

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Blackburn with Darwen LEA**

**11 November 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
- **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.

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

## Blackburn with Darwen LEA

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Blackburn with Darwen borough council lifelong learning service (the service) contracts with Lancashire Learning and Skills Council for the provision of non-accredited and accredited adult and community learning. Provision is delivered directly by the service and through a subcontract with St Mary's Sixth Form College.
2. Courses are provided at five neighbourhood learning centres and in primary schools, community centres, places of worship, libraries and other local venues across the borough.
3. The lifelong learning manager is the head of service and is responsible for the management of adult and community learning. She reports to the assistant director for community learning, who in turn reports to the interim director of children's services and the director of education and lifelong learning. The director is responsible to the executive director for education and lifelong learning.
4. The head of service is supported by two senior managers who have responsibilities for quality and resources and curriculum development. The service employs 12 development officers, eight middle managers, eight lead tutors, and five learning centre managers. There are 64 part-time tutors.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Provision is good in complementary health services, crafts, and community development. It is satisfactory in information and communications technology (ICT) for users, preparation for life and work and family learning. Leadership and management and quality improvement are good. Equality of opportunity is outstanding.
6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The service has good arrangements for self-assessment. The self-assessment process includes all relevant stakeholders. The views of learners, staff, managers and partners contribute effectively to the self-assessment process. Inspectors' findings matched most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.
7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** The service has clear and well-considered priorities for how it can improve its provision. These include organisational restructuring, strategic direction, improved communications, better management information and widening participation. The self-assessment report has a detailed action plan identifying how weaknesses will be resolved and how strengths can be maintained or improved.

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN LEA:**

- better promotion and signposting of learners' progression routes
- consolidate and raise the standards of teaching and learning in all curriculum areas
- consolidate and maintain the good provision
- improve development of teaching English to learners for whom English is an additional language

**GRADES**

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		1
Quality improvement		2

<b>Health, public services and care</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Complementary health services</b>		<b>2</b>	
Adult and community learning	126	2	

<b>Information and communications technology</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>ICT for users</b>		<b>3</b>	
Adult and community learning	312	3	

<b>Arts, media and publishing</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Crafts</b>		<b>2</b>	
Adult and community learning	210	2	

<b>Preparation for life and work</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>ESOL</b>		<b>3</b>	
Adult and community learning	86	3	
<b>Independent living and leisure skills</b>		<b>3</b>	
Adult and community learning	121	3	
<b>Citizenship</b>		<b>3</b>	
Adult and community learning	64	3	

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		3
Adult and community learning	347	3

  

Community development		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		2
Adult and community learning	246	2

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. Six areas of learning offered by the service were reported on and graded. Two inspection visits were made. All provision was inspected in the same week, except for health, public services and care, which was inspected during one visit in the previous week and over four days during the main inspection.

Number of inspectors	9
Number of inspection days	44
Number of learners interviewed	312
Number of staff interviewed	131
Number of visits	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

9. **Learners achieve skills and confidence. Their practical and written work in complementary health services is of a very good standard** and often exceeds their own expectations. They gain confidence and self-esteem, and are able to apply their new skills in their everyday lives. **Learners in ICT for users gain good practical skills.** In one session, a learner showed others how to enter data in a genealogy internet site. Learners are using their new skills to change their personal and working lives. Many learners in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes report that they are able to communicate in English with their family and friends, and to speak for themselves when shopping and going to see their doctor.

## The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Health, public services and care	1	6	1	0	8
Information and communications technology	1	10	8	0	19
Arts, media and publishing	1	5	2	1	9
Preparation for life and work	1	3	3	2	9
Family learning	0	5	4	0	9
Community development	2	6	0	0	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>62</b>

**10. Standards of teaching and learning are good in complementary health services, crafts and community development.** Schemes of work and lessons are very well planned and organised with clear aims and objectives. Tutors plan lessons flexibly to meet individual needs. They are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Theory and practical work is linked well. In a clothes-making class, learners made their own patterns for dresses and trousers with complex interfacing sections. Tutors give effective demonstrations of techniques, which inspire learners to improve their skills. Community development tutors use a good range of teaching styles to meet learners' needs, including appropriate strategies to integrate learners with disabilities into the session. In a mosaic-making class, every learner had a specific and achievable task, which took into account the nature of their disability. They were able to work at their own pace under the expert guidance of the tutor who organised challenging activities calmly and authoritatively. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in ICT for users, preparation for life and work, and family learning.

**11. Resources are good for learners in complementary health services and ICT for users.** The accommodation is of a very good standard. Learning centres are friendly, clean, modern and welcoming. The large, bright training rooms are well decorated, and have good-quality furniture. The learning centres and training rooms promote and value diversity through prominent displays, notices and leaflets. Professionally qualified and experienced staff are committed, self-motivated and enthusiastic. Learners in ICT for users have up-to-date computers with current software, colour printers and scanners. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) funds high-specification equipment and furnishings in the teaching rooms provided at the Radio Lancashire building to offer learners an opportunity to work in a modern environment.

**12. Good information, advice and guidance is provided for learners on preparation for life and work courses.** Guidance officers provide a comprehensive education, training and employment advice service. For example, one woman, returning to the area after working abroad, received help with housing and money management to enable her to re-enter the labour market. Guidance officers help learners with job application forms, which often need to be completed online.

**13. There are not enough progression opportunities for some learners.** In community development, learners complete and enjoy short courses but then find that more advanced courses, particularly in their own neighbourhoods, are not available. In a few cases, some learners drop out of learning altogether. **Progression opportunities for ICT for users learners are not promoted sufficiently.** There are few course leaflets or promotional



posters in the learning venues. Learners' induction packs do not contain information about progression opportunities. Learners are not generally aware of the range of courses available to them, or of the service's specialist guidance services.

**14. Many preparation for life and work classes do not focus sufficiently on spoken English for learners for whom English is an additional language.** Learning activities are mainly paper-based, with very little spoken English. There is not enough language practice to reinforce pronunciation and simple sentence patterns.

### Leadership and management

**15. Senior managers provide clear strategic leadership.** The service was substantially restructured 18 months ago to clarify objectives, roles and responsibilities for staff at all levels. The process was handled sensitively and without disruption to learners. Senior managers are committed to the service and work hard to promote achievement, high-quality learning and community cohesion. **Internal communications are good.** All staff receive a weekly briefing to inform them of developments in the service. Part-time tutors are supported well by lead tutors and are effectively managed and integrated into the service.

**16. The service has introduced very successful initiatives to widen participation by under-represented groups.** Initiatives to widen participation include a scheme to recruit men to ICT for users programmes at times and locations convenient to their needs. An initiative to promote learning to Asian women successfully established a neighbourhood learning centre after negotiation with the prospective learners, most of whom had not participated in learning for many years. A 10-week Indian head massage course was provided at times to suit the learners. As well as learning valuable practical skills, learners also improved their spoken English.

