrated into lessons. The range of learners in lessons during inspection did not reflect the diversity of the city's communities.

80. Aspects of curriculum management are weak. Tutors are managed by a curriculum co-ordinator and supported by centre managers, and they understand the lines of communication. There are, however, inconsistent approaches to the management of staff. Those teaching on accredited programmes hold regular team meetings to carry out standardisation activities and share good practice. Tutors on non-accredited programmes do not benefit from this practice. The service has recently introduced a new procedure for observing tutors, but this has not been fully implemented. Some paperwork introduced this year is not fully understood by some tutors. There is insufficient support for new tutors, in particular those joining just before the start of the programme. There is a good range of staff development opportunities available to tutors, who attend voluntarily. At the time of inspection, 64 per cent of tutors had attended these sessions.

81. The self-assessment report was insufficiently critical of the provision. It failed to identify weaknesses and overstated the strengths. There was little reference to hospitality and catering in the report. Many tutors did not contribute to the report. Tutors do not all understand the self-assessment process, and some of them were not adequately involved in it. The grade given by inspectors' for the provision matched that in the self-assessment report.

Leisure, travel and tourism**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		<i>4</i>
Adult and community learning	871	4

82. Over 80 per cent of the provision in sport and fitness is non-accredited. Learners can study yoga, qigong, tai chi, Pilates, keep fit, running preparation, aqua aerobics, kickboxing and subaqua. Accredited courses include expedition leadership, sailing, map reading, swimming and life-guarding. Of the 871 current learners, 723 are following non-accredited programmes. Sport and fitness courses are offered in 34 schools, colleges, churches and learning centres. Most courses are run in termly blocks. Classes are taught in the mornings, afternoons and evenings. A small amount of provision is offered at weekends. A curriculum programme co-ordinator, lead tutor and centre co-ordinators manage the curriculum and support the 26 sessional tutors.

Sport, leisure and recreation***Grade 4****Strengths*

- wide range of provision

Weaknesses

- poor standard of learners' work
- inadequate teaching and learning
- insufficient assessment and monitoring of learners' progress
- unsatisfactory initial assessment
- inadequate quality improvement
- inadequate curriculum management

Achievement and standards

83. Learners are insufficiently challenged and their work is poor. A number of classes are little more than social clubs, and in a few, learners mostly stood about, casually talking. In most classes, learners do not maintain or improve their fitness. Few learners acquire new skills or improve those they already have. Learners lose the health and fitness benefits gained on courses, because of the long holiday periods. In a few classes where achievement is satisfactory, most learners maintain their fitness during the course and some increase their mobility and movement. For example, a learner in a swimming class gained skills and confidence and is now able to go on holidays abroad.

84. Accredited courses have good achievement rates. However, the standards of work and attainment observed on some courses are lower than would be expected at this stage of the programme.

85. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory. Most courses only last for 10 weeks. There are very few new learners. Many return year after year to the same course. Learners enjoy

taking part in these courses and report high levels of satisfaction. Attendance rates at the time of inspection are lower than would normally be expected. Punctuality is poor in a few classes.

The quality of provision

86. The curriculum offer is good and includes a wide variety of programmes. These include courses that are not usually offered in adult and community learning, such as subaqua, running preparation and expedition leadership. There are sufficient opportunities for learners to progress from beginner to advanced programmes. Sessions are taught at a wide range of venues across the city, which are easy for learners to attend. Some provision is targeted specifically at learners from under-represented groups.

87. Overall, resources are satisfactory. Most accommodation is adequate. Learning materials and equipment are generally satisfactory. On some courses, there is an expectation that learners will bring their own equipment, such as mats.

88. Teaching and learning are inadequate. The range of teaching and learning activities is narrow, and tutors spend too much time on instruction and demonstration of exercises. Lessons are often poorly planned. Some high-risk activities are inappropriate for learners. Little attention is paid to correct performance, and tutors do not sufficiently monitor and correct learners' posture and exercise technique. There are insufficient alternatives or adaptations to exercises to meet learners' different needs and abilities. Some learners are insufficiently challenged, while others struggle to perform exercises that are beyond their capability. Tutors give learners little specific, individual feedback about performance.

89. There is too little assessment and monitoring of learners' performance. Some tutors use a learner assessment record to record group and individual learning objectives but the goals set are not specific, measurable or timed. Learners' progress towards their aims is seldom recorded and learners receive little feedback about their achievement or performance. Few learners are able to say how much progress they have made towards their learning goals.

90. Tutors are not systematically using the new procedure for recording learners' progress and achievement, and do not always use individual learning plans. One tutor completes learning plans comprehensively and this is having a positive effect on the learners' experience.

91. Initial assessment is unsatisfactory on most courses. Health and medical screening is rarely carried out, and in the few classes where it is, the form used by tutors does not include a section for learners to give informed consent to the process. Some tutors are not fully aware of the individual medical histories of new learners. There is little formal recording of learners' fitness or skills level at the start of a course. There is no formal procedure for assessing learners' literacy, numeracy or language needs. However, for these types of courses the informal arrangements in place are adequate.

Leadership and management

92. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Tutors and learners are sufficiently aware of the procedures in cases of bullying, harassment or other breaches of equal opportunities. However, there has been little staff development in equality of

opportunity.

