

REINSPECTION REPORT

Nottinghamshire County Council Reinspection

13 October 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. The adult and community learning service (the service) of Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) was formed in April 2001. It is part of the community, safety, regeneration and protection division of NCC's communities department. The service is mainly funded by the Nottinghamshire Learning and Skills Council, with some additional funding from NCC's regeneration portfolio and other external funding sources. Most of the provision is subcontracted to 85 training providers, including colleges, other education providers and community groups throughout the county, although the service offers a small amount of family learning programmes directly.
2. A management team of five manage the service. The team includes a manager, a service development manager, a development officer, a local learning manager and a family learning co-ordinator. There are five full-time equivalent partnership workers and an administration support team. Twelve curriculum leaders cover most areas of learning. Fifteen community operations groups (COGs), are organised and managed by the service. These comprise local stakeholders, providers and community groups and are based in areas of greatest deprivation. They provide links between the needs of local communities and the service.
3. In 2005-06, 17.5 per cent of enrolments were for information and communications technology (ICT), 15 per cent were for foundation programmes, and just under 15 per cent of enrolments were for visual and performing arts and media. The provision is at level 1 or below, and targeted at the areas of greatest social and economic need, and groups of excluded learners.
4. According to the 2001 census, Nottinghamshire has a population of 748,510, and 33 per cent of the population live in towns and villages with less than 10,000 inhabitants. The percentage of the population from minority ethnic groups is 2.6 per cent. In June 2006, the rate of unemployment in the area was 2 per cent, compared with a national average of 2.6 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Reinspection Grade 2

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** The service's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity, quality improvement, foundation programmes and family learning. The provisions in ICT, and visual and performing arts and media are satisfactory.
6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Partners and staff of the service are fully involved in the self-assessment process. Data, lesson observations and feedback from learners are incorporated into the report. The report, however did not always identify the key strengths which were highlighted by inspectors.
7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.**

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The provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Overall retention and success rates have improved, as have the standards of teaching and learning. Only 3 per cent of the teaching was judged to be inadequate. The post-inspection action plan is a comprehensive and closely monitored document which has resolved many of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4
Information & communications technology		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i>		4
Adult and community learning	342	4
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		3
Adult and community learning	773	3
Visual & performing arts & media		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		4
Adult and community learning	1,121	4
Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		3
Adult and community learning	97	3
Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		3
Adult and community learning	273	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Adult and community learning	441	3

Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Adult and community learning	394	3

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Adult and community learning	193	2

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i> Adult and community learning	74	2

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

8. The areas of learning inspected and graded were ICT, visual and performing arts and media, foundation programmes, and family learning. Leadership and management, including equality of opportunity and quality improvement were also inspected and graded. The inspection team did not grade health, public services and care, or leisure, travel and tourism. The inspection took place between 9 and 13 October 2006. There were also visits in November 2005 and March 2006.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	33
Number of learners interviewed	148
Number of staff interviewed	51
Number of subcontractors interviewed	27
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	53

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- good change management
- effective use of a wide range of partnerships
- good targeting of hard-to-reach learners
- positive impact of equality initiatives
- significant quality improvement
- particularly thorough self-assessment

Weaknesses

- weak monitoring of additional learning support

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills
- good teaching materials

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment of literacy and numeracy

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good achievement of individual goals
- strong group ethos in learning

- good course management

Weaknesses

- narrow range of teaching styles
- insufficiently established curriculum strategy

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- very good standard of learners' work
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficiently thorough initial and ongoing assessment

Family learning

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- good achievement and retention
- good standards of teaching and learning
- well-managed provision
- good range of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficiently systematic recording of progression

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good change management
- effective use of a wide range of partnerships
- good targeting of hard-to-reach learners
- positive impact of equality initiatives
- significant quality improvement
- particularly thorough self-assessment

Weaknesses

- weak monitoring of additional learning support

9. Since the previous inspection, the service has undergone significant changes which it has managed well. The provider has a clear vision of its role, and has ensured good, but flexible strategic planning. The service is supported strongly and with commitment by NCC. The provider's core management team has been restructured and has recruited new staff to ensure an effective and well-integrated team. The approach of the management team in resolving the weaknesses and meeting the key challenges identified by the previous inspection, has been positive and effective. Operational management has improved since the previous inspection. A better quality of teaching and learning is now offered by the service.

10. The provider continues to encourage the development of new learning provision by community groups, particularly within specific areas of deprivation in the county. The service has established a range of performance targets in such areas as retention, success and recruitment of new learners. These are detailed in its annual business plan. The service's management has been highly responsive to changes promoted by inspection and strategic decisions by the funding body. Key decisions have been made to ensure that solutions to problems and challenges are applied throughout the whole organisation, rather than in isolated pockets.

