

REINSPECTION REPORT

South Tyneside Council's Adult and Community Learning Service Reinspection

02 June 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

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

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

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. South Tyneside Council's Adult and Community Learning Service (STCACLS) operated within the directorate of lifelong learning and leisure during its inspection in February 2005, and is now part of the transition and well-being service within the children and young people's directorate, following restructure. Since the inspection, an adult learning manager has been appointed to a permanent post and the service has been completely refocused to concentrate on 'first steps' provision to meet the needs of the local population in line with government priorities. Traditional adult and community learning classes have been subcontracted or diverted to other providers, with a few 'first steps' learning opportunities in some subject areas being incorporated into one of the provider's three new strands of community development, skills for life and skills for work. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The family learning and foundation programmes currently run by the provider replace the former programmes which operated under the same names. They are run by new teams, and their focus is different, concentrating now on priority groups that are harder to engage than the former client group. Community development is new provision, and is the provider's main focus. There are 35 tutors who have direct contracts with the provider. Provision is offered in a range of venues in the community, many of which are managed by external organisations and quality assured by the provider through service level agreements. Most provision is supported through the Learning and Skills Council, and includes work-based learning programmes in construction and engineering. Inspectors reported on three areas of provision, family learning, community development and foundation programmes, all of which include elements of the curriculum formerly offered as adult and community learning provision. Separate curriculum areas are now too small to be inspected discretely. In 2004-05, there were just under 2,000 enrolments on courses within the areas inspected.

2. South Tyneside is the smallest metropolitan borough in England and covers the six areas of South Shields, Jarrow, Hebburn, Boldon, Whitburn and Cleadon. The borough suffered from the decline of traditional coalmining, shipbuilding and heavy engineering industries in the 1970s and 1980s, leaving a legacy of significant social and economic deprivation.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Foundation programmes

3. Currently, 193 learners are on foundation courses. Ninety are on literacy and numeracy courses and 103 are on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. Thirty-nine per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups, 57 per cent are women and 8 per cent have a disability.

4. Seventeen literacy and numeracy courses and 21 ESOL courses are provided

throughout South Tyneside. Courses take place in six venues, including community centres and social centres. All courses are part time for two hours each week either in the daytime or in the evenings. Some learners attend more than one course. The shortest courses last for five weeks and the longest for over 30 weeks. Most courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications. All learners are interviewed and assessed to ascertain their literacy, numeracy and language competences before joining a course. Learners can join a course at any time during the year. The courses are managed by a full-time skills for life officer and a full-time skills for life co-ordinator. Four full-time tutors and two skills for life tutors who job-share have developmental and teaching roles. There are also eight part-time tutors.

Family learning

5. STACLS offers a wide range of part-time family learning courses, including family literacy and numeracy, 'keeping up with the children' and 'family learning through football'. In 2005-06 the service subcontracted 89 per cent of its family learning to a wide variety of local providers. These comprise four training organisations, Learning First, Sunderland Association Football Club Foundation, the children's society and Groundworks, five schools, including the early excellence centre, and five local community groups. The remaining 11 per cent of the provision has been through direct delivery. Courses vary in length from two hours to 30 weeks. Ninety-six adult learners have completed courses since September 2005. Eighteen per cent of learners are from minority ethnic communities, 5 per cent are men, 1 per cent is under 19 years old, 4 per cent are over 55 and 21 per cent have disclosed a learning difficulty or disability. Courses run throughout term time, and tasters are held during school holidays. None of the current courses are accredited. The widening participation team leader has responsibility for managing this area. Two tutors deliver the courses.

Community development

6. STACLS's community development provision is based on the formation of partnerships with a variety of local, regional and national organisations. Its aim is to support members of community organisations to provide relevant learning opportunities and to increase the facilities available in their communities. In particular, the focus is on widening participation through the engagement of individuals, groups and communities that are socially and economically disadvantaged. In 2005-06 the service supported projects with 51 different local organisations ranging from very small community groups to regional providers of education and training. The area of learning is managed by a team leader, a lead officer, a community development co-ordinator and six full-time equivalent community development workers. In 2004-05, 1,094 learners enrolled on community development programmes. STACLS subcontracts these to local providers and community organisations. Projects range from one-day taster courses to year-long programmes of up to 240 guided learning hours. Most courses do not lead to national qualifications and provide a 'first step' to other learning opportunities. Most projects last between 10 and 30 weeks, follow school terms, and take place during the day and evenings on weekdays.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	34
Number of learners interviewed	126
Number of staff interviewed	71
Number of subcontractors interviewed	29
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	19
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	6
Number of visits	5

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. At the inspection which took place in February 2005, the overall quality of provision was not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Provision was unsatisfactory in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and in English, languages and communications. The provision in information and communications technology (ICT), visual and performing arts and media and in foundation programmes was satisfactory. Provision was good in business administration, management and professional, and in family learning. Leadership and management were unsatisfactory and quality assurance of the provision was very weak. Arrangements for equality of opportunity were satisfactory.

