INSPECTION REPORT

East Sussex County Council

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

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

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Contents

Summary

Detailed inspection findings

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) manages adult and community learning for family learning, community development and adults with learning difficulties and disabilities (ALDD), which is delivered by partner providers. The provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities and some of community development is subcontracted to the Adult College for Rural East Sussex (ACRES), Hastings College for Art and Technology (HCAT), Claverham Community College and Sussex Downs College. Currently ESCC has 632 learners, with 1,722 learners having enrolled on courses since September 2005. ESCC has a contract with Sussex Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Up until August 2004, when ACRES was established, ESCC was responsible for managing all the adult and community learning across the county. It was delivered by 10 community colleges. Since August 2005, ACRES has held their own contract with the LSC.

2. ESCC has recently restructured its children's services, with the adult learning team being relocated in the chief executive's directorate. A recently appointed adult education and skills manager has responsibility for managing the adult learning team and an independent organisation, the East Sussex Learning Partnership. The adult learning team also has an adult education development officer, a manager for family learning and ALDD, three co-ordinators and two assistants. Two of the co-ordinators develop family learning in two regions within East Sussex and the other co-ordinates the ALDD programme. A consultant has responsibility for widening participation through the community development programme. ESCC has established an Adult Learning Strategy Group (ALSG) to manage the process of change and to oversee the provision across East Sussex. The ALSG comprises ESCC, Sussex LSC, East Sussex Learning Partnership and representatives from each of the three lead partner providers of ACRES, HCAT and Sussex Downs.

3. Although unemployment in East Sussex is slightly higher, at 1.8 per cent, than the Southeast rate of 1.4 per cent, the unemployment rates in Hastings and Eastbourne are considerably higher at 3.1 per cent and 2.6 per cent. ESCC's data shows that East Sussex has the highest proportion of persons aged over 75 and the second highest average age of any county in England and Wales. Levels of part-time employment are relatively high. Just over 27 per cent of East Sussex residents aged between 16 and 74 have no qualifications. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in East Sussex is low at 2.3 per cent, compared with 4.9 per cent for the southeast of England.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS   Grade 4

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** ESCC's leadership and management, including the organisation's approach to equality of opportunity and quality improvement, are inadequate. Family learning and community development programmes are satisfactory, but the preparation for life and work programme is inadequate.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** ESCC has a satisfactory self-assessment process, which makes appropriate use of

information from staff and stakeholders. Self-assessment is well established, and has been significantly strengthened this year. ESCC makes insufficient use of data about success rates and participation by diverse groups in self-assessment. The process is very critical and accurate in leadership and management, community development and family learning. However, in equality of opportunity the strengths are over-stated. The self-assessment process in preparation for life and work attempted to identify suitable judgements, but was insufficiently rigorous in assessing the full extent of the weaknesses. Self-assessment leads to improvements and there is close monitoring of the development plan. The self-assessment grades mostly matched those given by inspectors.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** ESCC has improved their position to make improvements in the past eight months, since the appointment of the adult learning and skills manager. There is now greater recognition of the problems and inadequacies of the provision. Appropriate strategies are starting to be put in place to make improvements, and development plans are closely monitored. ESCC has seen improvements in leadership and management. Leaders and managers have thoroughly evaluated the adult education provision, and are re-structuring the team and partner provider model to be more appropriate for the future needs of the county. Although many improvements have been initiated, some of these have not yet had sufficient time to fully affect the areas of learning.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL:

- better collection, analysis and use of management information
- set and achieve realistic targets
- develop quality improvement strategies and systems to include all partner providers
- proactively widen participation
- ensure the re-structure leads to improvement
- maintain the strategic overview of provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities across the county

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Independent living and leisure skills		*4*
Adult and community learning	473	4

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Adult and community learning		*3*
Adult and community learning	36	3

Community development		3
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Adult and community learning		*3*
Adult and community learning	123	3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. All three areas of learning offered by ESCC were inspected and reported on. Four inspectors visited ESCC over five days in February, March and April before the final inspection visit.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	27
Number of learners interviewed	120
Number of staff interviewed	15
Number of subcontractors interviewed	40
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	25
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	9
Number of visits	5

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Learners develop good skills on community development and family learning programmes.** Learners apply their new skills well in the home, in their personal lives and into community projects.

9. **Achievement of ALDD learners is celebrated well.** Learners, carers, parents and staff are able to display work through a celebration of learners' week. The standard of work on ALDD courses is satisfactory. Where family learning learners have taken externally accredited qualifications, the success rates are good.

10. Although data is not maintained about progression, ESCC has some good examples of learners progressing onto further education or training, work or volunteering.

11. Retention rates on all programmes are satisfactory, but in community development programmes, they have declined in 2005-06.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Preparation for life and work	0	4	4	2	10
Family learning	0	3	2	0	5
Community development	1	3	3	1	8
Total	**1**	**10**	**9**	**3**	**23**

12. The teaching and learning are satisfactory. In family learning, the management of the learning environment is good. Family learning tutors use a range of approaches to make the learning sessions fun, to maintain attention and to ensure learning. Most lessons are well planned and well prepared. In the best learning sessions, tutors use a wide range of activities and ensure all learners participate fully. In some lessons, there is insufficient differentiation to meet individual needs and the wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities.

