

INSPECTION REPORT

Blackpool LEA

27 January 2006



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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Blackpool LEA

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Blackpool Borough Council (the council) has managed adult and community learning since 1998 when Blackpool became a unitary authority. Following a restructuring in 2004, the adult and community learning team moved into the new Leisure, Culture and Community Learning department of the council along with libraries, arts, heritage and leisure. The council receives funding from the Lancashire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This agreement does not include skills for life, which is the government's strategy in training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, or accredited provision. Most of the provision is delivered through two main subcontractors, Blackpool and the Fylde College (the college) and Montgomery High School (the high school), a specialist language school. The central team consists of a head of service, a quality and contracts manager, a skills for life manager and two curriculum managers. At the time of the inspection, the assistant director led and managed the provision, supported by a part-time consultant. Other management posts were very recent appointments.

2. At the time of the inspection, 16 part-time tutors were teaching courses provided directly by the council. In 2004-05, the council exceeded its recruitment targets and recruited 4,798 learners. The council provides courses directly for 1,798 learners. The high school has 1,117 learners and 1,883 learners attend classes subcontracted to the college. Each of the subcontractors has a manager responsible for the delivery and management of the subcontracted provision, and a team of tutors.

3. The council's team is located at Progress House but the provision is delivered in a variety of locations, including the local libraries, the City Learning Centre, community venues, the Grundy Art Gallery, social services establishments, and community and voluntary organisations. Blackpool has a very small proportion of residents from a minority ethnic background, at 0.8 per cent. It is the UK's 32nd most deprived authority, with the third-lowest gross domestic product per head of population in the Northwest, with low earnings and high seasonal unemployment. The unemployment rate is 4.2 per cent of the population, compared with 2.3 per cent in England overall. In the 2001 census, 40 per cent of residents declared themselves to have no qualifications, 24.7 per cent have poor literacy skills and 25.4 per cent have poor numeracy skills. In 2004-05, almost 60 per cent of school leavers did not achieve a full level 2 qualification.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management and the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are all satisfactory. The provision is also satisfactory in information and communications technology (ICT) for users, sport, leisure and recreation, crafts, and other languages, literature and culture. The provision in independent living and leisure skills is inadequate.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process takes account of the views of staff and learners in

BLACKPOOL LEA

direct provision. The provider also receives self-assessment reports from the subcontractors and incorporates these into the overall self-assessment report. However, subcontractors do not contribute actively to the self-assessment process. The report is critical, but identified some normal practice as strengths. Overall, the report's strengths and weaknesses did not match those identified by the inspection, although the grades were very similar and the provider was aware of the weaknesses identified by inspectors. The action plan produced from the report identifies ways to resolve the weaknesses, but does not identify how the strengths will be maintained. The targets set in the plan are not measurable enough.

6. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.

Many new processes and procedures have been introduced, or are in the development stage. These had had little effect at the time of inspection. A new head of service was about to join the team and other key staff members had only recently taken up their posts. In the period before inspection, the provider had clearly prioritised improvements to standards of teaching and learning. These measures were judged to have been successful by the inspection team.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BLACKPOOL LEA:

- improve advice and guidance for all learners
- improve the provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- continue to improve systems for assessing, recording and monitoring learners' performances
- establish systems for managing and co-ordinating the curriculum
- improve strategic planning of the curriculum with subcontractors
- share good practice

GRADES

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

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

Information and communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i>		3
Adult and community learning	298	3

Leisure, travel and tourism		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i> Adult and community learning	127	3 3

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Crafts</i> Adult and community learning	235	3 3

Languages, literature and culture		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	136	3 3

Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	173	4 4

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Nine inspectors spent 45 days inspecting and grading five of areas of learning. There were not enough learners in agriculture, horticulture and animal care, and retail and commercial enterprise for these areas to be inspected and graded separately. The inspection team also reported on all aspects of leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	9
Number of inspection days	45
Number of learners interviewed	166
Number of staff interviewed	84
Number of subcontractors interviewed	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	8
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	23

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Good development of skills and confidence takes place in ICT for users classes.** Many learners are new to using computers and they make significant progress in a short time. Enthusiastic learners work hard to improve their keyboarding skills and their understanding of computer applications.

9. **Learners in sport, leisure and recreation gain significant health and wellbeing benefits from attending classes.** Learners' levels of fitness, stamina, flexibility, mobility and strength are good. They also improve their personal confidence. The standards of learners' performances overall are satisfactory, and in some cases they are good.

10. **Learners develop good skills on crafts courses.** The work is stimulating and learners demonstrate personal development and individual styles. In card-making classes, learners use a wide range of techniques. In digital photography classes, they use a selection of tools with confidence. Learners in watercolour painting classes work with confidence. Attendance on courses is good. However, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not always make satisfactory progress.

11. Learners are developing good language skills on language courses and are gaining in confidence. Many learners report that they are able to converse adequately in the target language when abroad. The standard of written work in intermediate and advanced classes is satisfactory and the standard of spoken language at all levels is also satisfactory.

12. Attendance is very good on independent living and leisure skills courses, and learners are well motivated. **They achieve challenging personal goals.** Learners who have a number of significant problems and disrupted lives increase their self-confidence, and improve their speaking skills and their ability to work in groups. Learners also make

improvements in leading healthier lifestyles. However, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not make sufficient progress. All of the council's provision is non-accredited and there is no formal measurement of achievements.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Information and communications technology	0	8	8	0	16
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	3	4	1	8
Arts, media and publishing	1	4	4	1	10
Languages, literature and culture	1	5	2	0	8
Preparation for life and work	1	3	2	1	7
Total	3	23	20	3	49

13. **The provider has introduced effective initiatives to widen participation in ICT for users.** Introductory courses are successful in attracting new learners. Teaching is satisfactory or better, schemes of work and session plans are well structured, tutors are enthusiastic and supportive and encourage their learners. Tutors use a range of teaching methods, **but not enough attention is given to learners' individual needs.** Initial assessment does not always takes place and the results are not always used to plan learning programmes.

