

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **Nottingham City Council Adult and Community Learning Service Reinspection**

**08 June 2006**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

### **Adult Learning Inspectorate**

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

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

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

## Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Grading

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

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

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## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Nottingham City Council Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) will cease operation in July 2006, and its family learning provision will become part of the city council's children's services department. The family learning service is co-ordinated by a full-time manager of alternative learning, supported by a full-time family learning co-ordinator.

2. All the family learning provision is subcontracted. During the past nine months the subcontractors have included Common Unity Information Communication Technology, Big Wood Education Action Zone, Nacro, Parentline Plus, Fairham Community College, New College Nottingham, the Workers' Educational Association, First Data, Dunkirk Primary School in partnership with Castle College, Seely Junior School, and Rainbow Stripes. Six of these organisations are contracted for family learning provision at present, with New College Nottingham responsible for 60 per cent of it.

3. Nottingham City Council is responsible for the seventh most deprived area in England with four city wards in the top 10 per cent of the most deprived wards in England. Thirty-four per cent of the city's adult population have literacy and numeracy skills below level 1, and the wards in the north and west of the city have the third lowest level 2 educational attainment rate in England. Fifteen per cent of the city's population, and 27 per cent of its school population are from minority ethnic groups. Domestic violence makes up 25 per cent of reported violent crime. Family learning is a priority for the economic wellbeing of the city.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

#### Reinspection Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Nottingham City Council ACLS's leadership and management and arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The family learning provision is good.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report produced for the reinspection accurately identified the progress made by the organisation. Data was used effectively to make judgements, as was information from subcontractors.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Progress has been made in dealing with the weaknesses from the previous inspection. The ACLS has quality improvement systems in place, although many of these are fairly new. Data is now used to set meaningful and realistic targets for improving the provision.

## GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		4

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<i>Using IT</i> Adult and community learning	122	3

<b>Visual &amp; performing arts &amp; media</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<i>Arts</i> Adult and community learning	27	3
<i>Crafts</i> Adult and community learning	20	3
<i>Dance</i> Adult and community learning	15	3
<i>Music</i> Adult and community learning	8	3

<b>Foundation programmes</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<i>Literacy</i> Adult and community learning	65	4
<i>Numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	38	4
<i>ESOL</i> Adult and community learning	9	4

<b>Family learning</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<i>Adult and community learning</i> Adult and community learning	74	4

Grades awarded at reinspection

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

<b>Family learning</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Adult and community learning</b> Adult and community learning	82	2	

## ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

7. Visual and performing arts and media, and foundation programmes were not reinspected as Nottingham City Council's main adult and community learning provision is to close. After July 2006, the only area of provision will be family learning, so inspectors concentrated on that. Two monitoring visits took place before the week of the reinspection.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	38
Number of staff interviewed	5
Number of subcontractors interviewed	23
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	8
Number of visits	3

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

8. **Learners' achieve their goals and aspirations**, and they acquire good skills to help their children's work at school. There were 588 enrolments during the last academic year, and 475 learners achieved their intended learning outcome. Learners communicate better and are more able to support their children's learning.

### The quality of provision

9. **Teaching is good.** Teachers pace lessons and use resources well. Learners are actively encouraged to work in groups. Good support is given, particularly for numeracy and literacy.

10. **The ACLS works well with a range of agencies to support learners.** Schools provide creche facilities to enable adult learners to attend sessions. Subcontractors work well together and with other agencies.

11. Learners are offered a satisfactory range of courses. Resources are satisfactory and have improved since the previous inspection. Learners are given satisfactory guidance on progression, which is effectively timetabled into most programmes.

12. The targets set in individual learning plans are inadequate. The records of learners' progress, particularly in speaking and listening skills, are not specific enough. Tutors do not always follow the guidance they are given.

### **Leadership and management**

13. The ACLS has developed clear strategies to overcome the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection in April 2005. Major changes have been made to the organisation of the service, and it now focuses on activities that meet the city's key development needs.