13. **Family learning learners receive good information about course progression.** On many courses, progression is effectively built into the family learning course planning, and tutors routinely discuss progression with learners. Community development learners receive appropriate course information and initial advice and guidance. However, ALDD learners receive little information, advice and guidance about progression routes and services available elsewhere.

14. ESCC offers a range of courses that meet the current learners' needs. Much of the provision is during the daytime, which meets the requirements of learners on the programme. There are low levels of recruitment across all programmes when compared with targets for 2005-06.

15. Learners receive satisfactory pastoral, personal and learning support. Most ALDD classes have a classroom assistant who provides additional effective support. Professional counsellors are available to give support to community development learners who have mental health issues. In family learning, there are insufficient processes to support learners with additional learning needs, unless they are following a specific literacy or numeracy programme.

16. The accommodation in most learning venues is satisfactory, with much of the provision being delivered at central locations. Family learning learners have suitable resources. Computers are routinely used in family learning, but rarely used by community development learners.

17. **ALDD learners' individual health and safety risk assessments are not used to plan lessons.** Where health and safety risk assessments have been completed for ALDD learners, these are often produced by a carer who has insufficient information about the course content.

18. **ESCC's arrangements for initial assessment and identifying individual needs are inadequate.** Most learners do not have individual learning plans based on the results of an initial assessment. Learning plans tend to be based on group or course objectives rather than individual or personal goals. There is very little short-term target-setting for ALDD learners. Most of the provision is non-accredited and there is insufficient recording or recognition of learners' achievement. Learners have insufficient opportunities for interim reviews, and these are not always recorded.

19. **There is insufficient targeting of the provision to attract new learners onto family learning courses.** Managers are not using local data effectively to ensure that the provision being offered is in the right areas, or of appropriate duration or level, to meet the needs of learners.

Leadership and management

20. **ESCC is fully involved and works in collaboration with their partner providers to plan their strategic direction.** A particularly effective forum, the ALSG, has a clear focus on finding solutions in a very timely way. Effective links with the East Sussex Learning Partnership support a cohesive provision with progression opportunities across the county. Partnership work is a strength in all areas of learning. In ALDD, innovative programmes are being delivered where learners gain employability skills. Various forums have been introduced to improve partnership working and to involve partners in making decisions about future provision and policies. In family learning, the partners work well to organise and co-fund a well-publicised family learning day.

21. **ESCC gives good support to tutors through training events and regular meetings.** Communication with partners and outside agencies is very effective. ESCC's staff use their own links and contacts to good effect. ESCC provides a valuable facilitation service to match groups of learners to enable courses to run with sufficient numbers.

22. **The adult education team is fully informed about planned change and is involved in the consultation.** Internal communication is generally effective, with regular recorded meetings. The ESCC appraisal system is satisfactory, but some of the staff have not been reviewed recently. Two managers have had insufficient appraisal training.

23. **ESCC has a clear focus on providing value for money, and is currently re-structuring to offer a more efficient service.** Staff resources are adequate for the current learners, but would have been insufficient had ESCC recruited their planned learners in this year. Some of the roles have insufficient focus on managing aspects of the provision, including equality of opportunity and quality improvement.

24. **ESCC has appropriate business planning,** with clear and cohesive links between the council, department and business plans, and the local area agreement. Directors are well informed about adult and community learning issues.

25. Management of community development and family learning programmes is generally satisfactory. The management of the ALDD programme is inadequate. While there are systems in place for assuring and improving the quality of ALDD programmes, there have been no significant improvements. Monitoring of partner providers is too heavily focused on paperwork completion rather than quality improvement. A range of policies for

learners with disabilities and learning difficulties has been introduced, but there is little awareness of these among learners and carers. ESCC carries out insufficient monitoring of ALDD tutors' qualifications and their development needs.

26. **ESCC has inadequate data about retention, achievement and success rates** that managers can use to monitor the quality of the provision. Targets set in the past two years have not been met and were largely based on inappropriate and historical statistics. The ALSG makes insufficient use of data when making decisions about the future of the provision. Although data is available about learners on courses, insufficient analysis is done of different learner groups and their relative success on ESCC's programmes. ESCC does not have sufficient information for the planning of programmes for some disadvantaged groups, including those in remote rural areas.

27. **Arrangements for widening participation further are poor.** A largely reactive approach is taken to widening participation through the community development programme. The priorities fund which is used for community development has too narrow a focus. The forum that meets to decide on how funds will be used is ineffective, and rarely has continuity in delegates from one meeting to the next. Three partner colleges receive a fund for local priority projects, but it is not monitored well.

28. **Promotion of equality of opportunity is poor.** Learners do not have access to an appropriate equality of opportunity policy. They have little awareness of their rights and responsibilities or how to complain. ESCC carries out insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in teaching and learning. Staff have not received training in this subject.