14. **Teaching and learning resources are good for sport, leisure and recreation.** Teaching is satisfactory. Tutors provide appropriate explanations and demonstrations of exercise routines, **but there is poor initial assessment and recording of learners' progress.** Learners' health, medical and recent exercise history information is not recorded as a matter of routine and initial assessment does not include sufficient consideration of learners' starting points. The curriculum is restricted in range, and only serves the needs and interests of a small sector of the population.

15. **The quality of the accommodation and resources is good for crafts programmes.** Up-to-date equipment is used to support learning, and class materials and handouts are well prepared. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors are experienced and knowledgeable and use a variety of teaching methods. The better lessons are well planned. Some classes include learners with profound learning difficulties and disabilities, but their needs are not always being met effectively. The initial assessment and recording of learners' progress is poor.

16. Overall, teaching and learning is satisfactory in language classes, **and some innovative approaches have been taken in teaching, including family learning for British Sign Language (BSL) and languages.** These courses have been developed to meet the needs of parents and other adults, and children over eight years of age. Tutors use a variety of activities in all lessons, **but there is poor use of the target language in teaching.** Tutors too often use English to explain, give instructions or to speak with learners. **The provider has attracted a high number of new learners.** Accommodation in the learning centres is satisfactory. One subcontractor's premises have excellent facilities for learners in the evening and provide refreshments for all learners.

17. Some of the teaching in classes designed for disadvantaged groups is good. **However,**

learning is poorly planned for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Fifty per cent of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory. In many classes learners were supported by carers or other support staff, but in most classes the tutors and the support workers were unclear about the support workers' role in helping learners to achieve their goals. **Support for learners who have literacy and numeracy needs is inadequate.** Lesson plans do not always include targets to improve literacy and numeracy skills. In many classes, learners' literacy and numeracy needs are not identified.

18. **The service has good initiatives to involve hard-to-reach learners.** The council and its partners offer a range of first steps learning opportunities to involve learners, and provide courses at community venues throughout the town. These venues are convenient and attractive to those learners who find it difficult to attend more formal settings. A high number of new learners are taking literacy, language, and culture courses, and ICT courses.

19. **The information, advice and guidance provided for learners are not managed adequately and are inadequate for those learners taking independent living and leisure skills courses.** Many learners enrol by telephone and receive little guidance. Prospective learners are advised by the council's and subcontractor's staff, including those who work in libraries, whose knowledge is often restricted to that contained in the publicity leaflets. Some leaflets do not provide sufficient information. Many learners repeat courses and some of them are on courses which do not meet their needs.

20. **Most learners do not receive sufficient initial assessment of their learning needs before they begin their studies. Initial assessment is not adequate to identify specific disabilities and support needs for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.** It is not used sufficiently to make adjustments to learning programmes, and to make support needs clear to teaching and support staff. Individual learning plans are not always completed and monitoring of learners' progress is not always effective.

Leadership and management

21. **The council has good and clear objectives for its adult and community learning.** The corporate goals set a clear strategic direction for the council to meet the community needs of Blackpool. However, there is no clear strategy for how the council will meet these objectives, **and the strategic leadership and management of the provision is poor.**

22. **There are good initiatives to widen participation.** In working with, and supporting its partners, the council has been able to identify and attract many groups who are traditionally hard to reach. However, this is not part of a clearly defined strategy.

23. The council has taken particularly effective actions to improve the quality of teaching. The quality improvement manager has managed initiatives to improve teaching standards as part of the council's continuous improvement plan. Staff development in teaching and observations of teaching have improved.

24. **Curriculum management is weak for all areas of learning.** There is no clear curriculum plan and there are many inconsistencies between the direct and the subcontracted provision. There is some duplication of provision. The range of courses offered is very narrow, with insufficient opportunities for progression.

25. **Operational management is weak.** The council recognises that there is no

standardisation and there are inconsistencies in its direct provision. Subcontractors manage their classes independently. There is no co-ordination at curriculum level and no opportunities for staff to meet and share good practice or to standardise the content of the curriculum. The monitoring of learners' performances is inadequate. Information, advice and guidance for learners are not managed adequately. **The council does not provide adequate guidance for tutors and support them in implementing new developments,** such as the recognition and recording of attainment in non-accredited provision.

26. **The quality assurance policies and procedures are incomplete and few have been introduced.** There is no quality improvement strategy or quality assurance manual and standards are not used sufficiently for quality assurance. One of the subcontractors has its own well-developed systems. The provider recognises that the quality assurance system of the other subcontractor is not suitable and plans to improve it. There is no overall review of the provision, and the quality assurance systems of the provider and the subcontractors are not co-ordinated.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good and clear strategic vision
- good initiatives to widen participation of hard-to-reach learners
- particularly effective action to improve the quality of teaching

Weaknesses

- slow development and implementation of strategy for adult and community learning
- weak operational management
- incomplete quality assurance processes and procedures

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Grade 3

Strengths

- good skills development
- very effective initiatives to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to learners' individual needs
- poor curriculum co-ordination

Leisure, travel and tourism

Sport, leisure and recreation

Grade 3

Strengths

- good achievement of health and wellbeing benefits
- good teaching and learning resources

Weaknesses

- poor initial assessment and progress recording
- poor programme planning
- weak curriculum management

Arts, media and publishing

Crafts

Grade 3

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills
- good accommodation and resources

Weaknesses

- poor initial assessment and recording of learners' progress
- inadequate curriculum planning
- inadequate support for tutors

Languages, literature and culture

Other languages, literature and culture

Grade 3

Strengths

- good retention
- some successfully innovative approaches to teaching
- high numbers of new learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate measuring and recording of achievement
- poor use of target language
- poor curriculum management throughout the provision

Preparation for life and work

Independent living and leisure skills

Grade 4

Strengths

- good initiatives to attract hard-to-reach learners
- good achievement of personal goals by learners

Weaknesses

- poor planning for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- inadequate support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs
- inadequate information, advice and guidance for learners
- weak curriculum management

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BLACKPOOL LEA:

- helpful and supportive tutors
- welcoming learning centres with good facilities
- clear goals which help learners to make important changes in their lives

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BLACKPOOL LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- the amount of individual attention in classes - they would like more
- the accuracy and availability of advice
- the level of courses in order to develop knowledge and skills

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 3

Strengths

- good and clear strategic vision
- good initiatives to widen participation of hard-to-reach learners
- particularly effective action to improve the quality of teaching

Weaknesses

- slow development and implementation of strategy for adult and community learning
- weak operational management
- incomplete quality assurance processes and procedures

27. The council has good and clear strategic objectives for its adult and community learning service. The corporate goals set a clear strategic direction for the provision to meet the community needs of Blackpool. The objectives are to improve provision, increase and widen participation, conserve the heritage, build better and stronger communities, and ensure that all adult learners have the opportunity to learn and achieve their aspirations. Staff have a clear understanding of, and are committed to, the strategic goals of the council.

