

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Bolton Council**

**03 February 2006**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

## Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

## Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Grading

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

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

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Bolton Council

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Bolton Council	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	4
Key Findings	4
What learners like about Bolton Council	11
What learners think Bolton Council could improve	11

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	15
Equality of opportunity	16
Quality improvement	17
Information and communications technology	19
Leisure, travel and tourism	22
Arts, media and publishing	25
Languages, literature and culture	27
Preparation for life and work	29
Community development	32

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Bolton Council's Adult Learning Service (BCALS) is funded by the Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In 2000, the local authority agreed to merge its community education service with the further education college to form Bolton Community College (BCC). BCC has the sole contract with the local authority to deliver adult and community learning provision. BCC applies its own quality assurance and improvement procedures to the adult and community learning provision, and a local authority adult and community learning manager monitors the arrangement and its implementation. Plans and progress are scrutinised through weekly meetings with BCALS's executive elected member for adult services. There are joint groups for strategic planning, monitoring of performance, quality improvement and curriculum development. The objective for adult and community learning is 'to enable adults, young people and communities in Bolton to develop and succeed, by providing quality assured and appropriate learning and employment opportunities.

2. In 2004-05, adult and community learning was delivered at over 80 sites through a 'hubs and spokes' model built on a network of local learning centres. Of the 5,727 learners in 2004-05, 5,316 learners were on main programmes and 411 learners were on short family learning courses. Over 33 per cent of learners were entitled to full concessionary fees and 17 per cent were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Over 73 per cent of learners were women and 13 per cent of learners had a declared disability, learning difficulty or mental health problem. Twenty per cent of all learners were aged over 65 years and 37 per cent were from widening participation postcodes. The programme covers 13 areas of learning with the largest curriculum areas in arts, media and publishing and community development.

3. Of the borough's population of 261,000, approximately 204,000 are aged over 16 years and approximately 44,000 are over 60. Eleven per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups. Bolton is a large diverse borough, and includes affluent and poor areas. Almost 40 per cent of the population live in neighbourhoods which are among the 20 per cent most deprived in England and Wales. The borough has a high proportion of adults who are not involved in learning activities, a lower than average percentage of adults with level 4 qualifications and a high proportion without any qualifications. Twenty-five per cent of all adults fall below national standards for literacy and numeracy. This figure rises to 33 per cent in the most disadvantaged areas of the borough.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

### Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provider is good.** Leadership and management and arrangements for quality improvement are good and equality of opportunity is outstanding. The provision in information and communications technology (ICT) for users, arts and crafts, other languages, literature and culture, and literacy and numeracy were judged to be good. Sport, leisure and recreation was satisfactory and community development was outstanding.

**5. The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is comprehensive and involves managers, the local authority's staff and BCC's staff. The views of learners are taken into consideration through meetings and questionnaires. The self-assessment findings concerning adult and community learners reflect most of the judgements made by inspectors. The report is informative and covers all aspects of the provision. Most of the grades given by inspectors matched those of the provider. However, a few of the self-assessment judgements are not precise enough, and there is not always enough evidence to support them.

**6. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to maintain the high quality of provision.** Quality assurance arrangements used by the partners are thorough and very effective. There are many signs of a continuously improving service. All partners and learners contribute actively to the development and improvement of BCALS. Learners' achievements are very good and continue to improve. The capacity to further improve the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding, although for adult and community learning more improvements are still needed. Very good use is made of accurate learner data to monitor performance and to plan improvements. Progress in implementing plans is closely monitored.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR BOLTON COUNCIL:

- further improve the quality of teaching and learning
- improve the planning of individual learning
- continue to improve the quality of resources in local learning centres
- arrange courses to attract parents with young children in line with available crèche provision
- continue to target courses at hard-to-reach learners and communities

## GRADES

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

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

Information and communications technology			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i>		2	
Adult and community learning	423	2	

Leisure, travel and tourism		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i></b> Adult and community learning	246	<b>3</b> 3

Arts, media and publishing		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Arts and crafts</b> Adult and community learning	965	<b>2</b> 2

Languages, literature and culture		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Other languages, literature and culture</i></b> Adult and community learning	544	<b>2</b> 2

Preparation for life and work		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Literacy and numeracy</i></b> Adult and community learning	507	<b>2</b> 2

Community development		1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b> Adult and community learning	444	<b>1</b> 1

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. A team of nine inspectors spent 36 days inspecting the provision in October 2005. Five inspectors were involved in inspecting five adult and community learning curriculum areas. Leadership and management and community development were inspected during a second phase in January 2006.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	36
Number of learners interviewed	124
Number of staff interviewed	29
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	21
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	9
Number of visits	19

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

**8. Learners gain confidence, achieve their learning goals and often progress to further courses in all areas of learning.**

**9. Beginner information technology (IT) learners quickly develop their IT skills** and are able to write text and send e-mail. Some become sufficiently confident to take part in e-shopping and crop their own digital photographs. Learners progress well and approximately 33 per cent of them join further courses which lead to qualifications.

**10. Sports, leisure and recreation learners develop good skills that improve their health and well being.** They become more co-ordinated in their movements, and improve their breathing techniques and overall levels of fitness. Yoga learners improve their posture and balance. Learners over 50 years of age develop their mobility and fitness levels in exercise classes. Many of them say that attending classes has helped them to recover from injury.

**11. Retention, achievements and standards of learning are good on crafts courses.** Many learners on low-level courses produce work to a much higher standard than would be expected. Learners in embroidery classes complete impressive large-scale works that are displayed in community venues.

**12. Learners on programmes in other languages, and literacy and culture programmes achieve good pass rates in many courses, including French and sign language.** Beginners acquire basic verbal skills and understanding by listening to their target language. More advanced learners are able to use more complex language successfully in different contexts, including work and travel.



13. Many learners achieve their individual learning goals in literacy and numeracy courses. Learners with a history of academic failure or health problems get a strong sense of achievement through attending courses regularly. They receive in-house certificates, and for many of them this is the first time that they have received such recognition for their work. Family learners gain a real sense of achievement through doing activities such as baby massage or basic papercrafts. **Many learners progress to more structured courses and eventually to further study or accredited courses.**

14. **After attending courses, community development learners develop the confidence to progress to further education courses and employment.** Six former learning ambassadors, who are local residents and learners who promote learning in the community, now work as tutors or facilitators, and eight of them work as learning support assistants. Learners speak confidently of how learning has helped them to develop skills for work. Some learners in childcare have gained jobs in community creche. Learners' achievements are celebrated at special events which are held in community venues.

