

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Wirral LEA**

**10 March 2006**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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

### Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

## Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Grading

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

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

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Wirral LEA

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Wirral Local Education Authority (LEA) adult and community learning service (the service) is in the education and cultural services directorate of the council. The service is based in Bromborough. It provides learning programmes for families and adults of all ages. It uses two adult learning centres and 56 subsidiary centres. The service offers a wide range of courses, including first steps provision, across nine areas of learning and family and community learning. Accredited and non-accredited courses are offered. They range in length from two hours to 90 hours and from entry level to level 2. The service has an overall budget of over £900,000, of which about £880,00 is from Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There are 10 externally funded subcontracted projects delivered by a range of partners in disadvantaged areas.

2. The lifelong learning adviser has overall responsibility for the provision. She reports to the senior inspector, secondary and post-compulsory education, who reports to the director of education and cultural services. There are four full-time staff in the service, the lifelong learning adviser, a team leader, one family learning curriculum leader and a family learning administrator. The service also employs five part-time curriculum leaders.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** The service's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision is good in all of the areas of learning inspected, information and communications technology (ICT), languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work, family learning and community development.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Staff, partners and subcontractors are involved in the self-assessment process and contribute well to it. All contributors understand the significance of self-assessment and its relationship to development planning. The service makes good use of learners' views, and the report is largely focused upon the experience and achievement of learners. The organisation produced its most recent self-assessment report in October 2005. It provides a realistic assessment of most areas of the provision. It is evaluative and self-critical. The inspection agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but inspectors graded most of the provision higher than the provider.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** The service's clear focus on strategic management and quality improvement has enabled it to identify its development needs. The self-assessment process has been used to provide a clear focus for further changes and continuous improvement. The quality improvement system is reliable and well established.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR WIRRAL LEA:

- maintain the very good partnerships and initiatives that promote social inclusion and widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups
- continue to improve the good quality improvement processes
- continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning and teaching resources
- improve strategic and operational target-setting
- improve the monitoring of individual learners through the consistent use of individual learning plans
- improve the way good practice is shared across the organisation

## GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

<b>Information and communications technology</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<i>ICT for users</i>		<b>2</b>	
Adult and community learning	511	2	

<b>Languages, literature and culture</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i>		<b>2</b>	
Adult and community learning	188	2	

<b>Preparation for life and work</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		<b>2</b>	
Adult and community learning	277	2	

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i> Adult and community learning	157	2 2

Community development		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i> Adult and community learning	158	2 2

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. The service offers provision in a range of areas, including health and public services, agriculture, horticulture and animal care, ICT, retail and commercial enterprise, arts, media and publishing, history, philosophy and theology, languages, literature and culture, education and training, preparation for life and work, family learning and community development. At the time of the inspection, only a few classes were being offered in some of these areas of learning. The inspection team reported on and graded provision in ICT, languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work, family learning and community development.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	40
Number of learners interviewed	168
Number of staff interviewed	57
Number of subcontractors interviewed	20
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	20
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	28
Number of visits	37

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

7. **Retention and achievement rates are good in language programmes, where there is also high attainment.** In 2004-05, achievement on accredited programmes was 91 per cent and on non-accredited programmes it was 93 per cent. Learners make good progress and speak positively about what they have learnt. Learners in beginners' language classes speak accurately and clearly, some learners keep diaries in the target language and some make presentations to the rest of the class. On literacy and numeracy programmes,

retention and achievement are also high and in 2004-05, retention and achievement were 99 per cent and 92 per cent respectively. Learners develop a good range of literacy and numeracy skills, including writing creatively, becoming proficient at spelling, and calculating the perimeters and areas of irregular shapes. Attainment is good in community development where learners are developing self awareness and personal confidence and are highly motivated to learn. In family learning, attainment and achievement are satisfactory and learning is making a positive difference to the lives of the learners and their families. Learners are active participants during sessions and make good use of their personal experiences to contribute to the learning sessions. In ICT, retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. There is a good standard of work produced in most sessions and the learners develop good practical computer skills.

### The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Information and communications technology	0	7	3	0	10
Languages, literature and culture	2	3	2	0	7
Preparation for life and work	0	5	2	0	7
Family learning	0	5	1	0	6
Community development	0	4	3	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>

**8. The standards of teaching and learning throughout the service are good.** Thirty-seven teaching and learning sessions were observed and there was no inadequate teaching. Language classes are well structured, with clear learning outcomes. Activities are well paced and games and oral work are used to reinforce learning. In the best classes, there is little use of spoken English. In literacy and numeracy classes, sessions are well prepared and confidently delivered by the tutors. There is a good emphasis on practical work, with much of the time devoted to active learning, but in some sessions, worksheets are over-used and learning activities are insufficiently varied. In family learning, tutors use a wide range of activities to engage learners. Tutors are confident and knowledgeable. Sessions are well planned and tutors use detailed lesson plans. They make good use of resources to support their teaching.

**9. In community development there is good use of a learning mentor, who offers extensive support to learners.** Assessment is satisfactory in languages, where non-accredited programmes follow the same assessment and monitoring procedures as accredited programmes. Good tutors mark homework carefully and give learners clear direction. In a minority of cases, marking is insufficiently detailed for learners. Some internal moderation is also insufficiently detailed. In ICT, assessment is satisfactory and tutors provide learners with useful feedback, including helpful comments on how to improve.

**10. The curriculum offer is clearly linked to the service's strategic priorities.** The language provision meets the learners' needs and interests. The service provides a good range of languages and accredited and non-accredited programmes. In language classes, tutors will include specific content in the curriculum that the learners have requested.

**11. There is good support for learners with special needs in ICT.** The service has a wide



range of specialist computing resources for learners with physical or sensory impairments, such as large screens, large keyboards, roller balls, adjustable work desks, and specialist software for visually impaired learners.

**12. In ICT, there is effective use of ICT resources to support learning.** The centres provide a good working environment. Most centres have good, modern computers and all have overhead digital projectors and interactive whiteboards. Tutors make good use of the facilities.

13. In languages, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. A satisfactory initial assessment is used to ensure that the learners attend the right level of course. Tutors know who to contact should any of their learners require additional learning support. In literacy and numeracy classes initial and diagnostic assessments are satisfactory, as is guidance about progression opportunities. In ICT, learners are supported satisfactorily and they receive effective guidance from knowledgeable tutors.

**14. In literacy and numeracy classes, there are insufficient learning resources.** There are too few laptop computers with suitable software. Tutors do not have sufficient access to teaching aids, such as portable overhead projectors, digital projectors and interactive whiteboards. Learners also have insufficient opportunities to use online learning sites.

**15. In ICT, there is insufficient use of individual learning plans.** The plans do not contain sufficient detail and the learners are not set targets. Tutors do not update plans and the learners cannot use them to identify what they have achieved.

**16. In family learning, there is insufficient formal monitoring of learners' progress.** Individual learning plans are not completed in sufficient detail.

### **Leadership and management**

**17. The service benefits from good, clear strategic direction.** It has a clear mission statement and aims and objectives. The manager of the service is supported well by the council. Staff have a good understanding of the service's strategic aims and business objectives.

**18. The service selects subcontractors to help it achieve its strategic objectives, and it monitors them well through regular meetings.** In a minority of partner organisations that deliver the community development curriculum, the monitoring of the projects is insufficiently developed. These organisations are small and inexperienced and there are delays in providing relevant information to the service. Training events are now being held to assist voluntary sector organisations to meet the service's quality standards.

**19. Communications are effective.** The management style is open, consultative and supportive. Staff are well informed and regularly consulted.