11. As part of the management of change, the service has made significant and positive improvements in curriculum management. Curriculum team leaders have been appointed in all areas of learning, although the skills for life post is currently vacant. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The co-ordinator in this area is seconded to the core management team. These appointments have had a significant effect on the quality of provision and on the motivation of tutors. Curriculum team leaders have been actively involved in the development of curricula for the areas of learning. Curriculum planning, the use of management information and communications with tutors have all improved. Subcontracted partners have responded very positively to this initiative. The role of curriculum team leaders has been carefully defined, but in a number of cases the role has not been fully implemented to support the changes planned by the service.

12. The provider has continued to use its wide range of partnerships effectively for learners. The service acts as a conduit for local communities to access the services provided by a wide range of local strategic partners. It brings together diverse local voluntary groups and providers through its management of a network of COGs. These are led by partnership workers, and identify local needs in targeted areas. The provider encourages effective communications between partners to share funding information, and has a well-established system of bidding for funding. Local groups are supported in requesting funding for smaller initiatives.

13. In continuing to deliver its provision through a network of subcontracted training providers, the service has worked well to ensure that this network is actively managed, fully informed and uniformly committed to its objectives. A new branding initiative to ensure that all classes are seen to be the service's classes has been carefully managed by the service and has been well received by partners, tutors and learners. The linking of diverse local groups with a wide range of training partners has been further improved by a well-designed and readily accessible website. Tutors in particular have welcomed the opportunity to gain information and share expertise.

14. Staff development within the service is satisfactory. There are now more opportunities for tutors to meet to share information and good practice. The service has provided a series of well-received tutor conferences to bring together the teaching resources of their wide range of partners. The service's managers have used the conferences as an opportunity to introduce a series of curriculum leader workshops to encourage discussion and quality improvement activities. Tutors speak very well of the way in which these conferences reinforce the service's identity, and of the opportunities to share good practice among a highly dispersed group.

15. The introduction of an e-mail group has further improved communications among the service and the tutors. The provider has further developed learners' and tutors' handbooks, which have been well received by these groups. Tutors appreciate the improvements to the individual learning plans. They can now provide more effective and well-targeted teaching to meet individual learners' needs. This applies particularly to short-course learners who have been using a newly formulated single-session learning plan to good effect.

16. Resources are well managed and used effectively. The service has recently supported some courses by providing additional technical equipment. A lot of the resources and equipment used by the service are provided by subcontracted partners and are generally adequate. NCC provides an annual budget for the service and has fully supported the service, despite the necessity for significant budget cuts to other areas of its services. Staff employed by the service are suitably qualified and experienced. The tutors employed by subcontractors are also suitably experienced and an increasing number, currently more than 80 per cent, have a teaching qualification.

17. Management information is being used adequately. Data is derived from enrolments, learner evaluation forms and course data sheets. The management team receives a number of informative monthly reports which are also sent to larger providers to enable them to monitor their provision. The same management information is used as part of the contract review meetings which are held termly with each provider. At these meetings

the performance data is compared with the targets that are set out in the funding agreements between the service and the provider.

18. Satisfactory literacy and numeracy support is made available by the service, through close links with partners and specialist providers. Tutors and many of the learners know how to access literacy and numeracy support. They also know how to access the funding that is made available through the service if immediate support is not available at the learning venue. The service has used its extensive partnership links well to enable good coverage of these areas. For example, it has used links with a county dyslexia society project to provide funding for items of assistive technology for learners with dyslexia.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

19. The service has continued to widen participation by targeting hard-to-reach learners. The service development plan has clear targets and agreed priorities to recruit under-represented groups. The growth in the number of new learners is good. In 2005-06, 65 per cent of learners were new to the service, against a target of 20 per cent. The provider continues to use partnership workers, working in collaboration with local community groups, to develop courses which attract hard-to-reach learners. In the past year for example, partnership workers have operated 14 projects that have delivered 101 courses for 992 learners, of whom 802 were new learners. The projects also successfully targeted minority ethnic learners, who constituted 14 per cent of the total. This compares favourably with the 3.3 per cent for the service. Sixty-three per cent of learners in 2005-06 were from the most deprived areas of the county, and over 600 parents with young children made use of the available childcare support. The service also worked with 277 ex-offenders.

20. Since the previous inspection, the service has introduced a number of measures that have had a positive effect on equality and diversity throughout the provision. The management team has demonstrated good leadership in prioritising equality and diversity. One member of the senior management team has lead responsibility for equality and diversity. A new equality and diversity steering group has been appointed to promote and monitor equality and diversity. The provider has given some effective training in equality and diversity. A whole-day event, attended by over 100 tutors, has led to changes in teaching practice. The training also focused on how tutors might raise equality and diversity issues in the classroom. There are good examples of changes in classroom practice, such as the excellent promotion of diversity in the choice of Inuit stories. New lesson plan forms reinforce the training by requiring tutors to consider how they will deal with equality and diversity in their sessions. The observations of teaching and learning, and class visits monitor the inclusion of equality and diversity.

