INSPECTION REPORT

Wigan LEA

21 October 2005

ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

• work-based learning for all people aged over 16
• provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
• **learndirect** provision
• Adult and Community Learning
• training funded by Jobcentre Plus
• education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

Wigan LEA

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Wigan LEA's adult and community learning service (the service) is part of the education department. It operates within the policy framework for the council and offers programmes designed to contribute to strategic objectives for first steps, personal development, life skills and family learning. The service is funded by the Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

2. In October 2003, the service was transferred to the education department and is now part of the extended learning team. Wigan Borough Council's director of children's services, supported by the head of extended learning and the adult and community learning manager, currently heads the service. They report to the cabinet member for children and young people. The aim of the service is to provide a link for hard-to-reach learners in disadvantaged communities with the opportunities for accredited learning and further progression within local sixth form, further education, and higher education institutions.

3. The service does not deliver any learning provision directly. Its function is to develop, co-ordinate, fund and quality assure learning provision that is designed to involve, enthuse and enable 'new' learners. The service also works with partners to deliver neighbourhood learning in deprived communities.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS   Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** The provisions in information and communications technology (ICT) for users, beauty therapy, dance, fine arts and crafts, literacy and numeracy, and adult and community learning are all good. The provision in sport, leisure and recreation is satisfactory. Leadership and management are good, equality of opportunity is outstanding and quality improvement is good.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process includes all relevant parties, and each subcontractor completes individual self-assessments, which contribute to the overall self-assessment. The views of staff and learners are obtained and used in the process. Many of the judgements in the report match the inspection findings.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** The service has a good and comprehensive quality improvement system. Managers have used the self-assessment action plan to improve the provision over the past year. The service is also continuously improving its processes and in the past six months has increased the quality improvement team by the appointment of a quality improvement champion and curriculum team leaders.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR WIGAN LEA:

- make effective use of data in management decision-making
- further develop the use of individual learning plans
- initiate a more effective programme of staff development
- ensure that current procedures become fully established
- identify and further develop literacy and numeracy support in curriculum areas
- increase attention to specific curriculum risk assessment procedures

GRADES

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

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	1
Quality improvement	2

Information and communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ICT for users		*2*
Adult and community learning	600	2

Retail and commercial enterprise		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Beauty therapy		*2*
Adult and community learning	297	2

Leisure, travel and tourism		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Sport, leisure and recreation		*3*
Adult and community learning	125	3

Arts, media and publishing		2
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Dance Adult and community learning	118	2
Fine arts Adult and community learning	174	2
Crafts Adult and community learning	450	2

Preparation for life and work		2
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	147	*2* 2

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Adult and community learning Adult and community learning	1,236	*2* 2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. The inspection was organised to inspect the service's provision in ICT, retail and commercial enterprise, leisure, travel and tourism, arts, media and publishing, preparation for life and work, and family learning.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	40
Number of learners interviewed	276
Number of staff interviewed	63
Number of subcontractors interviewed	19
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	46
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	15

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Retention rates are good in ICT for users, beauty therapy, fine arts, crafts and dance, and adult and community learning.** They are satisfactory in sport, leisure and recreation,

and literacy and numeracy.

9. **The standard of learners' work in most programmes is good.** Learners make rapid progress in acquiring new skills in ICT for users. **Personal and technical skills are acquired effectively in all areas of learning.**

10. There is some very good individual progression by learners. One learner progressed from being a first-step learner to studying for a foundation degree in complementary therapies.

11. The service achieves good results in literacy and numeracy accredited tests. Thirty-five of 37 learners were successful in passing national tests.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Information and communications technology	0	6	2	0	8
Retail and commercial enterprise	1	3	0	0	4
Leisure, travel and tourism	0	2	5	0	7
Arts, media and publishing	0	8	0	0	8
Preparation for life and work	0	4	4	0	8
Family learning	0	6	3	0	9
Total	1	29	14	0	44

12. **Standards of teaching and learning are good in ICT for users, beauty therapy, and fine arts, crafts, and dance.** Tutors are very effective at motivating and maintaining learners' interest.

13. **Tutors in many classes use a wide range of teaching styles and strategies to meet learners' diverse needs.** For example, in one tap-dancing class, the tutor ensured that a learner with hearing loss could 'feel' the sound through the floor.

14. **Tutors are particularly well qualified in holistic therapies.** They provide a range of short taster sessions from which learners can choose the most appropriate. Tutors in other areas of learning are also well qualified. A high percentage of tutors have recognised teaching qualifications.

15. **A good range of provision exists in the beauty therapy area of learning** to meet learners' needs and aspirations. Learners feel confident enough to progress from their first steps and taster courses to other provisions. They are able to progress to accredited provision at the partner college or at other adult and community learning provision.

16. **In fine arts, crafts and dance, learners have access to a wide range of tools and equipment,** especially at the schools used as learning centres. Access to information technology (IT) is readily available and many learners use digital cameras to record their work.

17. Generally, other course-specific resources are satisfactory, and some of the tutors provide materials and equipment for classes themselves. The schools used for some of the courses provide adequate facilities and equipment. The service has a central store of some

equipment such as hearing loops and laptop computers for loan.

18. Assessment is generally satisfactory, particularly for the accredited provision, and meets awarding body requirements.

19. Pre-course information including initial advice and guidance is satisfactory. The service uses a range of marketing methods, including recommendations from previous participants, to interest and involve a wide range of learners.

20. **A narrow range of courses is offered in fine arts, crafts and dance,** but in other areas the range of courses is satisfactory.

21. **In many areas the use of individual learning plans is inadequate.** Tutors do not monitor learners' progress and achievements in any formal way, or record this information in the learning plans. Insufficient use is made of the individual learning plans by staff or learners. There are no agreed individual learning targets.

Leadership and management

22. **The service has well-articulated and clear strategic priorities.** Its declared aim is to attract new and hard-to-reach learners. The service's three-year development plan has very clear links to the community plan and the corporate plan, as well as local LSC priorities. The council and cabinet members are supportive of adult education and understand the role it has to play in bringing together partners who are able to work in specific deprived communities, which the service could not reach otherwise.

23. **The service has very strong partnerships.** The range of partners is extensive and reflects the provider's focus on reaching particularly deprived communities. **The partners complement the service particularly well, with the service supporting and facilitating first rung learning and partners often offering the next step progression routes.**

24. **The adult and community learning provision is managed well.** A small but highly effective team is funded by the local education authority and the LSC. Resources are used well to their full potential in order to meet strategic priorities. The service makes very effective use of partners' strengths and skills to add value to its own limited resources. The provider's managers use partners' locations and networks to good effect.

25. **The service uses a range of outstanding strategies and processes to involve hard-to-reach learners in adult learning programmes.** These learning programmes link up very effectively with other schemes such as the Extended Schools and Sure Start programmes. The provider's strategic aims identify and promote programmes specifically aimed at attracting and involving learners from the communities recognised as being the hardest to reach.