93. Quality improvement of the provision is inadequate. Weaknesses found by inspectors were not identified in the self-assessment report. Some areas of weakness are reported as strengths. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently critical or coherent. Some key stakeholders were not involved in the self-assessment process, and some of the staff are not aware of the self-assessment report. There is insufficient use of data for planning and improving the provision.

94. The observation scheme for teaching and learning has not led to improvements. Only two tutors have been observed recently and some long-serving tutors have never been observed. The grades given for the few observations that have taken place are over-generous. The feedback given to tutors by observers does not identify how tutors can improve. Some observations have been carried out by staff who do not have subject expertise. They are not able to identify subject-specific techniques or technical health and safety matters.

95. Curriculum management is inadequate. Communication with sessional tutors is poor. Staff are not well supported by managers. Some tutors do not know who the curriculum area co-ordinators are. Internal staff development events and meetings for sessional staff are poorly attended. For example, only a few members of staff have attended meetings to discuss new procedures for recording and recognising learners' progress and achievement. Communication between different co-ordinators across the regions is poor. There is insufficient identification and sharing of good practice. A lead tutor was appointed recently, but it is too early to judge whether this has had a positive effect on learners.

Arts, media and publishing**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance Adult and community learning	397	4 4
Crafts Adult and community learning	825	3 3

96. There are 825 learners enrolled on 77 crafts courses. Six hundred and twenty learners are following non-accredited programmes and 205 are on accredited programmes. Non-accredited courses include dressmaking, sewing crafts, pattern cutting, card making, calligraphy, pottery, interior design, woodwork, party planning, art pastels and accessories. There are accredited courses in dressmaking, embroidery, tassel making, life drawing, patchwork, soft furnishing, upholstery, stained-glass making and chair caning. Courses are offered in 42 community centres, schools, a women's centre, an active age centre and the service's main adult learning centres, in the morning, afternoon and evening. Most courses run for two hours a week for 11 weeks. Accredited courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 run for three to five hours a week. The courses are managed by a part-time curriculum co-ordinator and taught by 33 sessional tutors.

97. The service offers classes in ballroom, belly, tap, line, salsa and theatre dancing. There are 397 learners in 24 classes. Most of the provision is non-accredited, and courses are offered at beginner and intermediate level in several of the dance forms. Learners in line dancing classes can work towards bronze, silver and gold medals accredited by a dance awarding body. Dance classes are taught in schools, community centres, church halls and day centres across the city, during the day and evening. A few classes are taught during the weekend. Most are of 10 weeks' duration and are repeated throughout the year. The curriculum area is managed by a lead tutor, who reports to the curriculum co-ordinator for arts and crafts. There are 10 sessional tutors.

Crafts**Grade 3***Strengths*

- good achievement of practical skills
- good individual support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment
- weak aspects of curriculum management

Achievement and standards

98. Learners achieve a good standard of skills in practical work, particularly on accredited courses. Their portfolios contain inspirational designs and good samples of different techniques. Learners are encouraged to be creative and experimental in their work, and they gain the confidence to try new techniques and develop their skills. Tutors encourage

learners to research the history of their craft, considering topics such as the invention of zip fasteners and fashion styles. Learners in card-making classes use their skills at home to make cards with their grandchildren. Learners who have attended courses for several years continue to learn new techniques. Those on beginner courses appreciate how much they have learnt in the short time since they began their studies. In some sessions, learners develop good skills with the intention of setting up in business, for example in upholstery and soft furnishing. One learner has recently set up a catering business and uses the skills learnt on a party-planning course to develop the business further. Another learner, who completed an upholstery class, now runs a successful upholstery business. Some learners progress through the courses from level 1 to level 3. One learner is now a tutor. Learners are encouraged to display work at the end-of-year exhibition at one of the service's main centres. A recent learner was awarded a gold medal in a national award for excellence in tassel making. Attendance on most courses is good.

The quality of provision

99. Individual support for learners is good. Tutors in craft sessions move purposefully around the groups during sessions and encourage and support learners to develop skills. They provide informal feedback on the work. Some tutors arrange group feedback during the sessions, providing the opportunity for learners to develop critical analysis skills. Tutors check learning frequently and use questions to stimulate discussion and aid learning. Learners work on items at their own pace, so they can choose projects that they find interesting. Learning sessions are planned well to meet individual needs. Tutors are enthusiastic and motivate learners. Demonstrations of techniques are clear and involve individuals and small groups. Tutors successfully manage new and more experienced learners in the same group, including those who are working at different accreditation levels.

100. New learners are integrated well into established programmes. Experienced learners help and support new learners in the sessions. Learners share ideas and craft materials generously. Lesson plans and schemes of work are clear and well structured. Handouts and patterns are well presented and, in some cases, include information on basic measurement techniques.

101. Free summer schools and taster courses have been held in a range of venues across the city to encourage learners to attend longer courses. For example, two-hour courses were held over four weeks in a range of subjects such as cushion making, sewing, embroidery, card craft, tassel making and patchwork. Some of the current learners attended these sessions. Courses in sewing for Somali women are held at the Somali community centre, and craft courses for people aged over 50, at the Active Age Centre.