21. The monitoring of providers' implementation of equality of opportunity has improved a great deal since the previous inspection. Managers routinely raise equality matters in contract meetings, and closely monitor equal opportunities targets by participation, retention and achievement for different groups.

22. The service has a satisfactory set of equality and diversity policies, which have been updated since the previous inspection. The main policy sets out in clear language the provider's equality and diversity commitment, its aims and principles, and the implications for subcontractors, staff and learners. The policy does not refer to recent legislation, nor state how the policy will be monitored. However, appropriate references are made in

funding agreements to providers' responsibility in fulfilling legislative requirements. The service has also produced a clear anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy that includes good examples of unacceptable behaviour. This is included in the learners' handbook. There have been no formal complaints during the past year, but learners are aware how to complain and to whom.

23. NCC and the service have made an appropriate response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The council's corporate equality scheme fulfils its statutory duties adequately. It clearly shows how the service contributes to the overall corporate scheme. The service is also responding appropriately to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Of the 318 venues used by the service in 2004-05, 284 were compliant, and 34 required a detailed audit. A timetable of prioritised audits is being drawn up.

24. The service does not monitor the effects of additional learning support. The provider allocates funds for additional learning needs, but these are not used effectively. However, some of the service's learners receive support from partners who have access to their own support funds. The service does not have a clear idea of the numbers receiving additional learning support and is unable to analyse what learners are gaining from the support that they receive.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

25. The service has introduced significant quality improvement arrangements since the previous inspection. In particular, the provider has established comprehensive arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning. These include staff from the core management team, and curriculum team leaders and partnership workers. The service makes good use of individual providers' systems, while maintaining common standards for the quality of teaching and learning. Tutors are formally observed during alternate years, using a newly developed and comprehensive report system. They are observed less formally during class visits in the intervening period. The service has introduced a pre-course visit to all new providers to establish service expectations, and will observe each new provider during their first term.

26. In conjunction with these developments, the service has introduced a formal system of moderating teaching and learning grades. It has made effective use of its partnership arrangements to establish a well-organised moderation process. All providers have some stake in the moderation process and have contributed well to its introduction, and to the stabilisation of some of the grades awarded early in the process. The service has set demanding targets for teaching and learning in all areas of its provision. Since the previous inspection, the percentage of inadequate grades awarded for teaching and learning has been reduced significantly, although the percentage of good or better grades has not changed. The grades given by inspectors during the week of the inspection were better than those given over the year by the service, and closer to the national average of grades.

27. A detailed and comprehensive post-inspection action plan has been introduced. This document is central to the significant improvements that have been made. It covers in detail the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report and the key challenges that were identified. It also deals with the need to continue to improve the identified strengths. The report has been revised regularly during the period between inspections

and makes clear the responsibilities, timing and success factors decided by the service. The initiatives resulting from the post-inspection action plan have been incorporated within an overall quality improvement framework. The service has produced a quality improvement framework. This includes guidelines for the observation of teaching and learning, a new curriculum strategy, and detailed evidence from the self-assessment process. A quality improvement and development plan is currently being prepared, based on the evidence from the self-assessment report and the results from the post-inspection action plan.

28. The service continues to have a particularly thorough self-assessment process. Providers are required to self-assess their provisions in an individual self-assessment report. The larger providers produce a more comprehensive self-assessment report to cover assessment of leadership and management aspects. The service uses a wide range of information channels to collect evidence. In addition to learners' feedback, it uses tutors' team events to collect staff feedback and to instigate curriculum working groups to suggest and evaluate improvements. The self-assessment report itself is produced by the service's management team. The report incorporates information from the range of quality improvement initiatives, including observation of teaching and learning, equality and diversity steering groups, health and safety assessments, and the new curriculum strategy. A draft of the report is circulated to the management team and to curriculum team leaders before the final report is produced. The self-assessment process during 2005-06 significantly supported the success of the post-inspection action plan in improving the quality of provision.

29. Subcontract arrangements are satisfactory. Regular contract meetings are held each term with subcontractors to review each subcontractor's performance. The subcontractor has a detailed service level agreement with the service that specifies the required provision. Many subcontractors have financial and operational targets linked to the grant that the service allocates with the service level agreement. Such targets can include hard-to-reach learner involvement, success and retention rates, the number of learners, qualifications, and observations of teaching and learning. These targets are monitored regularly at contract review meetings and are adjusted if necessary, to reflect local needs and circumstances.

