

REINSPECTION REPORT

Norfolk County Council's Adult Education Service Reinspection

29 June 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **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.

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. Norfolk County Council's Adult Education Service (NAES) provides adult learning opportunities throughout the county. It has no subcontracting arrangements. Funding is largely drawn from the Norfolk Learning and Skills Council (LSC), with additional funding for specific projects from sources such as the LSC's Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities and the European Social Fund. NAES has nine administrative bases throughout the county. Courses take place in over 350 venues.

2. In February 2005, the county council's education and social services departments were reorganised to create a children's services directorate. NAES transferred from the education department to the department for cultural services. A new management structure for the service was being developed at the time of the previous inspection and was implemented in August 2005. The head of service is responsible to the head of cultural services and corporate resources, and is supported by a director of planning and four directors of operations. Each director of operations is in charge of a geographical area, as well as having other service-wide strategic management and operational responsibilities. The four directors are now supported by seven curriculum faculty managers and nine operational managers. There are also four managers with service-wide responsibilities for areas such as management information and project support. At the time of the reinspection there were 926 tutors and 62 learning support staff. A county council cabinet member is responsible for adult education, and the annual adult learning plan is approved by the cabinet of the county council.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Sciences & mathematics		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Adult and community learning	317	3

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Business administration, management & professional		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Teacher/trainer awards</i>		2
Adult and community learning	406	2
Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i>		3
Adult and community learning	4,127	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i>		
Adult and community learning	5,517	4
Health, social care & public services		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		
Adult and community learning	278	3
Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		
Adult and community learning	4,674	3
Humanities		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		
Adult and community learning	402	3
English, languages & communications		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		
Adult and community learning	3,166	2

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Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL Adult and community learning	866	3 3
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	2,879	2 2
Independent living and leisure skills Adult and community learning	842	2 2

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning Adult and community learning	2,034	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation Adult and community learning	4,799	2

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

3. This reinspection was of the area of learning, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, which was judged inadequate at the previous inspection. Although the provider had 492 learners on the contributory area of hospitality and catering, no courses were operating at the time of the reinspection. However, learners and tutors from this area were interviewed as part of the evidence base. The contributory area of leisure, sport and recreation was reinspected in full. The reinspection took place over five days and consisted of two monitoring visits and a final three-day visit by three inspectors. The quality of the provision in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel is now good. The overall effectiveness of the provision remains satisfactory.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	11
Number of learners interviewed	52
Number of staff interviewed	21
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	12
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	4
Number of visits	3

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> Adult and community learning	4,799	2

4. Health and sports studies represent approximately 19 per cent of NAES's overall provision. Enrolments in this area of learning represent 29 per cent of all adult and community learning enrolments throughout the county. At the time of reinspection, 4,799 learners had made 9,353 enrolments on 721 courses during 2005-06. Although most of the provision is non-accredited, qualifications are available in food hygiene and sports coaching. Men account for 16 per cent of learners, which is a 2 per cent reduction from the 2004-05 period. In 2004-05, the minority ethnic numbers were recorded at 5 per cent, with the total number of such enrolments for 2005-06 recorded at 8.9 per cent.

5. The provider offers 603 sport and leisure courses ranging from swimming and tennis, basket ball, exercise, bridge to tai chi and yoga. The 48 hospitality courses include food hygiene and the promotion of health and nutrition. Specialist courses are available for learners aged over 60 years. Progression is possible in some areas, but most classes are of mixed-ability levels. Classes take place in over 60 venues, some of which are dedicated adult learning centres and schools. Courses are provided during the day and in the evenings. Most courses recruit at the beginning of each term and last for between one and 10 weeks. There are 90 part-time tutors. A curriculum faculty manager is responsible for the programme area, and is supported by two curriculum advisers and four curriculum support tutors.

Strengths

- good health benefits for most learners
- good retention
- good management and development of the curriculum team
- good partnership development within the community

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of health and safety issues in some learning environments

Achievement and standards

6. Health benefits for most learners are good. For many of the older learners, benefits are in the form of maintaining fitness levels and delaying the onset of the effects of ageing. In some classes, learners have been able to use classes to help them recover from a variety of health problems, such as injuries resulting from accidents, heart surgery, broken hips and strokes. Learners have reduced the effects of spondylosis, arthritis and osteoporosis. One learner had been suffering from depression and had regained confidence through socialising within a class. The social benefits are significant, as many older learners who

are isolated in their communities come together to exercise and meet new friends. Learners are challenged effectively to remember long sequences and calculations in tai chi, keep fit and bridge. Learners place great value on the classes, and are fully supported by highly motivated and conscientious tutors. Older learners appreciate the growth in their confidence and self-esteem. Learners are fully involved and motivated in most classes.

7. The retention of learners is good and remains high at 94.9 per cent, which represents an increase on 2004-05, which was 89 per cent. However, it is notable that many learners attend the same course for many years and do not progress to other courses. Punctuality is broadly satisfactory in most sessions, but during inspection there were examples of some learners arriving late. Some learners were 15 minutes late for a 45-minute class. Learners' attendance during the inspection was recorded at 71 per cent, and is satisfactory.

The quality of provision

8. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Of the 20 observations made during inspection, one was a grade 1, four were grade 2, 13 grade 3, and two were grade 4. The overall grade profile has improved since the previous inspection. There is less inadequate teaching. In the better classes, individuals receive individual coaching and support, and are encouraged to work at their own pace. In most classes, tutors offer adaptations to make the most of the resources available and involve the learners to the maximum extent. In these sessions, tutors are skilled at observing the learners engaged in activities and offer corrections to techniques and postures, naturally and effectively. Tutors use appropriate language and verbal, practical, group, and individual teaching methods. Learners feel well supported by their tutors and are confident in class. However, in the less effective classes the learners do not receive enough individual coaching involving alternative techniques and modifications. Some poor techniques and postures are not corrected. In some classes, not enough attention is given to older learners getting on and off the floor safely, or to the safe movement of equipment, such as exercise mats.