26. Learning providers use an imaginative range of 'non-threatening' activities in accessible venues in the communities. These attract a wide age range of learners. One example of this was the project based on a local First World War memorial that involved learners of many ages in a range of activities. Other activities such as sports, cooking, languages, and camping are successful at removing obstacles to learning in a non-threatening environment.

27. The provider has good systems to support quality improvements. A good system for

observation of teaching and learning is in place and is supported by a full set of quality improvement policies and procedures. These have evolved over time, with significant changes having taken place during the past six months. The policies and procedures cover **all key areas of learning, including information, advice and guidance, induction, individual** learning plans, and initial assessments.

28. Staff appraisals and staff development are satisfactory. The core adult and community learning staff are part of the borough council's scheme, which requires an annual appraisal followed by a six-monthly review.

29. The management of health and safety is satisfactory. Most premises used by the service are owned by the local education authority. Until Easter 2005, health and safety was the responsibility of learning centre managers. Since then, a health and safety champion has been appointed to carry out new health and safety checks and to collate existing ones.

30. The management of the literacy, numeracy and language provision is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy support is available in the four main neighbourhood learning centres. These centres have established links with Wigan and Leigh College (the college). The college's support for learning services is open to adult and community learners. The service has successfully implemented skills for life, which is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language.

31. Internal verification is satisfactory. In the past year, adult and community learning managers and the quality improvement champion have visited learning centres to talk with learners and gauge standards of provision throughout the service. The quality improvement champion and curriculum team leaders will use the new quality monitoring visits to moderate the standards of work throughout the provision.

32. **Management information is not used sufficiently** to plan the provision and to improve performance. This weakness is recognised in the provider's self-assessment report. The service does not set retention and achievement targets by programme. There is no clear analysis of the data from learning centres to establish improvements needed. Key post holders such as the curriculum team leaders do not have sufficient access to management information to fulfil their roles adequately. No progression targets are set, although this is an important part of the service's strategic objectives.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- strong partnership working
- good management of the service
- outstanding strategies and processes to engage with hard-to-reach learners
- good systems to support quality improvements

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of management information systems

Information and communications technology

ICT for users   Grade 2

Strengths

- very good retention rate
- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective widening of participation
- very effective links with partners

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of individual learning plans
- restricted opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills

Retail and commercial enterprise

Beauty therapy   Grade 2

Strengths

- very good standards of teaching and learning
- very well-qualified and experienced teachers
- good range of provision to meet learners' needs and aspirations
- good initial advice and guidance from partners

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of achievements
- incomplete system to identify literacy and numeracy needs

Leisure, travel and tourism

Sport, leisure and recreation   Grade 3

Strengths

- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective systems to support learners' needs
- good partnership working

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring and recording of learners' progress

- inadequate completion of health screening
- inadequate use of data to monitor achievements and progression

Arts, media and publishing

Strengths

- good development of personal and learning skills
- good retention rate
- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective partnerships

Weaknesses

- restricted range of courses

Preparation for life and work

Literacy and numeracy   *Grade 2*

Strengths

- good development of personal skills
- good achievement rate
- responsive and effective partnerships
- innovative programmes to attract hard-to-reach learners
- successful implementation of skills for life strategy

Weaknesses

- insufficient setting and recording of learners' targets
- incomplete quality assurance systems

Family learning

Adult and community learning   *Grade 2*

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good support for progression
- very effective partnerships

Weaknesses

- inadequate individual learning plans and recording of progress
- no strategy to attract male learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT WIGAN LEA:

- 'programmes taking place in my child's school'
- short taster courses
- centres within easy reach
- rooms and equipment in good condition
- friendly tutors
- 'able to buy things as I can now read'
- 'being able to read street signs'
- 'gave me a reason to get out of the house'
- 'small classes - college is too big'
- 'I was in a refuge - passed my level 2 mathematics and English and now study social science'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK WIGAN LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- the childcare and crèche facilities in some schools and learning centres
- the marketing so that more people hear about the service
- the provision during holiday periods - keep all centres open
- the access - provide lifts in all buildings
- the parking at some learning centres

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 2
Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- strong partnership working
- good management of the service
- outstanding strategies and processes to engage with hard-to-reach learners
- good systems to support quality improvements

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Weaknesses

- insufficient use of management information systems

33. The service has well-articulated and clear strategic priorities in its mission statement. Its aim is to involve new and hard-to-reach learners. The service's three-year development plan has very clear links to the community plan and the corporate plan, as well as local LSC priorities. The council and cabinet members are supportive of adult education and understand the role it has to play in bringing partners together that are able to work in specific deprived communities, which the service could not reach otherwise. There are also good links between the family learning strategy and the borough's Extended Schools agenda. Partners are very aware of, and share the service's aims and goals.

34. The provider has very strong partnerships. The range of partners is very extensive and reflects the focus on reaching particularly deprived communities. The partners complement the service particularly well, with the service supporting and facilitating 'first rung' learning and partners often offering the next step progression routes. Good, collaborative working takes place in the partnerships, and very good working relationships have been established. There is a strong emphasis on co-operation and mutual benefit, ensuring as far as possible that there is a coherent curriculum which minimises duplication. Partnership arrangements are well managed. Regular, termly partnership networks meetings are effective in ensuring that partners are kept fully informed of developments. They also act as an effective forum for sharing good practice. Often the agenda will include opportunities for providers to talk about an aspect of their work, from which others may learn. Formal and informal communications with partners are good. Partners speak of the good accessibility of the adult and community learning team and the provision of informal support. The adult and community learning service also supports the partnership with resources and equipment.

35. The service's provision is managed well. A small, but very effective team is funded by the local education authority and the LSC. Resources are well targeted to meet strategic priorities. There is very effective use of partners' strengths and skills to add value to the service's restricted resources. Managers use partners' locations and networks to good effect. The managers are highly responsive. The service has adapted extremely well to changing circumstances. For example, the development of a number of champions uses the experience and expertise of individuals to help partners, and to create consistency of

standards throughout the service. Managers recognised the need to support and monitor curriculum activities by providing curriculum team leaders.

36. Financial management is sound. The service uses its finances very well to support strategic priorities. The budget is managed to ensure that over 90 per cent of funds are targeted at the most deprived areas. There is a strong commitment to a no-fee policy. Communications and responsibilities are clear, and the adult and community learning managers meet weekly, followed by a meeting with the key operational managers. Meetings are not minuted, but actions are recorded by individuals and followed up.

37. Communications are satisfactory. There are regular meetings about quality improvement matters. Communications with tutors are usually through learning centre managers. Curriculum team leaders have not yet met with their teams.

38. Staff appraisals and staff development are satisfactory. The core adult and community learning staff are part of the borough council's scheme, which requires an annual appraisal followed by a six-monthly review. The service does not have sufficient procedures to manage the performance of its newly created quality champions and curriculum team leaders. Most of the partners have satisfactory arrangements for identifying staff's needs in relation to their adult and community learning work. Adequate arrangements are being made for staff development by the adult and community learning team. In June 2005, the service held three days of staff development activities covering the new procedures and the accompanying paperwork. This event was attended by 72 per cent of tutors. However, most of the staff development carried out last year was for adult and community learning managers and learning centre managers. A staff development programme for the current year has been drawn up to include equality and diversity, recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement, and health and safety.