28. The council has satisfactory partnerships with local colleges and schools, external agencies and voluntary groups with which to promote adult and community learning. These partners include key community service providers and other parts of the council, such as the libraries. Communications throughout are satisfactory. A variety of methods and media is used to keep staff informed of the service's policies, procedures and proposed developments. The minutes and records of meetings identify action points and responsibilities and are monitored appropriately.

29. Staff appraisals are effective. The monitoring of staff's performances is adequate, and targets are set for staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities. These targets are reviewed regularly and revised as necessary. Staff training and development is focused on improving standards of teaching and learning, equality of opportunity, learner support, e-learning, and health and safety. The induction of new staff is appropriate. However, the council does not support or train all staff adequately enough to meet their job requirements. Some staff have not been supported sufficiently to enable them to meet the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Part-time staff do not always attend training events and managers do not always check that outcomes from training have been implemented successfully.

30. Financial management and the deployment of resources are effective. The provider's resources are adequate to meet the needs of learners. Most staff are qualified appropriately for their job roles. The standard of accommodation is good and provides an effective learning environment. There are enough learning materials and equipment to meet learners' needs, but the provider does not conduct sufficient resource scheduling and auditing. Learners' growth targets were met last year. The provider, as part of the council,

has thorough financial processes and procedures to determine costs and to control expenditure in the use of resources. However, management accounting and information about the costs of the provision are not used sufficiently by managers.

31. The strategic leadership and management of the provision is poor. There is no clear plan for how the council will meet its strategic objectives. Learners' retention rates are at least satisfactory for all areas of learning, and many learners achieve good subject and personal skills. However, there is no accurate measurement of learners' attainments on non-accredited courses. The council does not set and monitor targets for retention, achievement, and progression. Relationships with both subcontractors are well established and supportive, but the service level agreements have no details of targets and objectives. The agreement do not specify clearly what the responsibilities of the subcontractor and the council are, or how these will be measured. The provider has no clear strategy for joint curriculum planning to ensure that the needs of the community are met. There are not enough progression routes. The contract with the LSC does not include accredited courses, or skills for life courses. These are provided by the college.

32. Two key management posts have been vacant since March 2005. During this period an interim head of service led and managed the provision, closely supported by the assistant director of culture and community, who has overall responsibility for the provision. The new head of service took up post after the inspection. A skills for life manager and family literacy, numeracy and language co-ordinator are very recent appointments. The provider recognises that there is poor management of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs on most programmes, and a strategy to resolve this weakness is being developed.

33. Operational management is weak. The council recognises that there is no standardisation and that there are inconsistencies in its direct provision. Subcontractors plan and manage their classes independently. There is no overall co-ordination at curriculum level, progression routes are not planned or clearly signposted, and there is some duplication of provision and inconsistencies in course content. The provider has no joint marketing information to list all the courses provided by the council and its subcontractors. Information, advice and guidance for learners are not managed adequately, but the council has an improvement plan.

34. Many learners enrol by telephone and receive little guidance. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sometimes enrolled by carers who do not disclose learners' support or learning needs. Prospective learners are advised by the council's and subcontractor's staff, including those who work in libraries, but their knowledge is often restricted to the information in the publicity leaflets. Some leaflets do not contain sufficient information. Learners repeat courses and some are on courses which do not meet their needs. Most learners do not receive sufficient initial assessment of their learning needs before they begin their studies. The provider has trained its staff in its strategy for recognising and recording attainments on non-accredited courses, but has not monitored the way in which individual staff members implement the process. There is some good practice, but few staff have an adequate understanding and there are not enough opportunities for staff to meet to share good practice. Individual learning plans are not always completed and the monitoring of learners' progress is inadequate.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

35. Good initiatives exist to widen participation, but these are not part of a clearly defined strategy. In working with, and supporting its partners, the council has been able to identify and attract to learning many groups who are traditionally hard to reach. These groups include travellers, substance misusers, street dwellers and ex-offenders. Courses offered include parenting and family events, and art and design for beginners. Learning centres are positioned in the most deprived areas and wards in the borough to help the most disadvantaged learners.

36. The accommodation is welcoming, and much is of a very good standard. Access to all buildings is good. There is sufficient, suitable specialist equipment to meet the needs of people with disabilities. The council uses a range of methods to promote learning opportunities to prospective learners, including advertising in the local free press or on local radio. Tutors visit learners at home or where they meet in communities, to deliver leaflets and brochures, and provide advice. Promotional materials are generally well produced and informative, and marketing materials are available in Braille on request. No other modifications are currently available.

37. The council's detailed equality of opportunity and diversity policies and procedures are used in the learning provision. Staff and learners have an appropriate understanding of equality of opportunity. Policies and procedures are being adapted to meet the needs of the provision and its learners and staff more effectively. Equality of opportunity and diversity is promoted adequately, and the council's realistic targets for the promotion of these areas are being met. Learning materials and teaching methods promote equality and diversity. Learners generally know what action to take if they encounter discrimination, harassment or victimisation and bullying. The few complaints received from learners are dealt with effectively and quickly.

38. The selection and recruitment process for staff is fair and transparent. Staff receive adequate training and development for equality of opportunity and diversity issues. They have received useful training on working with people with disabilities, deaf awareness, the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995, and in raising their awareness and understanding of mental health issues. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not receive sufficient guidance and support.