102. At one centre, learners have access to information, advice and guidance about courses offered both by the service and by other providers. When tutors identify learners with literacy and numeracy needs, they request support. Tutors work with learners in class to support their writing skills, or they offer them extra sessions. In two observed sessions, support workers employed by another service were working with learners who had specific needs. At one centre, experienced learners volunteer to help other learners in an informal 'buddy' system. Learners appreciate having courses run in their local areas, for example craft sessions at a local school and at a day centre for mature learners, but some travel a considerable distance to attend a course.

103. Resources are satisfactory. Most craft tutors provide a range of materials for learners including some for purchase at sessions. Tutors encourage learners to shop as cost-effectively as possible or share bulk purchases. In pottery sessions, the clay is provided free of charge. Many of the rooms used are small, which limits the number of learners who can enrol. Some rooms provide little space for learners to spread out craft activities. One room used for mature learners is accessible only through a gymnasium, where doors are blocked with leisure equipment and the constant noise distracts learners. Rooms used for sewing classes vary in the number of machines available and the table space to use them. Some do not have adequate storage space. All sites are accessible for learners with restricted mobility.

104. There is insufficient assessment of learners. In a few cases, tutors adapt the standard initial assessment and continuous assessment procedure to their own courses. For example, in some craft sessions, tutors create their own methods of assessing learners' previous knowledge and skills. Some tutors devise their own checklist of skills developed during the course. These provide the tutor and learners with a record of techniques learnt and an action plan for future skills development. However, there is little evidence of a consistent system of initial assessment and ongoing recording of learners' skills appropriate to the craft activity and learners' needs.

Leadership and management

105. Tutors are well qualified and experienced in their subject areas. They are sensitive to the needs of adults and plan the courses appropriately. Many tutors promote learning by providing resources such as fabrics, threads and patterns to share with learners.

106. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Staff and learners have an appropriate level of understanding of equal opportunities. A small number of courses are targeted at specific groups such as those with visual impairment and Somali women.

107. Aspects of curriculum management are weak. The curriculum area is managed by a part-time curriculum co-ordinator. The curriculum co-ordinator carries out observations of teaching and learning, but the number of observations is limited and they are not used effectively to improve the quality of provision. Tutors teaching accredited courses meet for internal verification purposes and to share good practice, but opportunities for sharing good practice across the curriculum area are limited. The curriculum co-ordinator does not hold a budget and some tutors do not know what materials they are entitled to claim for.

108. In some subjects, curriculum opportunities are limited by a shortage of qualified tutors. Some groups that have already followed a course continue to meet weekly and support each other without a tutor. For example, members of one sewing group have gained all the accreditation available but want to continue learning craft skills and gaining experience together.

109. The self-assessment process was not inclusive enough. Sessional tutors were not consulted sufficiently. The self-assessment report identified some of the same strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors, and the grade given by inspectors matched that in the self-assessment report.

Dance**Grade 4***Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills in dance
- good range of provision

Weaknesses

- some ineffective course and lesson planning
- insufficient monitoring and assessment of learners' progress
- inadequate curriculum management

Achievement and standards

110. There is good development of learners' skills in dance. Learners in a beginners' line dance class are able to demonstrate a range of technical skills, and can hold their place in the line, after only three lessons. In a tap dancing lesson, learners, many of whom are retired, display good technical skills and considerable stamina in completing a demanding warm-up session. In a belly dancing class, many learners used a veil for the first time and displayed natural grace and fluidity of movement. Learners develop in confidence and improve their fitness. One retired learner described how memorising complex dance sequences helps her to retain mental agility. There is a clear sense of enjoyment and fun in most lessons. However, in one ballroom dancing class, a couple had difficulty with a cha cha sequence and made very little progress. In another lesson, several learners were unsure of the appropriate arm movements and correct posture during a line dance exercise. Attendance during the inspection was low at 71 per cent.

111. The overall retention rate in 2004-05 increased to a satisfactory 84 per cent. However, on a quarter of the courses the retention rate was significantly lower than this. The retention rate for three ballroom dancing courses was below 50 per cent. Tutors are not set targets for retention and achievement on their courses, and are generally unaware of the service's target for retention rates.

The quality of provision

112. There is a good range of courses and a good balance of day, evening and weekend provision. Summer taster courses were introduced for the first time last year. Learners value the progression opportunities open to them. In an intermediate lesson, learners can see how the skills learnt in a beginner course provide the foundation to enable them to make further progress. Courses are the right length and offered in accessible venues, which include church halls and community centres. There are fewer courses in the north of the city.

113. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The most successful lessons are those in which the enthusiasm, energy and skills of the tutor enable learners to meet challenging targets. In a belly dancing class, a very large group was skilfully managed, with most learners receiving individual attention. In the weaker lessons, tutors rely too much on demonstration and repetition. Few tutors use small-group work or involve learners in discussions on technical aspects of dance to confirm their understanding and knowledge.

114. The quality and accessibility of course information is generally good. Learners can collect course details from the publicity bus, local libraries or other venues. They begin their course with a 'week zero' which enables them to decide whether the course is right for them. Course information is not always reliable. A Latin American dance course was incorrectly advertised as a beginners' class. Eight learners were turned away, and no alternative provision was offered to them.

115. Resources are generally satisfactory. Tutors are experienced and many have a teaching qualification. In most venues, floors are clean, even and non-slip. However, in some venues, tutors are required to teach on carpeted floors, or in rooms that are too small to allow full freedom of expression, particularly in belly dancing classes. Some lessons take place on a gymnasium floor, even though this is unsafe. None of the dance studios has mirrors.