39. Resources are generally satisfactory. Tutors are well qualified, 91 per cent of whom hold a teaching qualification. Accommodation is satisfactory. Most of the accommodation is in schools or other council properties, which are of a reasonable standard. There are good assistive technology and specialist equipment resources for partners to use. These include loop systems for users of hearing aids, a Braille printer, page magnifiers, and larger keyboards. There are also 39 laptop computers.

40. The management of health and safety is satisfactory. Most of the premises used by the service are owned by the local education authority. Until Easter 2005, health and safety was the responsibility of learning centre managers. Since then, a health and safety champion has been carrying out new health and safety checks and collating existing ones. The champion is well qualified for the job and carries out the same function for the local education authority. A health and safety plan is used to prioritise the seven local neighbourhood learning centres. Three checks have been carried out, with the remainder to be completed by the end of December.

41. The management of literacy, numeracy and language provision is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy support is available in the four main neighbourhood learning centres, which are linked to the college. The college's support for learning service is offered to adult and community learners. Similar arrangements exist for family learning learners, who account for 75 per cent of learners in this area of learning. Learners on other programmes can access support through Working Wonders, a partner which delivers the service's literacy

and numeracy provision. Currently, referrals are made verbally and there is not enough written material to support the process.

42. Management information is not used sufficiently to plan the provision and to improve performance. This weakness is recognised in the self-assessment report. The service does not set targets for retention and achievements of learners by programme. There is no clear analysis of data from learning centres to contribute to improvements. Key post holders, such as the curriculum team leaders, do not have sufficient access to this information to be able to carry out their duties adequately. No targets are set for progression, even though this is an important part of the service's strategic objectives. The service has recently piloted the display and use of progression data with two partners.

Equality of opportunity
Contributory grade 1

43. The provider uses a range of outstanding strategies and processes to involve hard-to-reach learners in adult learning programmes. Adult and community learning programmes are linked very effectively with other schemes such as the Extended Schools and Sure Start programmes. Strategic aims identify and promote programmes specifically to attract and involve learners from communities recognised as being the hardest to reach. An equality and diversity champion has recently been appointed, and a focus group meets to review and monitor targets, with regard to challenging discrimination in all its forms and promoting adult learning to new learners. These policies and initiatives are linked effectively to the council's strategy for widening participation. The provision is organised and made available in areas of high social deprivation. Families with a long history of non-involvement with learning are successfully recruited using highly imaginative taster sessions. The programmes offered successfully attract learners from many disadvantaged groups including asylum seekers, migrants and travellers, as well as learners with mental health and learning difficulties. Schemes also target the homeless and those with a history of drug and alcohol misuse.

44. Providers use an imaginative range of 'non-threatening' activities in accessible venues in the communities. These attract a wide age range of learners. Activities such as sports, cooking, languages, and camping are successful in removing obstacles in a non-threatening environment. Literacy is introduced effectively by the use of book circles and poetry activities, which are particularly successful at providing an effective gateway into learning for many learners. On many occasions the provision of childcare facilities at learning centres is crucial in allowing parents to attend programmes, and the service often funds places in local childcare facilities. Many additional benefits are created, such as increased family bonding and levels of self-esteem. Parents become empowered by their return to learning. The service's team provides very good support to partners to allow them to try out new ways of delivering training.

45. The service's newspapers effectively promote and acknowledge learners' successes which provides good role models for other learners. Partners receive good support to enable them to provide small-group sessions which include individual support for identified vulnerable learners.

46. The service uses the main council equal opportunities policies and procedures which take into account all the current statutes. The council regularly reviews all of its policies to ensure that they are maintaining currency. An external consultant carried out an audit with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 compliance of all venues. Very detailed

reports identify the issues and structural changes pertinent to these venues. The service provides training for learning centre managers in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

47. Data is collected and used to identify key factors with regard to learners on current programmes. A detailed, formal programme of staff training is programmed for the coming year. Staff are, however, knowledgeable with regard to the needs of learners from the hard-to-reach categories, and the partners' specialist workers are trained and qualified appropriately.

Quality improvement   **Contributory grade 2**

48. The service has good systems to support quality improvements. A good system has been developed for the observation of teaching and learning. The previous system has been improved and developed and is part of a range of processes designed to quality assure and improve the provision offered. The quality champion or a curriculum team leader carry out the observation. The target is for all tutors to be seen each academic year. In 2003-04, learning centre managers observed 15 lessons. In 2004-05, managers observed 30 lessons. The observation forms used are very effective in recording the observation and provide a good system for supporting tutors in developing their teaching. The quality champion and curriculum team leaders monitor and standardise teaching practice at four different stages of learning by carrying out quality monitoring visits. These are very effective in sharing good practice and dealing with identified areas for improvement. The observation profile of the inspection reflects the service's own observation profile, with 66 per cent of lessons good or better and the rest satisfactory.

49. The service has a full set of quality assurance policies and procedures. Regular reviews of the procedures are carried out and changes are made each year, with significant changes having been made in the past six months. The procedures cover all key areas of training including information advice and guidance, induction, individual learning plans and initial assessment. A revised structure includes the appointment of a new quality improvement champion to oversee quality improvement and curriculum team leaders to support and monitor tutors. A quality improvement committee meets monthly to discuss and monitor quality issues. These measures are all highly effective in monitoring the service. Changes and developments have been made to improve the range and quality of the learners' experiences.

50. This is the first self-assessment report that the service has produced. Each partner and learning centre is required to produce a self-assessment report, which is then collated with the service's own report. The final report is critical, judgemental and concise, reflecting the findings of the inspection. However, the report tends to focus almost exclusively on leadership and management to the exclusion of the other key questions. The service's managers monitor the development plan resulting from the self-assessment report, and have resolved many of the weaknesses.

51. Learners' feedback is very effective in adult and community learning, literacy, and numeracy. Feedback is gathered, analysed and used to improve the provision. However, the system for gathering learners' views throughout the rest of the service is less well developed. Managers have tried a range of systems such as focus groups and questionnaires, but these have not been successful.

52. Internal verification is satisfactory. In the past year the service's managers and the quality improvement champion visited learning centres to talk with learners and to assess standards throughout the service. The quality improvement champion and curriculum team leaders will use the new quality monitoring visits to moderate the standards of work throughout the provision.