8. At the reinspection, which was completed in June 2006, the overall quality of the provision has improved. Provision in all of the subject areas is subcontracted out or incorporated into the provider's 'first steps' provision, and was not inspected discretely. Grades were given to community development, family learning and foundation programmes. Both the family learning and the foundation provision are radically different from the provision in the previous inspection. They have been refocused on priority groups rather than on traditional adult and community learners, and cannot be directly compared with the provision which existed at the time of the inspection. Community development is new provision, and is the provider's main focus. Provision is good in community development, and is satisfactory in family learning. Provision in foundation courses is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory, equality of opportunity is good, and the arrangements for quality assurance are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	5

Business administration, management & professional		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Business administration - Adult and community learning	55	2

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT - Adult and community learning	307	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation - Adult and community learning	990	4

Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Arts - Adult and community learning	216	3
Crafts - Adult and community learning	646	3
Other contributory areas - Adult and community learning	595	3

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English, languages & communications		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Languages - Adult and community learning	409	4

Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL - Adult and community learning	86	3
Literacy and numeracy - Adult and community learning	170	3

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	276	2

Grades awarded at reinspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality assurance		4

Foundation programmes		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL - Adult and community learning	103	4
Literacy and numeracy - Adult and community learning	90	4

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	96	3

Community development		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	1094	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. **Almost all learners who take qualifications in numeracy within foundation programmes pass them.** About half of all learners who joined a literacy or numeracy course in the current year have gained a national qualification at level 1 or 2. Just under two-thirds of learners who took literacy qualifications passed them last year. Pass rates in ESOL were good at level 2, but only just over a third of learners gained their level 1 qualification.

10. **Most learners in family learning and community development complete their programmes.** Most learners do well on courses, and learn what they set out to learn.

11. **Learners on community development programmes develop a good range of knowledge, skills and abilities.** They become more confident, and gain the ability to manage community programmes well. Volunteer workers who attend courses gain relevant national qualifications which they use to develop the skills and knowledge of other members of the community. Many learners develop good social and inter-personal skills.

12. **In community development, retention rates are very good and improving.** In 2004-05, 86.5 per cent of learners completed their programme. For 2005-06, 99 per cent of learners have completed courses to date. However, attendance rates are variable and are particularly low on some courses.

Quality of education and training

13. **There is good provision of additional learning resources across all of the curriculum areas.** The provider has built up a catalogue of resources, and information on availability is well promoted. Many learners benefit from using these resources. There are also good arrangements for sharing resources across subcontractors.

14. **In family learning, there is good progression to other provision and to employment.** Many learners use their new skills and confidence to further their careers or their career prospects.

15. **In literacy and numeracy there is insufficient identification and achievement of learners' long-term goals.** Tutors are supportive, but do not always prepare learners adequately for the next stage in their development. Targets are often imprecise and do not allow learners to plan their studies.

16. **In literacy and numeracy, the range of resources used in classes is narrow.** Many activities are based around worksheets, and do not stimulate learners. There is insufficient use of real, relevant resources that learners can identify with.

17. **In ESOL there is insufficient use of contexts to develop learning.** The individual aims and circumstances of learners are not always taken fully into account when learning activities are planned. Many learners work on generalised tasks which do not include specific vocabulary and background information. Learners do not always see the relevance of the language to their everyday lives.

18. **In family learning, there is insufficient use of technology to enhance learning.** Learners do not always have the opportunity to work with computers in the classroom, and do not have enough confidence to apply for jobs that may require these skills. Parents do not always feel able to help their children with school tasks that require computers.

19. **In community development, recognition and reporting of learners' progress and achievement has been slow.** Initial assessment is not always well used to guide further learning. Ongoing evaluation of learning is not always well focused on learners' attainment and achievement.

Leadership and management

20. **The provider has a good strategy for developing skills for life provision.** This has been formulated well to cater for the identified needs of the local population. Good information has been used to develop the strategy, which is realistic and achievable.

21. **In all curriculum areas there is now a much better focus on the needs of the local communities.** The provider has attracted many difficult to reach groups and has reshaped its provision to ensure that it is accessible. The client group has changed radically in the past year, and people who need it most are now benefiting from appropriate provision.

22. **The provider works well with a wide range of partners** to ensure that provision is comprehensive and appropriate. Many of the partner organisations have direct, well-established links with the provider's priority groups. The provider uses this expertise well to support community groups and learners.

23. **In ESOL, there has been slow development of tutors' expertise.** The provider has had difficulty recruiting tutors, and most appointments have been recent. Training and development is under way, but at present the team is relatively inexperienced.

24. **In all curriculum areas there is inadequate evaluation of teaching and learning.** The provider is developing a system of observations of teaching and learning, but early pilots of this have not been successful in identifying areas for improvement and in supporting tutors in their development. Feedback is generic. Tutors do not have a clear idea of how to improve the experience for their learners from the feedback they receive.

25. **In all curriculum areas, links between operational and strategic management are insufficiently well developed.** Strategies are good, but their implementation is not yet complete. Operational managers are not always clear about their roles and responsibilities, and do not always know how to get the information they need to do their jobs well. Most are new to their job roles and, although support is readily available, there are no clear guidelines for communication.