116. Arrangements to provide support for literacy, numeracy and language are satisfactory. Tutors are aware they can request learning support for learners if required. Many learners feel too embarrassed to make use of this service. Most tutors correctly underline the health and safety aspects of the courses and check the physical well-being of learners.

117. There is some ineffective course and lesson planning. In two observed lessons, there were no lesson plans, and in others, tutors used a generic lesson plan for each session. Lesson plans generally contain a list of activities without identifying the standard to be attained. Group learning goals are insufficiently clear and in some cases they are missing altogether. Fun and enjoyment are often emphasised at the expense of more technical aspects of the discipline. Teaching and learning often lack focus and structure. In the least successful lessons, ineffective planning leads to lessons without pace or challenge that do not allow learners to achieve the planned outcomes or make the expected progress.

118. There is insufficient monitoring and assessment of learners' progress. In some lessons, tutors give no individual or group feedback to learners. In others, tutors do not make individual assessments or check on learners' progress. In one line dance class, an incorrect posture was allowed to go uncorrected for the whole lesson. Assessment is poor, with no written feedback to support the achievement of learning goals and no systematic monitoring of learners' progress. In many lessons, tutors rely solely on visual observation to confirm learning, and make little use of peer assessment.

Leadership and management

119. Curriculum management is inadequate. Weaknesses identified in the 2003-04 self-assessment report have not been resolved. Following a recent restructuring, many staff do not fully understand their roles and responsibilities, nor those of their colleagues and managers. Some experienced tutors do not know who their lead tutor is. There have been no curriculum meetings to share good practice. The service has introduced a procedure for recording progress and achievement, but half the tutors did not attend the most recent, and essential, training and some tutors remain resistant to its use. The curriculum area is managed by the lead tutor reporting to the curriculum co-ordinator. Tutors complain of poor communication.

120. Managers acted too late to resolve tutor shortages. Twelve courses were advertised, mainly in the north of the city, but there were insufficient tutors to teach the classes and seven were cancelled. Managers make little use of data. There has been no analysis of the

reasons for low retention rates on some programmes, and data is not used regularly to improve equality of opportunity. For instance, men are under-represented, particularly in day-time line dance courses. Sporadic attempts have been made to increase participation by minority ethnic groups. Two years ago, an African dance class was offered, but it failed to run.

121. The service's quality improvement initiatives have not helped to raise the standard of teaching and learning. No schedule of observations has been drawn up for the current academic year. There are no plans to ensure that new staff will be observed during their first term. Only two observations have been carried out and no timescale is given for monitoring the resultant action plans. Monitoring of lesson and course planning is weak. This has been identified in the self-assessment report but it has not been resolved. Learners' feedback is sought through surveys as part of the review and evaluation cycle, but it is not clear how the results are used to bring about improvement. Inspectors gave a lower grade for the provision than that in the self-assessment report.

Languages, literature and culture**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	977	4 4

122. The service provides courses in Arabic, Cantonese, French, German, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese and Welsh, and in British Sign Language (BSL) at 29 learning centres. There are 977 learners enrolled on 91 courses in modern foreign languages, of whom 527 are enrolled on courses leading to a qualification. There are 226 learners enrolled on 21 courses in BSL at level 1 and 2. All foreign languages are available at level 1. French, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese and Spanish are available at level 2, and French, German, Mandarin, Spanish and Greek at level 3. About 50 per cent of courses lead to a qualification. Fifty-four per cent of courses take place during the day. Most courses run for 11 or 31 weeks and most learning sessions last for two hours. The area is managed by a curriculum co-ordinator. There are 50 sessional tutors.

Other languages, literature and culture**Grade 4***Strengths*

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- good development of provision to meet local demand

Weaknesses

- poor teaching and learning in modern foreign languages
- unsatisfactory initial assessment practices on accredited courses
- weak curriculum management

Achievement and standards

123. There is good achievement of personal learning goals. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. Learners study languages to help them in their work or for personal interest. For example, one learner in a BSL class works in a school with a number of profoundly deaf pupils and uses her skills to communicate with them. Many learners of modern foreign languages speak of improvements in their mental agility and of the increased enjoyment they derive from visiting the country where the language is spoken. They develop confidence in speaking the language, which enables them to communicate more easily with local people and gain a greater understanding of the culture of the country. Attainment is generally satisfactory. During the inspection, attendance was satisfactory at 88 per cent. Retention rates on all courses have improved since 2003-04 and are now satisfactory.

The quality of provision

124. There is good development of provision to meet local demand. Ninety-one classes are offered in 10 languages at 29 venues. Where possible, the service sets up new courses

in response to local demand. For example, a new class in Somali language and literature has been requested by the local Somali community, and is planned to start shortly. The service is responsive to demand from employers and provides classes in French, Spanish and Italian for a local company, in preparation for Liverpool's 'city of culture' designation in 2008. There are good opportunities for learners to enrich their language learning through trips to restaurants and to the country whose language they are studying, or to a local university to see foreign films.

125. The literacy and numeracy needs of learners are met in most cases. Some tutors have attended training in basic skills and all have received dyslexia information from the curriculum co-ordinator.