53. Subcontracting arrangements are satisfactory. Service-level agreements with partners are satisfactory and clearly reflect the service's strategic priorities. The agreements detail how the partner will meet the service's strategic priorities, by indicating, where appropriate, the geographical areas that the contract refers to or the type of learners that they should engage. The agreement outlines the quality monitoring arrangements and the responsibilities of each party.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology   **Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ICT for users		*2*
Adult and community learning	600	2

54. During 2004-05, 600 learners enrolled on a range of beginners' ICT courses. A small number of learners declared a disability, 48 per cent are men and 40 per cent are learners over 50 years of age. Courses include the use of computer software, desktop publishing, computer maintenance, use of the internet and digital photography. The courses last for two hours each week and for between five weeks and one term. Most courses take place in the evening, although there is some daytime provision and one learning centre offers a beginners' class on Saturdays. Courses take place in 15 community venues and local high schools.

ICT for users   *Grade 2*

Strengths

- very good retention rate
- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective widening of participation
- very effective links with partners

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of individual learning plans
- restricted opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills

Achievement and standards

55. Retention rates are very good. In 2005, the retention rate averaged 89 per cent, and some of the courses retained all their learners. Although none of the learners were formally assessed for a recognised qualification, most learners achieve their learning goals and approximately 70 per cent of them progress to higher-level courses within their learning centres, or at the local further education college.

56. The standard of learners' work is good, and many learners make good progress within a few weeks of beginning their courses. They develop useful ICT skills, and improve their confidence and make many new friends. In some lessons, where learners are encouraged to try ideas for themselves, a lot of creative work takes place. Within a few weeks of beginning digital photography and desktop publishing courses, learners are preparing calendars and seasonal greetings cards, and learning to use the software functions to prepare their creative work. Learners in a computer maintenance lesson were practising what they had been taught, and were doing so with minimum supervision. Older learners in one disadvantaged area of Wigan have been encouraged back into learning. They

appreciate the informality of the lessons and say that they are gaining confidence as well as learning new skills.

57. On many courses, learners are informally assessed by their tutors through observation and examining documents that the learners have prepared using computers. Individual learning plans are not used sufficiently. At the beginning of their courses, learners prepare the first section of this plan by recording their intended goals. The individual learning plan has sections for recording weekly progress, but in most of the plans examined by inspectors this section is little used. Tutors keep records of the skills taught, but the learners do not make good use of their individual learning plans for providing more details, or reflecting on their progress.

58. Learners are punctual and attendance is generally over 90 per cent. During inspection it was 87 per cent.

The quality of provision

59. Standards of teaching and learning are good. Seventy-five per cent of the lessons observed were good or better. Lessons are well planned and relationships within lessons are good and motivational for the learners. In the better lessons, tutors use a variety of teaching methods which involve the learners and help to build their confidence. Learners understand what they are expected to do. Tutors use their good subject knowledge to help learners improve. They give good-quality demonstrations and answer learners' questions effectively. Learners generally work at their own pace, are very well motivated and listen carefully to their tutors. Learners who experiment with the software facilities are particularly creative.

60. Most learners also learn much from other learners, enjoy the social aspects of the courses and make new friends. In the poorer sessions, tutors do not question learners effectively to check their understanding and do not give them sufficient opportunities to make their own decisions.

61. Hardware, software, accommodation and social facilities are all appropriate for their purpose. Schools and community centre managers make learners welcome. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Information available clearly indicates the course content and proposed outcomes so that learners are able to select the best course for their needs.

62. Tutors are adequately qualified and most have, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. All of them have personal skills that they use to good effect with the learners. There is some continuing development, including health and safety training.

63. Although many learners have weaknesses in their literacy skills, there is not enough specific and individual development of learners' literacy or numeracy skills. Tutors do not take opportunities during classes to include development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. They focus almost entirely on developing learners' ICT skills. Tutors do support learners in class, but this is often on an informal basis, and is not directly related to meeting identified learning needs. The provider has no system to make tutors aware of individual learners' literacy or numeracy needs.

Leadership and management

64. The service uses a range of strategies that is very effective in widening participation. Learning centres have successfully targeted under-represented groups and are careful not to create obstacles for new learners. The centres make good use of local advertising, and are generally successful in attracting and retaining new learners and learners who have low confidence levels. Learning centre managers are responsive to learners' feedback and make appropriate changes to course design and accommodation. Learning centres have been successful in attracting more men into computing courses, particularly older learners, but have been less successful in attracting people under 30 years of age. A referral centre provides counselling and other services for learners involved with substance misuse. This centre also has a small ICT training room. A structured five-week course provides an introduction to word processing and use of the internet. This is very successful in raising learners' levels of confidence and self-esteem.

65. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. Many learning centres involve learners and tutors in course reviews that are used to prepare the annual self-assessment report and development plans. Learning centre managers carry out some lesson observations that are monitored by the service's central managers. Although the service's annual self-assessment report does not report specifically on ICT, the judgements within the report which refer to ICT generally match those of the inspection. The provider has a developing programme of lesson observations with feedback to tutors about how they can improve their teaching.

66. There are effective partnerships among the learning centres, the local further education college and the local authority. Learners have access to a variety of beginners' ICT courses in localities near to where they live. The college is the main provider of the higher-level courses, but a few learning centres also offer accredited courses and more advanced digital photography courses. A learning centre manager has been recruited as an 'e-learning champion' to co-ordinate an analysis of the ICT skill needs of all tutors.

Retail and commercial enterprise   Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Beauty therapy		*2*
Adult and community learning	297	2

67. This area of learning provides non-accredited courses for adults in alternative and holistic therapies, offered as first steps to accredited learning. The course offer includes aromatherapy, reflexology, Indian head massage, crystal therapy, meditation and colour therapy, which is delivered primarily as an introduction to holistic therapies.

68. In the academic year 2004-05, 297 learners made 398 enrolments on 32 courses. Of these learners, 12 per cent were identified as having a learning disability. The learners were predominantly women who constituted 82 per cent of learners.

69. Courses are provided during the day and in the evening, with 212 enrolments for evening classes and 116 for daytime classes. A few courses are provided at weekends. All courses are provided on the basis of two hours each week over a period of either eight or 10 weeks. Venues are selected to ensure ease of access for the learners. A recently appointed curriculum team leader manages the provision.

Beauty therapy   *Grade 2*

Strengths

- very good standards of teaching and learning
- very well-qualified and experienced teachers
- good range of provision to meet learners' needs and aspirations
- good initial advice and guidance from partners

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of achievements
- incomplete system to identify literacy and numeracy needs

Achievement and standards

70. The retention rate for 2004-05 was 72 per cent overall and is satisfactory, although one learning centre reported 100 per cent retention of learners for the period.

71. Many learners attain personal and practical skills with the holistic therapy courses.   All of the learners confirmed high levels of personal satisfaction and enjoyment from their work. Several learners have enrolled on this type of course in order to help cope with personal stress and have identified a renewed sense of well-being.

72. One teacher has progressed from being a first steps learner on an aromatherapy course to gaining qualifications on an accredited course, and is currently studying for a foundation degree in complementary therapies. This learner received a national award for learner of the year for the Northwest region.

73. Goals and targets are not set in all classes. Achievements are not monitored sufficiently in some lessons, where individual learning plans are not completed and learners do not have ownership of their plans. Many individual learning plans have part A and B completed, but learners are not set individual targets. Two learning centres promote good practice in which learners have a personal file which holds their individual learning plan, learning agreement and course notes. The learners use this file at each lesson. They have identified their personal learning goals, and are monitoring them each week.