30. The service continues to use learners' feedback effectively to help monitor the quality of its provision. Learners complete evaluation forms at the end of their courses, but also have the opportunity to comment more immediately through a learners' comment form. The service also organises learner focus groups for each of the funding streams and for each of the provider's prioritised themes. The issues raised are shared with the relevant providers and comments are taken into consideration in deciding policies. The service has produced a summary report of learners' evaluations for 2005-06, divided by areas of learning.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas Adult and community learning	441	3

31. In 2005-06, the service delivered 246 courses using 15 providers. There were 1,492 learners who made 2,098 enrolments. ICT enrolments account for 17.5 per cent of all enrolments.

32. Approximately 36 per cent of learners are men and 50 per cent of all learners are over 60 years of age. One per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. Sixteen per cent of learners have disabilities. Most of the 246 courses at the time of inspection are scheduled for less than 60 hours. Most courses operate from September to early July, at various times which include daytime and evening courses. Most learners begin in September but they can join new courses at any time of the year. The ICT programmes are managed by the service development manager, who is supported by a curriculum co-ordinator who leads a team of tutors.

33. The service provides courses in more than 70 venues throughout the county which include adult learning centres, schools, community centres and churches. Providers' prospectuses, local guides, posters and flyers are used to recruit learners. Local partnerships working with community operation groups establish courses to meet the needs of particular groups.

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills
- good teaching materials

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment of literacy and numeracy

Achievement and standards

34. Learners develop good skills and confidence. They develop useful skills in word processing, spreadsheets and image manipulation. Some learners use the ICT skills that they acquire to improve their performances in the workplace, and other learners use these skills in their personal lives. One learner produced graphs to display information at work and another created an electronic family scrapbook for personal use. On some courses, learners acquire useful additional ICT skills. For example, learners researching family history acquire useful ICT skills to improve the presentation of their findings. Learners also develop social skills and personal confidence through ICT programmes. One learner gained enough confidence to help her children with their schoolwork. Many learners begin with no knowledge of ICT and quickly gain basic skills and confidence in using ICT.

This strength was partially identified in the self-assessment report.

35. Success rates in accredited and non-accredited courses have fallen in the current year, but remain satisfactory overall. Retention has improved since the previous inspection, from 85 to 90 per cent. Attendance has also improved since the previous inspection, and is now good at 84 per cent. Learners make satisfactory progress towards their personal learning goals. They are set appropriate targets and know when they have achieved them. Learners are attentive in lessons, and classes are conducted in a positive and supportive atmosphere.

The quality of provision

36. Teaching materials are good. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors provide a wide range of additional materials for learners, which includes handouts, textbooks and online learning resources. Tutors produce good handouts which are defined for the needs of individual learners. Materials are available for different levels of ability. The ICT team regularly reviews the teaching materials for effectiveness. The materials are amended as necessary. Learners appreciate the amount of additional information that they are given.

37. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Classes are small and allow individual support for learners. All of the lessons observed were judged to be satisfactory or better. In the better lessons, tutors use teaching methods that involve learners effectively and allow them to take more responsibility for their own learning.

38. Teaching environments are satisfactory. Most classes are bright, clean and well decorated with modern, reliable computers. All rooms have either a projector or an interactive whiteboard, which tutors use to good effect. However, some rooms are too small to allow tutors and learners to move around easily. Other rooms are too warm or too cold. Of the nine sites visited by inspectors, one did not use adjustable computer chairs, although they were available if required.

39. The use of individual learning plans has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. All learners have individual learning plans which tutors refer to and monitor during lessons, and review at the end of the lesson. Tutors provide appropriate feedback about learners' comments and complete progress reviews using the individual learning plan. The better reviews provide detailed comments about learners' progress, but some are still not detailed enough. Most individual learning plans focus on past learning, but the better ones include some programme planning. Courses met the expectations of most learners. A survey of learners showed that 85 per cent of them felt that the courses met their needs.

40. Support for learners with disabilities is satisfactory. Adaptive technology is used effectively. For example, one learner with mobility problems has an adapted mouse, and large keyboards are available in most learning centres. One learner was using magnifying software, but the screen was too small to obtain the best effect.

41. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are not identified sufficiently. There is no formal process for the assessment of such needs. The availability of literacy and numeracy support is covered briefly in induction, and although learners are given opportunities to

request such support at induction, there is no process to systematically identify support needs. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report. Some tutors identify support needs from examples of learners' work and provide informal support. Although skills for life awareness training is part of the curriculum strategy, this has not been implemented in the ICT area of learning.

Leadership and management

42. Curriculum management has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Regular team meetings are held, and opportunities exist to share good practice and resources. Staff's training needs are identified through lesson observations and as part of the appraisal process. A range of training courses is available to staff. Many of them have attended training for a number of issues, including recording learners' achievements and equality and diversity. The role of the curriculum leader has been established since the previous inspection, and is beginning to have an effect in promoting team working and providing effective support for tutors. Regular communications exist between curriculum leaders and tutors by use of e-mail and the tutors' website.