Quality improvement**Contributory grade 3**

39. The council has taken particularly effective actions to improve the quality of teaching. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced from more than 70 per cent in 2004-05, to less than 10 per cent during the inspection. The quality improvement manager has managed these initiatives to improve teaching and learning, as part of the council's continuous improvement plan. The provider's staff have received development training for teaching and learning and a useful 'tutor's toolkit' has been introduced to provide tutors with guidance and suggestions. The process for observing teaching and learning is now satisfactory. All tutors employed directly by the council have been observed at least once. A good sample of teachers employed by the subcontractors have also been observed. Observation is fair, critical and informative, and detailed action plans are produced showing how tutors can improve their performances. Joint observations take place with subcontractors' staff to ensure standardisation and to share good practice. A questionnaire for use by tutors who have been observed when teaching has recently been introduced in

order to monitor the observation process.

40. The management information system is used to accurately collect and record data about learners. Subcontractors have their own systems which are also accurate, but recruitment and retention information from subcontractors is often delayed. Managers have appropriate access to the data, but it is not used sufficiently for planning and monitoring the provision.

41. Feedback from learners is adequate and is used effectively to improve the provision. Improvements have included changing venues and the length of some courses to meet learners' needs and expectations. Progression surveys and questionnaires to determine why learners leave their programmes have been introduced recently. The analysis of feedback is appropriate, positive and useful. Surveys of partners' and subcontractors' views are positive about the provision. The provider has produced an action plan to resolve the weaknesses identified.

42. The quality assurance policies and procedures are incomplete and the quality assurance systems of the council and the subcontractors are not co-ordinated. There is no quality improvement strategy or quality assurance manual, and standards are not used sufficiently for quality assurance. One subcontractor has its own well-developed systems. The council recognises that the other subcontractor's quality assurance system needs to be improved and action is being taken to do so. A schedule of quality assurance monitoring checks and actions to improve the provision and bring about greater consistency in the use of documents has been introduced recently.

43. The provider's arrangements for self-assessment are incomplete. The views of learners, staff, managers and some partners contribute effectively to the self-assessment process. Both subcontractors self-assess their provision independently, and one does so very thoroughly and accurately. This information is used by the council in its self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is sufficiently critical. It provides adequate information about leadership and management, but there is not enough information about the curriculum areas. Inspectors' findings matched many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but inspectors identified further strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment report has a detailed quality improvement plan stating how weaknesses are to be resolved.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i>		3
Adult and community learning	298	3

44. ICT courses are provided for beginners and level 1 learners. Courses are held in 13 venues throughout the borough. Fifty-eight per cent of learners take courses delivered by the council, 15 per cent of learners are on courses at the high school, and 27 per cent attend the college. Numbers increased slightly from 654 in 2003-4 to 662 in 2004-5. Between September and December 2005, 341 learners enrolled on ICT courses. In January 2006, 298 learners were attending courses. Fifty-eight per cent of learners were over 55 years of age and 59 per cent of learners were women. Most courses last for 10 weeks. Most lessons last for two hours and are offered in the daytime and in the evening. All courses are non-accredited and include courses in application packages, the internet, e-mail and digital photography. There are 10 part-time tutors in the direct provision, four at the high school and five at the college.

ICT for users

Grade 3

Strengths

- good skills development
- very effective initiatives to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to learners' individual needs
- poor curriculum co-ordination

Achievement and standards

45. Learners develop good levels of skills and confidence in ICT classes. Many learners are new to using computers and they make significant progress in a short time. The learners are enthusiastic and work hard to improve their keyboarding skills and understanding of computer applications. Most learners have their own computers and regard ICT as an interesting hobby. Many want to keep pace with their children or grandchildren, some are updating their job skills, and others are doing voluntary or community work. Achievement is measured only in terms of attendance and retention and they are good. Retention in 2004-05 was 87 per cent, and attendance on courses at the time of inspection was also 87 per cent.

The quality of provision

46. The council has introduced effective initiatives to widen participation. Introductory courses attract many learners who have not taken part in education for a long time. A good range of venues exists to meet the needs of different groups of learners. In recent

years a large number of older learners have been attracted to courses that introduce the use of the internet and e-mail. Laptop computers are taken to a number of different learning centres in Blackpool to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups. These centres include the Salvation Army soup kitchen and two rehabilitation centres. At one learning centre, learners develop their digital photography skills well, using their own photographs. Courses that have been introduced for carers help to provide an informal support structure and provide opportunities to develop new skills.

47. Standards of teaching were satisfactory or better in all lessons observed by inspectors. Tutors are enthusiastic and supportive and successfully encourage their learners. The better lessons are well planned and make good use of multimedia projectors to demonstrate features of software packages and the use of the internet. In the weaker lessons, groups are often kept together and progress at the speed of the slower learners. The more able learners are held back and are not academically challenged. Most lessons have support material available for learners, although the content and quality varies. In some lessons, learning support assistants work with tutors to help learners who have additional needs. Schemes of work and lesson plans are well structured, but often do not contain sufficient information about how the tutor will support individual learners.

48. Resources are satisfactory. Most tutors are suitably qualified, and unqualified tutors are encouraged and supported to achieve a teacher training qualification. There is a system of observation for teaching and learning, which uses peer observation as part of staff development. Many of the tutors in the direct provision have attended staff development sessions. Several learning centres have interactive whiteboards and many have multimedia projectors that are used effectively. Most ICT rooms feature industry-standard hardware and software, but many centres do not have chairs which are adjustable for work with computers. Specialist equipment is available for learners with disabilities.

49. Insufficient attention is given to learners with specific needs. The results of initial assessments are not used to plan learning. Many lessons are tutor led and learners work at the same pace, regardless of their levels of skill or experience. Learners with more confidence are not able to make progress to their full potential. For some learners, opportunities to practise and consolidate their skills are restricted. Within the direct provision, end-of-course assessments are carried out to check learners' progress against their learning goals. Tutors monitor learners' progress well in the direct provision, and learners receive regular progress reviews. Progress is not monitored so well in the subcontracted provision.

50. There is not enough initial advice and guidance, and sometimes learners are placed on courses which are inappropriate for them. Some learners are placed on courses at the wrong level, and others are not studying the topics that interests them. For example, some learners wishing to find out about using the internet and e-mail were placed on a word processing course. Some learners repeat courses because of insufficient alternatives.