The quality of provision

74. Standards of teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are challenging and stimulating and tutors use a good variety of teaching and learning strategies. A very good standard of teaching materials is used, and many of the materials belong to the tutors themselves. For example, one teacher brings in her own therapy chair, while others bring scented candles, ionizers, CD players and appropriate music tapes. Teachers make good links between theory and practice. Support for individuals is particularly strong. Tutors give inspiring demonstrations and encourage learners' interest in the various disciplines. All tutors ensure that they meet the needs of new and experienced learners.

75. Well-planned lessons include a variety of activities with clear differentiation strategies for individual learners. For example in one class, the tutor was able to demonstrate basic techniques to one inexperienced learner and a specific, more advanced method to another. Tutors set challenging tasks for learners in order to stretch their learning capacity. In some classes, learners provide their own equipment and are advised what to purchase by their tutors to avoid unnecessary expenditure. In one class, learners were able to purchase specialist items from the tutor such as thumbprint crystals and dowsing crystals.

76. Tutors in holistic therapies are very well qualified and have current commercial experience. The tutors possess a wide range of holistic therapy qualifications, which enable them to offer a broad range of subjects within their taster programmes. Tutors' qualifications cover Reiki, Indian head massage, aromatherapy, aromatherapy for carers, crystal therapy, colour therapy, reflexology and sign language. All tutors are practising therapists and are able to refer to their personal experiences to add to the learning experience.

77. A good range of provision meets learners' needs and aspirations. Learners feel confident enough to progress from their first steps and taster courses to other provision. They are able to progress to accredited provision at the partner college, or other adult and community learning provision that the learners themselves consider to be more challenging. Several learners have progressed from holistic therapy taster courses to ICT taster courses and then to an examination-based qualification in IT. Good progression pathways allow a good proportion of the learners to progress to accredited learning. Seven of nine learners from one intake progressed to accredited provision.

78. Initial advice and guidance from partner schools are good. All learners attend an induction session before enrolling. They meet their tutors and discuss their personal aspirations and goals relative to the course content and requirements. Learners speak very well of these events and believe that they had all the necessary information before enrolling on their courses. The well-informed reception staff are able to direct learners to the correct tutor and are very efficient in carrying out the learners' requests regarding enrolment. For

example, one learner was unable to attend enrolment but had the information posted to her and was contacted by the school office to arrange an interview with the tutor before enrolment.

79. The accommodation for holistic therapy classes is satisfactory. Some schools are able to provide more appropriate facilities than others. One class is held in a school library which is relatively quiet and has low-level lighting and easy chairs, which is conducive to relaxation. Another room has easy chairs at the back of the classroom, which learners use for group or paired work. At one school the lesson was held in a cramped mathematics classroom that the learners felt was not conducive to relaxation and the aims of their course. Many tutors bring in their own equipment, such as coloured lighting and scented candles.

80. The service's system for identifying additional learning needs is incomplete. There is no formal screening for literacy and numeracy needs. Learners can identify their own needs at enrolment, which are then recorded in the individual learning plans. Late enrollers sometimes miss this process. These identified needs do not always reach the attention of tutors. For example, one learner identified a learning need at enrolment, but the tutor was not told. The tutor identified the problem herself in week three of the course, and took immediate action.

Leadership and management

81. Staff development arrangements are satisfactory. Lessons are offered at different times of the day and at different locations to allow the maximum number of learners to attend. If tutors are unable to attend learning centres, the information is sent by post and centre managers are on hand to explain any issues. However, records of attendance are incomplete and some tutors have not received the information.

82. Curriculum management is satisfactory. A new curriculum team leader has been appointed. New staff are inducted well and some carry out shadowing exercises with more experienced staff. Standardised planning documents are currently being introduced throughout the curriculum. These are used very well in some lessons and not so well in others. There is also some informal sharing of best practice between tutors. Allowances have been made in timetabling for access to classrooms and rooms have been changed at most learning centres to allow better access. For example, one classroom was changed to a ground floor as some of the learners have heavy boxes of equipment to carry from their cars. Text was provided in an appropriate font on coloured paper for one learner who was severely dyslexic. One teacher learnt sign language as she had a partially sighted learner in her class.

83. The self-assessment report does not refer specifically to this area of learning, but the judgements made for the first steps personal development area relate to this area and are accurate.

Leisure, travel and tourism   Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Sport, leisure and recreation		*3*
Adult and community learning	125	3

84. At the time of inspection there were 125 learners on sport, leisure and recreation courses. These courses include yoga, Pilates and aerobics. The provision is delivered at four locations, and the courses take place during the evenings. Most courses last for between five and 10 weeks, with some longer courses. In 2004-05, 91.7 per cent of learners were women, 27 per cent were aged 35 to 44 years of age, 28 per cent of learners were over 55, and approximately 1.5 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. Five per cent of learners had a declared disability. Currently there are six part-time tutors.

Sport, leisure and recreation   *Grade 3*

Strengths

- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective systems to support learners' needs
- good partnership working

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- inadequate completion of health screening
- inadequate use of data to monitor achievements and progression

Achievement and standards

85. Learners make good improvements to their health, fitness and well-being. They improve their mobility, flexibility and cardio vascular fitness. Learners' quality of movement and their ability to perform complex poses or routines also improve. They perform well, and develop a good understanding of the skills they are learning to improve their everyday experiences.

86. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Retention is satisfactory at 69 per cent.

The quality of provision

87. The standard of practical teaching is good. Learners' practical skills improve during the classes, and tutors provide them with a range of alternative exercises to meet their individual needs. They also incorporate visualisation to help in performance and relaxation. Planning is satisfactory, incorporating detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. Good use is made of a range of teaching styles and strategies, including whole-group instruction, demonstration and correction, individual coaching and, in the better sessions, independent and peer learning. Lessons are conducted in a safe and effective manner, including clearly articulated teaching and coaching points to correct performances. In yoga, learners are

able to progress at their own pace as they develop specific postures and movements. In Pilates and aerobics, learners accomplish co-ordinated group movements.

88. The provider's systems are very effective in meeting the needs of learners. Managers ensure that the provision meets the needs of new learners, particularly the hard-to-reach learners. The individual learning centre programmes are devised following a detailed consultation process with the local community. Good links exist with a range of voluntary and community groups, such as local national governing bodies of sport, as well as the police, to develop leadership programmes to support community development.

89. Partnership working is good and co-operating learning centres work to improve access and progression for learners. Learners who may not have progression opportunities open to them at one centre are referred to a more suitable venue. Pre-course and induction materials are satisfactory. Learners are advised of their health and safety responsibilities, equality and diversity, fire drills, the individual learning plan and the learners' charter. Course handouts are provided by most tutors to reinforce learning.

90. Learners' progress is not monitored and recorded sufficiently. Individual learning plans are not always completed, and in some classes neither tutors nor learners take ownership of the plans. Learners' aspirations are not added to the overall course outcomes.