**20. Staff appraisal is effective.** Staff are set individual targets, which are reviewed and updated regularly. Staff training and development are good and meet the needs of individual staff. However, not all part-time staff participate in staff development.

**21. Financial and resource management are effective.** The service's budgeting is

carefully linked to strategic priorities. Expenditure is carefully monitored, as are the income targets that have been set for the service. Adequate capital funding is used well to improve learning centres and improve access for disabled learners.

**22. There are very good use of partnerships across the service to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups.** Partnerships promote social inclusion. Provision is targeted well at a diverse range of learners in areas of high deprivation. Effective links are in place with statutory and voluntary groups. Information is used well to provide a range of projects to support the social inclusion agenda. In family learning, partnerships are highly effective in widening participation. The service works well with partner organisations and the partners use their links with parents to recruit them onto family learning courses. Participation of learners is effectively widened through the provision of literacy and numeracy courses.

**23. The service treats learners with respect and they feel safe and valued.** Learners value the location of the centres and the informality. The timing of classes suits the needs of learners and many of them benefit from free, conveniently located childcare. In ICT, provision is planned carefully to widen participation. Centres are strategically located, many in areas of deprivation, and are served well by public transport.

**24. In community development, the service uses good innovative strategies to develop the curriculum.** The service assists partner organisations to develop their capacity to offer courses on topics of interest to the community. The development of these initiatives contributes to capacity building in the community. The projects also contribute to regeneration and social inclusion.

**25. The arrangements for quality improvement are very effective.** The thorough arrangements for quality assurance include appropriate policies and procedures. Standards of learning and achievement are improving. Thorough and critical course reviews are leading to improvements.

**26. The observation of teaching and learning is good.** It includes the service and subcontractor tutors. The system supports tutors well. The grade profile of the sessions observed by inspectors is good and matches the findings of the service's observation system.

**27. The service's collection and analysis of feedback from learners, subcontractors and partners are effective. It uses findings to improve its provision.** The analysis of feedback is comprehensive. It is shared with staff and focuses on the learners' achievement and learning experience.

**28. The management information system is effective.** Managers and staff have clear and timely information on learners' recruitment, retention, and achievement rates. **There is good use of benchmarking data to compare standards with other similar adult and community providers.**

**29. The service has a detailed quality improvement plan, which states how it will deal with weaknesses and how to maintain or improve strengths.** The plan has clear timescales and targets.

30. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the service. In community development, there is good use of capital funding to provide resources that can be used over time to aid community development. In languages, there is good subject specialist support for staff. Tutors have access to and use good resources. Venues are appropriate to the learners' needs. ICT rooms are satisfactory, and there is adequate access to ICT for all learners. In one venue, the computers are outdated and unreliable, and the room is too small. In literacy and numeracy classes, learning resources are insufficient. There are too few laptop computers with suitable software for literacy and numeracy learning that can be taken to the local learning centre. Tutors do not have sufficient access to teaching aids, such as portable overhead projectors and digital projectors and interactive whiteboards. Access for those with mobility problems is suitable at most centres.

31. Literacy, numeracy and language support for learners is adequate and meets the learners' needs effectively. Support tutors are deployed to support learners throughout their studies. Support is regularly evaluated and adequately resourced. Initial assessment is appropriate.

32. **There is inadequate target-setting for the service.** The retention and achievement targets are not sufficiently challenging and are not based on previous performance. There is weak target-setting for individual courses in languages. Achievement targets are not set for individual courses, so staff do not know how well their learners are performing compared with those on other courses, and they are not sufficiently challenged to improve achievement rates.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good, clear strategic planning and direction
- good use of partnerships to meet community needs and widen participation
- good quality improvement processes and procedures

### **Weaknesses**

- inadequate target-setting

## **Information and communications technology**

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

#### *Strengths*

- good teaching and learning
- effective use of ICT resources
- well-planned provision that successfully widens participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of individual learning plans

## **Languages, literature and culture**

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

#### *Strengths*

- good attainment and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- very good use of partnerships to widen participation
- good specialist support given to staff

#### *Weaknesses*

- weak target-setting for individual courses

## **Preparation for life and work**

### ***Literacy and numeracy***

#### *Strengths*

- high levels of retention and achievement on accredited programmes
- good development of skills
- effective widening of participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient learning resources

## **Family learning**

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

#### *Strengths*

- good development and application of learning and skills
- good teaching and learning
- highly effective partnerships

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient formal monitoring of learning

## **Community development**

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

#### *Strengths*

- good strategies to widen participation
- good use of capital funding
- good innovative strategies to develop the curriculum

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficiently developed monitoring procedures in some partner organisations

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT WIRRAL LEA:**

- 'feeling good about myself and increased self-confidence'
- 'the pace of teaching, which is just right for me'
- 'the way the tutor explains different ways of doing things'
- 'that it's all right to make mistakes'
- 'learning more than at school'
- 'learning new things: a second chance'
- 'the tutors, they are brilliant'
- 'learning is fun'
- 'learning about different cultures'
- 'the timing of the class - I can take the children to the crèche and collect them after the class'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK WIRRAL LEA COULD IMPROVE:**

- a follow-on course for creative writing
- resources, particularly computers

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

#### Strengths

- good, clear strategic planning and direction
- good use of partnerships to meet community needs and widen participation
- good quality improvement processes and procedures

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate target-setting

34. The service sets a good and clear direction through its mission statement. It has a particularly clear set of aims, objectives and targets that are effectively linked to the strategic plan for the service. In turn, this helps to successfully support the strategic objectives of the council to support lifelong learning in its community. With good support from the council, the service's management effectively promotes the strategic direction of the service. Staff are involved well in and have a good understanding of the service's strategic aims and business objectives. The strategic plans of the service are appropriately shared with its key partners and subcontractors.

35. Subcontractors are selected where the partnership will better enable the service to deliver its strategic objectives. Wirral Girls' Grammar School delivers most the language provision for the service and Wirral Multicultural Centre is subcontracted to deliver ICT provision. Subcontractors sign an appropriate agreement which clearly specifies recruitment targets and achievement targets. There are regular monitoring meetings where actions for both parties are identified and progress is monitored. The service has worked very successfully with a number of subcontracted providers to help them develop new project initiatives into sustainable provision. Currently there are 10 subcontractors facilitating projects in the community. A minority of new voluntary sector subcontractors have insufficiently developed monitoring systems. Subcontractors contribute well to the self-assessment process. They are supported well by the service and fully involved in relevant meetings and staff development activities.

36. Resources to meet the needs of the service are adequate and often good. Staff are appropriately qualified for their roles and responsibilities. The standard of most accommodation is good. Welcoming and supportive teaching environments meet the work and learning needs of learners. The standard and sufficiency of learning materials and equipment are mostly adequate, but they are an area of weakness in the literacy and numeracy provision. Monitoring and scheduling of resources are satisfactory. Access for disabled learners is suitable at most learning centres. The service operates suitable health and safety practices and procedures with support from the council.

37. Communications in the service are effective. The management style is open, consultative and supportive. Staff are kept well informed of the service's direction or changes, policies, procedures, targets and standards required of them. Staff are consulted and have the opportunity to discuss issues and share ideas at regular formal and informal

meetings. Records of meetings and follow-up actions identified are appropriate. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and how these relate to the service's organisation and well-being. The staff handbook is a useful and informative document. Partners and subcontractors consider external communications with them to be effective and clear.