29. Self-assessment is well established, critical and generally satisfactory. Most staff and stakeholders are involved in the process, but there is insufficient input from tutors. Managers monitor the development plan effectively, and satisfactory progress is being made toward actions.

30. **ESCC has no overall quality improvement framework or strategy.** The system for observation of teaching and learning is poorly co-ordinated and there are too few observations of tutors. ESCC carries out very little analysis of the results of observation systems, nor is best practice identified and shared. Individual tutors' development needs are not effectively followed up. Many of the colleges have their own quality assurance and improvement systems, but these are rarely used by ESCC. Many partner providers are not using paperwork from ESCC effectively, but this has not been monitored sufficiently. Tutors have insufficient opportunities to share good practice, in particular in family learning and community development, where most tutors work in isolation and rarely meet. Feedback is collected from learners, but it is not used to help ESCC improve the provision.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good involvement of partners to support strategic direction
- some good initiatives between ESCC and partner providers to facilitate learning

Weaknesses

- inadequate use of data and targets

- insufficient management of quality assurance and improvement
- poor arrangements to widen participation
- poor promotion of equality of opportunity

Preparation for life and work

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good celebration of achievement
- very effective communication with outside agencies

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on individual learning needs
- inadequate management

Family learning

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- good information about progression opportunities
- particularly effective development of partnerships
- good management of the learning environment

Weaknesses

- insufficient targeting of new provision
- ineffective use and recording of assessment in some courses
- insufficient sharing of good practice by some tutors

Community development

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- productive partnerships that enhance the learners' experience
- good development of skills to support local communities

Weaknesses

- inadequate setting of individual aims and monitoring of progress
- insufficient sharing of good practice

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL:

- helpful and friendly teachers
- location of the venues that are easy to get to
- the informal style of the lessons - not like school
- being able to see a careers adviser to decide on the next move
- opportunities to try new things
- meeting parents with the same problems
- opportunity to spend quality time with their children

WHAT LEARNERS THINK EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- longer courses
- more sessions each week
- stricter time-keeping in small group work
- shorter wait for lunches to be served at college
- 'telling us more about what to do'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 4

Strengths

- good involvement of partners to support strategic direction
- some good initiatives between ESCC and partner providers to facilitate learning

Weaknesses

- inadequate use of data and targets
- insufficient management of quality assurance and improvement
- poor arrangements to widen participation
- poor promotion of equality of opportunity

31. The manager for adult education and skills has improved and strengthened partnership liaison since taking over the role in October 2005. ESCC has a good level of collaboration and consultation when forming strategies. The ALSG is a very effective forum for involving key partners in the decision-making process. It has an appropriate membership, and leadership commitment from the assistant director. A very open, trusting and equal ethos exists in the group, and members are happy to share confidential information. Decision making has a clear focus on finding solutions in a timely way. Tough decisions that have a major effect on the future of the provision across East Sussex are made well and acted upon. At area of learning level, there are regular, well-attended meetings of partners. Effective links with the East Sussex Learning Partnership have provided some good examples of progression routes for learners onto ESCC programmes.

32. ESCC gives good support to tutors, through training events and regular meetings. Communication is very effective with external providers and partners, who are well-informed about policies and other issues. ESCC's staff use their own links and contacts well to give partners a more comprehensive picture of the provision and wider local authority initiatives. ALDD partner providers benefit from ESCC engaging a wide range of external speakers at their meetings to update them on the direction of care in the county. ESCC provides a valuable facilitation service through matching groups of learners that would previously have been too small to operate as one group. There has been close collaboration between ESCC and ACRES when this was established, including financial support.

33. The adult education team has gone through recent restructuring and a further re-structure is planned for August 2006. Staff are fully informed about planned change, and are involved in the consultation. The restructures have a clear focus on providing value for money and offering a more efficient service, through minimising the subcontracting. The move of the adult education team to the chief executive's directorate has helped formalise the links between adult learning and economic development. Directors and the elected council member are well informed about adult and community learning issues. However, the restructuring is not yet effecting the management of the areas of learning. Staff resources are adequate for the current learners, but would be insufficient had ESCC

recruited their planned number of learners this year. Some of the ESCC roles are too operational, but the planned restructure deals with this.

34. ESCC has appropriate business plans, with responsibility and timescales identified. There are cohesive and clear links between the council, departments and business plans, and the local area agreement. The strategic area review has been used well in policies.

35. Internal communication is generally effective, with regular recorded meetings. Staff are monitored regularly through informal meetings with managers and more formal line management meetings. Staff are appraised using the ESCC process, which is satisfactory. The annual appraisal has been delayed recently through the consultation over the restructuring. Two managers have had insufficient appraisal training from ESCC.

36. ESCC has developed a detailed strategy for the use of information learning technology, which is very long and bureaucratic in style and has too much emphasis on school provision. The adult education development officer recognises that this is not helpful and is working with a consultant to write an e-learning strategy to meet the needs of adult learners. Some equipment has been purchased and training for tutors in its use has taken place.

37. Curriculum plans are maintained for each area of learning, and work has started on matching the provision being offered across East Sussex to local need. Research sponsored by the East Sussex Learning Partnership is used to some extent to review county-wide provision. Although this has been useful for the partner providers, it has insufficient detail about the extent of delivery or progression opportunities in each area to fully support planning.