14. Management information was a weakness at the previous inspection but is now reliable and well used. Retention, achievement and progression data is used effectively to monitor all the subcontracted provision. Data is used well to make improvements.

15. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is satisfactory. The subcontractors' staff have received some training in equality of opportunity. The differentiation of learning is satisfactory but is not always recorded. Equality of opportunity data is monitored satisfactorily and used effectively to identify trends in a range of different cultural groups.

16. **The ACLS has been slow to implement quality improvement measures.** The uncertainty over the future of the provision has led to delays, and many of the developments have only just been introduced. It is too early to assess their effect on learners' experience. Self-assessment is used effectively across the provision to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation.

### **Leadership and management**

#### **Strengths**

- clear strategies to overcome weaknesses identified at previous inspection
- reliable and effective management information systems

#### **Weaknesses**

- slow progress in implementing quality improvement activities



## **Family learning**

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

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of learners' goals and aspirations
- good teaching and learning
- very effective collaboration with outside agencies to support learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- inadequate target-setting in individual learning plans

## DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

#### Strengths

- clear strategies to overcome weaknesses identified at previous inspection
- reliable and effective management information systems

#### Weaknesses

- slow progress in implementing quality improvement activities

17. Nottingham City Council has made major changes to the provision offered by the ACLS. A total review was carried out, and, after considering the cost of dealing with all the weaknesses identified at the April 2005 inspection, it was decided in December 2005 to withdraw from providing all aspects of adult and community learning except for family learning. The ACLS core team has been reduced from 10 posts to four and will be further reduced to two at the end of July 2006. There has been good management of the main provision, with a reduction in the number of subcontractors from 64 in April 2005 to 23 at present. The organisation has only kept the subcontractors that can provide evidence of quality, such as good inspection grades. The Learning and Skills Council has yet to decide who is going to provide the main adult and community learning provision in the city for the next academic year. The council has made it clear that the purpose of family learning lies firmly within the main strands of development, particularly in extending skills, sustaining communities, and providing early years childcare, and it has moved the service from the economic development department to children's services. The decision to offer most family learning in primary schools is introducing learning to parents at the early stages of their children's schooling. Over 40 schools will host family learning activities in 2005-06.

18. The family learning co-ordinator appointed in July 2005 has provided good leadership for the family learning curriculum and produced a good family learning action plan to deal with the weaknesses identified at the inspection. She has ensured that the programmes are well supported by providing a range of relevant training opportunities for subcontractors' staff and leading curriculum development. A key task has been to manage the subcontractors, and this has resulted in a proposal to further reduce the number of subcontractors from 23 to nine. Subcontractors are now given clear expectations as to performance in terms of achievement, retention and progression rates. The management of subcontractors is satisfactory. Any new organisations that tender for contracts are assessed in terms of quality. The existing subcontractors are not asked to provide the same evidence of specific quality in family learning, or to demonstrate that risk assessments and Criminal Records Bureau checks are current.

19. The weakness of inadequate management information has been dealt with effectively. A reliable data system has been established and has enabled managers to use data effectively to make decisions. The management information system provided data on subcontractors' performance that enabled the ACLS to identify poor performance and to justify the withdrawal of contracts from those subcontractors that were underperforming. Data is broken down to ward level, and learners are identified by disability, ethnicity,

gender, and learning need within programme areas and by subcontractor. This data is being used effectively. Retention, achievement and progression data is available for all subcontractors. The changes in funding were supported by management information on subcontractors' performance. Data was available to inspectors to clearly identify learner numbers, types of programmes and outcomes.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