126. Teaching and learning in modern foreign languages are poor. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. One third of observed lessons were inadequate, with an insufficient range of activities to develop learners' skills. There is little use of pair work or small-group activities to provide variety and develop learners' speaking skills. Tutors do not identify strategies to meet the needs of individual learners. They do not make enough use of the foreign language for classroom teaching and they do not actively encourage its use by learners. When learners do use the language, their pronunciation is poor and some find it difficult to remedy poor skills. They are hesitant in their manipulation and production of the language, and are unable to construct full sentences, often restricting themselves to single word utterances. Tutors and learners rely too much on English and are reluctant to use the foreign language spontaneously in the classroom for simple verbal exchanges. There are too few activities and materials to encourage free expression, and insufficient opportunities for learners to develop communication skills. The range of teaching materials is limited and consists mainly of paper-based resources. There is little use of authentic materials, audio or video resources, or e-learning. In the better lessons, tutors plan well to meet the needs of individual learners. They use the foreign language extensively and effectively, and employ a range of techniques to consolidate and extend learning. Learners in these classes demonstrate good listening skills and are able to speak the chosen language with a high degree of accuracy and fluency.

127. Initial assessment practices on accredited courses are unsatisfactory. Initial assessment is an informal process and does not always assess the four language learning skills. The languages co-ordinator has produced a sample initial assessment, but there is no requirement for tutors to use it. There is an inconsistent approach to the information that tutors gather about their learners. Some enquire about learners' previous experience and personal goals and others merely assess their existing language skills. Tutors do not record the results or use them to help plan lessons or meet individual learners' needs. Many staff do not understand the purpose of initial assessment. However, the process of recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited courses is now firmly established, following a trial phase in 2004-05. However, it is too early to judge the full effect of this initiative in improving achievement.

Leadership and management

128. Tutors generally feel well supported by their managers. There are regular communications by telephone or letter, and the languages co-ordinator often meets informally with staff. The curriculum co-ordinator for BSL meets tutors each month to provide support with paperwork and discuss issues about teaching and learning.

129. Resources are generally satisfactory. Tutors have access to a range of specialist resources and equipment. A resource centre has been established at one centre and requests for equipment by tutors working at outreach centres are generally supported. However, one outreach centre is unsuitable for language learners because of the noise generated by other centre users.

130. Tutors are familiar with the service's policy on equality and diversity and many have attended in-house professional development sessions. However, there is no monitoring of resources to ensure that they are inclusive and are representative of diverse groups.

131. Curriculum management is weak. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. There are few opportunities for tutors to share good practice and no continuing professional development programme specific to languages, to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Tutors and managers do not routinely evaluate their courses. Tutors informally feed back any concerns to the centre manager, but there is no formal process for gathering tutors' comments and using them in the self-assessment process. Targets for enrolments and retention are set centrally. Retention targets are communicated to tutors in a general meeting at the start of the year. However, the tutors do not all attend these meetings. No achievement targets have been set.

132. The course titles are too vague to allow learners to effectively select their language course. For example, some courses advertised as year 1 are, in fact, for learners with previous experience. There is no advice about the content of the course or the level of experience required until learners turn up for the first session. This often results in learners of varying experience arriving for the same course and, in many cases, finding that it is unsuitable for them. There is not enough attention to detail in the publicity materials. A number of marketing leaflets contain inaccurate information about when courses start and the times they are held.

133. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently critical or accurate in the evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. It omits several weaknesses found by inspectors. However, the provider's self-assessment grade matched that given by inspectors.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ESOL</i> Adult and community learning	238	<i>4</i> 4
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	289	<i>4</i> 4

134. In 2004-05, there were 952 learners on ESOL courses. At the time of inspection, there were 238 learners on 24 courses running in 10 venues. Two hundred and fifteen learners are on accredited programmes. Courses are offered from pre-entry level to level 2 at a range of venues, although most courses are taught at Park Road and Granby Centre in the south of the city and Newsham Adult Centre in the north. The provision is managed by a half-time curriculum co-ordinator, who reports to the curriculum manager. There are 13 sessional tutors.

135. There are 289 learners enrolled on literacy and numeracy courses. Programmes are offered during the day at 26 centres across the city. Learners can study at entry level, level 1 and level 2, and courses run for one, two or three terms. The area is managed by two half-time curriculum co-ordinators. There are 15 sessional tutors.

ESOL***Grade 4******Strengths***

- wide range of targeted community provision

Weaknesses

- poor variety of teaching techniques
- inadequate individual target-setting
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress
- poor management of quality improvement processes

Achievement and standards

136. In 2004-05, 60 per cent of learners who sat an external ESOL examination passed it. Achievement rates for learners on a course in interpreting at levels 1 and 2 were very good, at 100 per cent. Learners make satisfactory progress on most courses. Some learners are on courses which are too difficult for them and they do not achieve the standards required.

137. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Most learners find their courses motivating and relevant to their needs. At pre-entry level, learners acquire survival language skills, and at other levels, they develop their existing skills to help them integrate into the community. Attendance is generally satisfactory at 65 per cent.

The quality of provision

138. There is a wide range of targeted community provision. Productive links have been made with a number of organisations and agencies, and have facilitated the running of courses in a number of venues to attract hard-to-reach learners. There are programmes being run in the Nigerian Centre, a centre for Somalis, the Pagoda Centre, and Toxteth Library. The service also works closely with Liverpool Community College, the local authority's jobs, education and training service, Sure Start, and a centre for refugees and asylum seekers.