38. ESCC has inadequate data about retention, achievement and success rates. Retention rates are not collected in a sufficiently timely way to be useful for monitoring the provision. Definitions used for achievement rates are inadequate and only measure attendance for a proportion of the course rather than by learner achievement or success. The ALSG makes insufficient use of data, including that for participation and funding, for informed decisions about the future of the provision. Although the development plan contains recruitment targets for learners, there are no targets for success rates. ESCC has set inappropriate learner recruitment targets, based on historical data. These have not taken changes into account for the provision or decisions to focus more on increased progression for each learner, rather than increasing learner enrolments. Most of the targets set in the past two years have been significantly under-achieved. Managers have an awareness of the reasons why these targets have not been achieved, and are revising targets and bidding procedures for next year. The partner providers have little awareness of recruitment targets and the progress they are making.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 4

39. Accessibility of learning venues for wheelchair users and those with restricted mobility is generally satisfactory. ESCC has provided some funds to partner providers to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. However, the ramp at one venue has no railing and is not safe. Some rooms are small and would be difficult for a wheelchair user to use. ESCC has a range of assistive technology, but there is very little use of these by partner providers.

40. ESCC collects data on the ethnicity and age of learners but little analysis, either formal

or informal is carried out to identify actions that need to be taken. There is no analysis of the relative levels of success or retention of different groups of learners. ESCC does not have sufficient information to plan programmes for some disadvantaged groups, for example those living in remote rural areas. The adult learning team does not collate information on learners in an area or an overall view of where the learners live and how far they travel to their classes. The county is aware of this weakness and has well-developed plans to record and collate this information.

41. Arrangements to widen participation further are poor. A consultant works two days each week to lead projects to widen participation in ESCC's provision. A largely reactive approach has been adopted by waiting for organisations to propose projects. ESCC does not clearly determine the provision that it would want to develop or identify possible organisations who could offer it. ESCC has a priorities fund for programmes to widen participation, which comprises four client groups. These are older people, young adults, black and minority ethnic groups and those with, or recovering from, mental health problems. There is evidence that the arrangements have been effective in engaging these groups of learners, but there is no provision for projects that deal with more diverse groups, for example, people in remote rural areas. The forum for managing the priorities fund is not effective. Invitations to attend the meetings are sent to 30 to 40 different organisations but most meetings are attended by eight to 10 people and these change from meeting to meeting. ESCC is aware of these shortcomings and from August 2006, plans to manage the priorities fund by identifying needs and then commissioning appropriate providers to run projects to meet these needs. The adult education and skills manager's very close links with the East Sussex Learning Partnership provides a good knowledge of the provision offered by other providers. Each of the three colleges also receives additional community development funding for local priority projects. However, there is little guidance about how this fund should be used and the arrangements to approve and monitor these projects are informal.

42. Promotion of equality of opportunity is poor. This weakness is recognised in the self-assessment report. ESCC does not have a named individual to lead on this topic. ESCC has an equal opportunities policy for its staff but it does not have one that is appropriate for adult learners. ESCC is working with a consultant to develop a more appropriate equal opportunities statement and policy. Few learners receive information on equality at the beginning of their course. There is no discussion about their rights and responsibilities, how they can expect to be treated by staff and tutors, or how they should behave towards each other. Few learners are aware of what to do if they want to complain. Partner providers usually deal with complaints at a local level, but they do not routinely give ESCC information about complaints they have dealt with. Learning materials are not checked to ensure that they do not reinforce stereotypes. Similarly, observations of teaching and learning do not ensure that tutors are using appropriate examples in their teaching. The service level agreements with partner organisations require them to provide ESCC with their equal opportunities policy. While the widening participation consultant checks that they have a relevant policy, a copy is not kept by ESCC and ESCC does not monitor its implementation. Staff have not received training in equality.

Quality improvement   Contributory grade 4
43. The adult education and skills manager has initiated many improvements to the leadership and management of the team in the past eight months. The adult learning team now has clearer direction from managers about the future of the provision. Working

relationships with partner providers, which have not always been productive, are now strong. The adult learning team responds well to external feedback and government initiatives. The curriculum planning process and service level agreements have been improved, and are now considerably more detailed and comprehensive. They now allow more opportunities for better management and monitoring of partner providers.

44. Self-assessment is well established and generally satisfactory. ESCC has revised the self-assessment template and developed a more evaluative process in the past year. Most staff and stakeholders are involved in the process, however, there is insufficient input from tutors. ESCC makes insufficient use of data about success rates and participation by diverse groups in self-assessment. The process is very critical and accurate in leadership and management, community development and family learning. However, in equality of opportunity the strengths are over-stated. The self-assessment process in preparation for life and work attempted to identify suitable judgements, but was insufficiently rigorous in assessing the full extent of the weaknesses. The development plan is monitored effectively and discussed at team meetings. Some satisfactory progress is being made towards actions in the self-assessment development plan, particularly within leadership and management. Tutor training on individual learning plans, initial assessment and paperwork has also been held, but is not yet having a sufficient effect on learners.