26. **In community development, there are insufficient opportunities for partners to share good practice.** Partners occasionally run complementary programmes, but are unaware of this, and cannot use this information to help learners or tutors. Although the resources between the provider and its partners are shared, there is insufficient sharing of resources among partners.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- very effective restructuring of provision
- effective partnership work to promote comprehensive provision
- good arrangements to support learning

Weaknesses

- insufficiently effective links between operations and strategy
- ineffective quality monitoring of teaching and learning

Foundation programmes

ESOL

Strengths

- good provision of additional learning resources
- good strategy to develop skills for life provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of contexts to develop learning
- slow development of expertise in teaching ESOL
- inadequate evaluation of provision

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good numeracy pass rates
- good strategy to develop skills for life provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient identification and meeting of learners' long-term goals
- narrow range of resources
- inadequate evaluation of provision

Family learning

Strengths

- good retention
- good progression
- increased focus on 'first steps' courses for priority groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of technology to enhance learning
- insufficient quality assurance of teaching and learning
- insufficiently developed curriculum management

Community development

Strengths

- good capacity building
- very good retention rates
- effective development of partnerships to widen participation among identified community groups

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of the processes for recording learners' achievements
- insufficient opportunities for partners to identify and share good practice

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	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	Mentor	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	Main learning goals	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.
	Secondary learning goals	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 and 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 a 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.

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Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
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 selfmanaging, sustainable communities.
Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make a 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 REINSPECTION FINDING

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- very effective restructuring of provision
- effective partnership work to promote comprehensive provision
- good arrangements to support learning

Weaknesses

- insufficiently effective links between operations and strategy
- ineffective quality monitoring of teaching and learning

27. A new adult learning manager took up a permanent post in July 2005, and adult and community learning was repositioned under the children's directorate as part of the strategy to target and meet the needs of priority groups in the most effective way. Strategic leadership is now well established, although this was a key weakness at the previous inspection. There is now very good focus on the needs of priority groups. The service has been totally restructured to accommodate the changes to provision needed to target these groups. The existing provision has been revised with some areas subcontracted to different providers, others operating on a full-cost recovery basis, and 'first steps' provision being strengthened, expanded and refocused to meet the needs of the local population. Plans and strategies are in place, and are linked to regional and national priorities. The provider's mission statement and vision are clear and precise, and have been translated into effective actions to reach out to specific members of the community. The provider has been successful in attracting the groups it has targeted. Systems are in place to ensure that funding is used effectively to support learners and prospective learners. Development workers are deployed effectively to identify and meet the needs of diverse communities, and to inaugurate appropriate provision to develop their potential.

28. STCACLS works effectively with a large number of partners to provide a comprehensive service to local people. This strength is retained from the inspection in February 2005 and has become more focused. The service has recently shared data with these partners to give an overview of the provision and opportunities in the area, and to formulate and promote progression routes and support mechanisms for learners. It works with partners in a wide range of sectors, including other providers, employers, schools, community associations, voluntary groups and the statutory sector. It has service level agreements with each provider it subcontracts with to allow it to monitor the quality of service and to intervene when necessary. It works with specialist groups to secure provision for priority learners, supporting the groups' structures and sharing resources and expertise.

29. STCACLS provides good support for its staff. Staff have been supported through management change to develop skills in new, more responsible roles, and have benefited from training commissioned from external agencies to enhance their skills. Some members of staff are now in radically different roles than those they had at the previous inspection. Although training has been given to staff on all fundamental aspects of their role, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, many managers are new to their post and still have significant training needs in these areas.

30. Financial management is satisfactory. Four cost centres have been merged into one, and there is now better awareness of the real costs of running courses which helps the provider to make clearer judgements on value for money.

31. All members of staff have development plans which are continuously monitored. Strategic objectives are realised through staff development programmes, and full support is given to staff at all levels to achieve their potential. However, some of the provider's teaching staff are not adequately qualified. Some members of staff who were deemed not to have adequate qualifications are being redeployed temporarily while carrying out job-specific training to gain appropriate qualifications and expertise. Training and professional development opportunities are extended to subcontractors' staff as part of the drive to provide a high-quality, comprehensive service to local people. Observers of teaching and learning are trained for their role, and new observers are mentored.