**17. Comprehensive and effective arrangements exist for quality improvement.** The new management structure has established new teams, policies and procedures to improve learning and achievement. The service's quality assurance policies and procedures meet priorities for continuous improvement. Internal auditing is effective and ensures that key areas of the provision comply with quality assurance procedures. Learners' experiences are monitored and weaknesses are quickly resolved. A good scheme for observing teaching and learning has been established for four years. Standards of teaching and learning have improved over the years and are good in most curriculum areas.

**18. Management arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory.** Learners receive an initial assessment during their first lesson. Their learning needs are identified on their individual learning plans. Tutors refer learners to the service's learning support team where appropriate. **However, in ICT for users, additional support needs are not always identified quickly enough.** In a few instances, learners are not referred to the learning support team.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- clear strategic leadership
- good management of performance
- particularly effective promotion of equality of opportunity
- very successful initiatives to widen participation
- comprehensive and effective arrangements for quality improvement

### **Weaknesses**

- incomplete learner data for 2004-05

## **Health, public services and care**

### ***Complementary health services***

***Grade 2***

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement of practical skills
- much good teaching and learning
- good resources

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient progression opportunities
- insufficiently specific learning outcomes

## **Information and communications technology**

### ***ICT for users***

***Grade 3***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- good assessment practice
- good management of resources
- successful initiatives to widen participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient challenge and differentiation in learning sessions
- insufficient promotion of progression opportunities
- insufficient attention to learners' support needs in some learning sessions

## **Arts, media and publishing**

### ***Crafts***

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- good development of practical skills
- good range of teaching strategies to meet individual needs
- particularly innovative and successful initiatives to widen participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of individual learning plans to monitor progress for some learners

## **Preparation for life and work**

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of confidence and social skills
- very responsive provision
- good information and guidance
- good internal communications

#### *Weaknesses*

- unsatisfactory teaching and learning in some ESOL classes
- insufficient spoken English for learners for whom English is an additional language
- poor resources in sewing classes

## **Family learning**

### ***Adult and community learning***

**Grade 3**

#### *Strengths*

- good development of knowledge and skills to build confidence
- responsive provision to meet local needs
- innovative management structure

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient attention to individual learning needs
- poor classroom accommodation in schools

## **Community development**

### ***Adult and community learning***

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- good development of skills
- very good standards of teaching and learning
- particularly good support for learners
- good curriculum management
- successful initiatives to widen participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient progression opportunities for some learners

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN LEA:**

- 'the chance for ordinary people to be heard'
- learning enough English to make friends with English people
- caring and friendly staff
- 'the learning is life changing'
- 'I can write a job application without help'
- the good teaching

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN LEA COULD IMPROVE:**

- the number of learning hours and courses
- the number of printers that work
- learning resources to include an electric iron and an overhead projector

## Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

## Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

<b>Active citizenship</b>	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make 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 2**

#### Strengths

- clear strategic leadership
- good management of performance
- particularly effective promotion of equality of opportunity
- very successful initiatives to widen participation
- comprehensive and effective arrangements for quality improvement

#### Weaknesses

- incomplete learner data for 2004-05

19. Senior managers provide clear strategic leadership. The director and assistant director of children's services take a personal and genuine interest in the development of the service to meet challenging objectives. The service was substantially restructured 18 months ago to provide objectives, roles and responsibilities for staff at all levels. The process was handled sensitively and without disruption to learners. Senior managers are committed to the service and work hard to promote achievement, high-quality learning and community cohesion. Staff and part-time tutors are consulted every year about aspects of their work which they value and those which they would like to be changed. Actions identified from these surveys are implemented successfully. Staff have a good understanding of the service's objectives and its priorities. They are able to explain the key messages outlined by senior managers in the service.

20. Internal communications are good. Senior managers meet every week. Curriculum managers and development officers meet monthly. Meetings are recorded carefully and proposed actions clearly identify responsibilities and timescales. All staff receive a weekly briefing to inform them of developments in the service. Part-time tutors are supported well by lead tutors. They are managed effectively and integrated into the service. Part-time staff attend a curriculum meeting and a training and development meeting every three months. Staff at all levels say that they are well supported by the service.

21. The provider's performance is well managed. A comprehensive, three-year development plan is closely linked to the borough council's corporate objectives. The service sets demanding targets for learner recruitment and retention and achievement, which are monitored closely and reviewed regularly. There are targets for recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups, men and socially disadvantaged groups. A detailed statistical summary of all aspects of the service's performance is produced every three months and is reviewed by senior managers. This summary report identifies the progress made against targets for raising the number of literacy, numeracy and language learners, establishing a learners' forum, improving management information and implementing a system for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievements. Action plans are precise, realistic, challenging, time-constrained and constantly reviewed.

22. Training and development arrangements are very effective. Staff identify their training

needs during their annual appraisals. Training and development opportunities for full and part-time staff are promoted well. For example, the service has a target to train all tutors to level 3 in literacy and numeracy teaching. Staff receive financial support or designated time during their normal working hours to complete their training.

23. The management of resources is satisfactory. Tutors are qualified and experienced. Most of them have a relevant teaching qualification. The service provides an in-house teaching course for tutors who do not have a teaching qualification. Teaching accommodation and specialist equipment is generally satisfactory and is particularly good in complementary health services and ICT. Some of the accommodation for family learning courses is poor and resources for sewing in preparation for life and work are also poor.

24. Management arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory. Learners receive an initial assessment during their first lesson. Their learning needs are identified in their individual learning plans. Tutors refer learners to the service's learning support team where appropriate. However, in ICT, additional support needs are not always identified quickly enough. In a few instances, learners are not referred to the learning support team.

25. Data is incomplete for learners attending during the period 2004-05. Information about learner recruitment and retention is generally accurate and is used effectively by senior managers to plan the curriculum. However, there are a number of omissions in the data concerning learners' ethnic background and age for 2004-05. Some aspects of curriculum planning take too long to complete. The service recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report and has taken effective actions to resolve it. The extent to which middle managers and lead tutors make routine use of data to plan the curriculum is generally satisfactory. However, some staff do not understand sufficiently how data can be used for planning purposes.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 1**

26. Equality of opportunity is promoted particularly well. Staff and managers are fully dedicated to equality of opportunity and to including all members of society. The service clearly demonstrates its commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity through its actions and policies. A clearly written and comprehensive set of policies incorporates the relevant legislation and is reviewed regularly. The selection and recruitment process for staff is fair and transparent. The proportion of staff members from minority ethnic groups compares favourably with the composition of the local population. Promotional materials are well produced and written in community languages where appropriate. They promote learning to under-represented groups. The service has successfully provided an 'essential life skills project' to meet the literacy and numeracy needs of learners in targeted communities. Courses in sewing and ICT have been matched with the core curriculum, enabling learners to enrol on courses of their choice and at the same time meet their literacy, numeracy and language needs. Learners with learning difficulties receive good support.