43. The promotion of equality and diversity has also improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Equality and diversity issues are emphasised at induction and all learners are issued with a handbook which contains relevant information. Learners carry these with them and refer to them. Arrangements for developing equality and diversity issues are identified in lesson planning, but are not always referred to sufficiently, in practice. All rooms contain equality and diversity information which is displayed on posters, and which staff refer to. Learners agree rules for the conduct of the class, and these are displayed on the wall.

44. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Regular checks take place on course documents and learners' understanding of various issues. There is evidence of some changes having been made based on learners' feedback. For example, workbooks were provided for one course following a learner questionnaire. The self-assessment process includes all relevant stakeholders and the views of learners and staff. Its findings broadly match the strengths identified by inspectors. Some weaknesses identified in the report were judged to be satisfactory by inspectors, and one weakness was not identified at all.

Visual & performing arts & media**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Adult and community learning	394	3

45. This area of learning accounted for 14.7 per cent of the service's total enrolments for 2005-06. There were 1,758 enrolments on 164 courses, of which five courses were accredited provision. The courses are held in a range of learning centres which are distributed throughout the county and include church halls, school premises and community centres. The provision is subcontracted to local providers, which include community and voluntary sector organisations and colleges. The further education colleges account for approximately 30 per cent of the provision. The largest contributor, besides the colleges, is the Sutton Centre which deals with 30 per cent of the enrolments. The courses cover a range of visual arts and crafts, including needlecraft, machine knitting, card making, fused glass, sculpture and jewellery. Dance classes include salsa, and belly dancing, and media classes include computer-based audio editing. Courses vary in length from two-hour tasters, to 12- or 30-week courses. They are designed for beginners, intermediate, or advanced learners. Most courses are offered during the daytime and supplemented by some evening provision. The area of learning is co-ordinated by a curriculum leader, and courses are taught by part-time staff.

Strengths

- good achievement of individual goals
- strong group ethos in learning
- good course management

Weaknesses

- narrow range of teaching styles
- insufficiently established curriculum strategy

Achievement and standards

46. Learners achieve their individual goals well. The aims of each lessons are communicated clearly. Learners and tutors share a commitment to achieving learners' individual goals. Learners complete initial assessments and individual learning plans that identify their starting points and aims for the course, and the tasks they need to complete during each lesson to master new skills. In the most successful beginners' classes, learners with little previous experience complete well-planned activities that allow them to acquire basic craft skills and make basic creative decisions about scale, colour and texture. Learners gain confidence as they produce finished pieces quickly and to professional standards on card making and jewellery courses. In dance lessons new learners are given simple, practical tips to support them in mastering new steps. In media lessons, computer-based audio-editing packages are used by learners in the local community radio live broadcasts. Learners in intermediate and advanced classes become self-motivated and extend their skills and produce more specialist pieces. Machine knitters produce

garments to a very high standard and demonstrate creative use of new skills. Learners' progress is monitored thoroughly and often small, individual achievements are recognised by the whole group. Achievements are satisfactory. The overall success rate is 88 per cent, which matches the service's target level. This has been maintained for the past three years. Retention is satisfactory at 88 per cent, and has also been maintained at this level for the past three years.

The quality of provision

47. Tutors develop a strong group ethos in learning. Classes agree ground rules which demonstrate an understanding of equality and diversity. These are displayed in each lesson. The tutor is often a role model in practising the ground rules, giving positive feedback to learners and supporting them, sometimes outside the classroom, with advice, equipment and resources. Learners are encouraged to contribute ideas and help to shape the learning programme in each lesson or for the whole course. Often learners who are less able, or who have a disability or need resources, are helped by fellow learners.

48. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Four of the eight lessons observed were good and four were satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned and structured and offer learners the opportunity to develop skills and understanding, and an individual direction. Activities allow for those learners with physical limitations. In a crafts lesson, learners who had difficulty manipulating small-scale pieces made doorstops, while other learners used the same pattern to make decorations. Learners are encouraged to compile folders of work and portfolios, as appropriate, together with completion of their individual learning plans.

49. The provider is responsive to local needs in terms of location in areas of deprivation, targeting new learners and responding to identified community demands. The service has plans to introduce new providers such as local film-making studios and arts community groups to this area of learning, extending the range of opportunities available and targeting new groups of learners.

50. Resources are satisfactory. Most of the venues are friendly and offer appropriate equipment and accommodation for practical classes. Information, advice and guidance for learners is satisfactory. Information about courses is widely available. Tutors give advice about progression opportunities during lessons, but learners do not always have access to wider advice and guidance at the appropriate time.