38. Staff appraisal is effective and the level of monitoring helps staff to improve and to meet their responsibilities. They are set individual targets for their job. These targets are reviewed during the year and are modified as required. Staff are clear about the standard of performance required of them to meet the service's needs and ensure their personal development. Staff training and development are generally good and meet the needs of individual members of staff. Staff are encouraged to carry out continuing professional development and areas of development include teaching qualifications, curriculum development and national priorities on learning, improving assessment strategies, and the use of IT and e-learning methods. However, not all part-time staff take full advantage of the opportunity for staff development. The planning of some part-time staff's professional development as part of group exercises was not successful.

39. The service's monitoring of learners' performance is satisfactory. It has appropriate strategies to improve performance. Learners' success rates are generally good. Staff's understanding of recognition and recording of progress and achievements is clear and it is used appropriately. Staff are suitably involved in target-setting and have individual targets for their job roles. Staff and managers have information available to them to set targets but the methods of reporting and recording of achievement are insufficient on some courses and achievement data is not centrally recorded promptly.

40. Support for developing learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is adequate and meets their needs effectively. Strategies for ensuring that learners' learning needs are accurately determined are effective. The initial assessment of their learning needs is appropriate. Learners' specific support needs are discussed individually with support tutors, who effectively support learners throughout their studies. Staff have the necessary knowledge and effectively apply the arrangements for the additional learning support. The monitoring of the learner support is sufficient and effective. Written reports and meetings with managers carefully evaluate that the support is appropriate and it is meeting the learners' needs. Funding for the additional support is adequate.

41. Financial management and the service's deployment of resources are effective, including the efficient use of staff and accommodation. The new financial planning and monitoring system is working effectively. The service's budgeting is carefully linked to strategic priorities. The council's strong financial procedures and standards ensure that the service operates efficiently in determining costs and controlling expenditure. The council also regularly and effectively monitors the service's performance against other key performance indicators. Fees for courses have been introduced recently for some learners. The service has income targets that are being monitored to determine their effect on recruitment. Adequate capital funding is used well to improve learning centres such as Leasowe, and this has included improving access for disabled learners. Further financial administration is being considered to help support the service.

42. There is inadequate target-setting for the service and it recognises this. The targets for retention and achievement rates are not sufficiently realistic and challenging. The present



target, set at 83 per cent for both retention and achievement rates, is below the 86 per cent already achieved last year. These and other targets set for individual areas have been devised without effective use of management information data. Some of the timescales set for short-term targets and for some actions that involve resources and funding have not been realistic.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

43. Wirral LEA makes good use of its external partnership links, which are particularly effective in meeting the needs of the local community. Partnerships between the service, local community groups, organisations and agencies are used to widen the participation of under-represented groups and promote social inclusion. The service works very effectively to meet its key corporate objective to involve residents in wider learning. Provision is well targeted at a diverse range of learners in areas of high deprivation. Many of these learners are in hard-to-reach groups with little educational achievement and would not normally consider entering this type of education. The service has developed effective links with statutory and voluntary groups working in the community. Information, identified through needs analysis, surveys and links with community workers, is used well to provide a range of projects to support the social inclusion agenda of the service. Recruitment to community-based learning projects is good for new and hard-to-reach learners. The service has worked very effectively with a multicultural centre to ensure that barriers to learners from under-represented groups are removed. The number of learners from minority ethnic groups has steadily risen. They now represent 8 per cent of the overall learner population, which compares well with that of the surrounding area, which is 1 per cent. However, there remains a gender imbalance, with women comprising 71 per cent of learners.

44. The service is successful in a range of joint community projects that assist learners with severe and multiple disabilities to access education and training. For example, one project produces ceramic pottery, which learners design, make and sell to the local community. Another project enables learners with severe disabilities to gain qualifications in IT. Learners have progressed to gain higher qualifications and many have been successful in gaining employment.

45. A wide range of specialist equipment and support is available for learners with additional needs. At enrolment, and during induction, learners receive advice and guidance regarding their support needs. Learners have the opportunity to meet with the curriculum leader for learner support to discuss their individual needs. The level and type of support is agreed and discussed with the course tutor and a support assistant is assigned to the learner. The type of support given is evaluated and reviewed frequently, to ensure that it is the most effective way to remove barriers to learning.

46. Accommodation overall is satisfactory, with most centres having access for wheelchair users and persons with restricted mobility. In one centre, access is difficult for wheelchair users. This service recognises this and it has contingency plans to ensure all learners can access learning at this venue. Access audits have either been completed or are in the process of completion. The service has responded to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and has made adaptations to premises, such as automatic doors and the introduction of ramps. Some learning centres have been redeveloped to improve access and the overall standard of accommodation. The service provides a good range of aids and modified equipment to help learners. Individual needs are assessed and met effectively. Most learning centres are equipped with induction loop systems to support

those with hearing impairment. Portable loop systems are sometimes used at outreach centres.

47. The service collects data relating to staff and learners' gender, ethnicity and disability. The service has detailed data on the ethnic composition of each of their local wards and use it effectively to target support for each area. At an operational level, the service makes good use of data to routinely compare the performance of different groups of learners.

48. Staff training is satisfactory overall, with frequent in-house training. Equality of opportunity and diversity is a routine agenda item at curriculum meetings, where staff receive useful guidance on how to deal with diversity and promote a socially inclusive environment.

49. Wirral LEA has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy that applies to all learners and staff. The policies give clear guidance on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Detailed procedures deal with bullying or harassment. However, there is no overall plan to ensure that equality policies are applied systematically. This has been identified by the service and plans are at an advanced stage to bring together all aspects of equality and opportunity and diversity into an overall strategic plan. Procedures for dealing with complaints are satisfactory and learners have an adequate understanding of the process. Where complaints have been made they have been dealt with promptly and effectively.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 2**

50. There are very effective arrangements for quality improvement. Sufficient quality improvement policies and procedures to ensure standards of learning and achievement are appropriate and are improving. Good quality assurance arrangements are used to monitor the standards of service from subcontractors, including regular reviews and monitoring meetings. Course reviews are thorough and critical and lead to improvements in provision at all levels.

51. There are internal audits for all key areas of provision, especially those that affect the learners' progress and learning experience. These audits also cover induction, enrolment, learner support, and risk assessments, to ensure that standards are appropriate or improving.

52. The observation of teaching and learning is good. There is an effective monitoring system that covers tutors of the service and its subcontractors. The schedule of observations is appropriately detailed for such a disparate service. The system supports tutors well. New tutors are carefully guided and developed by the use of detailed and constructive actions for improvement in their teaching. Staff who carry out observations are suitably qualified and experienced for this work. Observers have regular training to update their skills in observation and on developments recognised as good practice for the sector in teaching and learning. All grades of learning sessions are moderated by the team of observers to ensure consistency in grading and to share good practice. The process and procedures for observation and assessment are evaluative and fair in their assessment of teaching and learning. The grade profile of sessions observed by inspectors matches closely the findings of the service by its observation system.

53. Feedback from learners, subcontractors and key partners is collected and analysed

most effectively and used to improve provision. Learners' views are collected in a variety of ways, including use of questionnaires, learners' focus groups, looking at key aspects of provision, individual discussions with tutors, case studies on learners, and personal statements from learners about the service. Partners and subcontractors provide feedback through the use of questionnaires. Findings are shared with staff and are focused on the learners' achievements and learning experience. Feedback from learners, partners and subcontractors is very positive about the standard of the service and its support to them. Many changes have resulted from this analysis of feedback. Gardening courses, for example have been centralised to an area with additional indoor training facilities, where discussions and learning can take place more effectively. Other improvements include better communications with learners, improved learning materials, and more helpful administrative support to benefit learners directly.

54. The service has clear and effective priorities for improvement in most key areas of provision. Plans for continuous improvement are devised annually and are reviewed effectively. Courses are examined in detail annually to identify areas for improvement. Such improvements include better retention and achievement rates from 2003-04 to 2004-05. There have been increases in the number of targeted new learners from highly deprived wards in the borough, and of learners who are under-represented in education.