91. The completion of health screening is inadequate. There is no standard procedure throughout the service. Some courses do not use any health screening forms, and others use a form, but in many cases it is only partially completed. Information is not used to support initial assessments, or to modify session planning to meet individual learners' needs.

Leadership and management

92. Resources to support the area of learning are satisfactory. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced, and training events include topics such as equality and diversity, health and safety, and disability awareness. Staff carry out sports-specific continuing professional development using their own resources.

93. Appropriate and adequate accommodation is provided for sport courses, and health and safety measures are adequate. Some tutors provide their own support materials. Learners are aware of, and have a basic understanding of the equality and diversity policy and the learners' charter. The subject is included in the induction process, and learners do recall this when questioned. However, tutors do not reinforce equality and diversity during classes. All learners are dealt with fairly and appropriately.

94. The self-assessment report refers to first steps and personal development rather than sport and leisure courses. Some general comments are relevant, but some judgements are not well supported in the text.

95. Data is not used adequately to monitor achievement and progression. There is no centralised data for the local education authority to use in assessing progression rates in sport and recreation courses. Some data is provided by some learning centres, but this is not collated or analysed to provide meaningful information to inform the decision-making processes.

Arts, media and publishing   **Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance Adult and community learning	118	2
Fine arts Adult and community learning	174	2
Crafts Adult and community learning	450	2

96. In 2004-05, this area of learning provided a total of 42 courses, through five subcontractors, which constituted nearly 30 per cent of the council's provision. All of these courses were non-accredited. The total number of learners was 742 and, of these, just over 10 per cent were men. Eighty-seven per cent of the learners completed their courses. Twenty-one per cent of the learners were aged over 65 and 10 per cent declared a disability. Twenty-one arts and crafts classes and one dancing class have been operating since September 2005. These are all first steps back into learning courses for beginners.

97. The courses are held in 12 learning centres which include schools and neighbourhood learning centres. These are spread throughout the district. Classes take place during the day and on weekday evenings, and some are available throughout the summer. The tutors are part time, mainly teaching for between two and four hours each week. Classes are generally of two hours' duration and usually last for between five and 10 weeks. Courses include woodwork, painting and drawing, floral art, greetings cards, Christmas crafts and tap-dancing for beginners.

Strengths

- good development of personal and learning skills
- good retention rate
- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective partnerships

Weaknesses

- restricted range of courses

Achievement and standards

98. Learners in arts, crafts and dancing courses develop good personal and learning skills. The learners are enthusiastic about their progress towards the high standard of skills required to perform and to create craft items and paintings. They are challenged by the high expectations of their tutors and often exceed their own learning goals. For example, in a painting class, some beginners had completed work of a high enough standard to be shown on the learning centre's website. Learners compile portfolios of work, which they use as reference tools for further development. For example, in a flower arranging class, learners with mental and physical disabilities made personal folders containing photographs of them performing various skills in creating beautiful arrangements. They took the folders

home to show their families. This improved their self-esteem and confidence.

99. Learners on all courses produce a very good standard of finished work in a short space of time. In some courses they gain additional skills. For example, in a woodwork class, learners were taking photos with a digital camera and printing them off for their portfolios. The learners in the tap-dancing class improve their fitness levels as well as gaining great enjoyment from the performance itself. Learners quickly build up the confidence to take their skills back to their families and into the community. They develop self-belief, progressing to further learning.

100. Learners use individual learning plans to monitor and record their learning and achievement of learning goals. In some courses these plans are completed during every lesson, and build up to a final evaluation of the course with ideas for progression. This process is particularly effective in identifying a desire, as well as an ability, to progress.

101. Retention rates are good. In 2004-05, 87 per cent of learners from a total of 532 completed their courses. Learners attend regularly and show considerable commitment and motivation.

The quality of provision

102. Good standards of teaching and learning are achieved throughout the area of learning by well-qualified and appropriately experienced tutors, some of whom have good additional skills. All of the lessons observed at inspection were good. Tutors use a good range of teaching styles to meet learners' needs, including appropriate methods to integrate learners who have disabilities. For example, the tutor in a tap-dancing class made certain that a profoundly deaf learner was 'feeling' the sound through the floor and the beat of the dancing. Tutors provide very clear demonstrations to motivate and inspire learners in the craft skills. In a card-making class, the tutor incorporated the card designs created by previous learners, who were also beginners, to give confidence to learners who had been away from any kind of learning for many years, and who did not initially believe that they could achieve anything.

103. Tutors have detailed and easy-to-follow schemes of work with flexible lesson planning which allows the needs of their learners to be accommodated. For example, in a Christmas craft class, the tutor immediately responded to learners' requests to be shown the various uses of new cutting tools and the different kinds of guillotines now available. Clear, constructive verbal feedback enables learners to gauge their progress and to know what to do next. They begin to learn how to evaluate their own work. Peer group learning is productive in all arts and crafts courses. Learners help each other to solve problems, to choose designs and colour schemes and to share equipment and materials willingly.

104. Learners have the use of an extensive range of tools and equipment, especially in secondary schools. Access to information learning technology is readily available and some courses make use of digital photography and research their subjects on the internet. However, some classrooms are overcrowded because of the recruitment of too many learners, and some rooms are so full of superfluous furniture that tutors and learners have difficulty in moving easily around the working areas. One flower-arranging class had no ready access to water, which had to be carried in heavy buckets along a corridor.

105. Information about courses and programmes is readily available to learners. Leaflets

are distributed with newspapers, and advertisements are placed in local newspapers and libraries. Potential learners may call in to local learning centres, or telephone or e-mail for information. Learners find learning centre staff to be approachable and helpful before and after learners join their courses. The information provided about progression to the accredited courses provided by partners is well presented.

106. The crafts area offers a particularly narrow range of courses. Of the 21 courses operating during the time of inspection, 10 were about making greetings and other cards. Learners fill these classes and enjoy the courses, but they are not being given the opportunity to select from a wider range of options to expand their skills and confidence in learning. Some of the better tutors already working in the area have additional qualifications in further craft options, which could be easily utilised. Arts courses provide more variety, with glass painting and painting miniatures among the options.

Leadership and management

107. Effective partnerships contribute to good, locally accessible provision of courses. Learners can enrol at more than one learning centre if they wish. The service's management has good communications with all learning centres, and the centres communicate well with each other. Regular meetings take place to share information and direct the provision. Tutors meet together more informally, as some work at more than one learning centre, and are able to share good practice. They are well supported by local learning centre managers.

108. The whole provision is aimed at widening participation for those learners who are hard to reach, or who have not been involved with formal education for many years. The arts and crafts courses fulfil this aim very successfully. Some learners progress to accredited courses in a relatively short space of time, giving them a sense of satisfaction and pride in their new-found skills. Some of the learning centres have wheelchair accessibility and ground-floor provision, but other buildings are difficult to access from the car parks and some classes are held on the first floor with no lift.

