REINSPECTION REPORT

Liverpool City Council Reinspection

01 December 2006

ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Liverpool City Council Adult Learning Service (the service) is a function of Liverpool City Council (the council) and is contracted by the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to deliver adult and community learning in the area. Provision also includes further education, First Step, Personal and Community Development Learning, and Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is also used for project work. In 2005-06, 14,291 learners were enrolled on courses in further education, family learning, and adult and community learning. Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities accounts for 1,061 learners. Most provision is delivered directly and includes some project work provided by subcontractors.

2. The service has undergone major structural changes since the previous inspection in October 2005. It is led by a head of service who reports to the executive director of children's services. The staffing structure has been revised comprehensively. The head of service is supported by three senior managers and 12 middle managers. One senior manager has responsibility for finance, audit, health and safety, and the management information system. He has a team of 15 administrative and support workers. The other two senior managers have responsibility for teaching and learning, one for the north and one for the south of the city. One manager takes the lead on equality and diversity, and the other manager leads on quality improvement. Both managers have teams with specific curriculum leads as well as recruitment functions and specialist services such as support. There are 269 teaching and support staff throughout the two areas.

3. A review of all venues has been completed since the previous inspection. Of the 252 venues used in 2005-06, approximately 50 per cent are now in use. Venues used include four full-time adult education centres, primary and secondary schools, libraries, children's centres and community centres throughout the city.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS   Reinspection Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** The provider's leadership and management are satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity. Quality improvement is good. The provision in information and communications technology (ICT) is good as is the family learning provision. Retail and commercial enterprise, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, and preparation for life and work are all satisfactory.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The process involves managers at all levels of the service and forms a significant part of the course review process. A satisfactory quality improvement plan includes detailed plans for resolving weaknesses identified during the self-assessment process. This process is monitored closely by senior managers. Curriculum self-assessment reports and subcontractors' self-assessment reports are used well to contribute to the overall report. Although in many areas the self-assessment report's findings reflected those of the inspection, in some areas weaknesses were not fully identified.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.**
Although quality improvement procedures have not been fully implemented, all curriculum areas have demonstrated clear improvements, and are now satisfactory or good. Curriculum management is now satisfactory in all areas, as are teaching and learning in all areas. There is a clear focus on teaching and learning and the observation process is being used very well to bring about improvements.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Information and communications technology		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ICT for users		*4*
Adult and community learning	1,231	4

Retail and commercial enterprise		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Beauty therapy		*4*
Adult and community learning	481	4
Hospitality and catering		*3*
Adult and community learning	374	3

Leisure, travel and tourism		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Sport, leisure and recreation		*4*
Adult and community learning	871	4

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance		*4*
Adult and community learning	397	4
Crafts		*3*
Adult and community learning	825	3

Languages, literature and culture		4
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Other languages, literature and culture		*4*
Adult and community learning	977	4

Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
ESOL		*4*
Adult and community learning	238	4
Literacy and numeracy		*4*
Adult and community learning	289	4

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Adult and community learning		*2*
Adult and community learning	473	2

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Information and communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
ICT for users		*2*
Adult and community learning	897	2

Retail and commercial enterprise		3
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Beauty therapy		*3*
Adult and community learning	238	3
Hospitality and catering		*3*
Adult and community learning	220	3

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Crafts		*3*
Adult and community learning	353	3

Languages, literature and culture		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other languages, literature and culture		*3*
Adult and community learning	592	3

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL		*3*
Adult and community learning	223	3
Literacy and numeracy		*2*
Adult and community learning	290	2

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning		*2*
Adult and community learning	1,072	2

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

7. The reinspection took place between May and November 2006. The six areas of learning inspected and graded were ICT, retail and commercial enterprise, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work, and family learning. Leisure, travel and tourism was not inspected as the service no longer offers this curriculum area.

Number of inspectors	13
Number of inspection days	64
Number of learners interviewed	312
Number of staff interviewed	86
Number of employers interviewed	1
Number of subcontractors interviewed	7
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	58
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	8

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- particularly good management of change
- good use of partnerships to increase participation by under-represented groups
- significant improvements since the previous inspection
- very effective arrangements to improve teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of skills for life strategy
- insufficient use of management information system
- insufficient staff development in equality and diversity
- incomplete establishment of quality improvement processes in some areas

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Strengths

- good success rates on accredited courses
- very good use of a variety of activities in learning sessions
- particularly effective strategies to improve quality of provision

Weaknesses

- ineffective promotion of equality and diversity

Retail and commercial enterprise

Beauty therapy

Strengths

- good development of subject skills and knowledge
- good health and safety practices in lessons
- very effective measures to improve teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- low success rates for accredited courses in 2005-06
- inadequate use of data for quality improvement planning

Hospitality and catering

Strengths

- good retention
- good development of skills and confidence
- good teaching of crafts

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed assessment practices
- narrow range of community courses
- insufficient awareness raising of diversity in the classroom

Arts, media and publishing

Crafts

Strengths

- good retention
- good skills development
- good planning for the individual needs of the learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed assessment practice
- insufficient pre-course information
- insufficient focus on cultural diversity within the curriculum

Languages, literature and culture

Other languages, literature and culture

Strengths

- good achievement on accredited provision
- good development of skills and confidence in language
- good range of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to individual learning needs
- poor learning materials

Preparation for life and work

ESOL

Strengths

- very effective initial assessment
- good targeting of courses to meet local needs
- good actions to implement quality improvement processes

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory achievement on accredited courses
- insufficient development of learners' speaking and listening skills
- weak target-setting

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good achievements
- very good monitoring of learners' progress
- good support for learners
- very effective management to secure improvements

Weaknesses

- insufficiently challenging activities
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Family learning

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- good retention and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners
- strong curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficiently systematic recording of progression

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 3

Strengths

- clear strategic direction

- particularly good management of change

- good use of partnerships to increase participation by under-represented groups

- significant improvements since the previous inspection

- very effective arrangements to improve teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of skills for life strategy

- insufficient use of management information system

- insufficient staff development in equality and diversity

- incomplete establishment of quality improvement processes in some areas

8. The service continues to be strongly supported by the council. The provider offers strong strategic leadership to bring about improvements. This area was a strength at the previous inspection. The service has comprehensive strategic plans which are supported by detailed development plans for each curriculum area. The plans are clearly aligned with national priorities, LSC targets, and the council's community and corporate plans. The service has established a range of performance targets for recruitment and retention and the success of new learners. Staff are well aware of the service's strategic objectives and core values, which are reinforced effectively through staff development. The service collaborates well with key partners which support the service's strategic objectives.