20. The promotion of equality and diversity in family learning is carried out by the subcontractors and is satisfactory. Subcontractors' staff have received some training in equality of opportunity but the ACLS has not checked the quality of this. The focus of the programmes has been reviewed. It is now clear that the priority is participation and achievement by groups of parents in severely deprived wards. This priority is set against targets relating to the educational performance of groups of children and is at an embryonic stage. The weakness in the monitoring of equality and diversity information is now satisfactory. Although the ACLS collected a wealth of data, it did not use it to identify trends in achievement and retention. The data system is now breaking down the performance data of cultural groups more effectively so that trends can be clearly identified. This information is being used to ensure that the priority groups are being reached. Data has clearly identified that only 9 per cent of learners are men. Subcontractors have been set targets to develop activities that will increase men's involvement, but these have not yet raised the numbers of male participants. The level of participation among adults from minority ethnic groups is currently 24 per cent, a reduction from the previous year. This is a result of the deliberate targeting of family learning provision in the deprived wards of the north of the city which are predominantly white British.

21. Although equality of opportunity is an intrinsic part of all family learning activities, there are some lesson plans, particularly among the newer subcontractors, that fail to clearly identify differentiation activities. The ACLS's advice and guidance services are satisfactory. Twenty-six per cent of adults participating in family learning have met with a qualified guidance worker to discuss progression options. Many of the learners say that they wish to move on to become classroom assistants, but 89 per cent of the 2005-06 leavers in family learning are recorded as destination unknown. The target for 2006-07 is for 75 per cent of all adults participating in family learning to receive advice and guidance about progression options.

22. The manager of alternative learning has successfully bid for £ ¾ million from the East Midlands Development Agency to establish an access centre in one of the most deprived wards of the city. Its aim is to bring the opportunity for learning to those who are hard to reach. The centre will incorporate training rooms for family learning and entry to employment, and is to be completed by January 2007. Key staff have had training to ensure that the service is in line with corporate equality standards and to enable them to carry out full race-impact assessments.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 3**

23. Many of the developments to improve the quality of provision are new and have been implemented in the few months before the reinspection. It is too early to assess their effect on learners. The uncertainty about the future of the provision has affected the implementation of quality improvement activities. A family learning quality improvement cycle, monitored by the family learning quality group, clearly shows how different groups

and activities such as the curriculum group, the tutor observation group and the family learning quality group feed in to the annual self-assessment and three-year development plan.

24. The ACLS produced a family learning development plan in May 2006 in conjunction with the family learning subcontractors and the consultant from Basic Education and Guidance in Nottingham (BEGIN), the subcontracted skills for life specialist. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Key objectives have been identified for areas including learner numbers and recruitment, and these are broken down into targets for those with learning disabilities, minority ethnic groups and those with no qualifications. Targets have also been set for family language, literacy and numeracy (FLLN). Thirty-nine priority activities have been identified, and many of these are due to take place during the next academic year, including sharing good practice at completing individual learning plans, developing a parenting forum, and providing a menu of appropriate training. A family learning curriculum group has been established to share and fully co-ordinate the curriculum offer. Its members are closely aware of how this should fit in with the targeted priority groups. This group has met twice and is proving to be a useful forum for the sharing of identified good practice. Management information is now being used in decision-making and is key to actions such as the monitoring of the three-year development plan by the quality improvement group.

25. Staff are given satisfactory guidance and support for quality improvement through a subcontractor that has helped to develop the skills for life curriculum. Training has been provided to support the family learning development plan, which also incorporates the skills for life strategies.

26. A tutor/tutor manager group has been set up to enable tutors from the various subcontractors to meet and share good practice. It is very new but feedback from subcontractors' managers is very positive. The family learning co-ordinator takes the lead in this group, and the guidance she offers has been appreciated as having moved the quality of family learning forward. Many initiatives, such as recording progress and achievement and the appropriate adaptation of the curriculum to individual learners' needs, are so new that it is too early to see their effects.

27. The ACLS has begun to observe all tutors, and, up to the end of April 2006, 75 per cent of the observations were graded satisfactory or above. An established consultancy has been used to give all observers intensive specialised training in observing family learning. Where appropriate, the observations have been followed up, but it is too early in this process to see the effect on the learners.