45. ESCC does not manage the quality assurance and improvement arrangements well. A management role which includes responsibility for quality assurance has been created to start in August 2006. There is no overall quality improvement framework or system. Many partner providers have their own quality assurance and improvement arrangements, but ESCC is not requesting or using these. Each area of learning has its own arrangements for monitoring and improving the provision, with inconsistencies in the approach taken and how information is used. ESCC uses a well-established and thorough system for external observation of teaching and learning. Although there is central co-ordination of this system, in most areas of learning there is insufficient observation of tutors. Some tutor training has been held in response to the observation findings, but managers and co-ordinators are not effectively following up specific individual development needs or issues arising from observations. In community development, there is an additional peer observation scheme, which tutors find supportive, and this enables some good practice to be shared informally. There is very little evidence of the results of either the external or peer observation system being used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The ALDD co-ordinator also carries out regular reviews of the provision and monitoring of individual sessions, including learner interviews, with each of the partner colleges. The co-ordinator has recommended tutor development following these reviews and spot checks. Although each college has signed a service level agreement, one of the colleges has not yet allowed access to the information or premises for the co-ordinator to be able to carry out the reviews. Most of the colleges are not participating in the system of observation of teaching and learning, preferring to use their own systems. ESCC does not have access to this information and is unable to monitor teaching and learning effectively in these colleges. ESCC has circulated procedures and paperwork for use across its provision. Managers and co-ordinators have not yet monitored how successfully or widely these are being used by tutors and providers. Some feedback has been collected from ALDD college co-ordinators about the paperwork, which includes many recommendations for improvement, however, this has only taken place recently and changes have not yet been made. A variety of questionnaires are used to gather the views of learners and tutors. A new system for ALDD learners to give verbal feedback to an impartial interviewer has

recently been introduced, but it is too early to assess its impact. Although evaluations show a high level of satisfaction from learners, little useful information is gathered to help ESCC improve the provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Preparation for life and work   Grade 4

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Independent living and leisure skills		*4*
Adult and community learning	473	4

46. ESCC provides non-accredited programmes for adults who have a wide range of learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities and sensory impairment. There are 473 learners enrolled on these programmes and total enrolments for 2005-06 are 804. Many learners attend for more than one course. At the time of the inspection, 57 courses were offered. One per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups and 46 per cent of learners are men. The courses are offered at 29 venues across east Sussex. These include colleges of further education, halls owned by voluntary organisations, leisure centres and day service centres in rural settings and in the major towns. Most of the classes are held during the day and a few are offered in the early evening. The programmes vary in length from one day to 36 weeks and most sessions last for two hours. A part-time manager and part-time co-ordinator manage the provision. There are 47 part-time tutors, who are supported by classroom assistants.

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good celebration of achievement
- very effective communication with outside agencies

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on individual learning needs
- inadequate management

Achievement and standards

47. Learners' achievements are celebrated well, culminating in a 'celebration of learners week' at the end of the summer term. Learners, parents, carers and staff of outside agencies are motivated by the range and standard of work completed. Most venues have good displays of completed work and photographs of activities. Learners on many of the drama, singing and music courses work towards a production which is seen by many people.

48. The standard of work on courses is satisfactory. Learners on most courses are gaining confidence. They practise and develop communication skills and maintain or increase practical skills. The standard of work in one art and craft course is of a particularly high standard and the work in a drama and a singing and rhythm class is good. A small number of learners are gaining employability skills to enable them to work effectively as volunteers or to gain paid employment.

49. Retention rates are satisfactory. In 2003-04 the retention rate was 89 per cent, but this fell to 80 per cent in 2004-05. In the current year, 91 per cent of learners have been retained.

The quality of provision

50. Forty per cent of the lessons observed were good and a similar proportion was satisfactory. In the better, well-planned lessons tutors are enthusiastic, well qualified and experienced in their subject area. They give clear instructions and manage the learners, classroom assistants and carers well. They are skilled at using a variety of teaching methods such as repetition in different forms, practical activities and using materials relevant to the group. They enable individual learners to take part by providing tasks which match their individual needs. These tutors have high, but realistic, expectations of ability and behaviour in their group. Most tutors informally develop learners' communication skills through verbal and non-verbal methods and signing. In other classes, there is some effective use of signing especially in singing and drama. A few lessons include activities which help to maintain writing skills. However, tutors introduce too few activities in classes to develop or maintain numeracy skills.

51. The range of courses on offer is satisfactory and includes art and crafts, cookery, community skills, horticulture, health and fitness and performing arts. Most learners' needs are met through the level of courses. The timing and location of venues suit most learners including day courses and short summer schools which introduce new learners to the opportunities provided by ESCC.

52. Learners receive satisfactory guidance and support from tutors. Most classes have a classroom assistant who provides effective support, especially where more individual support is needed. Staff have a good working relationship with the learners. They provide support for learning and personal problems. Staff listen and show a personal interest in each learner.