9. The management of change is particularly good. A planned and positive approach has been taken to resolve significant weaknesses and challenges identified at the previous inspection, and to changes in funding. Staff have been kept fully informed and have been consulted at all stages. The service was largely reorganised in July 2006 to improve the efficiency and quality of provision, and to provide a more even distribution of learning opportunities throughout Liverpool. Fifty per cent of the learning centres were withdrawn from use as they did not meet new quality criteria including health and safety, viability and accessibility. Others were upgraded. A significant reduction in staff was managed very effectively and sensitively through redeployment and redundancy. New, improved systems, procedures and ways of working have been developed at the same time as the restructuring, to support greater focus on teaching, learning and performance management. External consultants and partners are used effectively to develop the provision. Partners and staff welcome the changes.

10. Curriculum management is now satisfactory. The service has made significant improvements. There are new curriculum programme managers. The quality of provision and tutors' motivation have improved. Staff's roles and responsibilities are clear. Curriculum planning, and communications with tutors have improved.

11. Communications are satisfactory. Managers meet with staff, partners and learners to explain actions being taken and to listen to feedback. A service newsletter, team meetings and staff internet groups are used to share information, monitor action plans and share good practice. Records of management meetings are available on the service's intranet. However, at several community venues, staff have no access to e-mail. Communications with external partners have improved.

12. Appraisal and staff development arrangements are satisfactory. The service uses a standard appraisal process for full-time employees, which involves a yearly appraisal and regular individual reviews for action-planning and target-setting. The development of sessional staff is achieved satisfactorily through observation of teaching and learning, followed by action-planning. There is good and consistent emphasis on improving teaching and learning. Since the previous inspection, a significant number of staff have attended training events.

13. The management of accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory. The service has introduced a variety of stringent measures to monitor spending and make efficiency savings. Learning resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is now fit for purpose. Some accommodation is new and purpose built for the provision.

14. The management and monitoring of health and safety are now satisfactory. The expertise of the council's health and safety staff has been used well to improve the provision. Generic risk assessments are now made for all venues against minimum standards for health and safety and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Venues not meeting the standards have been withdrawn from use. Subject-specific risk assessments are now being established throughout the curriculum areas. In the holistic therapies provision, health and safety was a weakness at the previous inspection. It is now judged to be a strength.

15. The skills for life strategy, which is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, is implemented slowly. While commendable work has been done to raise standards in the skills for life team and throughout curriculum areas, many actions remain outstanding. The strategy has been revised, but only recently. The action plan does not have sufficiently specific or measurable targets, or clear priorities for action to ensure cross-curriculum coverage. A new skills for life manager's post established as part of the restructure has not yet been filled. Most of the skills for life team require level 4 training in literacy, numeracy or language. Although much awareness-raising training has been given to the curriculum staff and the learning support assistants, not enough of them have been trained in skills for life support. Initial assessments to identify skills for life issues have only recently been established. It is too soon to judge the effects of these assessments.

16. Data is still not analysed and used sufficiently by managers to develop courses or to attract new learners. For example, data is not used sufficiently to monitor and understand trends at neighbourhood levels. There is little analysis of the performances of different groups of learners in curriculum or geographical areas. Substantial improvements have been made to the management information system, including new software, procedures and quality checks, but staff are still not fully aware of the types of reports which can be generated to help with planning. Management information throughout the service is now

accurate, and has recently become more timely. A clear, written procedure has very recently been introduced for collecting and checking success data for non-accredited learning. Staff are being trained progressively to use the new management information system, and can access the system online at the service's three main centres.

Equality of opportunity   **Contributory grade 3**

17. The service has established good partnerships to increase participation by under-represented groups. At the previous inspection, one of the service's strengths was its initiatives to widen participation, which included some partnership activities. This aspect has developed over time, and partners have become increasingly involved. Good partnership work is driving improvements for learners from disadvantaged groups. This work is carried out mainly by using wider project funding, and has not yet been fully incorporated into the curriculum areas. In one partnership project with Liverpool Community College, a thoughtful and well-planned agreement has been reached allowing learners to pay only one registration fee rather than one to each of the providers. Learners have access to a much wider range of courses and good progression routes are built in. This successful pilot is now to be developed throughout the city. In another partnership, very good work has been done with the Jobs, Education and Training Service to target employers and unemployed people in deprived areas. The service works very effectively with them and Liverpool Community College to give customised training to unemployed learners, enabling them to become ready for employment.

18. The service carries out a lot of work with community partners to target specific groups such as people with mental health or drug dependency problems. Specific community or voluntary agencies are used as subcontractors to give specialist training to vulnerable groups. A guidance project managed by the service using the neighbourhood renewal fund is very active in the minority ethnic community, reaching 32 communities. In the current year, over 600 learners are getting information and advice through the project. The service actively supports many providers and learning centres throughout the city with capital developments to improve physical access to buildings, or to provide specialist equipment to learners with disabilities. Thirty-four per cent of learners attracted by these initiatives are men, 7 per cent have disabilities, and 39 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Fifty-eight per cent of them live in the most deprived areas of the city. In the mainstream provision, 28 per cent of learners are men, 9 per cent have disabilities and 12 per cent are from minority ethnic communities.

19. Support for learners is satisfactory. Initial assessment processes have improved since the previous inspection. Learners can declare any general support issues during the enrolment process. A generic assessment is followed by a curriculum-specific initial assessment. These are new measures and have not yet been fully evaluated for effectiveness. Learner support assistants work well with individual learners, and tutors give sensitive individual support. The service provides an appropriate range of specialist equipment and childcare facilities. Induction for learners has been greatly improved, as have health and safety practices.

20. Policies and procedures are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the service has developed a satisfactory bullying and harassment procedure. The policies are up to date and cover all relevant legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. The provider also has a separate race relations policy and plan, with specific references to appropriate legislation. The

requirements of the Children Act 2004 have been established throughout the council. Training has been given to the main curriculum area staff affected, including those working in skills for life, early years, family learning and with discrete groups. Not all staff throughout the service have received such training.

21. Access to accommodation is satisfactory. The service has used its access audit, together with a more thorough approach to the identification of health and safety issues, to develop an improved resourcing strategy. Many of the venues used in the previous inspection are not being used now, in part at least because of access problems.