32. The links between operations and strategy are not well defined. This was a weakness at the previous inspection, and remains weak despite structural improvements. The provision encompasses a variety of elements within specific programmes. For example, a learning activity could be defined as community development as well as family learning and skills for life. Operational structures are currently insufficiently developed and do not provide clear lines of responsibility and communication. In these cases, there is a degree of confusion among staff as to how far their responsibilities extend. The management of work-based learning programmes lacks leadership. All current apprentices are employed by a council housing and construction division and it is not clear who is responsible for managing the learners. Learners' reviews are infrequent and there are insufficient staff to deal with the programme. Some learners have insufficient opportunities to access real site work. Some aspects of the entry to employment (E2E) programme are insufficiently managed. The individual learning and development needs of learners are not satisfactorily identified and the programme is insufficiently individualised. There are too few opportunities for learners to sample a range of work placements to enable them to make informed decisions about their future vocational training. Some learners are not on the E2E programme for long enough to develop their personal and social skills.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

33. Provision is now reaching the groups who need it most. The provider has been successful in attracting people from priority under-represented groups, and works well with specialist community groups to expand and support this provision. Family learning programmes are now being delivered in some of the most deprived areas, and a series of

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innovative and engaging activities has been successful in attracting larger numbers of men and people from minority ethnic groups into appropriate provision. Around 26 per cent of current learners are dependent on benefits. People with learning and physical disabilities are now benefiting from tailor-made courses as well as attending some of the existing courses offered by the service. The provider has also extended its provision to include E2E programmes for young people. This was a strength at the previous inspection, and remains so. The widening participation work carried out by the provider is backed up by a comprehensive range of strategies, policies and procedures which apply to the provider and to all its partners.

34. STCACLs has good arrangements to support learning. This is a new strength. It has worked hard to analyse the needs of its learners and to meet those needs. A learning support officer has produced and promoted an easily accessible pack to show what equipment is available to learners, and there is now very good take-up of this offer. In some areas, learners borrow equipment such as voice recorders so that they can record the lessons and practise at home. Tutors are aware of what is available, and make good use of these resources in the teaching. There is financial assistance available to learners, and this is now much better promoted, and take-up has increased. An audit of venues has been carried out, and some unsuitable rooms have been identified. Improvements to venues have been made from this identification, although there is still a good deal of work to be done to make all venues fit for purpose. Transport vouchers are available to eligible learners, and the provider runs six crèches, which are well used. Arrangements are in place to provide alternative childcare for learners whose children cannot attend a crèche. Arrangements to support learning are well managed and well promoted. The provider has moved to new premises which are still being refurbished. The accommodation is already being used for some learning activities, and provides a professional, pleasant working environment for learners. Support staff are available to help in classes. However, they are not always given clear instructions on how they can best help learners. Support for learners with dyslexia is still not fully developed.

35. The provider is fully aware of its responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. It has comprehensive policies and procedures that are generally well understood by staff. Effective training has been provided in equality and diversity, and more training is planned. Staff are now better aware of the need to embrace diversity through their teaching, and there is evidence of some incorporation of this in lesson plans and schemes of work, but it is not routinely monitored in the observations of teaching and learning. The previous inspection identified that there was insufficient promotion of equal opportunities in the curriculum. This has improved after staff training.

36. The provider monitors its provision and policies closely and systematically for equality of opportunity, and has now increased the number of under-represented priority learners. An analysis of comparative performance of groups is also carried out, and changes have been made to programmes to raise the achievement of those who perform less well than others. Arrangements for literacy and numeracy support are comprehensive, but support needs are not always identified and met. In E2E programmes, learners' literacy and numeracy competences are assessed, but are

insufficiently developed while they are on programme.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

37. The provider's management information system was weak at the time of the previous inspection. Now a wide range of management information has been collated, and is being used increasingly by staff to monitor progress. The post-inspection action plan is closely monitored through the management information system, and the provider is using this information well to implement the plan in a logical and coherent way. Actions are audited before being signed off. There is now greater focus on, and attention to, performance management support.

38. STCACLS has developed quality systems which cover every aspect of each learner's journey. These systems are supported by policies and procedures which are the product of accurate analysis of the key stages of provision. The previous inspection identified that quality assurance systems were inadequate, but they are now fit for purpose. However, the full quality cycle has not been completed, and has not been evaluated for complete efficacy by the provider. Target-setting at operational level is inconsistently applied, and is weak in some areas. This has improved since the previous inspection, but is still not fully developed. Individual learning plans are not used well throughout the provision. The provider is aware of this, and is providing further training for staff to counteract it. The service has established quality monitoring visits to all provision, with the number of visits dependent on the length of the course. These are successfully identifying some generic areas for improvement which have been actioned. A new quality improvement forum has been established and this allows the effective sharing of knowledge, understanding and ideas. The provider collects and uses feedback on all aspects of its provision. It is currently revising some of its questions to ensure that feedback is sufficiently critical. There is satisfactory attention to health and safety for learners and staff.

39. The self-assessment process is now continuous and inclusive. All sections dealing with leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality improvement are detailed, honest and critical. They analyse the provider's situation well. However, judgements on the new provision in the current self-assessment report are too descriptive and lack critical detail. These sections do not accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The self-assessment report forms the basis for action-planning, and strategically this is now at least satisfactory, although it is still not fully developed for the new provision. The previous inspection found that the self-assessment report was insufficiently critical.