27. The service has implemented very successful initiatives to widen participation by under-represented groups. The provider has effective partnerships with local agencies and support services that are used very well to widen participation. There is good access to learning opportunities, and learners do not have to pay for courses. Initiatives to widen participation include a scheme to recruit men to ICT programmes at times and locations

which meet their requirements. Many of these learners have not participated in formal learning for many years. An initiative to promote learning to Asian women was established successfully in a neighbourhood learning centre after negotiation with the prospective learners, most of whom had also not participated in learning for many years. A 10-week Indian head massage course was provided at times to suit the learners. As well as learning valuable practical skills, learners also improved their spoken English.

28. The neighbourhood learning planning team has been particularly successful in negotiating learning programmes in local communities to promote social cohesion. One initiative involved working with a community group to promote a cleaner environment in the community of Sudell. The tutor worked effectively with the group, which invited representatives from the borough council's cleansing service to discuss local concerns about refuse and street cleaning. Discussions between the group and the council led to significant improvements in the cleansing service's operations in the community. The group also participated in the 'Greenweek clean-up campaign', and identified a problem with discarded used syringes. Training in handling sharp implements was provided and was attended by some of the group and the wider community.

29. Learners receive appropriate information about equality of opportunity. They know what to do if they encounter discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying. Complaints from learners are dealt with effectively in a timely and effective way. The monitoring of the subcontractor's equality of opportunity arrangements is satisfactory.

30. Equality of opportunity data is satisfactory and is used to measure and monitor the effectiveness of the promotion of equality of opportunity. Targets for widening participation are challenging and reviewed regularly by senior managers.

31. Most accommodation is of a good standard, especially that directly managed by the service. It provides appropriate access and is adapted to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. There is sufficient and suitable equipment in classrooms and workshops to meet the needs of learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 2**

32. The service has comprehensive and effective arrangements for quality improvement. The new management structure has established new teams, policies and procedures to improve learning and achievement. The provider's quality assurance policies and procedures meet priorities for continuous improvement. The quality improvement handbook is detailed and well presented. Internal auditing is effective and ensures that key areas of the provision comply with quality assurance procedures. Effective steps are taken to monitor learners' experiences, and weaknesses are resolved quickly.

33. The collection and analysis of feedback from learners, staff and key partners are good. Effective analyses of learners' feedback are produced for each curriculum area. Learners' and staff's feedback is very positive. Learners are very complementary about their tutor's knowledge and experience and the support that the learners receive. Many learners felt that they had achieved much more than they had originally planned.

34. The service has clear and well-considered priorities for how it can improve. These include organisational restructuring, strategic direction, improved communications, better management information and widening participation. A great deal of improvement in these

priority areas was evident during the inspection. A useful set of priorities has been identified for 2005-06.

35. An effective scheme for observing teaching and learning has been established for four years. Suitably qualified and experienced staff carry out regular observations. Standards of teaching and learning have improved over the years and are good in most curriculum areas. The quality of teaching and learning is usefully benchmarked against similar regional adult and community providers in order to monitor standards.

36. The service subcontracts the teaching of some family learning classes to St Mary's Sixth Form College. The provider's monitoring of this arrangement is good. A service-level agreement clearly defines the respective roles and responsibilities. Communications are good. The service's staff carry out observations of teaching and learning to ensure that standards are met. The subcontractor provides a copy of its own self-assessment to the service, but the subcontractor has not contributed to the service's self-assessment process.

37. The management information system has improved over the past 12 months and it is used to collect and record learner data accurately. Staff and managers have good access to the information, including specially prepared reports, where appropriate. The system has recently started to produce a comprehensive analysis of learner data to enable managers to monitor progress and to make decisions about improving the provision.

38. The service has good arrangements for self-assessment. The self-assessment report includes all relevant stakeholders. The views of learners, staff, managers and partners contribute effectively to the self-assessment. The report is a useful and informative document. Most of the judgements in the self-assessment report matched those of the inspection. The self-assessment report has a detailed action plan which identifies how weaknesses will be resolved and how strengths can be maintained or improved.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Complementary health services</b>		<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning	126	2

39. In 2004-05, 854 learners enrolled on courses in this area of learning. At the time of the inspection, there were 126 learners enrolled on 13 accredited and non-accredited programmes. There are five first aid courses, five beauty therapy courses and three complementary therapy courses. Courses are provided for two hours each week for 15 weeks and are offered during the day and in the evening. Classes are taught in five learning centres which are directly managed by the service, and in five schools. Learners are recruited directly by the learning centres and through promotional materials in libraries, museums and the town hall. Most of the tutors are part time.

#### **Complementary health services**

Grade 2

##### *Strengths*

- very good achievement of practical skills
- much good teaching and learning
- good resources

##### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient progression opportunities
- insufficiently specific learning outcomes

#### **Achievement and standards**

40. Learners achieve a very good level of practical skills. Their practical and written work is of a very good standard and often exceeds their expectations. They gain confidence and self-esteem. Learners are able to apply their new skills in their everyday lives. For example, they are given examples of alternative, complementary therapies and relaxation techniques for managing the menopause and stress, as an alternative to using prescribed medication. In all the lessons observed, learners were interested and fully involved. They were challenged by the learning process. Many learners gain new skills and understanding, especially concerning the different types of products and treatments available. Those learners interviewed are encouraged to recognise and achieve their full potential. Those learners interviewed identified a wide range of unexpected benefits of attending the courses. Many learners commented that they did not realise how much they were learning. Some learners used make-up products for the first time and said how much better it made them feel. Learners also talked about the benefits of meeting new people in a learning environment. Retention rates are satisfactory.

## The quality of provision

41. There is a great deal of good teaching and learning. A range of teaching methods, such as simulations, demonstrations and group activities, is used effectively to promote and extend learning. Teaching and learning aids are of a good standard and managed well to ensure that learners do not have to wait for equipment, or for the session to begin. The pace of learning meets learners' needs. Key learning points are reinforced and checks are made to ensure that information has been understood. Question and answer techniques and quizzes are used particularly well to reinforce understanding. Learners are well motivated and enthusiastic. Good relationships exist between staff and learners. Learners speak positively about the quality of teaching.

42. Schemes of work and lessons are very well planned and organised with clear aims and objectives and appropriate timings. Tutors plan lessons flexibly to meet individual needs. They are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Theory and practical work is combined well. Tutors give clear explanations to learners' questions. Discussions in class are skilfully led so that no learner is excluded. Tutors praise and encourage learners when they contribute and participate in learning activities.

43. Tutors emphasise the need for punctuality and attendance. All lessons start promptly. Tutors are well qualified, experienced and confident in their roles. They have a good understanding of the anxieties felt by adult learners about returning to education after a long period.