55. There is useful benchmarking of the teaching and learning to determine standards against other similar adult and community learning providers, and against data provided by the education and training inspectorates. Overall analysis of teaching and learning, and improvements to it from benchmarking exercises is good. Priorities for 2005-06, also as a result of benchmarking activities, have included identifying several areas to improve standards of teaching and learning, further curriculum developments, and linking this to learners' performance.

56. The computerised management information is effective. It collects all data relating to the learners. There is sufficient and generally prompt collection of learners' achievement data on most courses. There are also sufficient and accurate methods of reporting on complex and modular courses. The management information system provides timely data on learners' recruitment, and retention and achievement rates. The system can be used to review trends in learners' achievement and aspects of equality of opportunity monitoring. There is an adequate system to analyse why learners leave courses early, and to record learners' progress to further training or advancement.

57. The internal verification process and procedures are effective and meet awarding body standards. Internal verification is operated to meet the needs of learners and the courses. Verifiers provide tutors with good and constructive feedback to improve their performance and understanding of assessment. Good practice that is shared includes useful evaluation methods and good techniques in assessment. External verifiers are very positive about the accredited provision.

58. The service has good arrangements for self-assessment. The views of learners, staff, subcontractors, and partners contribute most effectively to the process of self-assessment. All staff, including those who are part time, are actively involved in the self-assessment arrangements. Partners and subcontractors receive copies of the service's self-assessment report.

59. The self-assessment report is evaluative and self-critical and is largely focused on the experience and achievement of learners. Evidence is carefully collected for each key area of the Common Inspection Framework to support findings, including the use of accurate data on learners' achievement and progression and of the standards of teaching and learning.

60. Most strengths and weaknesses in the report have an effect on the learners' experience. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified. However, inspectors did identify further strengths and weaknesses.

61. There is a detailed quality development plan, which indicates how to deal with weaknesses and how to maintain or improve strengths. The plan has clear and measurable targets for measuring success. It is monitored effectively as part of the self-assessment process. Good progress has been made in most key areas, including teaching and learning.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Information and communications technology

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i> Adult and community learning	511	2 2

62. The service provides ICT courses at basic, elementary and intermediate levels. Courses include word processing, the use of spreadsheets, databases, and other applications, and courses in computer maintenance, digital imaging and web-page design. To date, 687 learners have enrolled on 172 courses during 2004-05. During the previous year, 797 learners enrolled on 123 courses. Currently, 511 learners are following 79 courses. Of these, 33 per cent of learners are over 55 years of age and 21 per cent of them are under 35. Thirty per cent of learners are men and 11 per cent of them are from minority ethnic groups. Courses run during the day and in the evenings. The shortest course is for two hours and the longest for 90 hours, and learners are required to attend for a minimum of two or three hours a week. Eighty-two per cent of enrolments are on accredited courses. Courses are taught in eight venues throughout the area, including schools, local learning centres, a day centre and community halls. A part-time member of staff supervises this curriculum area. There are 12 part-time tutors, three of whom are from partner organisations.

#### *ICT for users*

##### *Strengths*

- good teaching and learning
- effective use of ICT resources
- well-planned provision that successfully widens participation

##### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of individual learning plans

#### **Achievement and standards**

63. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. In 2003-04, the achievement rate overall in ICT was 77 per cent. The retention rate in the same year was 79 per cent, with a learner withdrawal rate of 20 per cent. In the following year, 2004-05, the achievement rate overall was 64 per cent. The retention rate in the same year was 75 per cent, with a learner withdrawal rate of 27 per cent. There is a good standard of work produced in most sessions and learners develop good practical ICT skills. Learners are motivated and enrol on a course for a variety of reasons that relate to their own needs and interests. Learners acquire good basic practical skills in word processing, spreadsheets, internet use and e-mail. Learners' work is particularly good in creating web pages and manipulating graphics. Many learners progress from a basic introductory course to develop more advanced skills.

## The quality of provision

64. Teaching and learning are good. Seventy per cent of the teaching observed was good or better and the rest was satisfactory. Lessons plans are good. Schemes of work are detailed and comprehensive and include challenging tasks. Learning sessions are well planned and structured. Tutors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and many of them put a lot of effort into preparing their sessions. Tutors use a good mix of delivery styles that engage learners and stimulate them to participate fully in discussions and debates. Quizzes and exercises are used well to motivate and engage learners. Crosswords are used to recap on previous sessions, with the answer words being key words used during the previous lesson. Tutors make good use of oral questions to check learners' knowledge and understanding. Tutors give good explanations of computer manipulation, rather than just describing procedures. They make good use of well-presented guidance notes and descriptive handouts. Where classes have a mixed range of ability, tutors carefully plan additional exercises and tasks for the more able learners while they wait for the others to complete the previous task. Learners receive effective individual guidance from experienced tutors, all of whom are well qualified.

65. There is effective use of ICT resources to support learning. All centres are pleasantly decorated, well carpeted, and conducive to learning. Most centres have modern computers with flat-screen monitors and up-to-date software. All centres are now equipped with overhead digital projectors and active whiteboards. Tutors make good use of this facility to display and manipulate images, databases and spreadsheets. They involve learners actively in learning, which enables them more clearly to understand and appreciate how different techniques work. One tutor has developed a virtual learning environment that allows learners to access exercises online. These are marked on completion and provide learners with instantaneous feedback. The system also allows for the submission of completed assignments for marking and their return with tutor comments. Learners who have missed a learning session can access it, watch the tutor go through the process and listen to an audio commentary of the procedure. Good use is made of digital cameras in the repair and maintenance class to photograph the position of components in a PC before stripping it down, cleaning and reassembling it. All computer classrooms are equipped with blinds for external windows and there is adequate space between work stations for learners to position their workbooks and exercise sheets. For disabled learners, there is a range of adaptive equipment, such as adjustable work desks, large screen monitors, large keyboards, roller-ball mouse and software packages.

66. Assessment practices are satisfactory and meet all of the awarding bodies' requirements. Tutors take care over feedback and mark work with helpful comments on how learners can improve their performance. Learners' progress is recorded by the tutor against the course objectives.

67. Learners are supported satisfactorily. They receive effective guidance from knowledgeable tutors, most of whom have many years of teaching experience. Tutors are enthusiastic about their subjects. Learners respond to the interest shown and make good progress. They carry out resource-based learning in small exercises and develop confidence by building the exercise units into larger assignments. Tutors control classes effectively.

68. The range of programmes is satisfactory to meet the needs of the learners, who

receive satisfactory guidance when enrolling. Pre-course literature accurately describes course content and all courses include a structured induction. Systems are in place to provide support for learners with language needs.

69. There is insufficient use of individual learning plans. The individual learning plans which do not contain enough detail about the learners' preferred learning styles, and their specific aspirations are not clearly identified. Targets and learning outcomes are not identified for learners to achieve as they make progress towards completing their qualification. Learners are not always aware of their progress. There is no updating of the individual learning plans, which would enable the learners to identify what they have achieved and what else they need to do to complete their qualification. Many tutors use the qualification learning outcomes as a benchmark but this does not provide the learner with sufficient information to allow them to make informed decisions regarding their progress.

### **Leadership and management**

70. The provision is planned well to successfully widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups. Centres are strategically located, many in areas of deprivation, and they are served well by public transport. Environments are welcoming to learners who are returning to learning after a long break. Centres offer a range of introductory courses designed to appeal to learners with little or no IT knowledge. Courses are delivered over a range of days and times to fit around learners' personal commitments. Tutors are helpful in encouraging beginners to persevere. Learners from minority ethnic groups are encouraged to attend centres that offer classes in their language. Crèche facilities are available at some centres, which encourages single parents to enrol. Tutors provide sensitive support for the learning needs of older people.