51. Tutors rely on a narrow range of teaching styles. They frequently use a traditional approach which includes a combination of demonstrations, question and answer sessions, instructions, handouts, and individual support. Not enough opportunities are taken to inspire and motivate learners through exposure to other cultures, history and artists' work. Learners are not exposed sufficiently to greater challenges. Achievements are sometimes perceived by tutors and learners only as tasks completed, rather than the achievement of visual language skills, or creative judgements.

Leadership and management

52. Course management is good. Tutors are well supported by clearly presented documents and have attended training sessions. Courses are well planned. Schemes of work are thorough and lessons are well planned. In most cases they are evaluated by the

tutor. Learners receive a consistent and satisfactory learning experience. Communications with tutors are good. The curriculum leader's role focuses on supporting tutors, identifying their training, and making them feel valued as part of a team. Meetings take place at least once each term, when good practice is shared.

53. Quality improvement is satisfactory, and managers have established their expectations of tutors which they measure against the standards. The observation of the teaching and learning system has improved, and now has more simple and consistent paperwork, specialist observations, and moderation. A system of class visits ensures that tutors have access to the resources and information that they need to support their roles. The area of training has maintained its level of good or better provision, increased the percentage of satisfactory teaching and learning, and reduced the level of unsatisfactory teaching as stated in the action plan.

54. Continuing professional development is satisfactory. Tutors have attended several training sessions which included equality and diversity, assessment, induction, and recognition and recording of progress and achievement. Equality of opportunity has been widely promoted and most tutors are aware of their responsibilities and actively seek to fulfil them in their relations with learners. Understanding and practice of equal opportunities is less well developed within the curriculum.

55. Literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory. Tutors are aware of the importance of identifying learners' needs and the area of learning has developed a creative 'card-making through numeracy' course.

56. The curriculum strategy is incomplete. A lot of data is available, but is not used effectively to plan the curriculum at area-of-learning level for providers as a whole. The service responds to intelligence from the communities, but courses are often set up without considering the wider aspects of level and progression. For example, a beginners' course has been started without a clear idea of progression opportunities.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Adult and community learning	193	2

57. The service provides its foundation provision through 22 contracts with local community, statutory and voluntary providers. The provision is targeted specifically at the most disadvantaged learners, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, learners with mental health issues, those with poor employability skills, and ex-offenders. In 2005-06, 1,001 learners made 1,766 enrolments. Of these enrolments, 1,507 were on non-accredited courses. Courses cover the generic skills for life, including independent living, personal development and employability skills. Specific courses include basic skills, key skills, Work 2 Qualify, arts and crafts, Storytelling, exercise, job coaching, catering skills, flower arranging, cookery, patchwork, qi gong, movement to music, confidence and communication skills, presentation skills, poetry, photography, tai chi and everyday mathematics. Courses are provided in probation offices, social service day care centres, mental health units, residential homes, a hospice and a wide range of voluntary organisations. At the time of the inspection, 193 learners were attending foundation programmes.

58. The area is managed by a part-time skills for life co-ordinator, who is seconded for half a day each week, and reports to the service development manager.

Strengths

- very good standard of learners' work
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficiently thorough initial and ongoing assessment

Achievement and standards

59. Learners enjoy their studies, and produce work of a very good standard. Tutors set realistic yet challenging standards which motivate learners to work hard. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities develop good practical skills through activities such as cookery and crafts. They increase their ability to function more independently. Learners have a good understanding of safe working practices, such as the need for cleanliness in food preparation. They develop good verbal skills and are confident in presenting their ideas and views in group settings.

60. Learners' achievements are celebrated in photographic displays and audio recordings. Learners' poems are displayed prominently in the library of one learning centre, and in another centre an open day is held to celebrate arts and crafts work. A DVD featuring learners talking about their learning experiences in the service is used during induction with new learners.

61. Retention and achievement rates are good. In 2004-05, for learners taking non-accredited courses, retention and achievement rates were the same, at 88 per cent. For learners taking accredited courses, the retention and success rates were 89 per cent. In 2005-06, for learners taking non-accredited courses, the retention rate was 95 per cent and the achievement was 86 per cent. For those learners on accredited courses the rates were 99 per cent for retention and 98 per cent for success. The number of learners gaining national literacy and numeracy qualifications has increased significantly. In 2004-05, 16 learners gained these qualifications, and in 2005-06, 213 learners did so.

The quality of provision

62. Standards of teaching and learning are good. Six of the 10 lessons observed were good or better, three were satisfactory and one was inadequate. Lessons are well planned and take the particular needs of the learners into account. Aims and objectives are clearly explained at the beginning of each lesson, and prominently displayed. Learners agree a set of ground rules with tutors which establish the standards of behaviour extremely effectively. There is an excellent rapport between tutors and learners, which establishes a shared culture of purposeful learning.