### The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Information and communications technology	1	5	1	1	8
Leisure, travel and tourism	1	1	3	1	6
Arts, media and publishing	1	4	3	0	8
Languages, literature and culture	0	2	2	1	5
Preparation for life and work	0	3	2	0	5
Community development	1	5	3	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>41</b>

15. **Teaching and learning standards are good in ICT.** Tutors plan varied learning activities to enable learners to work in groups, as well as individually at their own pace. There is a lot of peer support and checks on previous learning are thorough. Learners keep their own records and are aware of their own progress. Those learners with additional learning needs get good support from trained support assistants, but **planning for individual learning is not thorough enough.** Initial assessment is not rigorous, and few learning plans include records of appropriate, individual short-term targets. Some new learners do not understand what they are required to do.

16. **Sports, yoga and tai chi tutors use good instructional techniques in practical classes.** They demonstrate and give precise guidance about safety in the performance of techniques in order to help learners to avoid injury and to develop good performance skills.

17. **Planning is inadequate for individual learning in sports, yoga and tai chi.** Individual learning plans do not record what learners should be able to achieve in class, and the plans do not take account of individual ability levels. Assessment arrangements are not always clearly written.

18. **Standards of teaching and learning in arts and crafts are good.** Lessons are well planned to take into account of the needs of all learners. Teachers set meaningful goals for the highly motivated learners. Learners in fashion design check their individual learning plans each week and record their achievements regularly. Learners in needlework at a local mosque manufacture garments for themselves and their families. **The most able**

**learners are not challenged enough** and in many lessons no extension tasks are available to stretch gifted learners. The courses successfully attract the traditionally harder-to-reach learners. Older learners attend guitar and multimedia IT classes and courses include fashion for Asian women and art for learners with mental health care needs.

19. **Some innovative methods are used to teach languages.** Sign language tutors use handouts, games and graphics to help learners to remember the language. Language tutors use computer technology to make learning easier. **There is not enough focus on individual learning needs.** No effective methods are used in language classes to help learners to correct their most common mistakes.

20. **An extensive range of courses includes 10 languages. The most popular are taught in several local learning centres.** Learners can progress to higher levels and choose courses simply to learn, or in order to take examinations.

21. Teachers of literacy and numeracy courses visit specialist centres, such as the psychiatric wards of local hospitals. Many hard-to-reach learners join classes from these initial contacts. Male learners are attracted through sports days and a project which operates from an allotment. Productive links with organisations providing other services such as libraries, probation services, and an Asian men's mental health drop-in centre, allow contact with a much wider group of potential learners.

22. The community development learning ambassadors project successfully trains local adults from five targeted wards to become advocates of the benefits of learning. They become role models for potential learners, helping them to overcome obstacles to learning and giving them practical and emotional support.

23. **Support for community development learners is particularly good.** Informed advice and guidance is available and the needs of learners with dyslexia are assessed effectively. Course tutors are very supportive. Bilingual support and help are readily available for learners with language or literacy needs. More experienced learners are used well as mentors for other learners.

24. **Hard-to-reach groups are encouraged to learn through the productive partnerships** established by BCC. Community needs are identified through discussions with psychiatric nurses, the substance and alcohol misuse team, and the volunteer bureau. Courses are provided in venues which are familiar to learners.

### **Leadership and management**

25. **Leadership and management are particularly effective.** The partnership between the local authority and BCC works particularly well. BCALS is monitored thoroughly at all levels by the partners. Elected members are strongly committed to ensuring the success of the provision. Senior managers work collaboratively to ensure a strong focus on resolving key issues. All participation and priority targets are met.

26. **The management of the curriculum is good.** Curriculum leaders and area learning co-ordinators ensure that the curriculum meets local needs. The quality of the provision and the performance of staff are monitored by managers.

27. Strategic planning and curriculum management meetings are purposeful and action points are communicated widely. Successful improvements to the accommodation have improved learning opportunities. Good-quality learning opportunities are offered in learning centres which are convenient to most learners. There is a strong commitment to encourage volunteers and developing individuals to their full potential.

28. The quality of resources available to support learning programmes is satisfactory. Resources have improved and there are some good learning materials for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. **In some learning centres ICT resources are unsatisfactory**, but good, planned developments exist for implementing information and learning technology (ILT) and e-learning.

29. **BCC has a particularly strong culture of respect and support for learners.** The provider transforms the lives of individuals who arrive with low self-esteem and few, or no, qualifications. Fair treatment, respect and inclusiveness are values recognised by learners. Many individual success stories celebrate the very significant gains in learning that many learners achieve.

30. **Several projects have successfully widened participation**, in particular by under-represented and hard-to-reach groups. Some of these projects, such as the learning ambassadors, have achieved national recognition.

31. Equality and diversity policies are comprehensive and meet current legal requirements. The equality development plan has clear targets for improvement and arrangements for monitoring progress. Publicity materials celebrate the diversity of learners. The extensive training opportunities for tutors are well attended by the part-time tutors. Particularly good use is made of data to monitor the attendance, retention and achievements of distinctive groups of learners.

32. Adults with disabilities have good access to community learning centres. Financial support is available to learners towards the cost of fees, materials and childcare. Childcare facilities are available at many outreach centres, but the reduction in the number of places available has caused concern to some learners.

33. Quality improvement measures are effective. Managers make good use of timely management information to introduce necessary improvements. BCC applies its quality assurance systems to the provision very effectively. External partnerships help to successfully implement innovative projects. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

34. **Good use is made of readily available, timely management information** for the monitoring of staff's and learners' performances. Course information is easily accessible at local learning centres. Managers and curriculum leaders act quickly on concerns about individual courses and programmes. Reports are used by partners in their decision-making and development plans.

35. **Learners and partners are involved extensively in the planning of courses.** Learners' views are gathered through consultation events, surveys, questionnaires and evaluations. Promotional events encourage new learners to participate and good use is made of the expertise of partner organisations. Current learners are used to promote learning to

prospective learners.

36. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory, but **observers are not always subject specialists**. Feedback is used to point out necessary improvements, although some judgements are not specific enough. BCC assessed the quality of its teaching too highly.

37. Self-assessment involves staff, learners and managers effectively. The outcomes are moderated by an external specialist. Action and development plans are clearly written and are regularly monitored.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- particularly effective leadership and management
- particularly strong culture of respect and support for learners
- very effective targeting of courses at under-represented groups and communities
- very good promotion of equality and diversity
- good use of timely management information
- extensive learner and partner involvement in planning programmes

### **Weaknesses**

- ineffective communications about the arrangements for childcare provision

## **Information and communications technology**

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

***Grade 2***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of confidence and skills
- good progression by learners
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good curriculum management

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning for individual learning
- unsatisfactory resources in some learning centres

## **Leisure, travel and tourism**

### ***Sport, leisure and recreation***

***Grade 3***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of skills

- good instructional techniques in practical classes

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning for individual learning
- incomplete monitoring of quality of provision

### **Arts, media and publishing**

#### **Arts and crafts**

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- good achievements and standards in learners' work
- good progression
- good standards of teaching and learning
- particularly good inclusion of diverse groups of learners
- good leadership and management

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient challenges for the most able learners

### **Languages, literature and culture**

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

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- good standards in learners' work
- innovative teaching in some classes
- good range of courses and progression levels

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient focus on individual learning needs
- insufficient specialist observation of teaching and learning

### **Preparation for life and work**

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

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of confidence and social skills
- good progression
- good promotion of courses to under-represented groups
- successful initiatives to improve programmes

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning to meet individual learning needs

**Community development**

***Adult and community learning***

***Grade 1***

*Strengths*

- very good achievement and progression
- outstanding 'learning ambassadors' project
- particularly good support for learners
- effective inclusion of hard-to-reach groups through partnerships
- good programme management

*Weaknesses*

- insufficiently thorough planning for individual learning

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BOLTON COUNCIL:**

- the availability of courses in attractive and welcoming local learning centres
- the friendly support from all staff, particularly for less confident learners
- 'the encouragement to join a course and continue learning that has changed my life'
- 'being a volunteer has been very beneficial'
- 'tutors are good at pushing you and making you achieve your limits'
- the good mix of able-bodied learners and those with disabilities

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK BOLTON COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:**

- the access to and reliability of some computer resources
- the arrangements for childcare
- the car parking facilities
- the forms that need to be completed when applying for Access funds - they are too complicated

## Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

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

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



## Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Grade 2

#### Strengths

- particularly effective leadership and management
- particularly strong culture of respect and support for learners
- very effective targeting of courses at under-represented groups and communities
- very good promotion of equality and diversity
- good use of timely management information
- extensive learner and partner involvement in planning programmes

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective communications about the arrangements for childcare provision

38. Leadership and management are particularly effective. The partnership between the local authority and BCC works particularly well. The service-level agreement is good and protocols have been agreed to ensure that the provision is monitored at all levels by the partners. These agreements are a key element in improving the provision, and the success of the partnership has been recognised nationally as good practice. All partners, including elected members, are kept fully informed. Elected members are strongly committed to ensuring the success of BCALS. The adult and community learning manager, in collaboration with BCC's director, works hard to ensure that elected members, the local authority and BCC's managers focus on the key issues. All participation and priority targets are met.

39. The management of the curriculum has been strengthened considerably since the merger with BCC in 2001. BCC's good systems are applied to the planning and development of adult learning in the community. Most of the curriculum management is good. Curriculum leaders and area learning co-ordinators ensure that the curriculum is relevant to local needs. BCC's systems are adapted to meet the particular requirements of local communities, local authority priorities and the LSC. The quality of the provision and the performance of staff are monitored by the managers.

40. All partners are kept well informed. Strategic planning and curriculum management meetings are purposeful and action points are widely communicated. Successful initiatives to invest in capital building projects have further improved the opportunities for learning. The 'hubs and spokes' model effectively enables good-quality and relevant learning opportunities to be offered at the most convenient and comfortable location for learners. Key managers are good at inspiring and motivating others to get involved. There is a strong commitment to encouraging volunteers and developing individuals to their full potential.

41. The quality of resources available to support learning programmes is satisfactory. Resources have improved and some good learning materials exist for ESOL courses. In some learning centres, ICT resources are unsatisfactory.

42. The provider has good, planned developments for implementing ILT and e-learning throughout adult and community learning programmes. 'Just in time and just for me' is an effective training programme for staff, which is designed to increase the use of ILT. Tutors in non-technology subjects such as languages, are making good use of ILT in their lessons. Managers monitor the use of ILT and are creating a pool of resources for use in satellite venues. An increasing amount of ILT equipment and resources is being made available for teaching and administration. External partners contribute their expertise to the development of the ILT strategy. Sixteen e-learning guides have been trained to support curriculum tutors. ILT is effectively used in several widening participation projects.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 1**

43. BCALS is particularly effective in transforming the lives of individuals who often arrive with low self-esteem, and few or no qualifications. The provider places considerable emphasis on values such as fair treatment, respect and inclusiveness. Many individual success stories celebrate the very significant gains in learning and personal development achieved by learners. All staff at community learning centres are fully committed to ensuring learners can join, stay and achieve. BCALS celebrates the achievements of learners at an annual award ceremony and in the local learning centres. Tutors handle any barriers to learning sensitively. Additional learning support is strong for individuals and in the classroom. Learners in existing groups welcome newcomers and quickly put them at their ease. The learners' handbook includes a clearly written commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity, diversity and learners' rights and responsibilities.

44. Several projects have successfully widened participation in learning, particularly for under-represented and hard-to-reach groups. Some of these projects, such as the learning ambassadors, have achieved national recognition. BCALS has very successfully attracted adults from the most disadvantaged wards to learning, including adults on low incomes, former substance and alcohol users, and older learners from minority ethnic groups. Good, local partnerships with community and voluntary groups, schools, and local religious and cultural groups make the provision more available to excluded and vulnerable groups. The focus of these partnerships is not just on encouraging participation, but also on ensuring that learners are successful in their learning goals.