71. The ICT course co-ordinator also has teaching responsibilities and is in touch with what happens at all levels in the curriculum area. Tutors are supported well by the curriculum leader. All tutors are part time, and communications between the team are good, through termly meetings, e-mail and post. Arrangements for evaluating courses are satisfactory. Teaching sessions are observed regularly as part of the quality assurance arrangements. Tutors who receive unsatisfactory grades are given discreet but positive developmental support to improve their performance. Action plans are created and further observations are scheduled to monitor progress.

72. Learners are valued and treated with respect. There is good support for learners with additional needs. Following initial assessment, any learner identified as requiring support is referred to the appropriate section for more in-depth assessment to identify what support is required. For learners thought to have dyslexia, a quick scan is used to confirm the condition or a more in-depth assessment is carried out. Classroom support is currently given to two learners with hearing impairments.

73. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets the awarding body standards. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and the evaluative judgements made are in line with those of the inspection.



**Languages, literature and culture****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Other languages, literature and culture</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning	188	2

74. Currently, 188 learners are attending 20 classes in Spanish, French, Italian, German, Greek, Russian and Mandarin. Approximately half of the provision is accredited by the national open college network, with the rest non-accredited. Ninety-one learners are on accredited courses. Most courses are at levels 1 and 2, with Spanish offered at level 3. Courses are offered for 30 weeks, from September to June. There are also three holiday language courses of 11 weeks running from the beginning of January in German, Italian and Greek. Courses run for two hours each week and 80 per cent of classes take place in the evening. The service contracts with Wirral Girls' Grammar School, a specialist languages college, for 75 per cent of its provision. The remaining provision is delivered in four other centres. One family learning Spanish class is running in a primary school.

75. There are 15 part-time staff contracted to the service for the delivery of languages. The area of learning is managed by a general part-time curriculum leader, aided by the specialised services of the director of the language college, who supervises the provision at the language college.

76. In the academic year 2004-05, there were 396 learners of languages. Sixty-three per cent of the learners were women and 40.6 per cent were aged over 55. Four per cent were learners from minority ethnic groups, and 9 per cent of learners had a disability. The total annual programme was made up of 73 courses, 42 per cent of which took place during the day. In addition to those languages cited above, courses were also run in Bengali, Japanese and Welsh. All of these courses were funded by the LSC.

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

- good attainment and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- very good use of partnerships to widen participation
- good specialist support given to staff

*Weaknesses*

- weak target-setting for individual courses

**Achievement and standards**

77. There is high attainment and good achievement on language programmes. Achievement on accredited programmes in 2004-05 was 91 per cent. This was the first year of a new accreditation scheme and there was a 36 per cent increase in the number of learners seeking a qualification compared with the previous year. Achievement on



non-accredited programmes was 93 per cent. Learners in beginners' classes speak accurately and clearly, and participate confidently in classroom activities. At higher levels, they use a wider vocabulary and can carry out more complex conversations. Folders at all levels show a good variety of written work, from simple dialogues through to more extended writing. Some learners keep regular diaries in the target language, and some make presentations to the rest of the class. They make good progress and speak positively about what they have learnt. Learners with learning disabilities are able to use a limited repertoire of Spanish words, using greetings appropriately without prompting. Their social skills and self-confidence are enhanced through their contact with a new language and culture. Parents approaching a language for the first time are able to exchange simple greetings and introductions with their children. Attendance at classes in the week of the inspection was satisfactory at 77 per cent, and stood at 81 per cent in the weeks before the inspection.

### **The quality of provision**

78. Teaching and learning are good. Most tutors express their learning outcomes clearly in well-structured lesson plans. In the best classes, they vary the pace of activities and use games and oral work as a way of reinforcing learning. They strike a good balance between exploiting material thoroughly, and moving on briskly, using a combination of whole-class, individual and group work. Occasionally, tutors show little variation in pace, and adopt a whole-class approach which does not take individual need sufficiently into account. In these classes, learners sometimes have too few opportunities for active participation and practice of their skills. In some classes, beginners are encouraged to move around the room, carrying out simple actions and dialogues with their colleagues. In the best classes, there is little use of spoken English. Tutors use the target language sensitively at the appropriate level. They use a skilful mix of gesture and mime, and check understanding frequently. Pre-recorded material is used methodically to develop good listening skills. They enliven their classes through deft use of the audiovisual and electronic aids available. Learners appreciate hearing native speakers, and learning about the wider culture of the language. In one class, flashcards, combined with the use of taste, smell and colour, helped learners to remember food-related vocabulary before eating a paella. Resources are good. Many evening class tutors at the language college make good use of the modern facilities and audiovisual and electronic equipment available. Tutors in other centres use the audiovisual aids at their disposal and in the case of a primary school, its IT suite.

79. Assessment is satisfactory. Non-accredited programmes follow the same assessment and monitoring processes as accredited programmes. Most tutors mark homework carefully and give learners clear direction on what to do to improve. In a minority of classes, marking lacks useful detail for learners. Each learner completes an useful initial questionnaire which allows tutors to assess their previous level of language learning. Learners are encouraged to reflect regularly on their learning so that they can review how much they have learnt. However, some monitoring documents are incomplete and have not been signed by the tutor. In some cases, internal moderation papers contain insufficient detail, and have been completed in a cursory way.

80. The language provision is meeting the needs and interests of learners. Learners are pleased when tutors include their specific requests in lessons, as in the case of a Mandarin class which learnt about the Chinese New Year. The service has worked productively to provide a range of languages and a coherent language curriculum that encompasses accredited and non-accredited programmes. Monitoring documents demonstrate that

many learners are making use of this arrangement to progress through the provision. One group of learners is benefiting from a combined level 1 and level 2 Russian class, which the service has created to keep the class viable.

81. Guidance and support are satisfactory. A range of attractive and informative leaflets helps adults to choose the most appropriate level of class for their needs. The first lesson of the autumn term is offered as a taster, and this is appreciated by learners who can then decide whether they wish to enrol. Tutors know whom to contact should any of their learners require additional learning support. Learners can indicate this in their enrolment and initial assessment forms. Two learning support assistants were deployed in a Spanish class for learners with learning disabilities.

### **Leadership and management**

82. The service makes very good use of partnerships to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups. The service has subcontracted most of its language provision to a specialist language college. The college uses its income from adult education to supplement work on language development in primary schools, many of which are located in priority areas of the borough. Short taster courses in French and Spanish are run to attract parents into school to learn alongside their children. In one such class, 13 parents and their children are learning basic Spanish, and using the ICT facilities of the school to access a primary language website. For some parents, it is their first venture into school. The partnership with the language college also gives the service access to expertise to support its language provision for learners with learning disabilities.

83. Staff receive good specialist support. Tutors of languages to adults in the evenings have access to a wide range of high-quality resources. They have administrative support, as well as a technician who helps to set up computers and electronic whiteboards. Tutors in outreach centres can access the training opportunities made available to college staff, such as the use of electronic whiteboards. They can also observe expert teachers, as in the case of a tutor who did so in preparation for teaching a class of learners with learning disabilities. Wirral LEA's staff also use the expertise of the language college director for advice on accreditation and curriculum development matters. Arrangements for assuring and improving quality are good. There is an annual cycle of observations, carried out by a trained linguist. Helpful evaluative reports are produced, with plans detailing actions for improvement, and suggestions for training. As a result of observations, staff have been given training, classes have been relocated, and equipment provided in outreach centres. It is too early to judge the effect of this system on achievement rates.