Leadership and management

51. Curriculum co-ordination in ICT is poor. There is no clear plan and there are many inconsistencies between the direct and the subcontracted provision. The range of courses offered is very restricted, and there are not enough opportunities for progression, or to study subjects such as webpage development or technical support. Initial assessment is not used consistently and is not used sufficiently in lesson planning. Learning resources are not

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shared enough between tutors, and there is not enough consistency in provision.

52. The self-assessment report for the direct provision of ICT identified many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors, although only a small number of tutors were involved in the process. In contrast, the self-assessment report for the whole ICT provision was not detailed or clear enough.

Leisure, travel and tourism**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		3
Adult and community learning	127	3

53. The council offers courses in sport, leisure and recreation, which includes yoga for beginners, tai chi for carers, salsa for fitness, exercise to music, badminton, and music and movement for the over-55s. Ten courses are offered at seven venues which include schools, a further education college, leisure centres and libraries. Some courses are targeted at specific groups, such as carers and older adults. Most courses are offered for one or two hours each week for 10 weeks. Classes are available during weekdays and weekday evenings. In the first term of the academic year 2005-06, 127 learners were enrolled. Eighty-six per cent of learners were women. There are six part-time tutors who work between one and six hours each week. The sport, leisure and recreation provision is delivered directly by the council and also through its two subcontractors.

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

- good achievement of health and wellbeing benefits
- good teaching and learning resources

Weaknesses

- poor initial assessment and progress recording
- poor programme planning
- weak curriculum management

Achievement and standards

54. Learners in a variety of classes have achieved a wide range of benefits in health and wellbeing. Older yoga learners with restricted mobility have increased the range of movement in their joints and improved their general flexibility. Badminton learners have improved their strength and cardiovascular fitness. Salsa learners have improved their balance and aerobic fitness. Learners also improve their sense of wellbeing and personal confidence through social interactions in their classes. The standard of learners' performances overall is satisfactory, and in some cases it is good. In one yoga class learners demonstrated a range of complex postures, and in a salsa class learners had progressed to sophisticated step sequences. In both these classes, the standard of performance exceeded the expected standard. Most lessons are very well attended. Average attendance at classes during the inspection was over 70 per cent.

The quality of provision

55. Teaching and learning resources are good. Most of the teaching accommodation is good or better. Badminton is taught in a spacious five-court sports hall with ample room to

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accommodate all levels of teaching, and to ensure that learners do not have to spend time off court. Yoga at one venue is taught in a drama studio with a sprung wooden floor, and lighting that can be adjusted to help create an environment that is very conducive to relaxation and visualisation. Yoga for the elderly is taught in a warm spacious room in a care centre, with comfortable chairs that enable learners to participate fully in this specialist form of yoga. Teaching resources such as yoga blocks and badminton racquets are satisfactory and some are of a good standard. However, learners are required to supply their own exercise mats.

56. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Tutors provide appropriate explanations and demonstrations of exercise routines. Learners are able to understand and develop their skills in exercise or sports techniques. For example, in salsa fit classes, learners with no prior experience quickly learn complex steps and how to maintain their fitness. Tutors have a good rapport with learners and most of them have a good understanding of learners' needs. Lesson plans and schemes of work are mostly satisfactory, but some are not detailed enough and have no clear and measurable learning objectives.

57. Information, advice and guidance meets the needs of most learners. However, course information sheets frequently do not provide sufficient information about courses. There is not enough guidance about what is involved in the activity, such as the intensity, the clothing that learners should wear and the equipment that they will need to provide. Course information does not indicate any health or other restrictions which might apply. Five learners stopped attending a salsa fit introductory course as the course was based on fitness rather than dance. This was not made clear in the information leaflet or at the enrolment stage.

58. Initial assessments and the recording of learners' progress are poor. Health and information about recent exercise history is collected by less than 50 per cent of tutors. The initial assessment documents are not suitable for sport, leisure and recreation provision. They are not designed to allow subject-specific information to be collected about learners' starting points, or how flexible learners are, their perception of their emotional wellbeing or their ability and experience in relation to specific components of the course. The early stages of programmes cannot be planned in detail without such information. Not enough tutors have been trained to use the initial assessment and progress recording processes effectively. Many tutors do not realise the value of initial assessments and the monitoring of learners' performances. Tutors do not use induction to explain the significance of equality of opportunity in relation to what learners should expect from them, and what this means for relationships and behaviour within the groups.

Leadership and management

59. There are appropriate arrangements for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs. Staff's awareness of equality and diversity is satisfactory. However, some tutors do not fully understand how equality of opportunity applies to learning.

60. Programme planning is poor. The course offer is not co-ordinated or planned and the course approval process is inadequate. There is no clear rationale for the programme of courses offered and not enough discussion with subcontractors regarding the types of provision for learners in their locality. The curriculum is restricted in range, and serves the need and interests of only a small sector of the population. Most learners are older women, only 14 per cent of learners are men, and there are no classes designed to

increase participation by male learners. The council and its subcontractors have individually identified particular target groups for some exercise activities, but the links between target groups and wider initiatives such as 'Healthy Blackpool' are unclear. A number of classes do not have obvious links to such initiatives, and one class is purely recreational, with little learning content.

61. Curriculum management is weak. There is no overall curriculum management. The council does not check or monitor staff's qualifications and development as a matter of routine. The provider has no process to ensure that tutors carry out the professional development required to maintain their professional qualifications, or that they attend staff development sessions arranged by the council. Risk-assessment documents are not appropriate, and the forms do not provide enough information. Tutors are not appropriately trained to carry out risk assessments. Several reports contain inaccuracies in assessments and learners' risk levels. The observation of teaching and learning is not carried out by sports specialists and there is not enough information about subject-specific teaching practice and how tutors can improve. Feedback is collected from learners about the quality of the provision and changes have been made to some venues in response.

62. Inspectors agreed with the provider's self-assessed grade for this area of learning. However, the self-assessment report does not adequately identify strengths and weaknesses for the whole of this area of learning. The report is not complete and it is not critical enough. The action plan does not contain clearly defined actions to resolve all weaknesses.