45. BCALS's very strong commitment to equality and diversity is promoted through a comprehensive range of policies and procedures. These cover all aspects of equality and meet current legislative requirements, including child protection. The equality development plan has clearly written, measurable objectives, with deadlines for completion and arrangements for the systematic monitoring of progress. The staff fairness team monitor progress against these objectives. Equality and diversity impact measures include specific targets for adult and community learning.

46. Learning materials and methods are strongly influenced by a commitment to promote equality and diversity in most areas of learning. Publicity materials celebrate the diversity of learners, and some local leaflets appear in several formats. There are extensive training opportunities for tutors concerning changes in legislation, and awareness-raising. Training events are well attended by staff, including part-time tutors. Attendance records are kept and any effect on teaching strategies is evaluated. Particularly good use is made of data to monitor the attendance, retention and achievement of distinct groups of learners. This is used to assess the effectiveness of the additional support provided. Managers use data well, and tutors increasingly use data to monitor the effects of equality policies.

47. Adults with disabilities have good access to all of the main learning centres, and many of the outreach centres. Ramps, automatic doors, and signage in different languages are provided, and adaptive equipment in IT is readily available. Financial support is available to learners towards the cost of fees, materials and childcare, although some learners are discouraged from applying by the volume of paperwork involved. Childcare facilities are provided, including at many outreach centres. BCALS has reduced the number of crèche places because some crèches were underused. Some learners and staff do not understand the reasons for the reductions sufficiently. Contingency arrangements to ensure crèche places for all learners who want them are not fully effective. When planning its programmes for the next academic year, the provider intends to match crèche availability to courses known to attract parents and children.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 2**

48. Quality improvement measures are effective. Managers use timely management information well to introduce necessary improvements. BCC applies its quality assurance systems to the provision very effectively. Staff development, changes to the delivery model, the use of feedback from learners, investment in resources, and capital building have all had a significant positive effect on the learners and learning opportunities. External links and partnerships are used to implement innovative projects successfully.

49. Good use is made of readily available, timely management information. Data is easily available to all staff and managers including those at outreach centres. Information is frequently updated and checked for accuracy. Administrators use this information to monitor registers, withdrawals, transfers and tutors' absences. Early action is taken on learners' absences, to improve retention. Course information is readily accessible at local learning centres. Managers and curriculum leaders monitor trends and act quickly on concerns about individual courses and programmes. Discrete reports are used effectively to monitor progress in meeting local authority targets, such as the recruitment of new learners and progression to accredited programmes. Reports are used in quality improvement and strategic meetings by partners, in making decisions and drawing up development plans.

50. Learners and partners are involved extensively in the planning of all adult and community learning programmes. Learners' views are gathered through consultation events, surveys, questionnaires and evaluations. Information is presented in a way that is easily understood. Promotional events encourage new learners to participate and good use is made of the expertise of partner organisations. Current learners are used to motivate and find new learners. Many enthusiastic learners become involved in fundraising, and act as volunteers and learning support assistants. Learning co-ordinators spend time listening to the needs of learners. The learning ambassadors are inspirational role models.

51. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Observations are concentrated annually into a two-week period and are conducted by managers, curriculum representatives and advanced practitioners, but observers are not always subject specialists. Feedback is used to point out necessary improvements, although some judgements are not specific enough. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but BCC assessed the quality of its teaching too highly. Tutors' progress is monitored by the quality improvement group.

52. Self-assessment involves staff, learners and managers effectively. The outcomes are moderated by an external specialist. Action and development plans are clearly written and are routinely monitored. Curriculum area self-assessment reports are not always selective enough in identifying key strengths and weaknesses.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Information and communications technology

**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i> Adult and community learning	423	<b>2</b> 2

53. Four hundred and twenty-three adult and community learners are enrolled at nine sites on 31 non-accredited courses, ranging from introductory level to level 2. Course take place in purpose-built local learning centres, local community centres, schools and libraries throughout Bolton. Four full-time staff, and 12 part-time staff teach on adult and community learning courses. The curriculum is managed by a temporary curriculum manager and a curriculum leader. There are four course co-ordinators who also teach.

#### *ICT for users*

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- good development of confidence and skills
- good progression by learners
- good standards of teaching and learning
- good curriculum management

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning for individual learning
- unsatisfactory resources in some learning centres

### **Achievement and standards**

54. Learners develop their confidence and IT skills well. Complete beginners are introduced to the computer very gradually and in a supportive way. Learners develop new IT skills in e-mail and word processing using interesting topics. The course structure is sufficiently flexible to enable learners to progress at their own pace. Learners acquire good programming skills through an introductory course. They become confident in using the computer for personal and leisure purposes through courses on e-shopping and digital photography. Learners apply the knowledge and skills they gain, and understand internet security and how to crop their photographs. One learner plans to set up her own business selling photographs on the internet. Ninety-seven per cent of learners on beginners' courses completed the programme in 2004-05. All learners who complete the programme are given a certificate, whether they complete both main assignments or not. Some learners attend a ball to celebrate their achievement and receive their certificates from local dignitaries.

55. Learners progress well to further courses, most of which lead to a qualification. More than 30 per cent of the learners on IT adult and community learning courses in 2004-05, enrolled for accredited IT courses in 2005-06. Interest in taster sessions from potential

learners is generated by a team of 'learning ambassadors'. The taster sessions are targeted at adults in deprived areas and are held in church halls, local community centres and in libraries throughout Bolton. Learners are then encouraged to move to beginners' courses in the learning centres. Many learners progress to other courses such as 'second steps in IT' and to accredited courses at BCC.

### **The quality of provision**

56. The standards of teaching and learning in ICT for users are good. Tutors plan and conduct lessons well and encourage learners to work in groups, as well as individually at their own pace. There is a lot of peer support and learners enjoy the friendly atmosphere. Learning activities are varied and fun, and include internet shopping exercises. Checks on previous learning experiences are thorough. A group activity called 'The Tree of Learning', which is now available as part of standards unit pilot materials, is used successfully with learners who attend community and short taster IT courses. Learners' progress is monitored well. They keep their own records and are well aware of their own progress. Tutors provide them with good written and verbal feedback. Resources are used well by tutors, when they are available to them.