22. The provider does not give sufficient equality and diversity training to its staff. A lot of training has been given in the development of teaching and learning, including working with different ability levels within groups of learners. However, the provider does not reinforce the more general equality and diversity issues sufficiently with its staff. Some staff have had some such training, and new staff are given some equality of opportunity training at induction. However, there is currently no regular training or updating to ensure that staff are equipped on an ongoing basis to deal with the wider issues. Staff are not fully aware of the most recent legislation. The service does not use equality and diversity themes sufficiently in teaching and learning to reinforce issues with learners. Although learners from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of barriers to learning are being targeted, staff do not have sufficient knowledge of disabilities or cultural and social issues to fully equip them to deal with these groups. The service's staff have targets for reaching under-represented groups, but not enough attention is given to developing the skills or strategies to enable them to do this effectively.

Quality improvement   Contributory grade 2

23. The service has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. The health and safety system has been strengthened significantly and staff have been fully trained. The management structure has been simplified, and roles are clearer. Decision-making is now more effective. Curriculum management is at least satisfactory in all areas of learning and good in family learning and literacy and numeracy. Internal and external communications have improved a good deal. Working relationships are better. Resource rooms established in the north and south of Liverpool enable staff to gain quick and easy access to shared teaching and learning resources. Improved and standardised documents for schemes of work, lesson plans and individual learning plans help to raise the quality of learning. Learners' induction has improved and there are indicators that fewer learners are leaving before completing their programmes. The post-inspection plan is the main instrument for improvement and is monitored rigorously and revised regularly.

24. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are now very good. The process is thorough and uses very specific criteria for grading. It covers teaching, learning and achievements. The resulting action plans for staff are reviewed on a regular basis. Support is given where needed in the form of individual support, advice about practice or methodology, shadowing more proficient staff, or specific group training. Partners' expertise is used very well to improve teaching practice and to moderate grades. For example Liverpool Community College, which gained a grade 1 in inspection, is sharing its processes and practices with the service. Paired observations have been carried out with partners and throughout curriculum areas. The annual results of the observation process are used effectively to drive staff development and the service's self-assessment. Some information about equality and diversity, and skills for life lessons is recorded, but the

service recognises that this is an area in need of improvement. Good practice observed in lessons is not shared systematically among teams and curriculum areas, although there is a lot of informal sharing of resources and teaching techniques.

25. The comprehensive systems and procedures for quality improvement continue to be satisfactory, and cover most aspects of the learners' experiences. These systems are shared with staff at induction and then monitored and updated through the new quality improvement task group. Senior managers have a good understanding of quality improvement and are actively involved in promoting such activities to colleagues in the service.

26. Effective monitoring of the quality of the subcontracted provision has been maintained since the previous inspection. Service level agreements require subcontractors to implement a scheme for the observation of teaching and learning, and to produce an annual self-assessment report for the service. The manager responsible for quality improvement meets subcontractors regularly and clearly states the service's expectations. The service gives training to subcontractors' staff about self-assessment, teaching and learning, and quality improvement.

27. The service has an effective system for dealing with complaints from learners. The provider uses the council's complaints procedure. The senior manager with responsibility for quality improvement deals with complaints promptly and maintains a detailed complaints log. Most complaints are resolved satisfactorily. Arrangements for collecting and evaluating feedback from learners have improved. At the end of each term, the senior manager with responsibility for quality improvement produces a report, which is based on this feedback, for other managers. Action plans arising from these reports are now monitored to ensure quality improvement.

28. Self-assessment is satisfactory. It involves managers at all levels and forms part of the course review process. There is a satisfactory quality improvement plan which includes detailed plans for resolving weaknesses identified during the self-assessment process. This plan is monitored closely by senior managers. Curriculum self-assessment reports and subcontractors' self-assessment reports are used to contribute to the overall report. Although in many areas the self-assessment report reflected inspectors' findings, in some areas the weaknesses were not fully identified.

29. Some of the quality improvements made since the previous inspection are not fully established. Staff have received good training about recognising and recording progression and achievement and in at least one area this process is working well. In other areas the process is at various stages of development. The quality of initial advice and guidance to learners is inconsistent, although good improvements are to be seen in some areas of learning. Initial assessment is now widely available to learners, but the effects have not been evaluated. Individual learning plans are much improved, but target-setting is not always effective. The sharing of best practice is well established within some curriculum areas, but it is not sufficiently established in all curriculum areas. The service is aware of these weaknesses and has plans to resolve them.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology   **Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ICT for users		*2*
Adult and community learning	897	2

30. ICT learners represent 17 per cent of the service's provision. There are 897 learners on 97 courses in ICT. Of these learners, 37 per cent are men, and 7 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Courses are offered at level 1, 2 and 3, many of which deal with basic office software applications. Other courses include desktop publishing, digital photography and specific uses of the internet. Twenty-nine per cent of the courses are accredited. Courses range in length up to 31 weeks, mainly in two- to three-hour lessons each week. Courses are held in four main learning centres and in community centres, libraries, and primary and secondary schools. Teaching is provided by 26 part-time tutors and managed by a full-time curriculum leader who is assisted by two lead tutors, who also teach.

ICT for users

Strengths

- good success rates on accredited courses
- very good use of a variety of activities in learning sessions
- particularly effective strategies to improve quality of provision

Weaknesses

- ineffective promotion of equality and diversity

Achievement and standards

31. Success rates on accredited courses are good. The success rates for longer, examination-based courses over the past two years are more than 60 per cent, which is significantly above the national average for this type of accredited provision. These courses represent approximately 66 per cent of the provision. Learners on short and non-accredited courses develop a good range of skills and are confident enough to use their skills at home and in the workplace. They are able to use a word processor to write formal letters and use the internet to communicate with family and friends and for shopping. Learners enjoy their courses and feel well supported by their tutors.

32. Retention is satisfactory. Attendance at lessons during the inspection was 74 per cent, which is also satisfactory.

The quality of provision

33. A variety of activities was used well in lessons observed during the reinspection. No inadequate teaching was observed. Lessons are well structured with clear aims and

objectives which are stated at the beginning of each lesson. These objectives are often displayed for learners on flip charts or projected on whiteboards. Most lessons provide a very good variety of activities which include paired and group activities away from computers. During revision and portfolio-building lessons, quizzes are used well to develop a good pace and to motivate learners. Paper-based materials are good, being well printed and having many appropriate illustrations.

34. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners have an initial assessment of their ICT skills and their literacy and numeracy skills. The materials used for this are particularly appropriate. Support for learners is satisfactory, and learners are referred to skills for life support when necessary. Additional support tutors attend lessons when required. There is an adequate supply of specialist resources such as large keyboards.

35. There is a satisfactory programme of courses from level 1 to level 3. The provision is based in an adequate number of locations throughout the city and in a variety of venues. The number of venues used has been halved from previous years following more effective adequacy assessments. A mobile learning centre visits a large number of locations including shopping centres to offer ICT taster sessions and provide help with ICT.

36. All learners receive a satisfactory induction, with good emphasis on health and safety. Information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. Information about courses is available from a course leaflet that is distributed throughout Liverpool. The quality of advice provided by the helpline ranges from detailed information about a course, to more general information about start dates and times.

Leadership and management

37. Quality improvement strategies are particularly effective in raising standards. There is now no inadequate teaching. In the previous inspection, 20 per cent of the lessons were judged to be inadequate. All tutors are observed annually. Reports of the observations are thorough and give appropriate weight to learning. The grade awarded to the lesson clearly follows from the evidence contained in the report. The most recent grade profile is very similar to that produced by inspectors. Action plans give clear direction for tutors' development and are reviewed effectively by managers. Where good practice is observed it is shared with the teaching team. A limited access website is used well to allow tutors to share their materials. The provider has an extensive programme of staff development. The quality of the venues has improved a great deal since the audit of premises.

38. Standardised forms are used for schemes of work, lesson plans, individual learning plans and progress reviews. These are generally used satisfactorily for planning and the recording of progress. The assessment of learners' work is satisfactory, but there is no timescale for any resulting actions. Resources overall are satisfactory. The self-assessment process involves all tutors in the curriculum area, and the judgements of the report match most of those made by the inspection team.

39. The promotion of equality and diversity is ineffective. The percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups is low and has reduced over the past three years. There is a target to improve recruitment in the current year, but so far this is not being met. Strategies to attract learners from these groups are ineffective in the curriculum area, although project work using different funding sources is making some impact. Targets for

the curriculum area are not used effectively. Some good learning materials which reflect the cultural diversity of the city have been developed, but they are not used sufficiently in lessons.

Retail and commercial enterprise Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Beauty therapy		*3*
Adult and community learning	238	3
Hospitality and catering		*3*
Adult and community learning	220	3

40. There are 220 learners on catering courses. Twenty-seven per cent of learners are on courses which lead to qualifications in cake decorating and sugar paste at level 1 and 2. Eighty per cent of learners are women and 6 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Some learners have physical disabilities which include mobility difficulties, dexterity problems and impaired vision. A few learners have learning difficulties. The 22 courses include cake decoration, wired sugar flowers, and Chinese and Indian cookery. Classes are offered at different times of the day and evening in 10 venues throughout the area. There is a full-time curriculum manager, one part-time lead tutor and six part-time tutors.

41. The service's holistic therapies programmes include accredited courses in aromatic facial massage, reflexology, Swedish massage, and aromatherapy. These courses are at level 2 and 3 on the national qualifications framework. There are non-accredited courses at level 1 in holistic therapies, reflexology, massage and colour therapy. Courses are offered at two learning centres, one of which has recently been constructed and houses a purpose-built salon. There are 238 learners in this area, 174 of whom are on accredited courses.

Beauty therapy

Strengths

- good development of subject skills and knowledge
- good health and safety practices in lessons
- very effective measures to improve teaching and learning

Weaknesses

- low success rates for accredited courses in 2005-06
- inadequate use of data for quality improvement planning

Achievement and standards

42. Learners develop good massage skills, very good client care and apply background knowledge to practice extremely well. They demonstrate a very good understanding of the effects of treatments on the body and have a clear understanding of some complex physiology. Practical skills are well developed in all areas. Learners speak with a high degree of confidence and accuracy about the skills that they are developing and how to apply them. Confidence levels in lessons are very good. Learners are enthusiastic and

very keen to develop their skills. Retention on accredited courses is consistently high, at 84 per cent in 2004-05 and 83 per cent in 2005-06.

43. Success rates on accredited courses for 2005-06 are low at 59 per cent. Recruitment and achievements declined and success rates fell by 17 per cent. Action has been taken to improve course information and guidance, and to monitor attendance and retention. Learners questioned at the reinspection reported high levels of satisfaction with the course information and guidance offered. Retention at the time of inspection was good.

The quality of provision

44. Since the previous inspection, health and safety practices have improved a lot and are now good. There is very good emphasis on complying with health and safety policies in classrooms and salons. Learners demonstrate a very good awareness of hygiene and safety in the salon. Tutors include health and safety in the objectives of the lessons and a risk assessment is prepared for each new activity. Both salons have appropriate health and safety information which is displayed clearly on the walls. There are first aid boxes and sanitisation cabinets, and products are stored in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations 2002, and fire regulations.

45. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best lessons are well planned and include a detailed profile of individual learners' attributes and needs and use a range of activities to involve and motivate learners. The less successful lessons are not paced appropriately to suit the needs of all learners. Learners' portfolios are satisfactory. They contain a combination of tutors' notes, internet research and learners' notes from lessons. Tutors keep satisfactory records of learners' progress. Internal verification and assessment practices are satisfactory, although assessment feedback is not always detailed enough.

46. Support is satisfactory. Most learners receive an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy abilities. Learners are offered support as a result of the initial assessment, but not all learners choose to take advantage of this offer.

47. The range of courses and opportunities for progression are satisfactory. Following a review of the provision, it has been rationalised and is now limited to holistic therapies. The courses offered provide opportunities for progression from level 1 to 3 and provide a satisfactory choice of therapies.

48. Furniture, equipment and products are sufficient for learners' needs and fit for purpose. Accommodation at the Park Road centre is good, and salons are modern and designed for purpose. The salon at the Rotunda is on the first floor and is inaccessible to people with restricted mobility.

Leadership and management

49. Measures to improve standards of teaching and learning are good. Since the previous inspection there has been a thoughtful reorganisation of the management structure and a lead tutor has now been appointed. The changes have improved communications and support for tutors. The observation of the teaching and learning process is very effective. All tutors are observed annually, and receive detailed verbal and written feedback reports and action plans for improvement. The results of the observation process are used well to support and develop individual tutors.