Arts, media and publishing**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Crafts		3
Adult and community learning	235	3

63. The council offers courses in art and crafts, and music and drama. These courses include card making and papercraft, calligraphy, digital imaging and photography, dressmaking, painting and drawing, watercolour painting, beadwork, woodcarving and turning, guitar, music production and DJ skills. At the time of inspection, there were 18 art and crafts classes, and four music classes. In the current academic year, 235 learners are attending art and crafts courses. Most courses are at beginners' level, but there are intermediate courses for watercolour painting and digital photography, and in music. Courses are taught by the council and both subcontractors. At the time of inspection, 42 learners were enrolled for the direct provision and 184 were enrolled with the two main subcontractors. There were 33 men and nine women on the direct provision courses, and 45 men and 55 women with one of the subcontractors. No data is available about the gender of learners with the other subcontractor. Classes take place in two main learning centres, a library, two high schools and approximately six satellite centres throughout the borough. There are no accredited courses. All courses are for two hours duration each week over 10 weeks. Learners can attend during the day and in the evening. There are no dedicated curriculum managers for this area of learning. Fifteen tutors are employed on an hourly paid basis.

Crafts**Grade 3***Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good accommodation and resources

Weaknesses

- poor initial assessment and recording of learners' progress
- inadequate curriculum planning
- inadequate support for tutors

Achievement and standards

64. Learners develop good skills on their courses. In digital photography classes, learners were using photographic selection tools with confidence to manipulate photographs and modify images. The learners could produce montages from multiple images, change colour balances and repair damaged photographs using digital technology. In watercolour painting classes, learners mixed colours confidently by referring to their own extensive colour charts which they had completed earlier in the course. In card-making classes, learners were using a wide range of techniques including parchment craft, embossing, folding, binding and sewing, to produce cards which they had previously designed. Attendance on courses is good at 78 per cent at the time of inspection.

The quality of provision

65. The quality of accommodation and the resources for teaching and learning are good. Studios are well maintained, spacious, well lit and organised, with good storage facilities. Two learning centres have the most up-to-date equipment and resources for creative computing. Interactive whiteboards and plasma screens are used to help in learning and whole-group teaching in the computer environment. Teaching resources are effective, with carefully prepared handouts and information sheets for learners. Class materials are well prepared and are adequate for learning purposes. In the better classes, colourful, informative and well-written handouts are produced, some of which are in large print. Some learning centres have good displays of learners' work to motivate and inspire new learners.

66. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors are experienced and knowledgeable about their subjects. A variety of teaching methods is used, including short presentations, demonstrations and individual attention. Learners are encouraged to observe and analyse their subjects in drawing and watercolour painting, and are taught how to measure proportions. In wood-turning and carving, an experienced learner was invited to talk to less experienced learners about the types and uses of chisels. The better lessons are well planned.

67. The initial assessments and recording of learners' progress are poor. Initial assessment is not used consistently to identify learners' starting points and to agree group and individual objectives. In some cases, initial assessment identifies all learners to be competent at the beginning of the course. In other cases, different initial assessment criteria are used for learners on the same course. In one digital photography class, initial assessment is effective, using the tutor's own system. This good practice is not shared. Learning objectives are set in most classes and in the better classes challenging targets are set, enabling learners to increase their skills and confidence. However, these targets are often not measurable. The recording of learners' progress is inadequate. Tutors do not carry out, or adequately record, formative assessments of learners' progress as a matter of routine. In a few classes tutors have devised their own documents which allow for regular updating of learners' progress.

68. In some classes, learners' abilities vary a great deal. Some classes include learners with profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their needs are not always being met effectively. Tutors do not always know in advance if the learners they are teaching have such barriers to learning. These learners are often referred by agencies and their needs are often not disclosed in advance. Tutors are unable to plan or prepare for these learners or to modify their teaching plans. Although there is evidence that learners enjoy their classes in many cases, learning objectives are sometimes inappropriate. Learners are often accompanied by carers. The supporting role of carers in classes is not well defined. In one class observed by inspectors, the carer carried out all activities for the learner, and the tutor had received no guidance or training to enable her to support the learners more effectively. In an individual assessment with a learner with severe learning difficulties, the tutor asked the learner to remember activities that had taken place in previous weeks. The learner was unable to do this.

69. Most classes are at beginners' level, and there are not enough courses at intermediate or advanced level. Learners often return to the same classes for several years. Learners in

music production, DVD editing and digital photography are very motivated by what they are learning, but they are disappointed that they have no opportunity to develop their skills. They have taken the same classes repeatedly, hoping to gain more knowledge and skills. Learners are not informed of progression routes where these are available from other local providers.

Leadership and management

70. Access for learners in wheelchairs is good, and a new lift has been installed at one of the main subcontractor's sites. Most tutors are either fully qualified to teach, or are currently being trained. Staff development opportunities are good, but part-time tutors do not always attend. The observation of the teaching and learning process is satisfactory.

71. Curriculum planning is inadequate. The provider and the subcontractors do not plan their courses and progression routes together. Signposting for learners is ineffective, and they are unable to plan a coherent learning programme for themselves. There is some duplication of provision. Tutors have been given training to recognise and record attainment in this non-accredited provision, and most tutors have the guidance documents issued by the council. However the process is not clearly understood by all tutors. Initial assessment and recording of progress documents are not standardised, and different systems operate in direct and subcontracted provisions. Some tutors work in several different centres and must deal with a variety of documents.

72. Support for tutors in classes for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities is inadequate. In some classes, tutors are coping with learners with severe learning difficulties without any specific training in working with this group, and in some cases without teacher training. Tutors learn to work with these groups through 'trial and error'. Schemes of work and lessons are not planned to meet the needs of the learners. In a number of classes, the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were not being met, and the more able learners' ability to learn was also being affected.

73. The self-assessment of this area of learning is not detailed enough. Tutors employed by the subcontractors have not been involved. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors.

Languages, literature and culture**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	136	3 3

74. At the time of the inspection there were 136 learners enrolled on 15 courses, all of which last for 10 weeks. There are seven classes in Spanish, available as holiday Spanish, and beginners', intermediate and advanced courses, and French classes at holiday, beginners' and intermediate levels. Italian is available for beginners and intermediate learners, and there are BSL classes and a creative writing class. Of the 15 courses, three are provided directly by the council, four by the college and eight by the high school. Classes are taught at six learning centres throughout the borough. Thirty-three per cent of classes are held during the day. There is no weekend provision. All of the provision is non-accredited. Eleven of the 12 tutors teaching in this area of learning are part time. Sixty-six per cent of learners are new, 66 per cent of learners are women and 12.6 per cent of all learners are 35 years of age, or younger. Some classes include children with their parents.