84. There is weak target-setting for individual courses. Tutors are aware that an overall annual target for achievement has been set, but they do not have targets for their own courses. They do not know how well their learners are performing compared with those on other courses, and they are not challenged sufficiently to carry out a programme of quality improvement actions. The self-assessment report was evaluative. The inspection identified additional strengths to those identified in the self-assessment and a different weakness was identified.

**Preparation for life and work****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Literacy and numeracy</i></b> Adult and community learning	277	<b>2</b> 2

85. Courses range from entry level learning opportunities in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), to courses at level 2. ESOL courses were not included in the inspection. There are currently 277 learners on literacy and numeracy courses. Of these, 10 per cent are under 25 years old, 42 per cent are between 26 and 40, 37 per cent are between 41 and 59, and 11 per cent are over 60. Three per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. So far, during the 2005-06 academic year, 436 learners have enrolled on literacy and numeracy courses. During the previous academic year, 459 learners were enrolled. The shortest course lasts for five weeks and the longest for 11 weeks. All learners have the opportunity to obtain externally awarded qualifications. Five tutors teach on literacy and numeracy programmes. Many learners progress to a higher level course when they complete their present course and some then go on to courses delivered by other providers.

86. Courses are held in 11 learning venues throughout the borough. These include primary schools, community centres, day centres, adult learning centres, secondary schools and voluntary organisations. Classes are held in the daytime and in the evenings. Most classes meet for between two and three hours weekly. All learners are initially and diagnostically assessed and the outcomes are used to design individual learning programmes. The service works in partnership with community and voluntary organisations to encourage learners who are not usually involved in education and training to enrol on literacy and numeracy courses.

***Literacy and numeracy****Strengths*

- high levels of retention and achievement on accredited programmes
- good development of skills
- effective widening of participation

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient learning resources

**Achievement and standards**

87. Retention and achievement on accredited programmes are high. In 2003-04, 88 per cent of learners who joined a literacy or numeracy programme at level 1 or level 2 were retained and successfully completed their award. In 2004-05, retention and achievement increased to 99 per cent and 92 per cent respectively. So far in 2005-06, 98 per cent of learners have been retained and 54 per cent have already gained a qualification at level 1 or level 2. Between September 2003 and January 2006, only nine learners have taken

entry level literacy and numeracy qualifications. Very limited take-up of entry level qualifications is identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

88. For the period September 2003 to January 2006, retention on non-accredited literacy and numeracy programmes is also high, at 90 per cent. Approximately 77 per cent of learners completed their programmes successfully. Good achievements are identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

89. Learners develop a good range of literacy and numeracy skills, which many thought beyond them. These include writing creatively, becoming proficient at spelling, and calculating the perimeters and areas of irregular shapes. Most learners are highly motivated and eager to learn and make progress for various reasons. For instance, some are able to help their children or grandchildren with homework because they can now recognise words, spell, and construct sentences more accurately and confidently or calculate areas, volumes and ratios. Other learners have specific career aspirations and wish to obtain literacy and numeracy qualifications to become eligible for teaching assistants' courses or as entry qualifications for more advanced further education courses. Learners say their self-confidence increases, their self-esteem improves and they feel good about themselves as they develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Some learners did not enjoy school and now find it refreshing to find that learning is made enjoyable. Additionally, they value the social experience of working with, and talking to, other learners.

90. Learners produce work of a satisfactory standard. The worksheets they are given are usually neatly and legibly completed. Whenever possible, tutors mark their answers in class which gives learners quick feedback. If the answers are incorrect, tutors clearly explain the mistakes and give further instruction so that the learners avoid repeating errors. Homework is promptly marked and returned to learners with helpful comments. Good progress records are maintained from which learners can see what they have so far achieved and what they have found difficult.

### **The quality of provision**

91. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Seventy-one per cent of the teaching observed during the inspection was good and the rest was satisfactory. The good sessions are well prepared and confidently delivered by the tutors. The learning needs of individual learners are accurately defined and suitable tasks and exercises are provided for them. For example, in one numeracy class the tutor skilfully managed a learner working on the basic functions of arithmetic together with small groups of learners working on ratios, perimeters and fractions. When the learner had difficulty understanding the concepts of addition and subtraction, the tutor provided dice and small, coloured plastic circles to help her understand more easily by adding the spots on the dice and adding and removing the circles. In most lessons there is good emphasis on practical work, with as much time as possible devoted to active learning. In some sessions, however, worksheets are over-used and learning activities are insufficiently varied. In the satisfactory lessons, some of the activities are insufficiently differentiated and the pace is sometimes too slow or too fast for learners. Insufficient attention is given to setting individual learning targets and to recording them on individual learning plans. Occasionally, learners are working at too high a level of abstraction before mastering basic concepts through simple, first-hand experience. Often, tutors show learners two or three different ways of approaching a problem, such as calculating the areas of irregular shapes. Some also ask how learners were taught at school and build on that approach, where appropriate.

92. Initial and diagnostic assessments are satisfactory, and the service uses the results well to determine where tuition and practice are needed. Learners receive good support to complete their learning and to prepare for national tests. They also receive satisfactory guidance about progression opportunities.

93. Learning resources are insufficient. There are too few laptop computers with suitable software for literacy and numeracy learning that can be taken to local learning centres where there are no computing facilities. Tutors do not have sufficient access to teaching aids, such as portable overhead projectors, digital projectors, and interactive whiteboards, to help them when presenting their subjects in community centres that are poorly resourced. The recently refurbished Leasowe Centre is being equipped with computing facilities that will be available for skills for life learners. Learners have insufficient opportunities to use online learning sites to enable them to develop independent learning skills. There are insufficient practical resources for entry and pre-entry level learners and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. However, a very wide range of specialist computing resources is available for learners with physical or sensory impairments, such as large keyboards, roller balls and specialist software for visually impaired learners. Some staff are unaware of the resources that are available within the service.

### **Leadership and management**

94. The participation of learners from under-represented groups is effectively widened through literacy and numeracy courses. Learners value the convenience and informality of local learning centres, especially those who are reluctant to attend larger regional colleges. They benefit from the small class sizes and the group and individual instruction that the tutors provide. The convenient timing of classes allows learners to take their small children to crèches or primary schools, and to collect them when their classes end. Good partnership working with social services has enabled learners with learning difficulties and disabilities to take advantage of literacy and numeracy training. Additionally, the 'move on' provision has been particularly attractive to teaching assistants and learners who wish to begin training for teaching assistants' qualifications. Good recruitment of targeted groups, such as learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, is acknowledged as a strength in the self-assessment report.

95. The skills for life curriculum leader is responsible for managing literacy and numeracy courses. The service holds staff meetings each term and identifies action points and records the proceedings satisfactorily. The service monitors tutors' planning documents satisfactorily. Most staff are well qualified. However, only two of the literacy and numeracy tutors hold a literacy or numeracy qualification at level 4 and one literacy tutor is taking the level 4 course. Arrangements for monitoring staff without a level 4 award are insufficient. The observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Identified weaknesses are action-planned and staff receive satisfactory support to improve their teaching. Arrangements for evaluating courses are satisfactory. The draft skills for life strategy contains too few time-specific targets and it is inadequate for extending and guiding the delivery of literacy and numeracy provision. The service has taken insufficient action to increase the number of male learners. To link literacy and numeracy with other subjects, it has designed six innovative courses, including mathematics and ICT, English through ICT, and literacy through local history. The service has taken satisfactory action to begin incorporating literacy and numeracy throughout its provision, and to offer skills for life awareness training for staff teaching in other curriculum areas. It has also delivered

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satisfactory e-learning training to literacy and numeracy tutors. More appropriate entry level accreditation has been designed and approved by a local awarding body. There is slow progress in a number of managerial initiatives, such as the further development of partnership working, increasing the profile of literacy and numeracy provision within the local authority, wider workforce development, and the identification and dissemination of good practice.