139. The pre-entry level classes provide language survival skills and a progression route to the entry level 1 qualification. Many learners on entry level courses are actively looking for employment or are already employed and are hoping to improve their employability. Learners who are in employment find the locations and times of their classes convenient.

140. Accommodation is satisfactory. All centres are comfortable, warm and well lit. Teaching rooms at some outreach centres are basic, but they are adequately equipped and offer a welcoming atmosphere. The main centres are better equipped and tutors have access to overhead projectors, audio equipment and copying facilities.

141. The schemes of work drawn up for each course are generally satisfactory. Some identify aims, outcomes, methods and materials for each session, while others make a single list of a term's work. Many of the schemes of work are based on the ESOL core curriculum but do not use the referencing system to assist in measuring progress.

142. Tutors use a poor variety of teaching techniques, particularly in teaching pronunciation, correcting errors and checking learners' understanding. Some lessons are slow and uninteresting for the learners. In some classes, there are learners with a wide range of abilities, and some are not sufficiently challenged by the material. Many lessons are teacher-centred and do not give learners sufficient opportunity to practise the target language. In one lesson, there were no pair- or group-work activities, and the tutor went through the structure exercises and provided the correct answers, often speaking over the learners. However, in the better lessons, tutors plan different levels of work and include learner-centred activities. Lessons follow the schemes of work. All tutors establish a good rapport with their learners and create a friendly, supportive classroom atmosphere where learners are secure and confident about practising spoken English. Learners are well motivated and find their classes enjoyable and rewarding.

143. There is inadequate individual target-setting for learners. Few tutors devise individual learning plans for their learners, and those who do, do not base them on the results of initial assessment. The learning targets set are not specific, do not include challenging timescales, and do not refer to the ESOL core curriculum. Individual targets are often the same as the targets for the whole group. Diagnostic testing has been introduced in addition to the initial assessment. It is carried out during the third or fourth week of the course, and some tutors have yet to use it. Different test types are used by different tutors. Some tutors use a commercially available test, while others use one based on the ESOL core curriculum. Where information about an individual learner's linguistic strengths and weaknesses is available, this is not systematically fed into the individual learning plan.

144. Monitoring of learners' progress is inadequate. Staff do not have comprehensive

procedures to monitor learners' progress, and do not record the progress learners make in each lesson. There is no facility for learners to record what they have learnt from a session. Learners' feedback is not used to contribute to individual learning plans and their attendance at lessons is often erratic.

145. ESOL courses are not promoted well. Publicity leaflets have not been distributed far enough in advance of the start of term, and many learners have enrolled on programmes late. Leaflets advertise basic skills courses and ESOL courses. There are plans for specific ESOL leaflets but these have not yet been produced. There are no leaflets in community languages, although minority ethnic groups are specifically targeted. Many learners learn about the courses by word of mouth.

Leadership and management

146. Quality improvement processes are poorly managed. Observations of teaching and learning have not raised standards. Only three of the current ESOL tutors have been observed in the past two years, and two of these were observed in the month before the inspection. A programme of observations is now being planned.

147. There are few opportunities for specific staff development in ESOL. Tutors have been able to attend generic development sessions, but there have been few training sessions to meet the needs of the ESOL team. In particular, there has been no ESOL core curriculum training to help tutors in the use of skills for life materials. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The members of the ESOL team hold a range of qualifications and experience. The service has found it difficult to recruit new ESOL tutors. However, the curriculum co-ordinator ensures that all new staff have some relevant previous experience and an initial teaching qualification. Some tutors have recently qualified or have returned to teaching after a period of absence and have not received sufficient support and development.

148. The self-assessment report is satisfactory. The ESOL team met at the beginning of the year to contribute to the self-assessment process. Some of the weaknesses matched those identified by inspectors, but the strengths were overstated. Inspectors gave a lower grade for the provision than that in the self-assessment report.

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 4

Strengths

- very effective initial assessment
- good targeting of programmes to meet local needs

Weaknesses

- insufficient achievement at entry level
- inadequate planning of teaching in entry level classes
- insufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- weak quality improvement

Achievement and standards

149. The proportion of learners succeeding in the national literacy and numeracy tests at levels 1 and 2 has greatly increased since 2003-04. The standard of learners' work at these levels is generally satisfactory. Learners develop strategies for noticing and dealing with weaknesses in writing or calculating, and they gain in confidence and self-esteem. Those who study these courses alongside other programmes make better progress on their main programmes. The retention rate at all levels is good at 86 per cent.

150. Learners' achievement of primary learning goals on non-accredited courses is rarely recorded. At the end of 2004-05, about 10 per cent of records of learners' progress and achievement were not returned by tutors. Of 29 accredited and non-accredited entry level courses, 17 recorded no achievements. Attendance during the week of inspection was unsatisfactory at 66 per cent.

151. Too few learners achieve nationally recognised qualifications at entry level. Few learners have achieved a numeracy certificate, and while some achieve units of an accredited qualification, none has achieved the full certificate.

The quality of provision

152. Initial assessment is very effective. It takes place at the course venue in the week before the course starts, and is given by the tutor who will be teaching the learner. This helps to retain learners who might otherwise withdraw between the initial assessment and the start of the course. The service has adapted standard national initial assessment processes with a series of cards which learners sort into piles labelled 'Can do', 'Not sure' and 'No way!' This process gives learners a choice about which skills they feel comfortable learning. Preferred learning styles are identified and a self-assessment measures learners' confidence in a range of skills. Learners enjoy the process of initial assessment and begin their course with confidence in themselves and their tutors. However, dyslexia screening tests are seldom carried out.