28. Monitoring of the teaching of family learning is satisfactory. The co-ordinator assesses performance against a series of targets. These include the quality of initial assessment, the recording of learners' progress, the use of individual learning plans, the advice and guidance given and the recruitment, retention and achievement data. If a subcontractor fails to achieve these targets their contract is not renewed.

29. The ACLS is continuing to make improvements. These include the production of a tutor handbook, currently in draft format, which will outline the service's aims and objectives, and its commitment to quality improvement. It will make clear to tutors what procedures they need to carry out, particularly in the form of collection and completion of

documentary evidence on learners' progress.

30. An updated self-assessment report on leadership and management and family learning was produced for the reinspection. Learners were not consulted, but the main subcontractors were. The report was produced by the head of service for alternative provision, the family learning co-ordinator and a consultant from BEGIN. The self-assessment report was accurate in identifying the ACLS's progress and that the provision had now reached a satisfactory level.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Family learning

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Adult and community learning</b> Adult and community learning	82	2

31. Nottingham City Council's ACLS provides FLLN programmes, and projects for wider family learning. These are aimed at learners from disadvantaged communities. The provision is subcontracted to nine providers, some of which have additional subcontracts with other authorities. Classes take place in primary and secondary schools, community centres and children's centres.

32. Eighty-four learners are enrolled on 12 family learning courses. Between September 2005 and April 2006, there were 489 learners, 588 enrolments, and 95 family learning programmes. The target for 2005-06 is to reduce the amount of provision by 40 per cent from the 2004-05 level in order to ensure high-quality delivery. Most courses run for two hours each week during the daytime. They include single-session tasters, and short courses lasting up to 24 weeks, as well as more intensive courses run over a full academic year. Some courses are run as blocks over a weekend, to meet the needs and preferences of some learners with childcare commitments. Accredited courses include 'Keeping up with the children in numeracy' and 'Keeping up with the children in literacy'. A family learning co-ordinator has been appointed since the previous inspection, and is responsible for the provision, with the part-time support of a basic skills co-ordinator. All tutors are employed and managed by subcontractors.

### **Adult and community learning**

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of learners' goals and aspirations
- good teaching and learning
- very effective collaboration with outside agencies to support learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- inadequate target-setting in individual learning plans

### **Achievement and standards**

33. The 588 enrolments from September 2005 to April 2006, led to 475 achievements of individual learning plans. All the learners have partially achieved their targets and 88 are still in learning.

34. Learners achieve their goals and aspirations. They speak proudly of how the family learning courses have improved their confidence and self-esteem. The skills they acquire are valuable in helping their children with school work, and improving their own literacy

and numeracy. Head teachers of schools with family learning activities comment favourably on the enhanced involvement of parents in the school community. Courses are very effective in improving parents' communication with their children. Many programmes focus effectively on developing more healthy lifestyles and diet choices. Many parents enjoy being able to talk to their children about their numeracy or literacy work in school. Many are empowered by being able to help and encourage their learning, and by using the learning aids they make in class.

35. Many learners benefit from access to national tests for literacy and numeracy. Even on some short courses, learners are encouraged to take the tests, and additional time is made available for practice runs and further preparation. Data is being collated on the actual number of tests taken. Family learning and literacy support are enabling learners who have never previously achieved any recognised qualification to access a college course for classroom assistants.

36. There has been further improvement in the recording of achievement since the previous inspection, although the system used cannot currently record many of the activities and further learning that learners take part in.

### **The quality of provision**

37. There is good teaching and learning on family learning courses. Of the five lessons observed, four were good and one was satisfactory. The planning of courses, which was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, has improved. The pace of learning is good. Resources are used well. Additional resources are readily available to help learners who need them. For example, learners who identify a need for support with reading can have a support worker working with them in the following week. Tutors are very supportive and sensitive to learners' individual needs and family circumstances. Lessons are adapted to meet learners' preferences and interests. Learners' participation is very good in most courses, and working in groups is effectively encouraged. Activities to support and extend learning, such as family weekend sessions at an activities centre, are good. One group of disadvantaged learners was able to discuss the positive effect on their self-esteem of being given preferential treatment on a visit to a pizza restaurant as part of a healthy-eating course.