50. The service provides a range of good development activities for tutors which include improving lesson planning, teaching for the needs of individuals, and using individual learning plans. Teaching and learning is given priority at team meetings where tutors are encouraged to share good practice, or request further training and development.

51. Although the self-assessment process is satisfactory, data is not used sufficiently to plan improvements. Success rate and equality and diversity data is not analysed and used to its full potential. Success rates are not analysed at course level. They are not used to set targets in the course review process and the quality improvement plan. Although information about learner groups is collected, it is not used to improve recruitment and standards among under-represented groups.

Hospitality and catering

Strengths

- good retention
- good development of skills and confidence
- good teaching of crafts

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed assessment practices
- narrow range of community courses
- insufficient awareness raising of diversity in the classroom

Achievement and standards

52. Retention is good within the provision, with averages of 85 to 90 per cent in 2004-05 and 2005-06. Attendance and punctuality are good. Attendance is monitored and absences are followed up. Tutors ensure that absentee learners receive the information necessary for commodity purchases for the following week. Learners are conscientious in contacting the tutors themselves if they are unable to attend. Learners support each other well, by sharing cars and materials.

53. Learners develop good skills and confidence levels. They produce good-quality sugar flowers, decorated cakes and a range of cooked dishes which include some from ethnic cuisines. Some men are taking courses in response to changes in their family circumstances. Their skills development and understanding of nutritional issues is good. Learners develop a good understanding of different commodities and recognition of quality points when shopping. One learner is in the process of setting up a business producing cake and sugarwork decoration products. Some learners have commissions for celebration cakes. In classes there are high levels of enthusiasm, enjoyment and pride. Many learners wish to study further. Some learners use the internet well to obtain information and photographic images to help with their coursework.

The quality of provision

54. The teaching of craft skills is good. In cake decoration and sugar paste classes, tutors demonstrate high skills levels, which include shaping, moulding and colouring and the use of various tools and techniques. Cookery tutors teach good knife skills and the correct use of specialist equipment and the preparation of specialist foods. Tutors use good

demonstration techniques to break down complex procedures into easy stages for learners, basing this on good awareness of hygiene and safe working practices. Lessons are good humoured and very industrious. Handouts are good. Tutors have satisfactory schemes of work and lesson plans. Some standard formats have been developed since the previous inspection and are beginning to be implemented. Teaching is satisfactory overall.

55. Support for learners is satisfactory. Tutors have a strong ethos of care for the learners. Some learners with specific disabilities are supported by a personal carer, and in some classes a family member accompanies the learner. The process for the identification of additional support needs is relatively new and is not fully understood by all staff.

56. Resources are satisfactory. Learners have adequate access to a range of materials and tools. The accommodation is generally satisfactory, and better in some venues. After the previous inspection, many venues were discontinued as they did not meet the new health and safety standards.

57. Assessment practices are not developed sufficiently. Learning goals and targets in some classes are not specific or detailed enough. Part of the assessment process, which uses a closed style of questions, does not fully involve the learners. Some classes do not include enough timely assessment to ensure that tutors and learners can fully evaluate learning. Moderation sessions for non-accredited courses are planned to ensure that assessment practices are thorough and consistent, but had not taken place at the time of the reinspection. The recording and measuring of progress is being developed using suitable recording mechanisms and staff development facilities to ensure that the system is applied appropriately.

58. The range of community courses is too narrow. Part of the curriculum has been established for a long time and is repeated. There is no weekend provision. Few courses meet the specific needs of sections of the community. For example, there are no healthy eating courses aimed at low income groups, or young learners coming from care backgrounds. There are not enough links with other community groups or agencies to reach the wider community.

59. Some new courses have been developed, but many new initiatives have not been successful in recruiting learners. The curriculum is dependent on having the right accommodation and specialist tutors. Since the previous inspection, many venues have been discontinued as they do not meet the stringent health and safety guidelines now enforced by the service.

Leadership and management

60. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection a range of staff development activities have focused on quality improvement. Observations of teaching are now established, although some of the action points and recommendations from the observations have not had sufficient time to take effect. The teaching staff are well supported by the curriculum manager and communications are much improved. The self-assessment process involves staff through reviews, discussions and meetings. Many of the findings of the self-assessment report are similar to the inspection judgements, although inspectors did identify some additional weaknesses.

61. Lessons are not used sufficiently to raise learners' awareness of diversity. Learners' knowledge and understanding of other cultures is not reinforced or extended. Liverpool has a wide cultural diversity which is not reflected adequately in the lessons.

Arts, media and publishing   Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Crafts		*3*
Adult and community learning	353	3

62. The service has 34 craft courses, nine of which are accredited at level 1, 2, and 3, and 25 are non-accredited. The subjects include dressmaking, crafts, pottery, soft furnishings, calligraphy, tassel-making and card making. There are currently 353 learners, of whom 14 per cent are on accredited courses. Ninety-four per cent of the learners are women. Provision is given in four main adult learning centres, as well as church halls and primary and secondary schools. Courses are offered in the morning and afternoon, and there are twilight and evening lessons. The typical lengths of the courses are 11 weeks for non-accredited and 31 weeks for accredited courses. There are 10 part-time tutors and a full-time curriculum manager.

Crafts

Strengths

- good retention
- good skills development
- good planning for the individual needs of the learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed assessment practice
- insufficient pre-course information
- insufficient focus on cultural diversity within the curriculum

Achievement and standards

63. Retention is good at 80 per cent. Most learners arrive promptly for lessons in most cases and many arrive early to set out their equipment. They show commitment and inform the tutor of reasons for their absence by telephone or call in to the learning centre to leave a note. Absenteeism is checked and followed up thoroughly.

64. Learners in crafts develop good technical skills. They work with enthusiasm, developing new skills and gaining confidence in their abilities. The work completed is of a very good standard. Some learners receive commissions. Learners in tassel-making design tassels for use in the home and learners in card classes make wedding invitations and celebration cards for friends and family. Learners are well motivated and absorbed in their learning, and enjoy learning with their peers. New learners make significant progress and are able to complete complex tasks in a short time. They have the confidence to experiment with fabrics and techniques in order to produce work to a good standard. Learners have a good appreciation of the standards of work that they are producing, and the progress they are making. They help each other with tasks, share materials and discuss each other's work constructively. Fourteen per cent of courses are accredited. The

success rate for 2005-06 was 94 per cent.