40. Observations of teaching and learning are the provider's main means of assuring the quality of its provision. This system is currently ineffective. STCACLS has concentrated a good deal of time and effort on developing a system. Observations are currently recorded on generic forms and there is insufficient focus on the quality of teaching and learning. Forms include closed questions, and comments made by observers are insufficiently critical. Observations are not subject specific, and there is no feedback to the tutor on particular areas for development, or of good practice. Tutors and managers

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receive an inaccurate picture of the quality of their work from this process. There is currently no effective way of identifying or sharing good practice observed in lessons. There is insufficient understanding of how some tools can help tutors and learners. For example, individual learning plans are often not used, or not used well to set individual targets and monitor progress towards these targets. Many learners make mistakes that go uncorrected while they work on more generic aspects of their learning. Links between training for tutors and the results of observations are not fully developed. Inspectors gave lower grades than those identified by the provider.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL - Adult and community learning	103	4
Literacy and numeracy - Adult and community learning	90	4

ESOL

Strengths

- good provision of additional learning resources
- good strategy to develop skills for life provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of contexts to develop learning
- slow development of expertise in teaching ESOL
- inadequate evaluation of provision

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good numeracy pass rates
- good strategy to develop skills for life provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient identification and meeting of learners' long-term goals
- narrow range of resources
- inadequate evaluation of provision

Achievement and standards

41. Achievement of the adult numeracy certificate at levels 1 and 2 is particularly good for learners on the courses for classroom assistants. These learners are particularly motivated to achieve a level 2 qualification to help them meet the requirements for employment in schools. The provider has responded to this need well and achievement rates are good. Pass rates for all numeracy qualifications are between 81 per cent and 94 per cent. About 50 per cent of learners who joined a literacy or numeracy programme in 2005-06 so far have achieved a national qualification at level 1 or 2. Pass rates in literacy for 2004-05 were low at 61 per cent. In 2004-05, just over one third of

the 90 learners started pilot qualifications in ESOL. Pass rates were good in reading, speaking and listening at level 2, but at level 1 they were poor at 36 per cent. This shows significant progress from the previous inspection when achievement rates were low overall.

42. Some learners develop their language skills well. In particular, they improve their understanding of the use of different tenses in English and develop the confidence to use these tenses in everyday settings. Some learners also acquire useful vocabulary and everyday phrases. However, many learners make slow progress. Some learners feel they do not make sufficient progress in understanding the local accents, and are concerned that this is preventing them from improving their prospects of employment. In literacy and numeracy, some learners make satisfactory progress in improving their skills. They feel more confident about putting their ideas down on paper and have improved their accuracy in spelling and punctuation. Similarly some learners are more confident in carrying out calculations independently, and are particularly motivated when they achieve a national certificate. However, some learners do not develop their literacy skills sufficiently to achieve the required standards for the national tests, particularly at level 1. Retention rates on foundation programmes overall are satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

43. STCACLs has significantly increased the additional equipment it provides to support learning. In particular, learners on ESOL programmes make good use of individual voice recorders. These small but effective devices are lent to most learners, and some learners also receive other equipment, such as radios and compact disc players. Learners record the learning sessions and attach the recorders to their own televisions or players with loud speakers so that they can go over the language items and exercises again at home. Some learners are beginning to use this to get used to the local accents.

44. Some tutors use individual learning plans well to plan learning sessions and consider learners' short-term goals carefully when planning learning activities. Most tutors provide learners with good individual support and give them useful tips and advice to help them develop their skills. However, some tutors prompt learners too much and do not give them enough time to gather their thoughts and tackle the tasks independently. Record-keeping has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Tutors use initial assessments appropriately to identify short-term goals and record learners' progress towards these goals. However, most tutors do not use some of the additional information gathered at initial interviews, such as learners' preferred ways of learning, to plan their learning activities.

45. STCACLs provides a satisfactory range of foundation programmes and is currently increasing the scope of the provision through the development of its strategy for skills for life. Many learners have good access to provision that is in convenient locations. Some venues provide good learning environments with bright and well-equipped rooms. These include interactive whiteboards and a good range of computing facilities. However, some tutors are not sufficiently confident in using these facilities in their teaching. A few

venues are drab and too cramped for the number of learners. Some computing equipment in these rooms is old with very slow connections to the internet.

46. Tutors use a narrow range of learning resources in literacy and numeracy. Although learners on numeracy programmes make good progress in improving their skills to pass the national tests, most tutors rely too much on worksheets and practice tests. Learners are not given enough opportunities to develop their skills using practical activities or real tasks. Although some tutors use newspapers and writing activities, many of the related exercises are contrived and not sufficiently meaningful. Learners who are attending training programmes or who have jobs do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their basic skills in these contexts.

47. The foundation programmes do not sufficiently focus on preparing learners for the next step in their development. On literacy and numeracy programmes, tutors do not sufficiently identify learners' long-term goals. Too many learning aims on individual learning plans are general, or are simply linked to the achievement of a qualification. Very few learners receive sufficient guidance to help them identify what they want to achieve once they are more confident in their literacy or numeracy skills. Tutors do not sufficiently adapt learning activities so that learners are developing skills in contexts that are relevant to their employment or personal circumstances at home. In ESOL, tutors do not link learning activities sufficiently to help learners practise their language skills in meaningful contexts. Tutors select topics that are of general interest. Some learners have particular priorities, such as to improve their accuracy in listening and speaking to get a job, or to learn the specialist vocabulary needed to talk to medical staff, but they are not used enough to plan individualised learning activities.