44. Resources are good. Accommodation is of a very good standard. Learning centres are friendly, clean, modern and welcoming. Training rooms are large, bright, well decorated, and have good-quality furniture. Free refreshments are available for learners in the training rooms. The learning centres and training rooms promote and value diversity through prominent displays, notices and leaflets. Professionally qualified and experienced staff are committed, self-motivated and enthusiastic. A good range of learning materials, such as make-up and resuscitation dolls, is available, so that learners do not have to share. Tutors use a good selection of workbooks, aids and products to improve the learning activities. A range of facilities is available to meet the needs of learners with disabilities, such as a ramp for wheelchair users, toilet facilities for learners with disabilities, wide doors, low-level alarms, clear signs, Braille and tactile information, appropriate lighting, handrails, induction loops and a low desk at reception.

45. Initial advice and guidance services for learners are satisfactory. Information brochures and the student handbook are attractive and easy to understand. They provide course descriptions and information about the additional support available. However, there is not enough promotion of courses and many learners are not aware of the range of learning opportunities available. Some good support is provided to meet learners' diverse needs, particularly in literacy and ESOL, and learners are encouraged to make their learning needs known at initial assessment. However, the service does not review the effectiveness of this support.

46. There are not enough opportunities for learners to progress to other courses. Only three courses are offered in the programme area. Learners are not informed about other courses with different providers. Many classes operate on the same evening and at the same time, providing little opportunity for learners to attend more than one class. The

number of places on some courses is restricted. Learners do not receive any pre-course information and find it difficult to decide whether a particular course is the right one for them. Many learners wanted to continue with their courses or to develop their skills, but were not aware of any other suitable provision.

47. Learning outcomes are not specific enough. Individual learning plans are not tailored to individual needs, and tutors do not use them consistently. There is little indication in the learning plans of any literacy, numeracy or additional support received by learners. There are few measures to evaluate the effectiveness of learning support in raising retention or achievement rates. Many learners are not given a copy of their individual learning plans. Although some tutors have a good understanding of the progress that learners are making, insufficient details are recorded during the progress reviews. Comments are often vague and descriptive rather than evaluative.

### **Leadership and management**

48. Managers support tutors well. Internal and external communications are good. There are regular staff meetings and effective sharing of information and good practice. Staff are loyal to the service, enthusiastic, very well motivated and committed to achieving the best possible outcome for learners. Satisfactory links and effective working relationships exist with a range of external organisations. Staff development and appraisals are satisfactory. Appraisals take place annually, with more frequent reviews for new tutors.

49. Quality assurance policies and procedures are generally effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses. Teaching sessions are observed and useful feedback is given to tutors about how they can improve. Learners complete questionnaires which are used to improve the learning provision. Gender, age and ethnic background data is collected and analysed regularly.

50. The service's promotion of equal opportunities is particularly good. Tutors' ethnic backgrounds reflect the diversity of learners. The self-assessment process is integrated with the quality assurance procedures. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and development plans are established. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors, who identified other strengths and found two new weaknesses. Inspectors gave the same grade for this area of learning as that given in the self-assessment report.

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

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>ICT for users</b>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	312	3

51. The service provides ICT courses in five neighbourhood learning centres, community centres, and libraries throughout the borough. Drop-in facilities are provided in some centres for learners to practise their ICT skills. The service offers a range of non-accredited, 15-week beginner courses in digital photography, e-mail, the internet and basic ICT, and an accredited 30-week level 1 course in ICT skills. Progression to programmes above level 1 is available with the service's partner organisations. In 2004-05, 1,052 learners were enrolled on ICT programmes, representing 21 per cent of all learners. During the week of the inspection, 38 courses were operating in 17 venues. Three hundred and twelve learners are currently enrolled, representing 23 per cent of all learners on programmes offered by the service.

**ICT for users****Grade 3***Strengths*

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- good assessment practice
- good management of resources
- successful initiatives to widen participation

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient challenge and differentiation in learning sessions
- insufficient promotion of progression opportunities
- insufficient attention to learners' support needs in some learning sessions

**Achievement and standards**

52. Learners' confidence and skills are developed well. Learners' overcome their anxieties and readily attempt new activities. They enjoy their classes and do additional work at home or during drop-in sessions. Some learners are sufficiently confident to help other learners by demonstrating and sharing their ICT skills. In one lesson a learner demonstrated an internet search to the whole group. In another lesson, a learner showed others how to enter data on a genealogy internet site. Learners are using their new skills to change their personal and working lives. Some of them quickly develop a good range of computer skills. They use a mouse, keypad and keyboard competently. Computer terminology is used appropriately and is well understood. Many learners have developed sufficient skills to work independently, applying their knowledge and experience to other software applications. In a digital photography class, many of the learners were able to download pictures and e-mail them to friends. The retention rate is satisfactory. Attendance during the week of the inspection was good, at 90 per cent.



### **The quality of provision**

53. Assessment practice is good. In the best lessons, learners' skills and progress are monitored well. Tutors assess learners' previous skills and the progress that they make in lessons. Learners review their own progress and reflect on their changing needs. During mid-term reviews, learners identify areas for further development and consolidate the work they have completed. Some tutors use a range of assessment activities and materials to evaluate and record learners' understanding, skill development, knowledge of concepts and progress. For example, tutors use quizzes, research tasks, self-assessment, peer assessment and games to enable learners to record their progress and achievement.

54. Standards of teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. In the most successful lessons, learners are challenged and monitored by a wide range of active learning methods. Learners who have developed skills quickly, or grasped new concepts, are given more demanding work. In one lesson, learners' ages ranged from 20 to 80 years. All of the tasks that they completed extended their knowledge and were relevant to their needs or circumstances. For example, younger learners produced curriculum vitae, an older learner produced a glossary of computer terms to help her remember them, and other learners worked on a file management task. Homework is set regularly to encourage learners to work on their own and to promote their skills development.

55. In the less effective lessons, learners are not challenged sufficiently and there is not enough differentiation to meet the needs of learners. The pace of learning is often slow and many learners have to wait for the tutor to help them before they can continue with the task. Activities are often not appropriate for all learners. Learners who complete tasks quickly are left with nothing to do, while others are not challenged sufficiently to work more independently. In these lessons, there is too much emphasis on following instructions and completing the task, and not enough on gaining knowledge and understanding.

56. Progression opportunities are not promoted sufficiently to learners. Few course leaflets or promotional posters are available in the learning venues. Learners' induction packs do not contain information about progression opportunities, and they are not generally aware of the range of courses available to them, or of the service's specialist guidance services. Some of the tutors are not fully aware of the progression opportunities available. Many of these opportunities are new and the service has only recently produced course information. The service has not implemented an effective strategy for promoting its programmes of learning.

57. Some lessons do not include sufficient support for learners. Tutors do not identify learners' physical or perceptual difficulties adequately enough. The service employs support staff who have access to specialist equipment to help learners, but tutors do not always refer learners to this resource. For example, in one session a learner with a hearing impairment struggled to hear the tutor, without any support. Some learners with literacy and language needs are not supported adequately and do not receive specialist help to enable them to participate fully in the lessons.