109. Support for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. Tutors report that it is difficult to identify literacy and numeracy problems in subjects which are 'hands on' and require few literacy or numeracy skills. The portfolio work in short courses often consists of the learners' actual creative work, and written work is minimal. Some subjects such as woodwork require a few basic numeracy skills. Tutors are aware of how to help learners who do request support.

110. So far, only a few observations of teaching and learning have taken place. Of these, one took place during the week of inspection and the observation grade was compatible with the inspection grade. The overall standard of teaching in arts, crafts and dancing courses is very good. Tutors reported that staff training was readily available and used as required. The self-assessment report is generalised and includes several areas under first steps, rather than referring specifically to the arts and crafts area of learning. The report did not identify some of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspection.

Preparation for life and work   Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy and numeracy		*2*
Adult and community learning	147	2

111. The service offers a range of community-based provision for learners with literacy and/or numeracy needs. The provider develops, co-ordinates, funds and quality assures the learning provision, which is subcontracted to Working Wonders, a partner organisation. The provision is designed to involve hard-to-reach learners.

112. Working Wonders currently offers 31 courses at 31 learning centres. These courses are offered to hard-to-reach learners in disadvantaged communities. Each course includes literacy, numeracy, IT and English for speakers of other languages. The courses are first steps to learning and are non-accredited. However, accredited courses are available, and if learners wish to develop their skills further they can work towards nationally recognised tests. The courses range from one-off two-hour lessons, to a course that lasts for a number of weeks. Lessons are offered during the day and evenings. Courses are provided in community venues close to learners' homes. One hundred and forty-seven learners are enrolled on courses this year, compared with 179 learners in 2004-05. Thirty-nine per cent of enrolled learners are men, and 13 per cent are from minority ethnic communities.

113. The service employs two people, job sharing in a single full-time equivalent management post, and a skills for life co-ordinator who works directly with Working Wonders. This subcontractor currently employs a learning centre manager, a curriculum co-ordinator, 10 tutors, five support staff and three crèche staff.

Literacy and numeracy   *Grade 2*

Strengths

- good development of personal skills
- good achievement rate
- responsive and effective partnerships
- innovative programmes to attract hard-to-reach learners
- successful implementation of skills for life strategy

Weaknesses

- insufficient setting and recording of learners' targets
- incomplete quality assurance systems

Achievement and standards

114. Learners' personal skills are developed well. They gain in confidence, and develop effective communication and listening skills. The development of these skills enables learners to achieve a good standard of work, qualifications in literacy or numeracy, and in some cases, paid employment. The subcontractor now employs several learners as

learning support assistants.

115. Achievement levels are good, and of the 37 learners who took literacy or numeracy tests, 35 passed. The subcontractor arranges the test, provides the transport to the test centre and also provides a support person to sit in with the learners. These arrangements have proved successful in supporting learners to achieve their goals. Learners' attendance during the inspection was satisfactory, at 62.5 per cent. Attending one lesson is in itself a personal achievement for some learners.

The quality of provision

116. Partnership arrangements are responsive and very effective. Currently, 36 partners are involved with the subcontractor to develop the provision. The partners are from the voluntary and community sectors and employers. Strong partnerships exist with the community safety team, social services, and the alcohol and drug services. The partners, together with the subcontractor's staff, encourage potential learners to enrol for courses that are appropriate for them. Marketing of the provision to individuals has proved to be more effective than traditional marketing techniques. For example, one homeless learner attended the Key Project and was found accommodation with another partner, a local housing association. The learner attended literacy and numeracy lessons delivered on the association's premises and enrolled on a college course. Working Wonders provides transport and tutors, and supports the learners with crèche staff, to allow the learners to attend lessons.

117. Innovative programmes meet the needs of hard-to-reach learners. For example, a minibus provided by the local education authority picks up the homeless learners who attend lessons. These learners are then taken to a local employer where they are given lunch. This employer is also prepared to help them with writing their curriculum vitae and with possible employment opportunities. The learners also receive help with literacy and numeracy skills from the subcontractor's tutors. The subcontractor has an effective partnership arrangement with the Key Project, aimed at people who are sleeping on the street. Transport and breakfast are provided for the learners who are brought in to attend literacy and numeracy sessions. Working Wonders also offers a programme to help people with dyslexia. Learners following this programme have increased their reading age by one year.

118. All learners are encouraged to identify their level of literacy and/or numeracy skills. The subcontractor uses a paper-based initial assessment, the outcomes of which are used as the basis for target-setting in the individual learning plan. This process is satisfactory. Learners who are identified as having additional literacy needs are referred for a dyslexia adult screening test, and are offered advice and support. Learners also receive satisfactory support for pastoral issues and regularly receive information and guidance regarding progression to other provision. Learners who have enough confidence and skills to progress do so satisfactorily.

119. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors use teaching strategies and resources effectively to encourage learners to achieve a good standard of work and to develop their personal skills. Learners show confidence and demonstrate good standards in their work.

120. Individual learning plans do not contain sufficient target-setting and records of

achievement. The targets set are not specific to the needs of the individual learner. They are very broad and are not achievable. In most individual learning plans the targets are punctuation, grammar and form-filling. Neither the learners nor the tutors record achievements. Skills developed by the learners are not used to review and to set new targets.

Leadership and management

121. The service has successfully implemented the government's skills for life strategy. In 2003-04 report, the service identified the level of need for literacy and numeracy provision within the area. The service, with the help of Working Wonders, has successfully implemented the findings of the report. The provider has a planned programme of staff development and all curriculum staff have received awareness-raising for specific areas. There are regular team meetings and good communications between the subcontractor and the service to monitor targets, developments, and the progress of the learners. The service employs a skills for life team leader whose role it is to support the work of the subcontractor. Working Wonders has also been involved with the skills for life quality initiative and has met most of the targets set to develop a whole-organisation approach, and to develop a professional skills for life workforce.

122. Staff attend staff meetings on a regular basis and receive copies of the minutes. Communications and support for staff are very effective. Most of the subcontractor's staff are appropriately qualified, or are working for qualifications. Staff development is encouraged and most staff have received awareness-raising training in equality and diversity. The accommodation is fit for purpose and the resources used in the classroom are satisfactory. The self-assessment process is satisfactory and involves the subcontractor. Its tutors also contribute in an informal way. The inspection findings matched all of the strengths but none of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

123. Quality assurance systems are incomplete. The lesson observation scheme has not been fully implemented by the subcontractor. The external observations that have been carried out focus on teaching rather than on the learning process. The service has carried out two observations of Working Wonders' staff. There are no staff appraisals. Currently, no course reviews are carried out. Most of the lessons inspected did not have a scheme of work. Data provided by the subcontractor differs significantly from the information provided by the service.