63. Many lessons include innovative teaching methods to involve learners. For example, in one lesson, the tutor introduced the concept of equity by distributing sweets randomly to learners. Other learners protested that this was unfair, which led to a lively discussion about the inequality. Differentiation is applied appropriately to the set tasks. Tutors skilfully ensure that sensitive disclosures are used to build learners' confidence and share experiences in a supportive environment. Humour is used effectively to encourage learners to attempt more difficult tasks, and make the learning enjoyable. Learners provide effective peer support, often praising other learners' work. A relaxed atmosphere is engendered in lessons, which is conducive to learning.

64. Teaching resources are good. Tutors create stimulating teaching aids that motivate learners. In one lesson, learners with a wide range of learning difficulties and/disabilities used prepared materials to create medicine bags, which had featured in a story told to them. Teaching environments are satisfactory.

65. In most lessons, learning assistants and care workers are used effectively to support learners. Many learning resources are adapted specifically to meet the needs of learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In one crafts session, a board was attached to a learner's wheelchair to enable him to paint his own design on a t-shirt, with assistance. ICT is used well in some lessons to support learning. In one lesson, learners produced their own presentations, using relevant software. Some adaptive technology is available to support learners but there is limited access to ICT in some venues, and some tutors do not have the skills to use it.

66. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners satisfactorily. Most learners feel that their learning aspirations have been met effectively.

67. Advice and guidance are satisfactory. Some courses are supported effectively by staff from nextstep, who offer a comprehensive service to guide learners into appropriate provision. Induction is satisfactory. An example of good practice is the learners'

handbook which has been specifically created for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners are particularly encouraged to disclose any instances of bullying and harassment, and have confidence in the process for resolving such incidents.

68. Lesson content reflects the importance of equality and diversity. For example, in one session, recipes from India were used, with authentic ingredients obtained from local shops.

69. The service's initial and continuous assessments are not thorough enough. In many cases, initial assessment is viewed merely as an administrative process without particular benefit to learners, and is completed in a cursory fashion. The results of initial assessment are not always used effectively in creating individual learning plans. On some courses, individual learning plans are not reviewed systematically and continuous assessment is not recorded systematically by all providers. However, there are examples where initial assessment is related effectively to a vocational context to make it specifically relevant for learners. Some tutors make excellent use of individual learning plans to chart learners' progress, and record their improving skills levels.

Leadership and management

70. Curriculum management is good. Tutors are supported well and are given a comprehensive tutors' handbook, which explains clearly and concisely the professional standards expected, and how tutors can gain support. Course files and documents are good.

71. The service's management has a significant commitment to quality improvement. Teaching and learning observations are carried out systematically, and match inspection judgements in most cases. In addition to teaching and learning observations, regular classroom visits have been instigated to ensure that standards are maintained. Tutors value these positively, viewing them as a good mechanism for improving their skills.

72. Appropriate staff training has been developed, and is highly valued by tutors. An effective e-mail network has been established to improve communications between staff, and allows good practice to be shared effectively.

73. Equality and diversity is promoted particularly effectively throughout the curriculum. In all teaching and learning observations, tutors are required to identify how equality and diversity will be promoted with learners. Effective links with external agencies support the recruitment of hard-to-reach learners. Learners have extremely good relationships with the service's staff.

Family learning**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		2
Adult and community learning	74	2

74. In 2005-06, 1,332 learners enrolled on 1,585 family learning courses in family literacy, language and numeracy, and wider family learning programmes. Of those learners, 83 per cent were women, 39 per cent were aged between 35 and 44 years, 2 per cent were from minority ethnic groups, and 3 per cent had a disability. Currently, 74 learners are enrolled on 35 courses. Forty subcontracted providers deliver most of the programmes, using 106 venues. One tutor is employed directly by the service to deliver some family numeracy courses. The provision ranges from two-hour workshops through introductory, and short courses to intensive family literacy, language and numeracy programmes. The provision is aimed at families living in areas of greatest economic and social disadvantage, or those who have poor literacy, numeracy, or language skills. Some programmes have Open College Network (OCN) accreditation, and learners are offered national tests in literacy and numeracy. Most of the provision is non-accredited. A family learning co-ordinator manages the provision.

Adult and community learning*Strengths*

- good achievement and retention
- good standards of teaching and learning
- well-managed provision
- good range of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficiently systematic recording of progression

Achievement and standards

75. Retention and success rates are good. The retention rate for 2005-06 was 95 per cent and the overall success rate was 94 per cent. OCN accreditation has been offered for one year on two programmes, and 18 learners have been successful. Fifty-five learners achieved national qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy. The achievement of learning goals, which was a strength at the previous inspection, has been maintained. Learners gain new skills, explore their creativity, take risks, gain an understanding of how their children learn, and knowledge of the school curriculum. Parents and carers learn how to promote language and number development through story telling. Learners' confidence increases and they apply their new knowledge and skills with their children at home. Learners on some courses produce portfolios to a very good standard and there is good photographic evidence from many courses. In one highly disadvantaged area, where parental involvement was previously low, the parents formed a parent teacher group.