153. The programme is carefully targeted to meet local needs. Co-ordinators have identified courses offered by other providers and sought to ensure that provision is not duplicated. Community locations are often used to attract people unable to travel to one of the service's main centres. The programme focuses on pre-entry level and entry level courses, and 'Move On' courses leading to national certificates at levels 1 and 2 for people who enjoy working in groups. These courses are often run in response to demand from local schools' workforce development officers, who value the responsiveness of the service. Other 'Move On' courses are run in conjunction with family learning or employability courses. They are offered in the same local venues for people not yet confident enough or able to move on to courses at other centres. Provision is made for specific groups, such as people with neurological conditions, mental health difficulties, or women who have suffered from domestic violence.

154. The service's publicity campaign is inadequate, and many learners hear about courses by word of mouth. The specialist leaflet advertising courses for autumn 2005 had not appeared by October 2005. There are very few learning support assistants in entry level classes.

155. Teaching in many entry level classes is inadequately planned. Learners in these groups have skills ranging from entry level 1 to entry level 3, and have very different needs. Learners at levels 1 and 2 often attend entry level groups to deal with specific needs. Most tutors of these groups do not have sufficient specialist knowledge to plan adequately for such a wide range of learners. They do not use initial assessment information sufficiently to plan learning. Individual work in English classes is sometimes pitched at the wrong level. Some tutors plan whole- or small-group activities in which learners are insufficiently challenged or find the work too difficult. There is not enough support available for learners working on individual tasks. In one lesson, learners ranging from entry level 2 to level 1 were all given the same spelling lists to learn. Many of the words were unfamiliar. Learners were unable to guess their meanings and could not use them in any writing which they needed to do. Instructions about a gap-filling exercise were insufficiently clear to learners, and they became frustrated at their inability to complete the task. The tutor spoke too quickly for several learners for whom English is an additional language, and they found it difficult to understand what was said to them.

156. Tutors do not use ICT enough to support teaching and learning. Very few learners benefit from the use of computers. Entry level learners, learners with dyslexia, and learners with conditions which make writing difficult are particularly disadvantaged by the absence of ICT facilities in literacy classes. However, teaching in a few entry level courses and most level 1 and 2 courses is good. Paper-based teaching materials are well designed, and tutors use local newspaper articles to particularly good effect. There is an adequate range of practical equipment for teaching numeracy.

Leadership and management

157. Curriculum co-ordinators are well qualified and experienced. They provide clear direction to tutors about what is required of them. Communication is satisfactory, with meetings every term, which tutors are paid to attend. Staff development events are organised but often poorly attended. Some tutors are experienced and skilled, but only one has the specialist qualifications now required for teaching literacy or numeracy. The programme area does not have the capacity to provide close mentoring and support for new, unqualified tutors or to develop the skills of more established tutors.

158. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The curriculum area recruits some of the most disadvantaged learners. Tutors generally establish ground rules, to be used in teaching situations, for respecting differences between people. They have a satisfactory understanding of disability and take effective action to challenge discriminatory behaviour in the classroom. Teaching materials reflect the ethnic mix of the local population.

159. Quality improvement is weak. Too few observations of teaching and learning have been carried out to inform co-ordinators of the overall quality of teaching and learning. The process for following up weaknesses in lessons that are graded satisfactory or better has only recently been implemented. Procedures have been established for the moderation of non-accredited achievements, but the sample moderated is too small to make the process reliable in recognising achievement. Many tutors do not attend moderation meetings.

160. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Tutors' end-of-course reviews are used to judge the quality of provision. There are clear action plans to deal with weaknesses. In the few observations that take place, grades for teaching and learning are now generally accurate. There are rigorous checks on the quality of teaching files, although the sample

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scrutinised is small. However, data is not used enough to make judgements in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report identified most of the same strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors, but did not identify inadequate aspects of teaching in entry level classes. Inspectors gave a lower grade for the provision overall.

Family learning**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		2
Adult and community learning	473	2

161. The service provides courses in family literacy, numeracy, ICT, ESOL and wider family learning. Courses run throughout the year. Learners can study a 10-week course or short taster and workshop sessions, which run for between two hours and a full day. Programmes are provided in nursery, primary and secondary schools and in a range of community venues across Liverpool. The curriculum manager for the adult learning service manages a team of four full-time family curriculum officers. There are 29 teaching staff, including 15 qualified primary school teachers. There are 11 sessional adult tutors and three bilingual assistants. There are 473 learners enrolled on 57 courses. Seven per cent are men and 36 per cent are from a minority ethnic group. An external awarding body accredits most courses. Longer family literacy and numeracy courses lead to national tests in literacy and numeracy at level 1 and 2.