Leadership and management

48. The provider has completely revised its foundation provision, and it is now concentrated entirely on priority groups in the most deprived areas of South Tyneside. A new team is delivering this provision. STCACLs recruited some members of this team at a comparatively late stage of the reinspection to ensure that the right people were in post. The provider has given a good deal of training and support, but recognises that this provision needs more development. Its first priority has been to develop a coherent, workable strategy for skills for life that can be implemented by the new team. This strategy is new, and its effect is only partial to date. STCACLs has now developed a clear strategy for skills for life. This is linked well to identified national and local priorities and focuses well on developing provision in targeted parts of the region. The new management team for skills for life has already developed effective partnerships to extend the provision to targeted community groups. Interesting initiatives include working with new groups of learners such as ex-offenders, refugees and bilingual classroom assistants, and embedding literacy and numeracy in sewing and cookery courses. However, some targets on the plan to implement the strategy are not specific enough. The service experienced delays in implementing some of its provision and has not met its target of 406 new learners in 2005-06. The recruitment of learners is down significantly on last year.

49. Staff receive good support to help them gain relevant professional qualifications. About half the staff teaching on foundation programmes, including part-time tutors, have, or are working towards, a specialist qualification at level 4 in literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Communications among staff on established contracts are good. They use weekly meetings well to manage the day-to-day running of programmes. However, arrangements for part-time tutors to attend meetings are not fully effective. Staff do not have sufficient expertise in teaching ESOL. The teaching and management teams are new to their posts. Tutors do not adequately respond to some learners' development needs and they do not receive sufficient support to develop these skills.

50. Learners are treated fairly and with respect, and receive good personal support from STCACLs' staff, including administrative and reception staff. The service provides satisfactory crèche facilities at four of the six centres used for foundation programmes and some learners make good use of the transport passes to help them attend classes. However, teaching staff do not have sufficient awareness of dyslexia or how to provide appropriate support for learners with dyslexia.

51. STCACLs does not adequately evaluate its foundation programmes. Although managers have improved the accuracy of the data on learners' achievements, the service does not use this data adequately to evaluate the success of each programme or to set targets. Managers still do not have a clear view of the effectiveness of each programme in helping learners achieve qualifications or in meeting their development needs. Similarly, tutors are not required to evaluate their courses. The service does not have a system for tutors on foundation programmes to review retention, achievement and attendance rates, or to reflect on the effectiveness of their work. The scheme for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning does not provide tutors with useful and constructive feedback. Although all tutors who teach literacy, numeracy and ESOL have been observed teaching at least once in the past 12 months, the comments on the forms used to record this process are too descriptive and too general. Many satisfactory aspects are judged to be good or better. All the recent observations in this area of learning were graded too high. Observers do not provide tutors with feedback that is sufficiently linked to the specialist subject they are teaching and they miss many key weaknesses in the learning sessions. Most tutors gain an inaccurate picture of the quality of their work from this process. The skills for life managers have recently started to implement the new quality monitoring process. They use the checklist well to audit the documents in tutors' files. Tutors receive appropriate feedback on some aspects of the quality of the information on these documents, but managers have not sufficiently monitored the long-term goals on individual learning plans or the effectiveness of planned learning to help learners meet these goals. Interviews with learners are a good alternative to using questionnaires to gather their views. However, these interviews are not sufficiently probing to help managers identify the effects the learning programmes have on helping learners improve their skills and achieve their aims. Few of these quality assurance procedures are used sufficiently to develop staff or to identify good practice to share.

52. The self-assessment report developed in May 2006 is weak. The judgements are not

clear and the report does not give a meaningful assessment of the provision. The resulting action plan is too vague.

Family learning

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	96	3

Strengths

- good retention
- good progression
- increased focus on 'first steps' courses for priority groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of technology to enhance learning
- insufficient quality assurance of teaching and learning
- insufficiently developed curriculum management

Achievement and standards

53. Retention is good. On courses already completed in 2005-06 the retention rate is 100 per cent and registers indicate that only a few learners have left courses early.

54. Learners also progress well onto other courses and into voluntary and paid work. A wide range of internal and external progression opportunities has been matched to family learning courses to present learners with a variety of options to suit their personal needs and preferences. Progression information is integrated with courses well before completion. Information, advice and guidance workers give talks to some groups, although this support has not yet been extended to all providers or courses. At least 120 learners progressed to other courses within the service in 2005-06, and many of them have trained or are still training as classroom assistants. Nine have gained employment with the local authority and others are now working with young offenders or young children with behavioural problems. Forty-four learners from 'family learning through football' alone went on to skills for life courses.

55. Learners' overall attainment is satisfactory. The achievement rate for 2005-06 is currently 70 per cent. Progress and achievement are adequately monitored and measured against initial assessment in most non-accredited provision. Many learners can clearly express what they have gained in terms of personal learning outcomes.