### **Leadership and management**

58. Resources are managed well. Accommodation at the service's neighbourhood centres and other venues is of a very good standard. Venues are welcoming and clearly

## BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN LEA

signposted. All venues comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. There is a systematic risk assessment for each course in every venue. Most teaching rooms are clean, well lit and comfortable. Computer equipment is up to date, with current software, colour printers and scanners. Equipment is serviced and maintained by a corporate partner. The BBC funds high-specification equipment and furnishings in the teaching rooms provided at the Radio Lancashire building, to offer learners an opportunity to work in a modern commercial environment.

59. The service has introduced successful initiatives to widen participation by groups traditionally under-represented in adult and community learning. The service's development officers have good links to a wide range of community groups. There is particularly effective targeting of under-represented groups by negotiating and planning courses in the community venues used by prospective learners. These venues include social clubs and sports centres, religious centres, health and care settings for learners with specific needs, and neighbourhood centres in areas of deprivation. Many venues are located within easy reach of learners' homes, so that they can walk to their classes. Specific courses are provided for women learners in women-only classes, and there are drop-in facilities.

60. Diversity and equal opportunities are well promoted in classes and in materials displayed at learning centres. The ethnic background of many of the tutors reflects the cultural diversity of the borough. Tutors provide good role models for learners. The lead tutor for ICT is organising activities to explore the diversity of mid-winter festivals within the community.

61. The planning of courses and individual lessons is consistent and uses standard paperwork in course files. Teaching and learning is observed systematically and the judgements made by the service's observation team about the quality of teaching closely matched those made by inspectors. Staff training and development needs, identified from teaching observations, are recorded and actioned. The lead tutor also provides individual guidance and support for tutors. Regular network meetings deal with quality improvement procedures and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment process. For example, the team has ensured that learning outcomes are shared with learners and that progress is recorded accurately. However, there is not enough sharing of good practice in teaching, particularly in the non-accredited provision. The good learning materials developed by some tutors are not shared sufficiently with colleagues.

62. Inspectors' findings matched many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but some strengths were simply normal practice and others were not identified. The service's self-assessment grade matched that given by the inspection team.

**Arts, media and publishing****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Crafts</b> Adult and community learning	210	2 2

63. The service offers non-accredited arts and crafts courses. Craft classes include pottery, dressmaking, crafts, embroidery and beading, photography, cake icing and scrapbooking.

64. In 2004-05 there were 1,032 learners. Eighty-two per cent of learners were women and 42 per cent came from a minority ethnic group. This programme area represents 20 per cent of all learners. At the time of inspection there were 210 learners, of whom 92 per cent were women. Classes are taught in nine schools and community centres and operate during the day, evenings, and weekends. Courses usually consist of two-hour lessons of 10 weeks' duration, although some are shorter. A part-time creative arts lead tutor manages the curriculum area. There are 10 part-time tutors.

**Crafts****Grade 2***Strengths*

- good development of practical skills
- good range of teaching strategies to meet individual needs
- particularly innovative and successful initiatives to widen participation

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of individual learning plans to monitor progress for some learners

**Achievement and standards**

65. Learners develop good practical skills. They work enthusiastically and develop new skills and gain confidence in their abilities. Learners are well motivated and fully involved in their lessons. They enjoy learning with their peers and they gain an understanding of different cultures by working with learners from diverse backgrounds. Learners speak enthusiastically of the progress they have made and of the growth in their confidence. One learner in a calligraphy class is using her new skills to write manuscripts for her local church. Learners are very committed and contribute positively to the group. They ask questions and share information. In the best lessons, learners make significant progress. For example, learners on the fabric art and stitch course showed a willingness to experiment with difficult fabrics and techniques to produce creative work of a very good standard. Portfolios and notebooks are used to record learners' progress in skills and techniques and become useful reference tools. Learners provide each other with encouragement and support during lessons. Retention is excellent at 100 per cent.

### **The quality of provision**

66. A good range of teaching strategies meets individual needs. Lessons are planned carefully, they are well structured and packed with activities to develop learners' skills. For example, in a clothes-making class, learners made their own patterns for dresses and trousers with complex interfacing sections. Tutors give effective demonstrations of techniques, which inspire learners to improve their skills. They give sensitive advice and guidance to individuals during lessons. Challenging activities are well planned to suit learners' needs. Tutors differentiate tasks in most sessions to suit the abilities of learners. Good verbal and written feedback enables learners to continuously improve the standard of their work. In most lessons, tutors check learning by open questioning. In a scrapbooking class, learners used photographs of their grandparents as part of the design pages they were assembling. Good use was made of computer-generated images to embellish the finished product.

67. Particularly innovative and successful initiatives are used to widen participation. The service has worked with partner agencies to set up successful learning programmes for drug misusers and older people with mental health difficulties. Programmes have successfully attracted hard-to-reach groups such as homeless people and young women with a history of self-harm. During Adult Learners' Week, the service took over Blackburn museum for the whole day and provided marketing and recruitment activities to promote creative art, pottery and line dancing. Courses are planned carefully. Learning outcomes are negotiated with learners to ensure that they will benefit from the course and attend the sessions. Development officers play an essential role in the negotiation process. They communicate effectively with learners to ensure that the courses meet their wishes and needs. A learning programme for the residents of a hospice was set up after careful negotiations to ensure that learning would be appropriately paced, and would allow for suitable rest periods. A sewing class was set up after requests from mothers who wanted a course situated at a venue close to the school that their children attended.

68. The service has formed effective partnerships with Blackburn museum, local libraries and the BBC learning centre. These venues often exhibit learners' work. Learners' self-esteem and confidence increased significantly when their work was displayed in the museum and their families and friends were invited to the opening of the exhibition. Recently, there was a group exhibition of art work completed by hearing impaired learners and learners with mental health difficulties.

69. Assessment is satisfactory. The service has plans to introduce a system for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. Tutors give good verbal feedback during lessons. Written feedback in individual learning plans helps learners to improve their performances.

70. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Venues are accessible and located conveniently in the community. Most classes take place in pleasant, well-equipped community centres. Some classes take place in schools, where tables are often too low for cutting out fabric comfortably. The walls in multi-purpose rooms in some learning centres are bare.

71. Arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory. Tutors are sensitive to their learners' needs and they request learning support

for their learners if appropriate. The service provides crèche facilities at most learning centres. In weaker lessons, individual learning plans are not used sufficiently to monitor some learners' progress. In these lessons, there is no recording of learners' progress, insufficient use of differentiation strategies and insufficient attention to individual needs. Monitoring by tutors concentrates on whether learners have completed a task and not on the standard achieved. There is no formal start in a few lessons, and some tutors do not provide useful verbal feedback to learners. Learners are not challenged sufficiently in these lessons.