53. Most learners receive little information, advice and guidance about progression routes and services available elsewhere. At one venue, all learners are interviewed before courses start, which helps form the basis of a good, detailed initial assessment. However, this does not happen at the other venues. There is insufficient focus on individual learning needs. Learners' profiles, which in some venues form the basis of the initial assessment, are not always complete. Learners' profiles are the same for short and long courses and for all subject areas. Learners do not have individual learning plans based on the profiles or initial assessment. Learning plans are, in most cases, the same for each group of learners and consist of goals relating to the course content. In the better learning plans, learners identify a small number of personal goals, but these are often the same as other learners. One venue is introducing good assessment and target-setting against the pre-curriculum framework. There is very little short-term target-setting and little evidence that learning or personal goals are broken into manageable, measurable parts. In a few classes, learners have achieved targets in the first term of a one-year course and no attempt has been made to develop new targets. Where individual risk assessments are available they are not used for lesson planning. Many lesson plans, while detailed, do not indicate differentiation of tasks, although all groups observed had learners with a wide range of learning difficulties, disabilities and sensory impairments.

Leadership and management

54. Communication with outside agencies is very effective. The managers contribute to the main committees which plan and develop services and opportunities for people with learning difficulties. Innovative programmes are being delivered as part of membership of the 'valuing people' employment subgroup, where learners gain employability skills. From these initiatives, several learners are now in part-time employment. Managers have made suggestions and checked potential learners' requirements when planning the modernisation of daycare services. ESCC communicates effectively with many organisations in the voluntary and statutory sectors, and with parents and carers. All parties work towards maintaining a good learning experience for learners. Problems with punctuality are discussed with the learner and carers. The use of accommodation belonging to voluntary organisations helps to ensure that courses are run in appropriate areas.

55. The provision for learners with learning difficulties, disabilities and sensory impairments is inadequately managed. While there are procedures for improving the learners' experience, such as lesson observations and a quality improvement pack, the monitoring of their effectiveness has not made significant improvements. Observations of teaching and learning are not taking place on a regular basis. Many of the partner providers have their own systems for observing teaching and learning, and do not always make their results available. Although the quality improvement pack was designed after consultation with the college co-ordinators, a recent survey of tutors shows that a significant number do not think it is helpful and are using different paperwork. ESCC recognises a need for risk assessments for individual learners and these are completed by carers and day service centre staff. However, too few of these risk assessments have been received and they have little value as the person completing the assessment does not have sufficient information about the learners' course. The ALDD co-ordinator carries out spot checks and monitoring visits to partner providers, but these tend to be an audit of paperwork rather than checking the quality of the learners' experience. An informative, learner-friendly 'charter for learning' has been produced, but learners have little awareness of it. A clear complaints procedure leaflet has been designed, but its production is very slow and at the moment most learners are not aware of a complaints procedure. Tutors have a good working relationship with their learners and most learners would report difficulties or make complaints to them. A code of practice has been produced for carers which was distributed to care homes. However, in most classes, the carers change frequently and many are not aware of the code. In some lessons, the carers hinder the teaching and learning. ESCC does not monitor the tutors' qualifications and developmental needs sufficiently. There is little awareness of the changing requirements in different subject areas for specific training, for example, in sport and fitness teaching. Actions agreed at appraisals are not carried out and progress towards achievement is not monitored. The process of obtaining information for self-assessment is satisfactory. Some of the weaknesses in the report matched those identified by inspectors.

Family learning   Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning		*3*
Adult and community learning	36	3

56. ESCC offers family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning courses. In 2005-06, 230 learners have enrolled on FLLN and 445 learners on wider family learning courses. At the time of inspection, 36 learners are attending one of the six courses through four partner providers. In 2005-06, courses have been delivered by 44 partner providers, which include primary and secondary schools, Sure Start centres and a range of statutory, voluntary and private organisations. FLLN courses include 'keeping up with the children' in literacy and numeracy, 'early start', play and language courses. Wider family learning courses include parenting, healthy eating, family cooking and using computers. Provision is delivered across the county, with the greater proportion in Sussex's urban east. Most courses are of 10 to 30 hours' duration and last between five and 12 weeks. There are a small number of twilight and evening courses, including workshops and taster opportunities, but most are held in the daytime. The longer FLLN courses help to prepare learners for the national qualifications in literacy and numeracy. The programme is managed by a part-time family learning manager and two part-time family learning co-ordinators, working in two regions of east Sussex.

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- good information about progression opportunities
- particularly effective development of partnerships
- good management of the learning environment

Weaknesses

- insufficient targeting of new provision
- ineffective use and recording of assessment in some courses
- insufficient sharing of good practice by some tutors

Achievement and standards

57. Learners increase their confidence and develop new skills. Most learners have low-level or no qualifications at the start of their programme and have not been in a formal learning environment since leaving school. Learners are well motivated through learning skills and strategies to manage their children's behaviour and development. Learners develop the confidence to share their experiences and support each other well. They apply the skills and tactics they have learnt in their home and personal lives. On the wider family learning courses, learners demonstrate good standards in a wide range of topics such as cooking, playing music and crafts. Parents have improved their understanding of vocabulary used in schools and are increasing their familiarity with the work and levels

expected of their children at different key stages. Numeracy skills have improved through using modern methods for calculations.