The quality of provision

76. Standards of teaching and learning are good. Eighty per cent of the classes observed were good, and 20 per cent were outstanding. Tutors use a range of teaching methods to suit different learning styles. In one innovative session, learners used their numerical and risk assessment skills to design a den using craft materials, which was then scaled up to produce a full-sized version in the school grounds that can be used by children. Another lesson encourages creativity. The tutor used expertly made puppets to animate a story, then children and adults use craft material to illustrate some aspects and develop their language skills. Healthy eating is a theme in several programmes and supports the Every Child Matters agenda. Parents consider nutrition and subsequently share a healthy lunch with their children. Lessons are planned well to allow differentiation. The best lessons have energy and pace. Learners support and encourage each other and their group work is effective. They are fully involved in their own learning and understand what new knowledge and skills they have acquired. Tutors check that learning is taking place through questioning and observation. Learners are actively involved in evaluating learning sessions.

77. The assessment and recording of progress are satisfactory and take place in some form in all programmes. Initial assessments in wider family learning include discussions, tutor observations and learners' own views of what they can do. In other programmes, more formal assessment are used, and diagnostic assessment is available when appropriate.

78. The previous inspection identified that insufficient use was made of individual learning plans. They are now used consistently throughout the provider. Tutors have a strong commitment to helping learners to value their abilities. Individual learning plans are used regularly to review and record progress.

79. The service's use of resources continues to be good. Tutors have a variety of resources that are used well. These include digital cameras, tape recorders, video recorders, and laptop computers as well as craft materials, books and paper-based resources. Parents are encouraged to make simple games that can be played with children at home. On one course, babies' toys and books are available for parents to borrow each week. These resources reflect cultural diversity. The accommodation is satisfactory.

80. The service's range of provision is good. In 2005-06 there were 80, two-hour workshops, 72 introductory courses, 19 short courses and three intensive family literacy, language and numeracy programmes. This pattern has been maintained for the current year. The geographical distribution is good, with provision in a variety of locations. Programmes are delivered in areas of greatest disadvantage. They are delivered by subcontracted partners who bring varied skills and specialisms. The larger providers support short and intensive literacy, numeracy, and language courses. Voluntary organisations provide expertise in arts, crafts, story telling, and working with babies and very young children. Some programmes are aimed specifically at attracting more men, such as a 'dads and lads' numeracy course at a football stadium and a 'sport for all' programme to involve parents and carers of children who have a disability. Additional programmes continue to be a strength. These programmes include residential weekends

for specific target groups, or areas and outings to extend experience. The service works with health professionals, community organisations and partnership workers to provide family learning where needs are identified.

81. Personal support for learners is satisfactory. Additional learning support and childcare are available when required. Information, advice and guidance was previously considered a weakness, but it is now satisfactory. Some tutors are appropriately qualified and provide this service in a number of centres. Tutors are aware of progression opportunities which are displayed as posters.

82. Learners' progress is not recorded systematically. Learners do progress to other courses and to employment, and some of the larger providers record data on management information systems. Some programmes ask learners for their intended destinations, which allows the number of learners who have progressed to further training or work to be estimated. Some tutors record anecdotal evidence and case studies. However, there is no consistent approach to such records, or any overall assessment of the progress of family learning learners.

Leadership and management

83. The provision is well managed. A family learning co-ordinator leads the curriculum group, which takes forward the curriculum strategy. Tutors receive curriculum and professional support. They are involved, and feel valued by the service. They regard the support they receive as highly professional. Communications are good in person, by e-mail, by telephone, and through the ACLS website. Partnership working between providers is good. Good practice is shared regularly within curriculum group and staff conferences and also through informal exchange visits. Quality improvement has focused successfully on the quality of teaching and learning, and achievements. Seventeen of the 23 tutors have been observed and others have received class monitoring visits. Providers' performances are monitored and the data is used in making decisions. Quality improvement documents are used well and are understood by tutors, who are involved in the self-assessment process.

84. Equality and diversity training is evident in all aspects of the planning and delivery of equality and diversity training. Ground rules are developed that encourage an understanding of difference and mutual respect. Display and teaching materials reflect cultural diversity. Teaching activities respect the languages of speakers of additional languages. In a lesson where learners were using photographs and laptop computers to make a book for their children, one woman was producing a book in Arabic and English. Learners' support needs are identified and met for those with language or learning difficulties, or with mental health problems.