### **Leadership and management**

72. An innovative and complex curriculum management structure is effective in meeting learners' needs and in raising standards of learning. Managers are clearly focused and understand the service's priorities. Management teams are supported by development officers and lead tutors, across curriculum areas. Teams work in all areas of learning to develop and deliver a responsive, learner-centred curriculum with outcomes negotiated and agreed by learners and partners to meet individual and group needs. This is managed through effective leadership and a management commitment to raising achievements and widening participation.

73. Internal communications are good. Staff feel valued and well supported. Managers work effectively to ensure that staff develop strategies to continuously improve the provision. They give individual support and training to tutors in the use of lesson planning and the recording of learners' achievements. Quality improvement arrangements to observe teaching and learning identify areas for improvement effectively. Action plans are used effectively to measure progress and to provide support. Tutors value the constructive feedback that they are given following observations of their teaching.

74. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Tutors work successfully with learners from diverse backgrounds. Learning materials and lesson plans reflect the diverse culture of the borough.

75. All staff contributed to the self-assessment report. Inspectors' findings matched many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. The grade given by inspectors for this area of learning matched that given in the self-assessment report.

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

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>ESOL</b> Adult and community learning	86	3
<b>Independent living and leisure skills</b> Adult and community learning	121	3
<b>Citizenship</b> Adult and community learning	64	3

76. At the time of the inspection, there were 271 learners and 308 enrolments on preparation for life and work classes, accounting for 20 per cent of the provision. Sixty-four per cent of learners are women, 90 per cent are aged under 60 and 52 per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2004-05, there were 370 learners enrolled on programmes in this area of learning.

77. There are six ESOL courses, six independent living and leisure skills courses, two sewing and two cookery courses. Most courses operate for two hours during the day or in the evening, for between 10 and 15 weeks. There are four craft and ICT classes for learners with mental health difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

78. Most courses are offered at pre-entry or entry level and are not accredited externally. Most of the provision is offered in areas of the borough which the service has targeted. Classes take place in the service's neighbourhood learning centres and in community centres, schools and libraries. There are two lead tutors and 15 tutors.

*Strengths*

- good achievement of confidence and social skills
- very responsive provision
- good information and guidance
- good internal communications

*Weaknesses*

- unsatisfactory teaching and learning in some ESOL classes
- insufficient spoken English for learners for whom English is an additional language
- poor resources in sewing classes

**Achievement and standards**

79. Learners achieve good levels of confidence and social skills. Many learners in ESOL classes report that they are able to communicate in English with their family and friends, and to speak for themselves when shopping and going to see their doctor. Some ESOL learners have developed sufficient confidence and skills to make friends with English people. In sewing classes, learners can take accurate measurements to draft a pattern, then cut and sew a dress or a pair of trousers, with the minimum of assistance. Learners feel confident enough to help each other and they value the opportunities for interacting with

their peers. One learner had gained enough confidence to speak to a large audience at an event in the town hall to celebrate learners' achievements. Learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties have opportunities to interact socially and to maintain and develop skills in working co-operatively. They take pride in their very good skills levels. In a sewing class, some learners are making fitted trousers from a commercial pattern and others have learnt how to use a basic first-aid kit. Some learners have used their new-found confidence and skills to get jobs.

### **The quality of provision**

80. The service is very responsive to learners' needs. Courses have been established following requests from social services day care centres, and from learners who previously attended a family learning sewing class, and who are now negotiating for a further course to improve their proficiency. The service re-established a sewing class for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities when the local college discontinued it. Development officers promote learning to non-traditional, prospective learners.

81. Good information, advice and guidance is provided by the service. It is quick, simple to use, and available at the service's learning centres. Local residents can visit the many agencies which hold regular surgeries at learning centres. Guidance officers provide a comprehensive education, training and employment advice service. For example, a woman who returned to the area after working abroad received help with housing and money management to enable her to re-enter the labour market. Guidance officers assist learners with job application forms, which are often lengthy and need to be completed online. Guidance officers visit classes at the invitation of tutors, to promote the service. A 'community barge' event took place in October 2005, when a barge travelled along the Leeds-Liverpool canal, which runs close to areas of deprivation. Staff approached shoppers and residents to give information and invitations to come aboard or to go to the neighbourhood learning centres.

82. Arrangements for meeting learners' literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory. An informal initial assessment is carried out for short, 20-hour courses. In ESOL classes, learners' listening skills are assessed, but the information is not always used to plan differentiated learning. Learners are fully involved in negotiating learning goals and the contexts of learning. However, learning goals in individual learning plans do not distinguish between achievements with assistance, and achievements without assistance. An innovative individual learning plan form has been developed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These forms use self-adhesive labels with a colour photograph and written description of the target task. Mid-course reviews and end-of-course evaluations are thorough. They enable learners to focus on their progress, and are presented in forms which are easily understood by learners. Learners on the digital photography course, who are recovering from drug misuse, receive thorough verbal and written feedback about their individual skills and personal development.

83. Teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in some ESOL classes. Many of the learning activities in the lessons observed by inspectors, were too complex for the learners. The tutor gave explanations, but did not check whether learners had understood. There was insufficient differentiation to meet the needs of learners with different levels of skill in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The pace of lessons was set by the more advanced learners. Learning did not focus on small, discrete, achievable learning objectives. Worksheets were dull and contained too much information, with dense text and no visual

prompts. In one class, learners were learning how to give important personal information, but errors in speaking and in writing their addresses and dates of birth were not corrected.

84. In the better classes, tutors maintain a brisk, purposeful pace while giving support to individual learners. The learners are engaged in a variety of activities which are challenging and achievable. A wide range of resources is used. For example, in one ESOL class, fruits were used to assess and develop vocabulary, and in another, a digital projector was used to prompt and correct the spelling of new vocabulary. Learners in a digital photography course took photographs of the learning centre and the city park, and their work was exhibited at the central library. One tutor produced very good resources to help learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties to learn how to treat a burn. Learners' achievements are recognised and celebrated. For example, a computerised presentation was given of photographs of clothes made by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

85. Many classes do not focus sufficiently on spoken English for learners for whom English is an additional language. Learning activities are mainly paper-based, with very little spoken English, and there is not enough repetition or language practice to reinforce pronunciation and simple sentence patterns. Language activities in sewing classes with an ESOL component are mainly limited to completing a personal learning diary.

86. Resources are poor in sewing classes. There is not enough space for learners to cut out fabrics. Two groups have no iron, and in one class there are not enough sewing machines, there are no mirrors, and insufficient bobbins. Most worksheets are appropriate and attractive. However, some poor-quality instructional handouts have blurred photographs. The service has had difficulty in recruiting qualified ESOL tutors. One unqualified tutor is teaching an ESOL class. Accommodation is generally good, especially in the attractive, inviting neighbourhood learning centres.