Quality of education and training

56. The provider employs well-qualified and experienced staff to run its main courses, and learners benefit greatly from this. Taster sessions are not normally run by the same members of staff, but by experts in the subject area. The content of taster courses attracts learners, but staff are not always well qualified to teach these groups, and are not well enough aware of the particular learning needs of the client group. Learners' progress is generally well planned and monitored through the provider's assessment tools. There is satisfactory identification of, and provision for, learners' additional learning needs on mainstream courses.

57. The use of new technology to enhance learning is insufficient. Very little use of information technology (IT) was observed during the inspection. Course documents show little planning to use IT or digital media in sessions. Very few learning targets include IT skills development, although learners often identify it as a need through initial assessment and feedback. Some learners are reluctant to join the workforce because they fear the new technology they may have to use.

58. The service provides a satisfactory range of courses. The programmes and activities are carefully matched with learners' aims and potential. The provider has used a wide range of local information to decide on what should be offered and where it should be offered. Courses are targeted towards members of the community who fall into the government's current priority groups, and links with schools and local employers ensure that the mainstream provision offered is relevant and responsive to local circumstances. Course venues are spread appropriately across South Tyneside to meet the needs of targeted groups. A good variety of taster sessions attract new learners when schools are not working, but there is insufficient direct consultation with the client group in selecting the content of the sessions. The provider offers a sufficient range of courses which contribute to the learners' capacity to stay safe and healthy.

59. Learners generally have good advice and guidance to help them develop personally and professionally. Tutors are usually well informed and helpful. Many learners progress to other courses or to employment after their training.

Leadership and management

60. Family learning has undergone a complete change of focus and structure since the previous inspection. Direct delivery of wider family learning in well-established, comparatively affluent school venues has been replaced by mainly subcontracted delivery in areas of high deprivation. There is increased focus on 'first steps' courses for specifically targeted under-represented groups. The new priorities have been very well communicated to staff, subcontractors and community partners. Course publicity is designed appropriately to be easily accessible to the targeted groups. There has been successful use of community development workers, some residents' associations and extended schools co-ordinators in setting up new courses and attracting disengaged learners. The participation of men has increased significantly on 'family learning through football' courses, delivered by the Sunderland Association Football Club Foundation. The

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foundation promotes its courses very successfully in school assemblies, urging children to involve their fathers. The number of learners from minority ethnic groups attending courses has also increased to 18 per cent, much higher than the representation of the region, which is approximately 50 per cent below the national average.

61. There is insufficient quality assurance of teaching and learning. The lack of skills of some tutors in the teaching and classroom management of intergenerational groups has gone unrecognised. There are insufficiently specific quality assurance guidelines for subcontractors. Some tutors are inadequately qualified and experienced. The expertise of other tutors has not been clearly identified or shared. Some accommodation is inappropriate for adult learners. Only two observations have been carried out this year and feedback on tutors' performance has not been sufficiently judgemental. There is no specialist observer for family learning. The self-assessment process has not clearly identified areas for improvement and the recently developed quality improvement policy and procedures have not yet had time to affect teaching and learning.

62. Curriculum management of this area is still insufficiently developed. There are poorly defined roles within partnerships and areas of responsibility are not clear. Poor communication and lack of co-ordination between the service, its subcontractors, partners and tutors sometimes result in inappropriate decisions and duplicated effort. For example, two subcontractors were unaware that they were running complementary programmes in the same school and had not exploited opportunities for a joint approach and shared resources. Although subcontractors, development workers and tutors are well aware of the type of learners they need to recruit, targets for recruitment, retention, achievement and progression are not quantified or timebound. There is also insufficient timely analysis of programme data for decision-making. Staff are not always aware of current data on enrolment, attendance and retention and cannot clearly identify discrepancies or emerging trends.

Community development

Community development		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	1094	2

Strengths

- good capacity building
- very good retention rates
- effective development of partnerships to widen participation among identified community groups

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of the processes for recording learners' achievements
- insufficient opportunities for partners to identify and share good practice

Achievement and standards

63. The different groups of learners involved in community development successfully develop a good range of relevant knowledge, skills and abilities. Many learners significantly increase their confidence in being involved in community work and their competence to carry out this work. In particular, many community group representatives and managers of community organisations have developed their capacity to set up and manage projects. For example, they have developed a good understanding of the complex skills required for applying for funds to support their community work. Some organisations have successfully bid for funding from a variety of different sources to support community projects. The additional skills that organisers develop through STCACLs's community development provision include marketing their services, managing meetings and organising events. Similarly, many volunteer workers who attend STCACLs's courses successfully achieve a wide variety of national qualifications and use the skills they have learnt well when they work with members of their communities who are new to learning. In turn, these targeted groups of learners develop skills and confidence in a wide range of subjects such as yoga, plastering, tiling, cooking and the use of ICT. Many of these learners develop their social and interpersonal skills particularly well.

64. Retention rates are very good and improving. In 2004-05, 86.5 per cent of learners completed their programme, and in 2005-06, 99 per cent of learners completed the courses to date. However, attendance rates vary and are particularly low on some courses.