**Family learning****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	157	2

96. At the time of inspection, there were 157 learners on family learning programmes and 14 courses running. Most courses are Open College Network (OCN) accredited and cover literacy or numeracy subjects. For example, the service offers family literacy, family finance, play and language, and family works courses.

97. Courses run from entry level to level 1 for between 10 and 72 hours. Some learners also take national tests in literacy and numeracy at levels 1 and 2. Most courses are offered as daytime provision and are offered mainly in primary schools. However, some courses are offered in children's centres and Sure Start centres. In addition to the regular courses, short taster courses and workshops are also offered. Most learners are women, although some men have been recruited onto courses.

98. The curriculum area is jointly managed by two curriculum leaders who are also tutors, one of whom is full time and one part time. The curriculum leaders report directly to the lifelong learning adviser. There are six sessional tutors, one tutor subcontracted from a college and one tutor with a part-time contract.

***Adult and community learning****Strengths*

- good development and application of learning and skills
- good teaching and learning
- highly effective partnerships

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient formal monitoring of learning

**Achievement and standards**

99. There is good development and application of learning and skills. Learning is making a positive difference to the lives of learners and their families. Learners apply their learning quickly and practically. Learners are also developing their knowledge in specific topics as a result of learning. For example, learners on a numeracy course talked about how the mathematics techniques they learnt on the course reflected current practice in schools, which gave them increased confidence to help their children and also increased their knowledge of mathematics. Learners also benefit from having improved relationships with their children after spending time working with them on home activities set during the session.

100. Learners have greater knowledge about school education and teaching as a result of



attending courses, and they use this knowledge constructively to support their children's learning at home and in class during joint sessions. They are also building good relationships with the school or centre staff by participating in family learning courses.

101. There has been good progression by many learners to other courses within the service and with other providers. The service regularly collects and analyses data regarding learners' progress. For example, two former learners now work at one of the schools where they attended family learning courses. Both learners progressed from level 1 courses to level 2 and level 3 courses. Another learner on an early start course has changed career direction and now intends to work as a tutor, and has already enrolled on a level 3 adult tutors' training course. Learners are also progressing from family learning courses and taking national tests in literacy and numeracy at levels 1 and 2.

102. Achievement and retention on accredited courses are satisfactory. During 2004-05, the retention rate was 91 per cent, with achievement at 89 per cent.

### **The quality of provision**

103. There is good teaching and learning on courses. Most of the sessions observed during inspection were judged as good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Tutors use a wide range of activities to engage learners' interest during sessions and are confident and knowledgeable about their subjects. Sessions are well planned. Tutors use detailed lesson plans and link sessions to the adult core curriculum for literacy and numeracy. Tutors make good use of the learner group profile to help develop the planning and delivery of their sessions and to give additional support to learners where needed. Many tutors also make good use of a range of resources, such as games or ICT, during sessions. Tutors have a good range of appropriate qualifications and experience in school teaching, adult education and community education.

104. The standard of teaching is high and tutors use technical terms where appropriate and also set activities and tasks to challenge the learners. For example, in a family literacy session, after leading a discussion about the difference in structure between narrative and script, the tutor set an exercise for the learners to write a few lines of script using the structure they had just learnt. In a lively family works session, the tutor made good use of a poem and a quote from Aristotle to reinforce learning about behaviour and also introduced learners to the concept of 'emotional hijack'. The tutor also used exercises at regular points during the session to check and reinforce learning.

105. Learners are active participants during sessions and make good use of their personal experiences to contribute to the learning. For example, during a family finance session, one learner talked about how the fact that she had never been in debt created a problem when she tried to obtain a credit card. Learners are keen and well motivated. They discuss their work during sessions, support each other's learning and ask questions to check their learning.

106. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the learners' needs and interests. It is clearly linked to key strategic priorities. Most courses are accredited, which provides a useful stepping stone to other qualifications and work opportunities. The provision is targeted at new learners from deprived communities with literacy and numeracy needs. However, because of the links between behaviour, parenting and learning, the service also now offers an innovative course named family works, which was jointly developed with the behaviour



support co-ordinator within the service. The course has been well received by learners and it is often oversubscribed. It focuses on behaviour management and helps parents to reflect on their own behaviour and how that affects their children and their behaviour at home and in school. Provision is located in schools where there are areas of need. Crèche provision or support to meet childcare costs is available, but there have been some problems with capacity at some crèches. The service is working to resolve these issues.

107. Support and guidance for learners are satisfactory. Learners receive good individual guidance and support during sessions. For example, during one session, a learner with language support needs received individual support from a school teacher who regularly provides input and support during the session. In other classes, tutors or other staff from partner organisations support learners who need extra help. Learners receive information and guidance about other learning opportunities. A map of progression routes has been produced to help tutors and learners identify how they can use their course as a stepping stone to other courses. A leaflet on information, advice and guidance has also been produced as a guide for tutors about the nextstep service.

108. There is insufficient formal monitoring of learning. Initial assessment is comprehensive and the service uses diagnostic tests to record learners' literacy and numeracy skills. There is some good practice, but this is not shared with all staff. Some tutors record meaningful long-term and short-term goals, but not all of them do so. Individual learning plans are being completed in varying degrees of detail. In most cases, however, goals and targets set are often too general to be meaningful and may consist of just one word. For example, on one individual learning plan, the main goal was to 'complete the course' and 'e-mail' was recorded as a target.

109. The individual learning plan is often undated and the form does not allow for dates to be linked to the targets set and achieved. Although learning is regularly monitored and tutors have a good knowledge about each learner's individual goals and needs, the formal monitoring of learning is weak. A learner's starting point is always recorded, but information about their achievement at the end of the course is not always recorded, or not recorded in terms of learning achievement. For example, comments are sometimes made about a learner's growth in confidence, but not about their actual learning achievement. Some tutors make good use of learning outcomes to monitor progress with learning. Other tutors ensure that learners complete a sessional record, which learners can use to complete a column entitled, 'What did I learn today?'. Although there is some good practice, the use of learning outcomes to monitor progress, and of the sessional record, is not consistent or systematic across the team.

## **Leadership and management**

110. There are highly effective partnerships with a range of partners, including schools, Early Start centres and nurseries. Family learning staff work well with partner staff to recruit learners. The curriculum leaders provide detailed written guidance to partners about how to recruit learners and also meet with head teachers or heads of centre to offer additional support and guidance. The partners use their links with parents to recruit them onto courses and value them as learners and as parents. Partner organisations have a good understanding of how working well with parents contributes to working well with children.

111. Training is provided to staff from partner organisations to help them understand the objectives of family learning in relation to literacy, numeracy and language. Family learning

tutors work well with partner staff to jointly plan and review sessions and to ensure integration of the adults' learning with that of their children. Partners are actively involved in reviewing sessions and reviewing the effect of family learning on parents, children and their own organisations. The curriculum leaders regularly collect evaluative data and information about the courses from all partners. Family learning is well established in the culture of partner organisations. For example, one head teacher commented that family learning is now an expectation of many parents at the school. At this particular school, parents take their coffee break in the staff room and have a good relationship with the head teacher and other staff.