### **Leadership and management**

87. Internal communications are good. The area of learning involves a cohesive team approach throughout the curriculum and geographical areas. Information is shared very effectively through individual, team and curriculum area meetings and staff bulletins. Lead tutors, project officers and development officers are familiar with the service's core objectives and are very well motivated to achieve them. Personal targets for staff are linked to core objectives. Senior managers use management information to plan the provision and relevant information is shared with lead tutors and development officers. The restructuring of the service has improved informal communications between lead tutors and development workers. Tutors are very well supported by the development officers in setting up courses, negotiating the course objectives, mid-course reviews and course evaluations. 'Diagonal slice teams', consisting of staff at different levels and from different areas, focus on issues such as health and safety, to ensure that all aspects are taken into account and that resources are used to best effect for learners. Staff report a genuine 'no blame culture', in which suggestions and comments are considered and acted upon quickly.

88. The service has good, innovative strategies to reach people who would not normally join learning groups, and to promote social cohesion. Learning centres are very welcoming and inclusive. Learners and staff of different age groups and from different ethnic backgrounds are respectful of each other and work co-operatively together.



89. The provider has a satisfactory system for observing teaching and learning, but did not carry out enough observations during 2004-05. The grades awarded to lessons by the service are generally higher than those given by inspectors. Good initiatives to gain learners' views include a well-publicised learners' forum which includes a free lunch. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process and they contributed to the action plan. The self-assessment identified similar strengths and weakness to those found by inspectors, but it did not identify the weaknesses relating to ESOL. Inspectors gave a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report for this area of learning.

**Family learning****Grade 3**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	347	3

90. The service contracts with St Mary's Sixth Form College for the provision of some courses in family language, literacy and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning (WFL). There were no courses in family numeracy at the time of the inspection. Three hundred and forty-seven learners are enrolled for 2005-06 and there were 1,607 learners during 2004-05. Eighty-seven per cent of the learners are women and 51 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. In 2004-05, family learning accounted for approximately 32 per cent of the total provision. Most courses are negotiated in response to community needs, but some are planned. One course is accredited.

91. Ten of the courses are taught in schools and one is taught in a library. There are 72-hour intensive family literacy courses for ESOL learners, 30-hour courses in family literacy and six-hour 'keeping up with the children' courses. WFL courses include family art, and health and well-being. One course is targeted at young mothers. In 2004-05, courses were offered in card-making for the festival of Eid, cultural awareness, creative arts and crafts, using digital cameras, and confidence-building. In 2005-06, family learning courses have been offered at 24 schools and community centres in deprived areas. The family learning team is managed by a tutor-team manager and the widening participation team manager. Staff include a fractional lead tutor, a tutor, a development officer and 10 part-time tutors.

***Adult and community learning*****Grade 3***Strengths*

- good development of knowledge and skills to build confidence
- responsive provision to meet local needs
- innovative management structure

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient attention to individual learning needs
- poor classroom accommodation in schools

**Achievement and standards**

92. Learners develop good knowledge and skills to build their confidence. In family language and literacy, learners increase their knowledge of reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, to help them support their children with school work. Good informal learning takes place. In one class, a group of mothers acquired knowledge of first-aid procedures from another member of the class. In a session in which parents were making stick puppets, they also learned where to buy cheap craft materials for their children. In a WFL class, learners confidently debated how people communicate. They increased their

knowledge of the subject and also made good links between learning in the class and life experiences. In many classes, learners describe positively the progress they have made. They take pride in their work and maintain neat files which illustrate their achievements. Learners are committed and attend regularly.

### **The quality of provision**

93. The provision is responsive in meeting local needs. Learners value being able to attend courses in the heart of local communities. One learner on a WFL course about taking control of one's life, described how the course met the needs of Asian women to help them take up roles in the community. The curriculum is negotiated to meet the needs of local people. One learner, who is chair of school governors at a local school and a community activist, explained how the service had helped a community group to set up a WFL course to meet local needs. The service provides a crèche for learners with young children. Community centres and children's centres appreciate the opportunity to participate in family learning.

94. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Fifty-six per cent of the lessons observed were good or better. There were no inadequate lessons. In the best lessons, tutors use the course paperwork to record learners' progress and achievements. Lesson plans in some family literacy classes are closely matched to the core curriculum. Tutors on WFL courses are very skilled at negotiating with their learners to ensure that their needs are met. In the first lesson of a new course, the tutor carefully ensured that the aspirations of one hesitant learner were recognised, to ensure that she would come again. In many classes, learners participated in a wide range of activities. However, in one course the teaching was very dull. In a few lessons the slow pace did not challenge some learners sufficiently. Learning resources are generally satisfactory, but access to ICT resources is restricted. Only one classroom is equipped with computers.

95. Classes are promoted well through community and school links. Information and advice is satisfactory. Tutors can request an information advice and guidance session for their learners towards the end of each course. Learners receive informal information about their progress from their tutors.

96. Not enough attention is given to the needs of individuals. Initial assessment on some FLLN courses is not thorough enough. This is particularly important when learners have specific needs that could affect their understanding and hinder their progress. In those courses where it is appropriate to assess over time, tutors manage the process well. Some lessons do not include plans to meet individual needs and progress is not monitored routinely throughout the course. In one large class, it was difficult for the tutor to deal with the wide range of ability levels within the group. Individual learning plans are not reviewed frequently enough. On one course, 50 per cent of the plans had not been reviewed at the halfway stage of the course. Although learning support is available, some tutors are not clear about how this support can be obtained in order to help the learners. Language support needs were not identified adequately at the beginning of one lesson. Many learners required help with the use of language, but the course was too short to accommodate their needs.

### **Leadership and management**

97. An innovative management structure supports the family learning curriculum. The

curriculum is organised in two distinct strands. A development worker, who is employed specifically for family learning, and a lead tutor, provide an unusual and beneficial mix of skills. The lead tutor focuses on the delivery of courses to ensure that recruitment targets are met. The development worker has extremely good knowledge of the local communities through outreach work. This information is shared with the family learning team. There is good, collaborative teamwork. The family learning team meets regularly to integrate outreach activities. The development worker's visits to the initial lessons of the courses are well established and contribute to good attendance. Tutors are well supported in community venues. Staff have a clear sense of strategic direction and strong links are maintained with the service's objectives.

98. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. A wide range of learners attend courses. Young mothers, grandmothers, aunts and family members are encouraged to learn in a supportive atmosphere. Tutors take account of the diversity of their learners through the appropriate selection of learning materials.

99. Quality assurance arrangements are generally satisfactory. The service level agreement with the subcontractor is clear and adequately detailed. The range and frequency of observations of tutors are restricted. Only two observations were carried out last year. There are plans to observe all tutors each year, but only two observations have been carried out so far. Staff are suitably qualified.