Adult and community learning**Grade 2***Strengths*

- good achievement
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners with additional learning needs
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient feedback to learners
- insufficient use of individual learning plans to monitor learners' progress

Achievement and standards

162. Achievement is good. In 2004-05, the retention rate on courses was 96 per cent and the achievement rate on accredited courses was 97 per cent. On short, non-accredited courses, learners achieve their personal learning goals. Many gain the confidence to help their children, for example by using a weekend shopping trip to explore shape and colour. Learners increase their confidence in helping their children with homework by learning how literacy and numeracy are taught in schools. Learners enjoy working alongside their children or grandchildren. Many parents join a library and borrow books for the first time. There is poor progression to 'Move On' courses, with only 33 learners progressing out of 3,250 enrolments on family learning courses in 2004-05.

The quality of provision

163. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching was good or better in 73 per cent of observed sessions. In the most successful sessions, there is effective planning, individual

tasks for learners are based on their ability, and there is a variety of activities such as paired work, group discussion and role-play. In one session, project work effectively incorporated a number of enjoyable and fun activities to teach numeracy concepts such as estimation, graphs and charts. There is good peer support, and learning activities are related to children's work in school. Tutors skilfully involve all learners, using directed questions and answers, and careful handling of sensitive topics.

164. There is good support for learners with additional learning needs. In one session, one learner had a hearing impairment and another a visual impairment. The tutor had taken the needs of the hearing-impaired learner into account when planning the session and made sure that the learner could see her speak in order to lip read. The visually impaired learner benefited from the use of enlarged worksheets on yellow paper and the use of specialist computer software. Tutors make good use of bilingual support in lessons where language is a barrier to learning.

165. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners complete a 'Measuring My Own Progress' form at the beginning of their course. This identifies appropriate literacy and numeracy needs and assesses learners' confidence in working with their children. Those on longer family literacy and numeracy courses receive an appropriate initial assessment. English language initial assessments are in user-friendly pictorial form.

166. Resources are satisfactory. There are clear worksheets and some imaginative use of information and learning technology. In one session, there was good use of a palm top computer to demonstrate the effectiveness of an electronic database, compared with a paper-based system. This was used effectively with young children, building on concepts such as height and weight, which they were learning at school. Learners have good access to learning materials in sessions. Some furniture is inappropriate for adults, with many using child-sized chairs and tables. Rooms are sometimes too small for the activity. Tutors have good access to staff development opportunities. All teaching staff have completed core curriculum training and tutors with a primary school teaching background also hold adult teaching certificates.

167. The service offers a broad curriculum range at a variety of levels. There are effective links with the city council's primary strategy team to develop new courses that directly relate to national primary literacy and numeracy strategies. Planning for sessions is flexible and responsive to learners' requests. For example, one observed session was changed at the request of learners, from a visit to the local library to a trip to Liverpool Central Library. There is clear and informative pre-course information. It clearly outlines the course objectives and how to access provision. Taster sessions are used effectively as part of the pre-course recruitment process.

168. Tutors give too little feedback to learners on their progress. Tutors routinely set home activities to extend learners' knowledge, but this work is not always marked. Marked work does not always indicate how learners could improve. Tutors do not keep sessional records of learning. Assessment records are solely based on accreditation criteria and focus too much on task completion. Most learners complete an evaluation form at the end of each session, but these records are not always held by the tutor. Most tutors give good, clear verbal feedback in sessions, but this is not recorded.

169. There is insufficient use of individual learning plans to monitor learners' progress. All

learners have an individual learning plan that identifies group and individual learning goals. Group learning goals are linked to accreditation criteria. Learners identify their individual learning goals but these are not always realistic, achievable or time constrained and are only reviewed at the end of the course. Planning for lessons does not take account of individual learning goals, and learners' progress towards them is not evaluated until the end of the course.

Leadership and management

170. Curriculum management is good. The family learning team clearly understands the role that family learning plays in the service's strategic objectives. Targets for retention and achievement rates are appropriate and there is an operational action plan that identifies the actions needed to achieve these targets. There are very effective links with the city council's primary strategy team to develop and monitor provision. Staff attend primary strategy group meetings and are fully aware of the latest initiatives in primary schools. School liaison officers in the team work closely with schools to identify appropriate courses. Strategies for literacy and numeracy are linked together. However, ESOL is not yet fully integrated with this process. Staff are aware of the new procedures for recording learners' progress and achievement and have plans to implement the system.

171. There is insufficient emphasis on health and safety. Tutors do not emphasise health and safety requirements in family ICT courses. In one lesson, moulded chairs were used in a school computer suite. Risk assessments carried out in schools are not checked by the service, and inspectors observed some unsafe practices.

172. There are some good initiatives to widen participation. For example, 'Family Fun on the Ferry' is part of family learning week and involves the service hiring a Mersey ferry and offering activities on three sailings. In 2005, 217 families booked on to activities on the ferry. The service has appropriate action plans to target working families by offering provision at twilight and in the evenings. The service offers family language provision through the 'Working with Bilingual Families' team. At the time of the inspection, 36 per cent of learners were from minority ethnic groups.

173. There is thorough and accurate evaluation of courses. The process is comprehensive and involves partners, such as head teachers and city council primary strategy officers. Evaluation meetings include learners and are accurately recorded. They consider the progress made by learners, the skills they have developed and where they want to move on to. There is a very effective system of observations of teaching and learning. Observation reports are thorough and identify actions for improvement. Staff find the observation system useful in improving their teaching practices. Staff are involved in continual self-assessment through team meetings. The service has an appropriate quality improvement action plan. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are identified in the self-assessment report and quality improvement action plan. Inspectors gave a higher grade for the provision than was given in the self-assessment.