The quality of provision

65. The service's planning for individual learners' needs is good. Tutors design courses to build learners' skills and knowledge sequentially. Lessons are well structured and carefully planned to accommodate the mixed abilities of the learners. There are effective demonstrations from knowledgeable tutors who follow this with sensitive individual advice and guidance during lessons. Good handouts are given to learners to use at home. Tutors make good use of examples of their own work to encourage learners to progress. Tutors check learners' understanding of techniques and processes effectively.

66. Learners in non-accredited and accredited classes are encouraged to keep portfolios. These are used as good reference tools to explore and develop ideas. The tassel-making class visits exhibitions and commercial designers. Learners find this inspiring. All the learners enjoy exhibiting their work.

67. Support for learners is satisfactory. Individual support from tutors and peers is good. The service has introduced a more thorough initial assessment process. This includes the identification of learners' skills for life needs. Tutors now have an adequate process for requesting general support needs as well as those for skills for life, but it is too soon to be able to analyse the effectiveness of the entire process.

68. Assessment practice is not developed sufficiently. Assessment processes have been developed since the previous inspection, and initial assessment is satisfactory. However, learners do not take ownership of their individual learning plans, which are kept by the tutor. In many classes the tutor completes the plans. Forms are of the tick box variety and do not measure the progress of each individual adequately. Tutors do not always review and measure progress systematically. Many tutors use their own documents and assessment materials. These are often quite comprehensive and useful in measuring progress, but are not standardised for all tutors. There is a clear focus on improving lesson plans, and the use of individual learning plans and assessment, and a good deal of staff training is planned to resolve this problem.

69. There is not enough pre-course information. Some learners are confused by course titles that use specialist language. The prospectus contains no in-depth descriptions of courses. For example, classes are called 'craft for beginners', with no explanation of the content of the class. Insufficient advice and guidance is given for accredited courses. Some learners attended lessons without knowing that they were accredited. Course start times were changed without informing learners adequately.

Leadership and management

70. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Communications have improved since the previous inspection. Tutors now feel well supported and included in quality improvement initiatives. The provider holds meetings to share good practice. The provision has been reviewed since the previous inspection. There is now a better balance of courses throughout the city. Resources are satisfactory, as are tutors' qualifications. Staff development is satisfactory and has improved a lot since the previous inspection. Tutors have completed training in the general principles of good teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Some tutors have also had subject-specific training during the past year. Observations of teaching and learning are detailed and the grade profile is similar to

that given by the inspection team. The self-assessment process is satisfactory.

71. The service does not focus sufficiently on cultural diversity. Lessons do not take advantage of opportunities to explore a the rich source of materials from minority ethnic communities. Tutors' files show little planning to celebrate cultural diversity. Most of the classes are based on western culture and learners are not introduced to other cultures. In one instance, all the learners were making Western clothes and were not encouraged to discuss other types of dress, despite the fact that the learners were from a range of minority ethnic communities. Information technology is not used sufficiently to develop wider learning.

Languages, literature and culture
Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other languages, literature and culture		*3*
Adult and community learning	592	3

72. There are 592 learners on 58 courses, covering nine languages in 24 learning centres. Fifty-six per cent of the learners are on non-accredited provision. Most of the accredited and non-accredited provision is at level 1, with 13 per cent at level 2 in French, German, Greek, Spanish, Arabic and Mandarin. The courses are provided in a range of venues and locations and include primary schools, secondary schools, community and voluntary organisations' accommodation, as well as in the four adult centres owned by the service. Fifty per cent of classes take place in the evening, and the remainder at various times during the day and at weekends. Sixty-one per cent of learners are women. The provision is co-ordinated by a lead tutor, and there are 19 sessional tutors.

Other languages, literature and culture

Strengths

- good achievement on accredited provision
- good development of skills and confidence in language
- good range of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to individual learning needs
- poor learning materials

Achievement and standards

73. The success rate for accredited language provision, which accounted for 50 per cent of all courses in 2005-06, is good at 93 per cent. This represents a good improvement from 71 per cent in 2004-05. Retention is satisfactory for accredited and non-accredited provision. During the reinspection attendance was 68 per cent.

74. Learners develop confidence and language skills. This was also the case at the previous inspection. Learners study languages to increase their skills for work, or for personal interests. Many learners visit the countries where the languages are spoken and their courses have helped them a great deal to develop confidence in speaking and a greater understanding of the local cultures. Lessons are enjoyable and learners are confident enough to speak the language well.

The quality of provision

75. The range of provision is good. Classes are held in Arabic, Cantonese Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese and Spanish at 24 venues throughout the city. Opportunities to gain a nationally recognised qualification are available in approximately 50 per cent of courses. Progression to higher levels is available

in all but Cantonese, Italian and Portuguese. Class times are varied to suit as many learners as possible with daytime, evening and weekend courses available. In the current year, 49 per cent of learners are new to the service.

76. The quality of course information has improved and is satisfactory overall. A brochure lists the language courses available by area and learning centre. Guidance for selecting the right level can be obtained from the lead tutor, or specialist guidance staff. Clearer titles have been introduced and detailed course information leaflets are available. The first lesson of each course is now used to ensure that learners are sure that they have selected correctly. However, some learners have found difficulty in getting guidance before this first lesson, and are sometimes confused by its purpose.

77. Support for learners is satisfactory. There is good informal support in lessons for learners and many of them speak highly of their tutor's friendly approach. A helpful information pack about dyslexia and language learning has been produced for tutors and learners. A satisfactory new process exists for identifying literacy, numeracy or language needs, although it is too soon to be able to assess its effectiveness.

78. The provider does not give sufficient attention to learners' individual needs. A good subject-specific initial assessment has been developed for all languages at level 1 and 2, to supplement the general one. This specific assessment has been carried out for all classes and recorded appropriately in a group profile. However, the results are not used adequately to help in lesson planning for individual learners. Some learners are not sufficiently challenged in some lessons, but other learners cannot fully understand the activities. The tutors overcome some of these problems in the livelier sessions with their enthusiastic style and careful questioning of individual learners. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In many lessons, tutors make constant, effective use of the languages they are teaching. In these lessons learners have well-developed listening skills and speak the language confidently with satisfactory pronunciation and fluency. However, a few tutors still place too much reliance on translation into English to convey meaning and as an activity. Assessment practices are satisfactory.

79. Many of the teaching materials used are poor. There is a predominance of paper-based materials. These are often badly photocopied sheets of pages from textbooks rather than colourful, well-presented handouts. There is very little visual or tactile stimulus to suit the different learning styles of learners, and there was no use of video or other technologies in the lessons observed by inspectors.