58. Insufficient data is available about progression rates within ESCC's family learning programmes. ESCC has some effective examples of progression, for example, learners progressing from a short literacy course to a short numeracy course and then to a course with a recognised national qualification. In 2004-05, the achievement rates were good for the 14 learners who took the national qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy, at 100 per cent. Retention rates on both programmes are satisfactory. On the wider family learning courses, retention rates were 93 per cent in 2004-05 and 2005-06. On the FLLN courses, retention rates were 95 per cent in 2004-05 and are currently 96 per cent for 2005-06.

The quality of provision

59. Learning sessions are well prepared and well planned. Tutors establish a good rapport with learners, while maintaining a sense of purpose and order. In the learning sessions with parents and children, tutors are skilful in using a range of approaches to make the sessions fun, to maintain attention and ensure learning. Tutors who are covering sensitive topics use appropriate and successful techniques to establish the right environment that encourages contributions and group support. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with 60 per cent of learning sessions observed being good, and the rest being satisfactory.

60. Good information about progression opportunities is incorporated effectively in all courses. All partner providers see information, advice and guidance as being a crucial part of their provision. Some partner providers make a considerable effort to ensure this takes place, including home visits before and after the course, where appropriate. One partner provider encourages learners on a parenting course to discuss progression by organising a follow-up learning session. Tutors routinely discuss further learning opportunities with learners at the beginning, throughout and at the conclusion of courses. On many courses, there are strong links with nextstep advisers who talk to learners towards the end of their course.

61. The accommodation in learning venues is satisfactory, with much of the provision being delivered in schools. Most learning venues are very accessible, being near or on the high streets. The family learning co-ordinators collect health and safety risk assessments, but these are only checked annually as part of the course review visits.

62. The courses are meeting the needs of the current learners. Learners receive satisfactory pastoral, personal and learning support. Partner providers give learners suitable resources to enable learning, including folders for their handouts and key word books. The range of teaching equipment is satisfactory. Computers are routinely used for some courses. Childcare provision is available on many courses. Transport is organised for some courses to enable access for parents and children. A strong emphasis on healthy living is reinforced well in some of the courses being offered on the wider family learning programme. For example, family cycling courses promote the importance of exercise, and a Chinese cookery course delivers serious messages about nutrition and the importance of eating vegetables. However, there are insufficient processes to support learners with additional learning needs, unless they are following a specific literacy or numeracy programme, which is recognised in self-assessment.

63. Although ESCC has produced an extensive set of documents for partner providers to use with learners, there is ineffective use and recording of assessment on some courses. Not all tutors are establishing learners' individual starting points or aims, neither are they setting challenges or targets. Little of this information is recorded on the 'learners' journey' or an individual learning plan. Many of the tutors believe the paperwork to be optional, and few learners complete the learner diary. Learners have insufficient interim reviews, and these are not always recorded. Little of the learners' progress or achievements are recorded or recognised. However, on some courses, paperwork is used to good effect to assess, set goals, review and support course progress, achievements and post-course progression.

64. There is insufficient targeting of the provision to attract new learners onto courses. ESCC has identified where it is delivering courses this year, but this has limited use for planning, as some of this has been for an individual workshop or taster session. There is insufficient use of local data to ensure that the provision being offered is in the right areas, or of appropriate duration and level, to meet the needs of learners. ESCC managers are aware of the high proportion of residents aged 16 to 74 who have no recognised qualification, and the need to target areas of rural deprivation, but have not yet met these challenges. The current provision is too heavily determined by the success of past bids and areas that have attracted funding. This has had particular impact in one of the regions, where there are areas of unmet need. ESCC's school inclusion advisers are becoming more aware of family learning, but are not yet sufficiently involved in identifying schools which might have the need and capacity to become involved. Targets for participation in family learning courses were unrealistic for 2005-06 and have been underachieved. There is significant under-representation of diverse groups in family learning, with less than 1 per cent of learners from minority ethnic groups and only 20 per cent being men.

Leadership and management

65. Partnership work has been developed and improved considerably through the formation of a family learning forum. ESCC has increased its number of partner providers to include a wide range of members. Members of the family learning forum have a genuine role in contributing to the strategic direction and planning for the provision. The family learning manager has worked productively with members, including seeking their advice about the handbook for learners and tutors, a child protection leaflet and a new family learning logo, to represent family learning across the county. Forum members work well together to organise and co-fund a well-publicised family learning fun day. Following the success of this, they are now planning a family learning day. Communication with partners is good, through a monthly newsletter, by attending parents' events and informal discussion with parents. The family learning co-ordinators give sufficient support to partner providers to help them form bids for new work. Although development sessions have been held for partner providers' tutors on skills for life, which is the government's strategy on literacy, numeracy and the use of language and recognising and recording progression and achievement, only seven tutors attended.