38. Collaboration among the many agencies involved in supporting learners is very effective. Learners are given good guidance and support, and are enthusiastic about the supportive nature of the teaching and the help they receive from schools, parent participation co-ordinators and early years staff. School staff and learners appreciate the success of tutors in building up peer support. Crèche provision on site is highly regarded by the learners. Where an internal observation identified that there was insufficient childcare support, the service is planning additional childcare. Guidance sessions on progression routes are timetabled into programmes, and good guidance is given about whether learners can take part in additional learning opportunities. The ACLS offers very effective additional learning aids and provides additional staff to support language or literacy needs. Subcontractors work well together and with health, childcare and other agencies to support learners.

39. There is good provision of courses for parents in the most disadvantaged areas of the city, as was noted in the previous inspection. The service responds to the needs of

schools by providing appropriate courses. One head teacher is pleased with the way that the service was able to support improvements in basic communication in families, which her school had identified as a major concern affecting learning. Family learning has succeeded in recruiting and supporting learners who have previously not been involved in the life of the school or the community. The service makes very effective use of feedback from learners to ensure that future courses meet their needs. In order to assist in progression, additional activities are often planned for a pilot class at the end of a course so that the learners can act as a focus group to plan future learning.

40. The service has identified areas of good practice, and plans to use these in further training. The previous inspection identified that learners were inadequately involved in planning their learning, but improvements continue to be made in this area. In one example from a new subcontractor, a learner with behavioural problems is setting himself some small but challenging goals to improve his concentration and participation, which contribute to the way the class is managed. Tutors provide short individual sessions at the end of each course to review and record each learner's achievements.

41. Resources are satisfactory, with most premises accommodating adult learning, crèche provision and joint learning with school-age children. In one school, however, other demands on space lead to adult classes being in a different room each week, and at the time of inspection, they were held in a sports hall where there were interruptions from staff and pupils passing through. There has been an improvement in the standards of furnishings and equipment in centres since the previous inspection, and the ACLS now provides tables and chairs for adults where provision is in a primary school.

42. The targets set in individual learning plans are inadequate. Although both the initial assessment and the recording of learners' progress have improved since the previous inspection, individual learning plans do not contain sufficiently challenging and achievable targets for learners to attain. There is insufficient recording of progress in the development of speaking and listening skills, and many of the targets set for literacy are weak. There is good guidance for tutors in the ACLS's quality toolkit, but this is not always put into practice.

### **Leadership and management**

43. Managers have improved in the quality of the family learning provision since the previous inspection, although many of the changes are still at an early stage. The provision is now satisfactory. Networks are used well to share and develop good practice. Recent developments include the establishment of working groups on the curriculum, on quality improvement and on equality of opportunity. There is effective work between agencies to support family learning, particularly where observations take place and are moderated between providers. When observers identify a need for improvement, there is good planning of mentoring and ongoing support for tutors.

44. The self-assessment for family learning makes satisfactorily critical judgements. Tutors comment favourably on the improvement in communication since the previous inspection. The effectiveness of leadership in setting clear direction and support for family learning has enabled the provision to move forward. Good training and development for tutors is supporting basic skills development and encouraging the sharing of good practice. There is satisfactory recognition of diversity and equality of opportunity in practice, with some training for staff. Further training is being identified to extend this and



to tackle some inconsistent use of individual learning plans.

45. The availability of data has been improved to help planning and review, and subcontractors have improved their methods of recording and exchanging data with the service. There are detailed service-level agreements with subcontractors, but these are not adequately verified or monitored.