Leadership and management

80. Curriculum management is now satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. All tutors are managed by a lead tutor. Communications and staff development are satisfactory. As part of the restructure, the number of tutors has been reduced. Management is more effective. The qualifications and experience of staff are satisfactory, as is the accommodation. The internal observation of the teaching and learning process has been improved by joint observations with external consultants and more peer observation and training. The process is now satisfactory. The grades given during the reinspection closely match those of the internal observations. The availability of data has improved and reports are available for managers, but there is not enough analysis to help in programme planning. Feedback is gathered and actions are taken, based on comments made.

81. The development of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths found by inspectors, but the two weaknesses were not identified by the service.

Preparation for life and work Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL		*3*
Adult and community learning	223	3
Literacy and numeracy		*2*
Adult and community learning	290	2

82. The service has 39 literacy and numeracy courses, from pre-entry to level 2, which are provided at 17 venues throughout the city. Classes take place in the mornings, afternoons and evenings from Monday to Friday. Most courses last for two and a half hours each week over 35 weeks. Approximately 50 per cent of the courses are at entry level. The provision has been restructured recently. It is now managed by a full-time programme leader who has nine part-time tutors. Most literacy and numeracy learners work towards national qualifications, and the remainder work towards individual learning goals. There are 290 learners, 156 of whom are on literacy courses, 108 are on numeracy courses and 26 learners are on joint literacy and numeracy courses. Approximately 25 per cent of the learners are men.

83. There are 223 learners on 30 English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses at 11 venues. Forty-nine per cent of learners are working for external accreditation. Courses are offered from pre-entry to level 2 at a range of venues which include schools and community and voluntary organisations, as well as at three adult education centres. Classes are offered in the mornings and afternoons during the week. Thirty-five per cent of learners are men. The provision is currently managed by two half-time co-ordinators. In the new structure they report to a newly created skills for life manager post. This post was vacant at the time of the reinspection.

ESOL

Strengths

- very effective initial assessment

- good targeting of courses to meet local needs

- good actions to implement quality improvement processes

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory achievement on accredited courses

- insufficient development of learners' speaking and listening skills

- weak target-setting

Achievement and standards

84. Achievement on accredited courses is unsatisfactory. Only 58 per cent of all the learners on externally accredited courses went on to take an examination. Some attempted accreditation for all four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, and others attempted only the listening and speaking modules. The overall pass rate for all

modules was satisfactory, at 77 per cent. However, for the other 42 per cent of learners who were not entered for examinations, the learners achieved personal goals. Approximately 50 per cent of all learners are on accredited provision.

85. Learners make satisfactory progress on non-accredited courses. Eighty-one per cent completed their courses. Most learners are well motivated and work hard in lessons. Attendance is generally satisfactory, at 73 per cent.

The quality of provision

86. Learners receive a very prompt and effective initial assessment of their language skills. The process is systematic and thorough. Personal barriers to learning and educational backgrounds are explored, as well as strengths and weaknesses in the four aspects of language, in order to place the learner in an appropriate class. Further diagnostic assessment in class checks the accuracy of the placement. Learners who learn at a faster pace can move quickly to higher-level classes.

87. Learners are targeted successfully through outreach services for specific community groups. Good use is made of data to locate classes in appropriate parts of the city. Bilingual tutors and support workers work effectively to attract target community groups into learning. For example, a class with a bilingual tutor has been set up in a learning centre in Chinatown for learners who do not have the confidence to attend an adult learning centre. Lesson content covers a range of topics which are pertinent to local community issues, employment opportunities and the needs of individual learners. Class timings and locations accommodate the needs of different learners. Some classes are available for women only. Many learning centres provide crèche facilities. Class times are adjusted appropriately to enable parents and carers to attend.

88. Teaching standards have improved since the previous inspection. All the lessons observed were at least satisfactory. In the better classes, learners work confidently on a range of activities to learn new language skills. Activities take account of learners' different ability levels. The pace is brisk and challenging.

89. Learners undergo a thorough induction process. This includes learners' rights and responsibilities in areas such as attendance, health and safety and equal opportunities. Some induction materials are in picture form for learners with poor English language skills to aid understanding. Satisfactory levels of information and guidance are provided to learners to enable them to progress to wider adult learning provision, college courses and employment opportunities.

90. Learners do not have enough opportunities to practise their speaking and listening skills. Some lessons are conducted at one pace and are dominated by tutor-led activities. Learners get few opportunities to practise their speaking and listening skills in small groups or pairs. Learners spend more time on reading and writing activities. Dull and uninspiring lessons rely heavily on worksheets and poorly photocopied exercises from textbooks. Tutors do not make sufficient use of information learning technology in lessons to support the full range of learning styles. Learners in higher-level groups are sometimes given web addresses for homework research.

91. Target-setting to support learning is weak. All learners have individual learning plans, which clearly record the results of learners' assessments in the four skills of speaking,

listening, reading and writing. In the more comprehensive plans, learners' personal needs and educational backgrounds are also identified effectively. The plans set group and individual targets and provide good opportunities for tutors and learners to review and monitor progress. However, these plans are not always used satisfactorily. Some tutors have a poor understanding of how to assess and measure progress specifically, and do not appreciate the relevance of these processes to their learner groups. Targets are often expressed in inappropriately complex language. Some learners have no individual targets. When targets are set they are often not specific enough, time bound or easily measurable. Target reviews are not used sufficiently to give learners constructive feedback about their progress.

Leadership and management

92. The service has taken effective actions to implement quality improvement. A systematic and comprehensive staff training programme has been introduced. Weaknesses in teaching and learning, identified at the time of the previous inspection, are being resolved. Schemes of work and lesson plans have been standardised and matched to the national curriculum. They take account of the needs of individual learners. Lesson plans include sections for evaluation. Learners' views are collected systematically, analysed and used to improve the provision. All tutors are now observed on an annual basis, and areas for improvement are identified clearly. Three tutors are now enrolled on level 4 specialist skills for life teacher training courses. Results of the observations are also used in the in-service training schedule. The schedule includes issues identified at the time of the previous inspection, such as equality and diversity, the use of individual learning plans to monitor and record progress and achievement, and the development of a more extensive range of learning activities. Inspection findings broadly match the strengths and weaknesses identified in the service's 2005-06 self-assessment report. Good practice is not shared sufficiently between the family learning ESOL provision, the core ESOL team and ESOL community development projects.