57. Learners with an identified additional learning need receive good support from trained support assistants and specialist resources. Some learners are well supported by the same support assistant on several courses. Materials are adapted, and one learner, who had recently suffered a stroke, was given a special recording tape and exercise material in large text. When additional learning needs are identified after a course has begun, support is less structured. Good advice and guidance is given to learners when they have completed their courses. They are given a progression slip which allows them to enrol quickly on another course at reduced cost.

58. A good range of courses is available, with clear progression routes. The courses are provided over a wide geographical area. Learners' views are used to help develop new courses. However, some courses are cancelled when there are insufficient learners. Most learners are transferred to other courses but the number of learning venues is reduced. Some learners are unable to attend the course of their choice.

59. Individual learning is not planned sufficiently. Initial assessment is not thorough enough and learning styles and individual learning needs are not analysed adequately. Only a small number of learning plans record individual, short-term targets. Some learners on beginners' courses do not understand what they are required to do, and the language used in initial assessment forms is too complex. A few of the learners cannot cope with courses above beginners' level. Teachers provide easier exercises for them, but these are often not planned in advance.

60. Literacy, numeracy and language needs are supported satisfactorily, but these needs are not always assessed adequately. Some tutors are not trained to deal with learners' literacy and language requirements.

61. Resources are unsatisfactory in some learning centres. Some computer suites have only one small whiteboard, and very few have overhead projectors or adequate technology for interactive teaching and learning. Some rooms are cramped and many have no space to allow learners to work away from the computers. One learning centre has a lift which is kept locked and some centres have inappropriate or damaged chairs. Access to computers



and the internet is not always available in school venues. Not all of the introductory course workbooks are suitable for beginners, and some use difficult language and have small print that is inappropriate for elderly learners.

### **Leadership and management**

62. The curriculum is well managed. Managers are particularly responsive to the needs of learners and tutors. Course reviews are thorough and evaluative, and learners' progress is well monitored. Tutors are supported and appraised well. Communications with tutors are very good, using an efficient e-mail system and regular meetings. Staff are well qualified and staff development is good. Teaching and learning are observed regularly, and training and further observations take place if unsatisfactory grades are awarded. Inspectors' findings matched most of the self-assessment judgements for this area of learning. Data about learners' ethnic background and age is gathered, but is not used effectively to monitor trends.

**Leisure, travel and tourism****Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i></b> Adult and community learning	246	<b>3</b> 3

63. Courses are offered in body toning, tai chi, yoga and Pilates. There are progression opportunities in tai chi. All courses are non-accredited. At the time of inspection, 246 learners were enrolled in 17 classes. Courses are offered during the day and in the evening in venues which include schools, community centres and church halls throughout the city. Most classes last for one to two hours each week over 16 weeks. Thirty-seven per cent of learners are over 60 years of age, and 12 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. Six tutors teach one or two lessons each week. A programme manager works with a curriculum leader to manage the provision.

***Sport, leisure and recreation*****Grade 3***Strengths*

- good development of skills
- good instructional techniques in practical classes

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning for individual learning
- incomplete monitoring of quality of provision

**Achievement and standards**

64. Learners develop good skills that contribute to their health and well being. They achieve better co-ordination, and improve their breathing techniques and overall levels of fitness. Learners taking yoga improve their posture and balance, and are able to stretch and hold poses well. Through better focus and increased stamina they are able to stay in poses for long periods of time. Those with more restricted mobility adapt the exercises to suit their own abilities. Tai chi learners learn to concentrate and become more flexible, and develop higher levels of energy.

65. Learners over 50 years of age show high levels of mobility in exercise classes. Their sense of timing and movement to music is particularly good, and step sequences are energetic and lively. Individual learners state that taking exercise has helped them to recover from injuries. Several learners talked about how taking part in classes has restored their confidence after a serious injury, or had helped them to reduce their visits to the doctor or chiropractor. Retention of learners is very good.

**The quality of provision**

66. Tutors use good instructional techniques in practical classes. They offer precise guidance on important safety points in the performance of techniques, to help learners to avoid injury. This instruction also helps learners to develop good performance skills. Tutors

use demonstrations to promote good practice, and a variety of teaching techniques which includes manual guidance. Teachers move among the learners in exercise to music classes, taking care to correct any poor performance or posture. They get to know their learners and their abilities well and are aware of any individual needs. Yoga tutors tell learners clearly which part of the body they are working on and the difficulties that the learners may encounter when practising. Tutors make particularly good use of blocks to help learners align their feet.

67. Learning is satisfactory. Learners are able to show their understanding of how to grade their own exertions and of how hard they are working, using a rating scale. They also showed how they can concentrate and relax during a performance of the mudras, a new yoga exercise.

68. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Courses are sufficiently well publicised in newspapers, the course prospectus, and newsletters and flyers that are on display. Learners can also receive postal information about courses. Many receive information by word of mouth from existing learners and community workers. Most of the course titles do not indicate the level of expertise needed and some are confusing. The work 'exercise' is used widely to describe courses in the prospectus without indicating the type of exercise. Classes for women only are not identified as such. The range of courses is satisfactory. BCC has recently introduced new courses in Pilates and body toning.

69. Planning for individual learning is inadequate. Although learning plans are completed for all classes and learners, the learning outcomes merely list class activities. Learning outcomes are not identified sufficiently for individuals or groups of individuals within the classes. Many learning plans have sections which are not completed or signed by the learner. In many cases, there are no clear links between learning objectives, topics and skills to be covered in the lessons, and arrangements to assess achievement. For example, one learner with mobility problems in an exercise class could not participate in a number of class activities because the tutor had not planned alternative activities for her. In another class, there was no planned use of the learning support tutor. Insufficient consideration was given to individual outcomes. Courses have appropriate schemes of work and all have lesson plans, but some lesson plans do not specify the activities to be carried out and most tutors are not using the standard guidance for planning for individuals.

## **Leadership and management**

70. New staff have been appointed recently, including a curriculum leader and an adult and community learning co-ordinator, to meet the staff shortages recognised in the self-assessment report. The programme of courses has been remodelled and a number of courses have been removed from the programme. The total number of sites used has been reduced. New courses in Pilates and body toning have been added recently. The development plan is incorporated in BCC's development plan for 2005-08, but it does not refer specifically to planned developments for this area of learning.