65. STCACLS has developed a wide range of courses to meet the diverse needs and interests of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. Community development workers have adopted a good range of successful and creative initiatives to engage with a wide variety of community groups, community associations and individuals to help develop a broad range of provision across the borough. For example, in December they attended school nativity plays to provide potential adult learners with information about the aims of the service and the support it can provide to help establish sustainable learning activities. Over 23 learners became involved in projects through this initiative. The contracted providers work well with a particularly wide range of specific groups of learners such as young offenders, young parents, the visually impaired, learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, and drug and alcohol awareness groups. They offer a good choice of relevant courses and consider learners' personal circumstances and learning needs carefully when selecting the times, venues and length of each course.

66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better learning sessions, learners are challenged by the learning activities. Tutors use a good range of different activities to meet the learners' diverse needs and provide good individual support and coaching to help them develop their skills and abilities. These learning sessions meet the very real needs of non-traditional learners. For example, in one project, 'cooking on a budget', run in a residential centre for young ex-offenders and homeless young people, the learners work with great enthusiasm learning practical cooking skills such as how to prepare nutritious meals from raw ingredients. They learn about the health and financial benefits of home cooking, and at the end of the session they sit down formally at a set table to eat the meals they have prepared, helping them to develop their social and interpersonal skills. In another session for the blind and partially sighted, specialist equipment and software packages are used effectively to deliver training for learners. However, some learning sessions are not planned well enough to meet individual needs. Some tutors do not identify or reinforce the main purpose of each session. Some learning activities are repetitive and do not challenge or inspire learners sufficiently. Some tutors use a narrow range of learning materials and do not incorporate the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills enough into their sessions.

67. Resources overall are satisfactory. The service uses a good range of venues which are suitably equipped to provide training close to where learners live. However, some of the accommodation is unsatisfactory. Some rooms are not well ventilated, some present difficulties for learners with restricted mobility, and some are too small to adequately accommodate all of the learners on register. Most tutors are experienced and have relevant vocational qualifications, although they do not all have a recognised teaching qualification. Community development workers are experienced with good skills in community development strategies and have very good working relationships with providers and learners. However, most of them do not have recognised qualifications in community development.

68. Initial advice, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Courses are advertised in newsletters, jobcentres, individual course leaflets which are circulated to local homes, provider notice boards and by word of mouth from community

development workers. Learners also receive good information on other learning opportunities, and many learners progress to other courses. Feedback from learners indicates that they find staff very helpful and supportive. Some learners make good use of additional equipment, such as adapted aids to use with computers. However, some tutors do not routinely receive information from the learners' initial health screening to help them plan learning sessions for individuals.

69. Progress towards implementing the procedures for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement is slow. Initial assessments are weak and do not identify learners' starting points adequately. Personal and group learning goals are too general and are often not sufficiently related to learners' needs or aims. Mechanisms to evaluate learners' progress are insufficiently developed. Many individual learning plans are not reviewed or updated and the comments do not adequately measure how much learning has taken place. STCACLS is aware of these issues and has identified appropriate action to improve these aspects of the community development provision.

Leadership and management

70. STCACLS has recently restructured and now has a clearly identified and appropriate focus for community development. This is communicated effectively to staff and partner organisations. The service has effectively developed partnerships to widen participation among multi-disadvantaged target groups and individuals. Seventy-five different partnership contracts were issued in 2004-05 to providers that successfully delivered 104 courses. Eight of these have been sustained in 2005-06 and a further 51 different learning projects have been approved. STCACLS is particularly successful at developing new partnerships and manages this aspect of its work well. Staff have developed clear procedures and criteria which must be satisfied before contracts are issued. The service also works in partnership particularly well to gain community regeneration funding to provide a wide range of training to community groups. For example, in 2004-05, 156 community volunteers received training in relevant subjects such as child protection, mini bus driving, first aid, outdoor adventure activities, weightlifting and sports leadership, and a further 79 attended a similar range of training in 2005-06. Most of these volunteers achieved the related qualification and now use the skills and knowledge gained to provide more effective learning activities within the community associations and groups they are involved with.

71. Many of STCACLS's quality improvement arrangements for community development are satisfactory. Processes and procedures to monitor performance and quality assure the work of contracted providers and individual tutors have been recently introduced. Observations of teaching and learning take place regularly. Since the beginning of the year, 30 learning sessions in community development have been observed by a newly appointed team. The records for these sessions are detailed and, in some cases, evaluative. However, where appropriate strengths and areas for improvement are identified, the forms used for recording this process do not provide sufficient information on how the improvements are to be developed or the timescales for these. STCACLS does not provide sufficient opportunities for partners to identify and share good

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practice. For example, although some partners working in similar locations or with similar community groups value the meetings they have, the service does not arrange sufficient meetings to bring all providers together to evaluate and improve the provision. Similarly, the partners do not receive sufficient feedback from the data they collect on their courses or the use of the community-based facilities. The service does not work with partners enough to use this data to identify good practice or areas for improvement as a service and within individual communities.