66. Some tutors have insufficient opportunities to share good practice, especially across the group of partner providers. Most tutors work in isolation and rarely meet. The family learning co-ordinators work well to support partner providers, but this is aimed at too high a level to give sufficient support to tutors. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but the good tutors do not have sufficient opportunity to share good practice

with other tutors. Many tutors plan in relative isolation, even when delivering similar topics. Tutors do not work together as part of a school cluster and this reduces their ability to fully meet the needs of local parents.

Community development   Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning		*3*
Adult and community learning	123	3

67. ESCC's community development courses currently take place at 23 venues including schools, community centres, church halls, day centres and libraries. At the time of the inspection, 123 learners are attending community development courses. The total number of learners enrolled in 2005-06 is 243. There are 14 courses running at the time of the inspection. ESCC offers mainly non-accredited short courses, including managing anxiety and depression, introduction to plants and gardening, team building, jobsearch, computing and Spanish. While the aim of the community development programme is to attract new learners who have not achieved level 2 qualifications, ESCC has four specific target groups which are for older learners, young adults, members of black and minority ethnic groups and people with mental health problems. Community development is managed by a part-time consultant. There are approximately 60 tutors.

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- productive partnerships that enhance the learners' experience
- good development of skills to support local communities

Weaknesses

- inadequate setting of individual aims and monitoring of progress
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Achievement and standards

68. ESCC provides accessible and non-threatening learning opportunities for learners with few previous educational achievements or qualifications. Learners develop good skills which support their personal goals and effectively contribute towards the community. Learners' art and craft work, which is of a very high standard, is celebrated well and is displayed at venues. This is particularly effective at a centre for people with disabilities, where learners display, celebrate and sell their work through a successful and well-attended annual art exhibition. A permanent installation of work which is based on ceramic pieces made in lessons has provided interest and stimulation for local residents. At a day centre for people with head injuries, learners work productively on their allotments, applying learning from the plants and gardens course. At another venue, learners contribute well to school activities.

69. Where learners take externally accredited qualifications, there are good results. For example, eight young women and their children successfully completed an accredited emergency first aid course. Although data is not maintained about progression, there are some good examples of where learners have moved on to accredited programmes,

employment and voluntary work within the communities. Several learners on different community development programmes have progressed onto national vocational qualifications and further accredited training, full- and part-time employment and voluntary work.

70. Retention rates are satisfactory, but have declined in the past two years from 87 per cent in 2004-05 to 73 per cent in 2005-06. Some of the data is collected very late, making it difficult for managers to monitor trends in retention.

The quality of provision

71. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Tutors have good subject knowledge and establish a very good rapport with learners. Learners enjoy their learning sessions and many make clear progress. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and well focused. Tutors clearly identify course aims and objectives, and carefully structure topics to build on previous learning. In a particularly well-prepared learning session, a tutor who was substituting for an absent teacher delivered an effective session, based on the plans and documents they were given. In the best learning sessions, the detailed evaluation of the learning session is used for subsequent planning. In the weaker learning sessions, individual learning is not checked adequately. In some learning sessions, worksheets are not fit for purpose, are inaccurate or too complex for some learners. Learners make little use of computers.

72. The accommodation in learning venues is satisfactory. The learning venues are often familiar and accessible to the learners, but are occasionally too cramped. In some learning venues, the cramped accommodation restricts the range of teaching and learning activities that can be used.

73. Learners receive appropriate course information and initial advice and guidance about their courses. On some courses, there is very clear written information and learners attend introductory sessions to confirm the suitability of the programme. At learning venues which support people with mental health issues and disabilities, professional counsellors are available to support learners. Effective support mechanisms are available for learners through the partnerships that have been developed.

74. Although the courses are meeting the needs of current learners, there are low levels of recruitment compared with planned targets. Many partner providers find the current bidding process and paperwork required by ESCC to be overly bureaucratic. ESCC recognises this, and plans to change the system for next year.

75. Learners' individual learning goals are rarely identified or recorded. Few learners complete an individual learning plan. Initial assessment is poor and rarely recorded. There is insufficient recording of individual progress. Individual needs are not always taken into account when planning lessons, and there is inadequate differentiation in teaching and learning styles, activities and resources.

Leadership and management

76. The consultant has ensured productive collaboration with a wide range of statutory and independent community partners. Partners share their knowledge and experience to develop the range of courses, and this has developed the curriculum offer. Partners work

well together to adapt and deliver courses to suit different priority groups. For example, a course dealing with anxiety and depression was originally designed for learners with mental health needs, but this has been successfully introduced to older learners. ESCC has worked particularly effectively with the Primary Care Trust in securing joint sponsorship and support for courses. ESCC's partnership working has raised the awareness of the effect learning has on the health and well-being of patients. Productive links with local further education colleges provides placement experience for counselling and beauty therapy learners.

77. Tutors have insufficient opportunities to share good practice. In particular, there is little sharing of teaching strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Although partner providers have opportunities to meet, this rarely involves tutors. Tutors are part of an observation of teaching and learning system. This is poorly co-ordinated by ESCC, with too few observations being carried out. Tutors can be part of a peer observation system, which is voluntary and is a support mechanism for tutors. The peer and teaching and learning observation schemes are not used to identify good practice.