71. Arrangements to monitor the quality of provision are incomplete. The records of tutor observations are not judgemental enough and do not contain adequate action points for improvement. The evidence used in the self-assessment report is largely descriptive and does not make sufficient use of learners' performance data. Learners' safety checklists for classes are often unsigned by tutors and learners. The risk assessment of activities is inadequate. Learning plans are often unsigned by learners. Some forms recording the

health of participating learners are unsigned by the tutor.

**Arts, media and publishing****Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Arts and crafts</b>		<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning	965	2

72. There are 965 learners on courses in arts and crafts. Part-time courses include embroidery, multimedia and acting. Progression opportunities exist from part-time entry-level taster courses, through to level 3 access to higher education courses. Courses are offered at 23 learning centres throughout the borough. There are nine full-time and 32 part-time tutors.

**Arts and crafts****Grade 2***Strengths*

- good achievements and standards in learners' work
- good progression
- good standards of teaching and learning
- particularly good inclusion of diverse groups of learners
- good leadership and management

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient challenges for the most able learners

**Achievement and standards**

73. Retention and achievements are good on adult and community learning courses. The standard of learners' work is good. Many learners on level 1 courses are able to produce work of a much higher standard. Level 1 learners on embroidery courses complete impressive community projects, drawing on diverse images from the local area. Learners on interior design courses are able to produce very good-quality mood boards and design mock-ups. In fashion design, learners learn how to use a colour wheel, and are able to complete simple, well-designed garments. Learners acquire good practical craft skills. Progression by learners from the adult and community learning provision to further studies is good, and learners' progression to full-time further education courses has increased over the past two years. Learners' progression from entry-level craft courses to further BCC courses is particularly good.

**The quality of provision**

74. Standards of teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned to take account of the needs of all learners. Teachers set meaningful goals for the learners, who are highly motivated. Individual learning plans are used appropriately to help learners set measurable targets for themselves. For example, in fashion design, learners are encouraged to check their individual learning plans each week and to record their achievements regularly. Learners enjoy their studies. In two sewing courses at the local mosque, female learners

work purposefully to produce garments for themselves and their families in a positive and creative atmosphere. Support is good for learners with additional learning needs. Good additional learning support is available in the classroom for individual learners with physical and sensory disabilities and learning difficulties. For example, in one multimedia class for retired adults, a learner with significant learning difficulties received good individual support. He was able to participate fully in all activities. Support for learners is good.

75. The curriculum provides for the needs of the local community. Adult and community learning courses, such as guitar and multimedia IT for elderly learners, are attracting traditionally hard-to-reach learners. Community leaders are consulted regularly for advice about the content of the curriculum. The provision of sewing courses in mosques and community centres has significantly increased the number of Asian learners over the past two years.

76. Assessment practices are effective. Constructive comments are provided about learners' projects, to enable them to improve their skills and progress. Marked work is returned to learners promptly. Learners on sewing courses at the mosque receive immediate verbal feedback on their work, and written feedback is encouraging, detailed and easy to understand.

77. Resources are satisfactory for most courses. There is good provision for multimedia and IT teaching at the Farnworth Centre, and the mosque is equipped with sufficient sewing machines. Printmaking facilities at BCC's main site are poor. In one adult and community learning printmaking lesson, 17 learners shared a single hand-printing press. Learners experienced long delays to complete their tasks.

78. The more able learners are not challenged sufficiently. In many lessons there are no extension tasks to challenge gifted learners. For example, in one jewellery lesson no planning had been carried out to prepare extra activities for learners who completed tasks early. In a printmaking lesson, the most able learners found the drawing and printing tasks easy.

### **Leadership and management**

79. The management style is consultative and tutors are appropriately involved in the self-assessment process. Performance is reviewed and improvements are planned. Staff are required to implement the improvements. New tutors receive detailed induction packs and are assigned a mentor. The programme manager is actively involved in the support and guidance of all new staff, conducting a meeting with all new team members within the first term. The teaching of all fractional part-time staff is observed once each year. Effective guidance helps tutors to improve if their teaching is found to be inadequate. Staff are well qualified and many tutors are practitioners, having substantial industrial experience to share with learners. Courses are planned effectively. Course teams meet once each term to review individual courses.

80. There is a particularly good representation of learners from diverse ethnic groups. A good range of courses at the mosque and the Deane and Derby Centre serves the needs of the local community well. Learners progress well from these courses to ESOL and other, higher-level courses. The curriculum is designed to be multicultural. For example, in Level 1 embroidery, learners are taught about African, European and Japanese designs as well as British ones.

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

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	544	2 2

81. Of the 544 learners in this contributory area of learning, approximately 75 per cent are women. They attend part-time courses in 10 different foreign and community languages. In 2004-05, there were 470 learners. Courses are held during the day, in the evening, and at weekends. The most popular European languages are available in eight progression stages.

***Other languages, literature and culture*****Grade 2***Strengths*

- good standards in learners' work
- innovative teaching in some classes
- good range of courses and progression levels

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient focus on individual learning needs
- insufficient specialist observation of teaching and learning

**Achievement and standards**

82. Learners' achievements are good overall. Pass rates are very good on most post-beginners' courses in languages. The pass rate for British Sign Language (BSL) at level 1 is now 13 per cent above the national average. French at level 3 has a 100 per cent pass rate. Retention is low on some beginners' courses. In most beginners' classes, learners are able to use basic language to ask for and give simple information. They quickly reach a satisfactory level of comprehension in their chosen language. Learners on more advanced courses use more complex language successfully in a range of different contexts, including work and travel. Learners develop language skills satisfactorily and most show good achievement at their current levels.

**The quality of provision**

83. Learners have good verbal and comprehension skills in most of the spoken language classes. They work on all the skills areas and show good attainment overall. Learners taking deaf awareness courses develop the confidence and knowledge required to help them in their job roles. Some of the teaching is innovative. In deaf awareness courses guest speakers give presentations, which contribute to learners' understanding and knowledge. BSL tutors use handouts, games and graphics to help learners to remember the language. There is some good use of ILT to ensure that the context is relevant to learners. For example, in a Spanish class, the tutor used projected photographs of her own family to introduce learners to vocabulary, by superimposing and removing the vocabulary

alternately to help learners to become familiar with the new words.