112. Curriculum leadership is good. Two curriculum leaders share responsibility for managing family learning and also have teaching responsibilities. Most of the tutors are sessional, but they are well supported by the curriculum leaders and receive good support through regular meetings. There is also good communication among all the team and with partners. There is good support for staff development and a commitment by staff to developing their professional practice. For example, some sessional staff have completed training for the level 4 adult literacy specialist qualification or are currently studying for the qualification.

113. Quality assurance and improvement are satisfactory. Data and analysis forms are used to collect quantitative and qualitative information about courses. For example, the service collects figures relating to intended progression and invites comments from teachers about the 'overall progress of children in relation to communication, language, literacy and/or mathematical understanding'. Quality assurance processes, such as moderation, course reviews and tutor observations, work well to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There was a close match between the profile of internal observation grades and inspection grades. The self-assessment report for family learning was evaluative and comprehensive, and the grade was the same as the proposed inspection grade.

114. Learners are valued and treated with respect. Support is available for learners with additional learning or language support needs. Strategies are in place to try to recruit new learners from under-represented groups, such as men and minority ethnic groups.

**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	158	2

115. The service works with 10 subcontractors. These subcontractors are funded to provide training and support to unemployed people, substance misusers, or those taking the first step into adult learning or involvement in community development. The projects are aimed at learners from disadvantaged communities. Some of the projects receive capital funding and some receive revenue funding.

116. At the time of inspection there were 158 learners on 21 courses at 12 venues. Courses include an introduction to catering, skills for life, personal development and ICT. There are a range of levels from entry level to level 2. The duration of courses varies from one day to a year. There are 18 accredited courses with 114 learners and three non-accredited courses with 44 learners. The courses are part time.

117. Thirty-three per cent of learners are men. Fifteen tutors deliver the programmes. Ten tutors are employed by the subcontractors and five by the service. The service employs one part-time manager to co-ordinate this programme area. In 2004-05, there were 911 learners, 82 of whom had a disability.

***Adult and community learning****Strengths*

- good strategies to widen participation
- good use of capital funding
- good innovative strategies to develop the curriculum

*Weaknesses*

- insufficiently developed monitoring procedures in some partner organisations

**Achievement and standards**

118. Attainment is good and learners make good progress towards their learning goals. Learners develop self-awareness and state that they have improved self-esteem and personal confidence. Many of the learners are facing considerable personal and social difficulties, such as domestic violence and debt. Some of the young mothers have been out of formal education since becoming pregnant at a very young age. At one centre, former substance misusers are developing a regular structure and routine to their day. Despite the difficulties learners have, they are highly motivated to learn.

119. Parents of children in a school for children with special educational needs travel considerable distances, often on public transport, to attend the family ICT class. They enjoy learning how to use computers and sharing learning with their children. Most of

these parents have never attended any activity at the school before joining the ICT class. Some parents are learning to handle their aggression in a more positive manner. They are making choices about their future rather than feeling victims of their circumstances. All learners on accredited courses are building portfolios of their work. Retention rates are good for all courses, with very little evidence of learners leaving courses. Attendance is satisfactory, although it was 73 per cent during the inspection week. There are some problems with timekeeping on two courses.

### **The quality of provision**

120. There is innovative use of a learning mentor who supports learners throughout their programme. The learners are attending a drive for life course, which offers English or ICT and numeracy to learners who attend classes for two half days each week. The learning mentor offers extensive support to these learners, who face a wide range of personal problems. The mentor is available by telephone throughout the week. If the learners attend their classes they are able to claim one driving lesson each week and their driving theory examination is paid for. Some female learners were unhappy about getting into a car with a male driving instructor so the learning mentor went with them for the first lesson. The learning mentor meets and greets learners every week at the start of the class and follows up absences quickly. Learners complete detailed and challenging action plans with the assistance of the learning mentor. The retention on this programme is 100 per cent. The scheme is to be extended to other programmes offered by the service.

121. Learners are well supported in all classes. Tutors work with a wide range of abilities from pre-entry to level 2 and the work is very challenging. The tutors provide good support to the learners. For example, in classes where one or more learners have additional learning needs, an extra member of staff provides support.

122. Teaching is satisfactory. Of the observed sessions, 57 per cent of teaching was good and the rest were satisfactory. Schemes of work and lesson planning are thorough. Initial assessment is good and an assessment of English skills is completed in ICT classes. Following initial assessment, four learners in one ICT class have been directed to ESOL classes for extra language support. Tutors monitor and record learners' progress regularly and keep records, but these are often not dated or shared with the learners.

123. There is good discussion during class. The service encourages learners to carry out research on the internet relating to topics which are discussed in the group. In one session on a programme which covers cooking fish dishes from different countries of the world, learners can debate flavours and ingredients that they have never tasted. One learner said she had never followed a recipe before attending the class. Parents of children attending a special school are learning about computers and are building a portfolio for accreditation.

124. Resources are satisfactory. Venues are appropriate to learners' needs. ICT rooms are satisfactory and there is adequate access to ICT for all learners. In one venue, the computers are outdated and unreliable, and the room is too small. Childcare is available for learners.

### **Leadership and management**

125. There are good strategies to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups. Open partnerships are developing in response to mutual need.

The service works alongside voluntary organisations as an equal partner. The service is very effective at supporting the development of ideas rather than imposing them. It promotes a range of innovative projects to engage hard-to-reach learners. The service has responded to community need by locating centres in areas where learners are comfortable, despite their unlikely use for learning. For example, one project is offered in a room at the rear of a shop. Risk assessments are completed for all venues. A range of carefully selected organisations are involved in developing projects to attract learners who would not attend a class in traditional educational settings. Short accredited units are used to engage learners and to enable easy identification of their progress.

126. The service makes good use of capital funding. In 2005-06, the funding has paid for a small teaching kitchen in a women's centre and a crèche to support parents in a school. It has also purchased cameras to develop a community television project. A climbing wall has been built in a specialist sports college. All of these projects have very clear strategies for current and future development of the service and the community. In addition to using the kitchen to offer courses to women, other organisations are now using this facility. A local college, the youth service and a local school access the space when adult learners from the service are not using it. The community camera project is being developed through a partnership with staff from a regeneration initiative working closely with very small community organisations who have never accessed any funding previously.

127. There is a good innovative curriculum. This is assisting partner organisations to develop their capacity to offer first step courses on topics of interest to the community. The arts and crafts curriculum is being used well to develop community projects. One course is being offered to local women who have an interest in nutrition and eating healthily. The tutor uses the course to develop social and cultural awareness, as well as to extend learners' knowledge of food enhancers, fresh fish and unusual vegetables. The learners research the source of the recipes and find out about that country's cultures and traditions, which they then share confidently with other learners. The community TV course is being piloted with the intention of involving young people in making community television films and developing scripts. It is intended to train some of the participants to become mentors to future learners. The development of these initiatives assists community capacity building, regeneration and social inclusion well. They are engaging hard-to-reach learners whom the service would not be able to reach through their traditional curriculum.

128. Curriculum management is good. There is good communication with staff and subcontractors. The curriculum manager supports potential partners and subcontractors in developing their projects and in organising and planning courses. Staff development is satisfactory. Staff are suitably qualified. Equality of opportunity is good in community development, particularly the opportunity to research and discuss cultures from across the world. The self-assessment report is evaluative and broadly reflects the strengths and weaknesses identified on inspection.

129. The monitoring in some partner organisations is insufficiently developed. Data is collected at the end of each quarter, but in the smaller and less experienced organisations there are delays in providing the relevant information. This delays data analysis. The service works with subcontractors to improve their own systems and has devised a pre-course checklist to assist subcontractors and to ensure that there is clear agreement about data requirements. One-day training events are now being held by one subcontractor to assist voluntary sector organisations to meet quality standards.