9. Learners' progress is recorded satisfactorily. Substantial improvements have been made in this area since the previous inspection. New systems have been implemented and are becoming established. In most sessions, learners are now fully involved in setting targets and assessing their own progress, in co-operation with their tutors. Tutors have worked very hard to help learners in this process and to ensure that the process is effective. Achievement rates are satisfactory. Good examples of progress are in swimming, where learners who attend for relatively short periods of time display the ability and confidence to swim for short distances with and without the help of floats. Learners show good skill levels in tennis on basic strokes which is reinforced by some effective coaching.

10. The range of courses available to learners is satisfactory. The range includes keep fit, aquafit, tai chi, yoga, bridge, badminton, tennis and basketball. The courses available to older learners are particularly good. NAES has a range of courses which are accessible within the communities in Norfolk, and are valued very highly and well attended. NAES is also working in partnership with a variety of agencies to develop new courses and programmes to widen participation with traditionally under-represented groups. Learners

value their classes highly and are anxious for them to continue. It is important to learners that the provision takes place in their local area and that classes are affordable.

11. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. Some teaching resources are supplied by tutors, not NAES. Most classrooms are clean and suitable for the classes held in them. Some tutors report that the rooms are almost ideal for their subjects. However, there are problems with some community venues.

12. Initial advice and guidance are broadly satisfactory. Course information is advertised in the local press and is readily available in libraries. The enrolment process is simple and straightforward. In some classes, tutors provide good information about progression opportunities to higher-level courses, and to social clubs where learners can use their newly acquired skills. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory, with no evidence of any learner being refused access. Accessibility is satisfactory in most learning centres. Learners do not receive additional literacy and numeracy support in this subject area.

13. NAES does not monitor health and safety sufficiently in some learning environments. In some classrooms, chairs are stacked precariously nine or 10 chairs high, providing a hazard to learners engaged in activities such as yoga sessions. There are hazards on pool sides in the form of uneven surfaces and sharp edges on raised drain covers, and rusty and flaking manhole covers. In another session, the fire exit was being blocked by learners' personal items, such as bags and coats. Fire extinguishers were being used as door stops. There is also an inconsistency of approach to the testing of portable electrical equipment used in classes. Some tutors' equipment has been tested in the past year, while other equipment is due to be tested.

14. Risk assessments are not subject-specific, or designed for the needs of each tutor in each class. The general safety levels in areas used for teaching are satisfactory, but more specific hazards related to specific activities are not identified. For example, within exercise classes, space is needed between learners to ensure that they have enough room to move around safely and avoid collision. This is particularly pertinent in community and school venues which are very heavily used every day. Pre-activity readiness questionnaires have been introduced and are evident in all classes. It is difficult to assess the effects of these questionnaires on the planning of learning and individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

15. Significant progress has been made since the previous inspection in managing and developing the curriculum team. Most tutors are well supported in their roles by learning centre staff and curriculum management of NAES. Tutors, the curriculum management, and learning centre managers all have good relationships. Significant changes have taken place in the management structure for this area of learning. A full-time curriculum faculty manager and two curriculum advisers been appointed, as well as three part-time curriculum support tutors. Clear lines of responsibility have been implemented. A detailed tutor information pack has been produced and has been distributed to all tutors, defining lines of responsibility and roles within the curriculum area. Two newsletters have been produced for the area of learning, promoting professional development workshops and processes of communication.

16. There has been a considerable increase in the number of tutors attending training,

and most of them regard the experience as being positive. The curriculum manager meets monthly with curriculum support tutors in order to help implement the quality improvement strategies and meet the needs of the post-inspection action plan. A detailed curriculum management file has been produced. The implementation of strategies and guidelines, which took place during December 2005 and January 2006, is in its early stages but progress is being monitored closely. Data is now collected about achievements and retention. Tutors appreciate the lines of communication and are now full members of the team. This has been achieved by producing newsletters and by curriculum support staff visiting all tutors. Tutors who have not attended training sessions are followed up with individual visits. Where resistance to change has been identified, continued improvements raise staff's knowledge and understanding of being part of the curriculum team, and establish recording methods to identify the quality of the provision.

17. Quality improvement systems to support learning are satisfactory. The observation of teaching and learning system is broadly satisfactory, with 72 per cent of observation grades matching or being under-graded, compared with a sample of the grades given by inspectors. Management has made good progress in observing all of the tutors before the reinspection. Systems have been implemented to raise standards and NAES has worked hard to ensure that all tutors are up to date and fully committed to the process. Without exception, tutors think that the process has been productive and has helped them to improve the standards of teaching. Some learners think that the paperwork is not appropriate and encroaches on classes too much. Some tutors have adapted the documents to make the systems more suitable to their subjects.

18. The partnerships being developed within the community to increase participation are good. NAES has collaborated effectively with a wide range of different organisations to make learning available to a wider group of learners. Many of these are through the SureStart programmes that have identified a learning need and asked NAES to provide programmes. These include a very successful programme of keep fit for post-natal mothers which has expanded successfully to included carers. As the funding has declined for this programme, the trustees of the community venue have provided funding to enable the programme to continue. Food hygiene courses are delivered in conjunction with a secondary school, as part of its enrichment programme. Other organisations, involving caring, ex-offenders, and regional development trusts are all collaborating successfully with NAES to provide appropriate learning programmes. Where funding allows, these collaborative working partnerships will continue.