84. The range of provision is good, with 10 languages offered at a range of local learning centres. The most popular and commonly taught languages are offered in different parts of the region to ensure that people can learn locally, and the less popular languages are offered in central locations on good public transport routes. The languages programme is structured and offers choices at different stages between non-accredited and accredited options. Learners are able to progress through the levels and do not generally repeat classes. Guidance about progression opportunities is satisfactory, although some tutors are not sufficiently aware of what opportunities exist. Language courses are offered to hospitality learners wishing to work in other countries.

85. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Many tutors develop their own teaching materials and there is an appropriate range of audio visual learning aids. Access to community learning centres is good for learners with mobility difficulties. Staff are well qualified and some have higher degrees.

86. There is not enough focus on individual learning needs. In language classes there is no effective strategy to help learners to work on eradicating their most common mistakes, though most tutors correct some mistakes as they occur. In the better lessons, tutors allow learners to use language creatively, working at their own level and pace, but too many of the exercises are generic. Tutors do not record learners' progress effectively enough to set individual targets and to monitor progress. Informally arranged tutorials are not always used productively to support individual learning. They are used to praise learners' efforts, but do not provide sufficient guidance for learners about how to improve.

### **Leadership and management**

87. Teams work well together to provide peer support and to share good practice. A formal mentoring programme is used to support new tutors. Staff meet informally to share good practice and to solve problems, but not all meetings are well attended. Regular staff meetings are used to decide on actions which are designed to help develop teaching practice. As part of BCC's commitment to staff development, all tutors have had ILT training. A wider variety of teaching methods is now used.

88. Levels of participation by learners from Asian ethnic backgrounds are low, except on community language courses such as Arabic. Language classes are used well to introduce learners to the culture of the country and world languages such as Spanish are presented to include regional perspectives. Learning materials are checked for any cultural bias.

89. Observations of teaching and learning are conducted by non-specialists. Not all necessary improvements are identified. In some classes where problems have been identified, suggested solutions are not precise enough and the problems remain. Feedback from learners is used to improve the provision. Good working partnerships with local community organisations contribute to the development of community languages.



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

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Literacy and numeracy</i></b> Adult and community learning	507	<b>2</b> 2

90. The programme includes foundation programmes, family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) programmes and wider family learning programmes, particularly in areas of social and economic disadvantage.

91. Two hundred and fifty learners are on foundation studies courses. These included courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those with mental health problems, and those with a hearing or visual impairment. Most of the 16 tutors are part-time. Courses take place at 15 sites, including psychiatric wards in the local hospital and mental health drop-in centres. Courses are offered from entry level to level 2.

92. Two hundred and fifty-seven learners are on FLLN programmes which are delivered in more than 20 primary schools. Five full-time and five part-time staff teach the courses and bilingual support workers are used when needed. Short taster courses in wider family learning prepare learners for structured courses where they can improve their own skills and take national tests in literacy and numeracy. Seven discrete literacy and numeracy courses are provided, mainly in conjunction with the probation, and alcohol and substance misuse services. Foundation and family learning programmes each have a full-time manager. Learners who attend for more than 10 hours a week have an individual learning plan. In 2004-05, there were over 2,000 learners on these programmes.

***Literacy and numeracy******Grade 2******Strengths***

- good achievement of confidence and social skills
- good progression
- good promotion of courses to under-represented groups
- successful initiatives to improve programmes

***Weaknesses***

- insufficient planning to meet individual learning needs

**Achievement and standards**

93. Many learners, with previously low levels of achievement and confidence, are very successful in meeting their individual learning goals. Learners' development of confidence is very good. For many of the learners who have a history of failure or considerable physical or mental health problems, attending a course regularly represents a significant achievement. The use of in-house certificates enables staff and learners to celebrate success. For many learners it is the first time that they have received a certificate for their achievements. Learners progress well to other courses, some of which are accredited.

Most learners with sensory impairments have progressed to the mainstream provision. BCC reserves three places on all of its courses for learners progressing from the foundation programme.

94. Wider family learning learners develop confidence in their own abilities through workshops, tasters and short courses. These courses offer learners a sense of achievement through activities that are relevant to their daily lives such as baby massage or basic papercrafts. There are very good progression opportunities for these learners to join the more structured family learning provision and to eventually enrol for mainstream courses. For example, two learners from the FLLN programme are now training to be teachers. Others have used their new-found confidence to gain employment. The overall pass rate for accredited learning is very good. Retention throughout the provision is good.

### **The quality of provision**

95. Standards of teaching and learning are good in most lessons. Tutors use various methods to help learners overcome longstanding problems such as poor spelling. A mix of theory and practical work is used appropriately to hold learners' attention and to help them develop their group-working skills. Literacy and numeracy is well integrated with practical activities. Tutors quickly establish productive working relationships with learners. Learners in a new group specifically for mental health service users got to know one another quickly by moving around the room and answering each other's questions. The course content is relevant to learners' lives and delivered at an appropriate level. Tutors skilfully encourage learners to think about how they might progress further. In FLLN lessons, trained primary school teachers give valuable insights into the teaching methods used in school. Good use is made of wider family learning activities to motivate hard-to-reach learners. For example, most parents working with their children making craft artefacts for Halloween were keen to join a further class designed to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

96. Tutors work hard to promote their courses to under-represented and vulnerable groups. They visit drop-in centres, the psychiatric wards of local hospitals, a centre for adults with physical impairments and a sensory impairment centre. Many hard-to-reach learners join classes after these initial contacts. Innovative projects encourage under-represented groups to enrol. For example, male learners are attracted through sports days and a project which takes place on an allotment.

97. Tutors are appropriately qualified and teaching resources are satisfactory. Learners are assessed within three weeks of beginning a course. The targets established from initial assessment information are not always detailed enough. Tutors and specialist staff provide good support to learners. Some learners with a history of failing at school and a very poor self-image have, after thorough assessment and with good support, achieved level 2 qualifications in literacy.

98. Most courses are non-accredited and aim to attract hard-to-reach learners to education. BCC has very productive links with a wide range of other organisations, including primary schools, libraries, museums, health centres, social and probation services, the drugs and alcohol team, and an Asian men's mental health drop-in centre. Learners appreciate being able to attend courses in familiar venues that are easily accessible.