100. Classroom accommodation in schools is poor. Teaching accommodation in five of the six schools visited by inspectors was unsatisfactory. Classrooms are often cramped. In one class, restricted space prevented tutors from moving freely around the group. In another class, it was difficult for the learners to carry out the activities. Inappropriate rooms are used and interruptions disrupt learning. One class was held in a different room each week for the first three weeks. In another class, access for people with restricted mobility is poor. The decorative condition of some rooms is also poor. Accommodation in community centres is of a better standard.

101. The self-assessment process did not make any judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. The report did not identify the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. Inspectors gave a lower grade for the provision than that in the self-assessment report. Tutors are adequately involved in the self-assessment process.

**Community development****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning	246	2

102. During the period 2004-05, 1,413 learners enrolled on community development courses in 35 venues throughout the borough. Seventy-five per cent of learners were women, 50 per cent were from a minority ethnic group and 19 per cent declared a disability. Thirteen per cent of learners were aged over 60 years. Since September 2005, 246 learners have enrolled. Classes are taught during the day and on weekday evenings. They are generally of two hours' duration and last for between 10 and 12 weeks. Neighbourhood learning planning groups operate continuously throughout the year and their duration is determined by the nature of the learning activities in which learners participate. At the time of inspection, there were 11 courses, covering basic computerised presentations, creative writing, mosaic and crafts, digital photography, Urdu, a museum project and neighbourhood learning planning groups. There are nine tutors, one of whom is full time.

103. The aim of the service's community development programme is to widen participation in learning for the borough's diverse communities, and to meet the learning needs of people from groups often under-represented in adult and community learning. The service also contributes to the development and promotion of neighbourhood learning planning groups. Neighbourhood learning planning is a process in which groups of citizens discuss and agree plans to improve their neighbourhoods. Informal teaching methods are used to develop community leadership skills and to identify and implement strategies to meet the aims of the groups.

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

- good development of skills
- very good standards of teaching and learning
- particularly good support for learners
- good curriculum management
- successful initiatives to widen participation

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient progression opportunities for some learners

**Achievement and standards**

104. Learners develop their skills well. Many learners have not participated in learning since they left school. They make good progress on community development programmes. For example, in a basic computerised presentation course, older learners were able to give individual presentations to the class using graphics, moving images and music, after only 20

hours of learning. They exceeded their own and their tutor's expectations. Learners gain self-esteem and greater independence as they perform confidently in front of their peers. In a creative writing group, some learners with mental health problems were able to read out their work and explain their thoughts and feelings for the first time. Learners with disabilities, at a day centre, completed a large mosaic design which was then hung in the entrance hall for visitors to see. Learners taking part in a museum project have been able to work in a public area for the first time and enjoyed the freedom that this gave them. Learners' work is promoted with displays in every centre and exhibitions for the general public in the museum and central library.

105. In the neighbourhood learning planning groups, learners gain an understanding of the needs of their communities. The service successfully promotes informal learning to develop learners' community leadership skills. Learners are able to resolve challenging situations in a structured and thoughtful way. One neighbourhood group is currently setting up a community business which hires out play and other equipment for young children. They have produced a professional business plan, opened a bank account, arranged for the use of premises and are ready to bring the initial idea to completion. Another group has identified a need for health services in its area and has established a good working relationship with the 'Healthy Communities Collaborative' to raise awareness and to promote healthy eating for families. Learners are proud of their achievements and they comment favourably on their tutors' informal, yet purposeful approach to teaching.

### **The quality of provision**

106. Very good standards of teaching and learning are provided throughout the area of learning by well-qualified and experienced tutors. In the museum project for learners with physical and mental disabilities, tutors worked together to involve all learners in producing an artistic display of work in showcases, taking digital photographs, and making written cards for display cases. Tutors use a good range of teaching styles to meet learners' needs, including appropriate strategies to integrate learners with disabilities into the lessons. In a mosaic-making class, every learner had a specific and achievable task, which took into account the nature of their disability. They were able to work happily at their own pace under the expert guidance of the tutor, who organised challenging activities calmly and authoritatively. Learners developed co-ordination and concentration skills as they worked on the tasks. Tutors have easily understood schemes of work, which they use flexibly to respond to the needs of individual learners. Lesson planning is detailed, but sufficiently open-ended to allow for unexpected occurrences in class, particularly with learners with disabilities and mental health difficulties.

107. In the neighbourhood learning planning groups, learners benefit from the knowledge of their tutors who lead them in debates and discussions to develop viable community initiatives. One tutor merged two very different community groups when it was realised that they had very similar concerns about community safety. The groups are now working with each other and with the Lancashire Constabulary and their social housing provider, to resolve some of the problems in their community. In the merged group, learners are developing skills in teamworking, negotiation and conflict resolution.

108. Learners help each other to assess constructively initiatives for community development. In one neighbourhood learning planning group, learners researched the practical problems of creating a children's garden at the local primary school. They had three plans to consider and, after much consultation and a lively debate, decided on a

particular course of action.

109. Learners are particularly well supported by their tutors and other staff. Tutors take the time to get to know their learners' individual capabilities, particularly those of learners with disabilities. Care is taken to put learners at ease and to make them feel safe in the learning environment. In a creative writing class, learners with mental health problems were able to start the lesson by moulding soft clay and absorbing the softness and texture of it in silence, to put them in a receptive frame of mind before beginning to talk or write. Tutors deal with any difficult behaviour with patience and calm authority.

110. Arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory. Tutors identify learning needs during the process of negotiating each community development learning programme.

111. Some learners are accompanied by carers or support workers in classes, to help with their learning experiences and to promote their personal development. Learners are well informed about the courses available. Marketing materials are available at local neighbourhood planning groups, local schools and learning centres. Many learners hear about courses by word of mouth.

112. There are not enough progression opportunities for some learners. They enjoy and complete short courses, but are disappointed when they find that there is no progression route, particularly in their own neighbourhood. In a few cases, learners drop out of learning altogether.

### **Leadership and management**

113. Managers have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve in the communities that they serve. They have a good understanding of community development work and the needs of local people. Managers are responsive to learners' feedback. Strong links and collaborative partnerships are formed with the groups and community organisations that share the service's priorities. Tutors are well matched to their groups. Communications between staff are effective. Part-time tutors feel supported by the open and accessible management style. Regular meetings take place and good practice is shared.

114. Initiatives to widen participation are successful. The whole provision is aimed at widening participation for those learners who are hard to reach or who have not recently been involved in learning. The community development courses achieve this aim successfully. The neighbourhood learning planning groups discuss and implement initiatives to draw local community members into their local learning centres. Learners with a wide range of disabilities are welcomed into the provision. Courses are delivered in the library, and the museum, schools and community centres. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted in every class and group meeting.

115. All learning centres are accessible for people with restricted mobility. The accommodation is mostly up to date, with plenty of working space and adequate parking.

116. The self-assessment process was inclusive and involved managers and tutors. The self-assessment report's findings generally matched those of the inspection, but some weaknesses were overstated. Inspectors gave a higher grade to the provision than that given in the self-assessment report.