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

- good retention
- some successfully innovative approaches to teaching
- high numbers of new learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate measuring and recording of achievement
- poor use of target language
- poor curriculum management throughout the provision

Achievement and standards

75. Retention is good. In 2004-05, it was 87 per cent. Attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was 77 per cent. The standard of written work in intermediate and advanced classes is satisfactory. Learners are developing good language skills and are gaining in confidence. Many learners report that they are able to converse competently when abroad. All learners are very well-motivated, enthusiastic and committed and most participate well in lessons. The standard of spoken language at all levels is satisfactory, although pronunciation is inconsistent and in a small number of lessons this is not corrected. All the provision is non-accredited and there is no formal measure of achievements in language provision.

The quality of provision

76. Some of the teaching employs innovative techniques. One subcontractor offers family learning for BSL and modern languages. Courses have been developed to meet the needs of parents, children over eight years of age and other adults. This is working well for adults who do not have sufficient confidence and who prefer to learn in a more relaxed environment. The whole group enjoys the range of activities which often includes games. Learners in a BSL class were able to introduce themselves and to discuss family members in sign language. The children in these classes contribute well and make good progress.

77. Some teachers use ICT effectively to enhance learners' skills and understanding. In a French lesson, the interactive whiteboard was used by the tutor and the learners to improve pronunciation and to learn vocabulary. Learners enjoy this and make good progress. In an intermediate Spanish lesson, learners accessed a languages website to read, listen and practise their vocabulary and sentence construction at their own individual pace. In another Spanish class, learners were able to role-play shopping, using a large number of products and cartons provided by the tutor. This exercise was conducted in the target language. The learners gained in confidence throughout this exercise.

78. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners enjoy their lessons and appreciate the support and help from their tutors. All the lessons observed had schemes of work and lesson plans. In the better lessons, these outlined the activities, resources and assessment involved. Few of the lessons had differentiated activities, or individual targets for learners. In all lessons, tutors use a variety of activities. Number and word games are popular with the learners. Tutors are imaginative in their use of resources, using handouts as well as textbooks and tapes. The pace of lessons is satisfactory or better. Lessons are generally lively and retain the learners' interest and involvement. Learners receive homework which is either a reinforcement of what has been covered in class, or preparation for the next lesson. In the better lessons, homework is checked at the beginning of the lesson and issues arising are discussed as a whole-group exercise. In intermediate and advanced classes, there is written homework which is marked.

79. A high number of learners are new to the provision. Nine of the 15 classes on offer at the time of inspection were holiday or beginners' classes and 66 per cent of these learners are new. Learners are satisfied with their courses. In the 2004-05 surveys they indicated that they considered 84 per cent of the provision to be excellent. However, a small minority expressed concerns about the cancellation of a creative writing class, despite it being advertised.

80. Information, advice and guidance and support is satisfactory overall. There is no joint publicity. Information sheets and brochures are produced by the partners on an area or learning centre basis. They are widely circulated through newspapers, local libraries, doctors' surgeries and to past learners. Learners can gain additional information from the local office. A large percentage of the provision is delivered at the high school and here staff advise on a personal basis, with each learner receiving 15 minutes' advice. A few learners are placed in inappropriate classes.

81. Accommodation in the learning centres visited by inspectors was generally satisfactory. One subcontractor's premises have excellent facilities for evening learners. Another centre visited for an evening lesson was poorly lit and not welcoming, and had no facilities. Other

learning centres have some facilities for refreshments and all have staff available to learners. Rooms are shared with other users and do not have displays of foreign language or BSL materials. Learning resources are satisfactory. Tutors provide their own handouts and there is no sharing of good practice. Staff are appropriately qualified. Most staff have degrees or experience of living in the country concerned, and have a teaching qualification or are studying for one. There were not many native speakers of the taught languages in the lessons observed by inspectors.

82. The recording of initial assessment, progress and achievement is poor. In the better lessons, learners have completed an individual assessment and have an individual learning plan, with group targets. In a few classes, learners' individual learning targets have been identified, and these are usually assessed in class during a spoken exercise. Some tutors record learners' progress on a checklist. This process is new and many tutors are not aware of it.

83. The target language is used poorly in teaching. Too often tutors use English to explain, give instructions or speak with learners. In the better lessons, the target language is used to a greater extent. In a holiday Spanish class, the lesson, and its activities in telling the time, were taught primarily in Spanish.

Leadership and management

84. Staff development opportunities are good. Tutors speak highly of the training provided for working with vulnerable groups and for e-learning, but attendance by part-time tutors is not always good.

85. Quality assurance is satisfactory. One subcontractor has a comprehensive system, and there is now a quality group which aims to ensure consistency. All tutors observed during inspection had had internal teaching observations within the previous 18 months, and had found the process helpful.

86. The self-assessment report is satisfactory. Many of the strengths and weaknesses were acknowledged by the provider in the report or position statements. However, some aspects of teaching and learning, such as the use of the target language, were not identified.

87. Curriculum management is poor. The language curriculum is not planned jointly by the provider and the subcontractors. The council and the subcontractors develop classes independently and there is no overall analysis of the language needs of Blackpool's population. There are gaps in the provision. For example, there are no classes in German, Chinese or new European languages, and there are few opportunities for progression. There is no curriculum framework, giving consistency of levels, syllabuses or schemes of work. Resources are not shared or developed jointly. There are no tutor sessions to share good practice among providers, or to jointly develop expertise in teaching in the target language. The council has no strategy for family learning within the context of widening participation, or for the contribution of language classes to the council's strategies and targets. There are inconsistencies throughout the provision in the development of processes for initial assessment, and the recording of progress and achievement.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	173	4 4

88. The council provides 18 courses in independent living and leisure skills which include some provision for adults with learning difficulties and mental ill health. Nine courses are managed directly by the council and nine are subcontracted to the college. Courses are targeted at learners who do not usually join in formal learning activities such as travellers, homeless people and people experiencing social exclusion for a variety of reasons. The provider was unable to provide accurate enrolment data for 2004-05. Currently there are approximately 58 learners in the directly managed provision and 115 learners are involved in subcontractors' courses. The number of learners who declared a disability is not available. Two of the courses are accredited by national awarding bodies.