99. Not enough attention is paid in some lessons to setting clear targets for individual learners, by which they can measure their progress and achievement. Targets are not

always used to contribute to lesson planning. Records of learners' progress are not precise enough.

### **Leadership and management**

100. Committed managers and tutors have worked hard to improve the quality of the provision. Targets for enrolments have been exceeded. Senior managers contribute to national research projects and steering groups. The skills for life provision, which is fulfilling the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, is improving the integration of literacy and numeracy skills with foundation studies. Specialist training events about dyslexia and disability awareness, autistic spectrum disorders, and mental health issues have been well attended by full- and part-time staff. The self-assessment process for this area is thorough and evaluative. Staff in local learning centres are well supported by managers.

**Community development****Grade 1**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b> Adult and community learning	444	<b><i>1</i></b> 1

101. The community development provision includes targeted projects and taught programmes aimed at hard-to-reach learners. At the time of inspection, 444 learners made a total of 549 enrolments. Ninety-one learners are on accredited courses. The courses are taught at 14 learning centres by 18 tutors. Community development projects encourage local people to participate in programmes that contribute to the development of their own communities. They focus on capacity building and regeneration, delivered through outreach work, project work, informal education and volunteer training. The projects include training for community learning ambassadors, literacy, numeracy and language skills champions, and community involvement in neighbourhood management. Community learning programmes are offered in several locations. They include sports leadership, ICT for Asian elders, child protection courses for non-professionals, aromatherapy for carers, and healthy living.

***Adult and community learning******Grade 1******Strengths***

- very good achievement and progression
- outstanding 'learning ambassadors' project
- particularly good support for learners
- effective inclusion of hard-to-reach groups through partnerships
- good programme management

***Weaknesses***

- insufficiently thorough planning for individual learning

**Achievement and standards**

102. Learners, many of whom have been out of education for a long time, develop much greater confidence after attending a course. Learners' achievements are celebrated through special events which are held in community venues. Retention and achievement is good for accredited and non-accredited courses. Learners progress very well to further education courses and employment. Six former learning ambassadors now work as tutors or facilitators and eight work as learning support assistants. The learners, who initially had little confidence, now speak confidently about the benefits of learning and how it has helped them to develop skills for work. They showed surprise at what they had achieved and thought that they were not capable of such achievements. Learners on the outdoor activity leadership courses work as volunteers on short, introductory sports courses. Learners on the child protection course improve their parenting skills. Some have progressed to a level 2 childcare course, or to work in community crèches. One learner is training to become a teaching assistant.

## The quality of provision

103. The learning ambassadors project is highly innovative and of outstanding quality. This successful project trains local adults from five targeted wards to become advocates of the benefits of learning. Three ambassadors are successful learners themselves and make good role models. The ambassadors help potential learners to overcome obstacles to learning, provide them with practical and emotional support and promote learning opportunities. They carry out research in the wards where they live. Local people trust their knowledge of local learning needs because they are drawn from these same communities.

104. The learning ambassador programme offers good progression opportunities to nationally accredited courses at level 1, 2 and 3. There is good progression and some learning ambassadors are now employed as project workers and learning support assistants. Many of them progress to other learning programmes and many have become literacy, numeracy and language skills community champions, or are training to be teachers. The curriculum leader is a former learning ambassador. They talk with pride and passion about the effect of the work on their self-esteem. The lessons from this successful model are being applied to other projects throughout the borough. The ambassadors give presentations to other providers in England and Eastern Europe. Their work has enriched the lives of communities through homework clubs, breakfast clubs for children, and local newsletters.

105. Most of the teaching is good. Tutors provide suitably challenging activities. They ensure that learners feel secure and introduce new activities in small, achievable stages. For example, a group of older learners, with no training since school, learnt how to use a laptop computer. They were able to produce text and to use some of the tools to change the print successfully in their first lesson. Good use is made of group work to build learners' confidence and communication skills.

106. Informed advice and guidance is offered to potential learners in taster sessions. Course tutors are very supportive to them. The assessment of dyslexia needs is effective. Bilingual and other support workers are readily available in classrooms. Discrete help is given to learners with a language or literacy need. ICT champions offer good support to learners. Good use is made of learners acting as mentors for other learners.

107. Hard-to-reach groups are attracted effectively to learning by the use of a range of productive partnerships. One project has successfully trained home-based workers to increase their earning potential and employability. Community needs are identified well through extensive links with other service providers such as psychiatric nurses, the substance and alcohol misuse team, and the council for voluntary service. Courses are provided in venues which are familiar to learners. Courses held in a centre for older members of the Asian community attract men to Do-It-Yourself and women to health issues courses. Good provision is made for carers to attend courses by ensuring that those they care for are looked after. User groups encourage local residents to offer suggestions for new courses. Research groups suggest ways of overcoming obstacles to participation in learning.

108. Planning is not thorough enough to meet individual learners' needs. Some individual learning plans provide good evidence of progression and involve learners in setting and reviewing their own targets. In other cases, learners' targets are too general and not easily

measurable. Some lesson plans show little evidence of how learners' individual needs will be met. Planning for the effective integration of literacy, numeracy and language needs is not well established. Some of the course materials are not easily understood by learners.

### **Leadership and management**

109. Managers know what they are trying to achieve and give clear directions to staff. Tutors clearly understand the learning needs of local people and the contribution that learning provision makes to the local authority's strategic objectives. Managers are skilled at getting additional funding to support BCALS's developments. Staff morale is very good. Communications with outside agencies are good, and good practice is shared at the regular staff meetings. Extensive staff development opportunities exist and training events are well attended. Managers encourage the development workers to try out new initiatives and approaches.

110. Equality and diversity is well promoted. Learners are welcomed on joining the programme and are made to feel respected. They speak positively of fair treatment and how this adds to their self-respect. Learners are invited to express their concerns and these views are taken seriously. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted in every class and group meeting. Tutors offer good support to learners in lessons and are sensitive to the various support needs of their learners.

111. Staff are well involved in the self-assessment process and course reviews. Managers have identified clear development needs such as the more efficient implementation of recognition and recording of progress and achievement, and are taking appropriate actions to bring about improvements. Key strengths and weaknesses are not identified explicitly in the self-assessment report.