Family learning   **Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning		*2*
Adult and community learning	1,236	2

124. The provision consists of family learning and family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) courses. These include family learning science, local cultural interest, crafts and ICT. FLLN courses range from early start, and foundation to key stages 1, 2 and 3. These courses are linked to adult literacy and numeracy accreditation and to qualifications for teaching assistants. The lengths of the courses vary from two-hour introductory workshops to 12-hour programmes. Most are held during the daytime, with occasional evening and weekend sessions. In 2004-05, 1,236 learners attended 356 programmes at 64 venues. Ninety-eight per cent of learners were women, and less than 1 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. Programmes are delivered in partnership with other organisations and schools. Sixteen tutors employed by a partner college deliver the programmes and are managed by the family learning co-ordinator who is seconded from the college to develop and co-ordinate the provision.

Adult and community learning   *Grade 2*

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good support for progression
- very effective partnerships

Weaknesses

- inadequate individual learning plans and recording of progress
- no strategy to attract male learners

Achievement and standards

125. Retention is good, with 88 per cent of learners retained on FLLN courses and 92 per cent on family learning courses. Of the 1,236 learners in 2004-05, 488 progressed to accreditation. Eighty-eight per cent of those who took the national test in literacy or numeracy passed. Learners report positive outcomes in terms of skills, knowledge and an understanding of how their children learn. They produce games and activities to use with their children and gain the confidence to help them and to put into practice what they have learnt on the programme. Many learners become volunteers at a school, progress to a teaching assistant course, or gain jobs. One learner who has completed a number of family learning courses, including one on the science curriculum, has started a science club for children after school.

The quality of provision

126. Support for progression is good. Thirty-nine per cent of the learners progressed to accreditation in 2004-05. Learners experience seamless continuation, with the same tutor who delivers the family literacy and numeracy delivering the three-week college programme to prepare learners to take the national qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy. Follow-on programmes are provided on request in the same venues, when a need is identified. In the longer programmes, learners enrol for one term and then choose, as a group, if they want to continue for a further term. They subsequently progress to accreditation. Learners are supported to progress to a teaching assistant course and help is provided to find work placements for volunteers. Sure Start provides a basic training course in volunteering. Tutors give information to learners about progression routes and refer to specialist information, advice and guidance if required.

127. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Thirty-four per cent of classes had satisfactory standards and 66 per cent were good. There are clear lesson and programme plans. In the good lessons a range of methods is used to suit adult learners and to draw on their experiences. Tutors are knowledgeable about the national curriculum for children in English, mathematics and science, and are enthusiastic when passing this information on to parents and carers. Tutors develop a good rapport with the learners. However, some tutors do not have enough experience and training in how adults learn. These tutors do not make the most of learning opportunities. In other lessons, where programmes are double-staffed to work separately with adults and children, neither tutor has specific knowledge of adult literacy and numeracy skills teaching.

128. Fifteen programmes are offered in different venues. These programmes are repeated throughout the year. The programme is responsive to requests from schools. Twelve longer programmes, for adults and children together, are provided each year in selected schools in areas of greatest deprivation, in consultation with school advisers. Those schools that are not selected are offered family learning programmes, but for adults only. Two-hour introductory workshops are held in the summer to recruit learners for the autumn term. These are held either when children are about to start primary school, or before transition to secondary school. Programmes are in accessible community venues.

129. Tutors produce and share materials that are mainly paper-based and copies are stored in two resource centres. In the best lessons, the pre-designed programmes, materials and handouts are used selectively to support teaching, but in others they are more rigidly adhered to and tutors try to cover too much material. ICT is available in many venues, but is not always accessible or used as an integral part of FLLN lessons. A range of toys and games is used and can be loaned to parents and carers.

130. Assessment is informal on most courses, but formal assessment is applied when learners progress to accredited provision. Individual learning plans and the recording of progress are not developed sufficiently. Group plans are agreed with learners and individual aims are added. These are general statements about helping their children rather than specific learning targets. No records are kept of learners' progress. Learners are not encouraged to reflect on their own learning. They may list activities but not what they have learnt. End-of-course reviews, particularly where learners progress to an accredited course, may identify more specific needs. A pilot scheme whereby learners take the national test in literacy or numeracy online gives them instant feedback.

131. Tutors identify individual additional support needs and understand how they can access appropriate support. Learners for whom English is an additional language receive individual support. Literacy and numeracy support may be given within or in addition to a family learning session.

132. Crèche provision is available in some venues and schools are given financial support. However, in many schools there is no accommodation for childcare facilities, particularly in newly built primary schools.

133. Only 2 per cent of the learners are men and there is no strategy to involve fathers or male carers. Most classes are held during the day, with the exception of the teaching assistant courses. In one secondary school, where Key Stage mathematics was offered, the feedback from 30 parents who were unable to attend was that they would prefer evening sessions, as many of these parents were men. Provision will respond to this request. Where men do attend, it is by chance rather than design. None of the programmes are specifically targeted at fathers and male carers. Programmes such as family science, which might have attracted male learners, are held during the day. The service has not set targets to recruit male learners.

Leadership and management

134. Effective partnerships ensure that all learning provision for families is co-ordinated and that resources are used to their full extent. A family learning steering group includes representatives from key partners. A range of programmes is offered by different providers, but duplication is avoided and programmes complement each other. Sure Start and the new children's centres provide accessible bases for family learning programmes in venues that learners are already familiar with, while also offering other learning opportunities for parents and carers. Step Into Learning is a pilot programme which is used to work with staff in early years settings to enable them to direct parents and carers to adult literacy and numeracy programmes. Family learning also supports this pilot programme by providing literacy and numeracy modules for the learners who may then pursue a professional qualification for a certificate in adult learner support.

135. The library service Book Start programme introduces books to babies and works closely with family learning, as well as promoting family learning programmes and recruiting parents. Schools offer additional opportunities for families. One school's teacher and its governors have analysed how the total provision in the school supports the five outcomes of Every Child Matters which is a range of measures to reform and improve children's care. The service's partnership with the college enables learners to move from non-accredited provision to gain qualifications, using one venue and the same tutor. This makes the most of available resources for both family learning and the college.

136. The family learning co-ordinator manages 16 tutors. Communications are effective, using letters, e-mails, telephones and personal contact. Staff meetings held each term provide opportunities to discuss issues and share good practice. Tutors have up to 20 paid hours each year to attend meetings and staff development events. E-materials have been developed collectively and are universally available. Staff have attended training to update their knowledge of the national curriculum for children, but they have not all attended training for adult literacy and numeracy skills.

137. Quality improvement is satisfactory. Fifty per cent of the tutors have been observed teaching. The service has appropriate systems and monitoring procedures. Learners complete an end-of-course evaluation and after one year are asked how they were affected by the course. One hundred learners responded to the most recent survey and the results were analysed. Head teachers are also asked to respond annually about the effects of courses on learners and the school. Actions are taken based on the responses.

138. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Programmes are successful in recruiting hard-to-reach learners. Disability audits have been carried out on buildings and the co-ordinator has attended training concerning the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Learners with disabilities can access specific equipment.

139. The self-assessment report identified the strengths found by the inspection team, but not the weaknesses. The weaknesses that were identified in the self-assessment report are being resolved.