89. Typically, courses last for 10 weeks, for two hours each week in the daytime. One financial literacy course lasts for 20 weeks, taking place one day each week for six hours. The skills for life provision for the area is managed by the college. Independent living and leisure skills are managed by a curriculum co-ordinator and taught by part-time tutors, some of whom are curriculum specialists in other areas of learning. Courses take place in a variety of learning centres including a hostel, a women's refuge, a day centre, an early years centre and libraries.

Independent living and leisure skills**Grade 4***Strengths*

- good initiatives to attract hard-to-reach learners
- good achievement of personal goals by learners

Weaknesses

- poor planning for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- inadequate support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs
- inadequate information, advice and guidance for learners
- weak curriculum management

Achievement and standards

90. Learners achieve challenging personal goals. Attendance is very good. Learners are motivated to attend, and their continued attendance is well supported by tutors and partner agencies. Attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was 80 per cent. Learners, some of whom have a number of problems and disrupted lives, are supported, and are set relevant and achievable goals to enable them to take more control of their lives. Such goals include increasing their self-confidence in speaking, working in groups and improving their life skills. Learners also make improvements in leading healthier lifestyles. A group of learners with learning difficulties enjoyed a session of short tennis, curling and relaxation at

a public sports centre. These achievements represent significant steps for these learners.

The quality of provision

91. The council promotes good initiatives for hard-to-reach learners. The provider works with other agencies and partners such as charities and social services to reach a wide range of these prospective learners, including homeless people, ex-offenders, people with learning disabilities and mental ill health, travellers, parents, and people who live in areas of high deprivation. A range of first steps learning opportunities is used to attract learners who have had poor educational experiences in the past. The courses enable learners to make significant changes in their lives and include confidence building, computer skills, managing money and fitness classes. Course are situated in a variety of community venues, such as hostels, sports centres, day centres, an early years centre at a primary school, a drugs rehabilitation centre and a well-resourced learning centre. These venues are convenient and attractive to those learners who find it difficult to attend more formal settings. Thirteen learners were recruited to a one-day money management course which was sited in a hostel for the homeless.

92. Some of the teaching is good. Most of the courses are designed for disadvantaged groups. Learners negotiate outcomes in some, but not all, of the lessons. Staff use some innovative methods of recording learners' achievements, such as CDs and learner diaries. However, individual learning plans do not contain sufficient records of achievement.

93. The council offers a range of first steps courses which meets the needs and interests of learners. Many learners expressed the excitement and motivation they experienced in enjoying learning for the first time in their lives. However, some of the courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities offer little opportunity for learners to make choices. Some learners repeat the same or very similar courses and their progression routes are not planned sufficiently. However, learners do access a useful range of courses and make significant progress in the provision which is targeted at learners from disadvantaged groups. The local college provides an extensive range of skills for life courses throughout the borough, but progression routes for learners and links with the council's provision are unclear.

94. Learning programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are poorly planned. Fifty per cent of the lessons in this group which were observed by inspectors were unsatisfactory. Initial assessment is not adequate to identify specific disabilities and the support needs of learners with disabilities. Initial assessment is not used sufficiently to make adjustments for learning and to make support needs clear to teaching and support staff. Target outcomes in learning plans are not divided into manageable learning stages in order to motivate and encourage the learners. Not all staff members have sufficient knowledge and awareness of learning difficulties and disabilities, although they are often curriculum specialists in other areas. Those staff who do have specialist knowledge and teacher training provide more effective learner support and learning sessions, especially for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In many classes, learners are supported by carers or other support staff. In the better classes, the roles and responsibilities of support workers were clearly defined, but in most classes tutors and the support workers themselves were unclear of their expected contribution to the learning experience.

95. Support for learners who have literacy and numeracy needs is inadequate. Lesson plans do not always include targets to improve learners' literacy and numeracy skills. In

many classes, learners' needs in this area are not identified. Where staff are trained in literacy and numeracy teaching, targets are set and assessed, but some staff do not have sufficient skills and awareness to include literacy and numeracy activities in the planning of learning. However, some good initiatives for improvement have taken place, such as the development of a financial literacy course in January 2006 by the recently appointed literacy and numeracy co-ordinator. Some assessment of learning is poor and individual learning plans do not include sufficient records of learners' progress. Learning outcomes are not always negotiated sufficiently with learners, or individualised enough to set challenging and achievable milestones for every learner. Initial assessment takes little account of prior learning.

96. The information and guidance available for learners is inadequate, a situation which was recognised in the self-assessment report. None of the course information is available in an accessible format for learners with learning disabilities, other than in Braille. Learners do not always know where to go for advice and some learners are enrolled on inappropriate courses. Many learners do not attend the first class of their courses. In one class, learners arrived three weeks after the course start date. This was of particular concern as two learners with profound and multiple disabilities were not expected by the tutor, who was unable to meet their needs. Inspectors encountered a number of instances where learners had been enrolled on courses by carers who had not disclosed important information about the learners. Some advice and guidance is included in courses, but there is not enough information regarding progression routes, and many learners repeat courses.

Leadership and management

97. Curriculum management is weak. Curriculum planning is not co-ordinated for the direct and subcontracted provisions. The provision is not planned collaboratively, progression routes are not planned and there is no sharing of good practice between the provider and the subcontractors. Many of the staff are unqualified and some have not attended in-house courses to help them to support adults with difficulties and disabilities. However, four tutors who have the required qualifications have been appointed very recently. The management of learner recruitment is poor. Many learners do not attend the first course lesson, and they miss induction and initial assessment. The situation is not managed well for learners who enrol late. Many tutors did not know who to expect to their classes and were unable to supply inspectors with accurate class lists. Although attendance is very good, some classes recruit very low numbers of three or four learners. In these cases, promoting group work and the development of social skills is very difficult. A number of classes have been cancelled.

98. Inspectors did not agree with the grade given in the self-assessment report. They identified additional weaknesses.