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good achievements
- very good monitoring of learners' progress
- good support for learners
- very effective management to secure improvements

Weaknesses

- insufficiently challenging activities
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Achievement and standards

93. Achievement in literacy and numeracy is good. Overall success rates of 75 per cent in literacy and 68 per cent in numeracy in national tests are good, and have improved a great deal from the previous inspection. The success rate in numeracy level 1 is good, at 89 per cent, and the success rate for numeracy level 2 is satisfactory at 66 per cent. Retention for 2005-06 is good at 81 per cent. Learners' achievements of individual learning goals in the non-accredited provision are also good. Learners progress to

higher-level courses or gain employment through specific provision such as the fire and ambulance courses. Some learners move to teacher training, or to other access courses. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make significant personal and social gains. They improve their self-esteem and confidence and acquire independent living skills. They achieve their targets and make good progress in reading, and in developing literacy or numeracy-related computer skills. Most learners have well-organised folders. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory.

The quality of provision

94. Learners' individual progress is monitored very well. Individual learning plans are used to involve learners in setting their long- and short-term goals. Tutors know their learners very well. Initial assessment is used effectively to set realistic targets. Learners understand their targets and write them in their own words. Each small step in learning is recorded meticulously. The individual learning plans are fully and formally reviewed each term to monitor learners' progress. In the non-accredited provision, the individual learning plan is internally verified to assess the achievement of learning goals. Evidence of progress and progression from other courses is recorded clearly in the individual learning plan.

95. Support for learners is good. Tutors are very aware of their learners' support needs. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well by learning support assistants and sometimes through social services support assistants. Enabling resources such as information technologies, enlarged keyboards and 'hands-on' materials are available and used well by visually and physically impaired learners. Learning support assistants work well with tutors and provide much-valued individual support where necessary.

96. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learning objectives are clear and learners know what they will be learning. Tutors check learners' understanding of tasks satisfactorily and reinforce learning throughout the lesson.

97. Resources are satisfactory. An adequate range of textbooks, games and cards is available to supplement the paper-based teaching and learning materials. Computers are used to a satisfactory extent.

98. Literacy and numeracy courses meet the needs and interests of learners. Courses are offered at 17 venues throughout the city, in community centres, schools, and neighbourhood learning centres. The provision is responsive to the needs of different communities and employers.

99. Activities in some lessons are not challenging enough. More advanced learners complete fairly simple tasks and have to wait to be told by the tutor what to do next. Important learning time is wasted while the whole group completes the task. Some teaching depends too much on the tutor's input and worksheets. Learners do not always know when or where they can apply their newly acquired skills, especially where general skills are being developed and learners need them for specific tasks related to work. Progress is slow for some of the more able learners. In some numeracy sessions, the activities are not always varied and practical enough.

Leadership and management

100. Curriculum management is very effective in achieving improvements. Many aspects

of the provision have improved since the previous inspection. A full-time programme leader has worked on the quality improvement action plan. There is more focus on teaching and learning. All tutors were observed jointly in 2005-06 by the service and Liverpool Community College's staff. Individual action plans were developed following each observation and tutors were supported to improve the quality of their teaching. The service's staff take part in a good programme of development sessions.

101. A good range of partnerships has been developed, which meets the needs of learners in communities, care homes, those recovering from neurological disorders, and others who are entering the employment market. Staff are suitably qualified and supported to keep up to date with the latest developments. The area of learning is taking part in a national project for the development of reading aloud in class and improving fluency. This experience is being used well to improve learners' confidence in classes. Communications with part-time staff are good and the internal verification system is strong. Courses are reviewed using the appropriate data and the results of learner satisfaction surveys are used satisfactorily in the course reviews.

102. Good practice is not shared sufficiently. This weakness remains from the previous inspection. There are plans to share good practice through shadowing and peer observations. There is a significant amount of good teaching practice in the area of learning, but this is not shared with other tutors effectively enough to bring about improvements in the less successful teaching practice. The self-assessment report acknowledges too much satisfactory teaching as a weakness. The use of ICT in sharing good practice is in the early stages of development. The self-assessment report is honest, open and critical, and broadly reflects the judgements made at reinspection.

Family learning   Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning		*2*
Adult and community learning	1,072	2

103. There are 1,072 learners on 57 courses, eight workshops and three one-day events. Ninety per cent of the learners are women, 16 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 1.5 per cent have a disability. The provision includes family literacy, language and numeracy that ranges from two-hour workshops to 10-week courses. Wider family learning courses include ICT, behaviour management, and ESOL. With the exception of the workshops, all programmes are accredited through the Open College Network (OCN). Courses range from pre-school to key stages 1, 2 and 3. Venues include primary and secondary schools, children's centres, day nurseries, adult learning centres and community groups. Family learning is managed by a full-time family learning programme leader and a half-time ESOL programme leader. There eight full-time equivalent tutors, four sessional tutors and three bilingual additional learning assistants.

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- good retention and achievement
- good teaching and learning
- good support for learners
- strong curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficiently systematic recording of progression

Achievement and standards

104. Retention and achievement are good. The overall success rate was good at the previous inspection and this strength has been maintained. For 2005-06, the retention of learners for family literacy, language and numeracy provision is 85 per cent, and the overall success rate is 96 per cent. On wider family learning programmes, retention is 90 per cent and the success rate is 99 per cent. Accreditation is through OCN for the Northwest. Learners in non-accredited workshops gain in confidence and self-esteem as well as acquiring skills and knowledge. Portfolios are well presented and demonstrate the skills that learners have acquired. Some learners progress into employment. Learners apply their new skills and knowledge effectively in home activities with their children. Their relationships with their children are much improved.

The quality of provision

105. Standards of teaching and learning are good, with 86 per cent of the lessons observed judged to be good or better. Teaching was a strength at the previous inspection and this has been maintained and improved. Lessons are well planned and structured,

with a variety of teaching methods to suit different learning styles. These methods include small and paired group work, video, demonstrations, games, practical activities and workshop sessions. Lessons are well paced and challenging. Tutors are good role models for how to interact and play with children. Good end-of-session evaluations help the adults to understand the value of play as well as to gain confidence in trying new ideas. Adults and children learn well. Tutors show parents good questioning skills with which to prompt and support the children's learning. Learners develop good insight into number concepts and how to develop these at home. They can speak clearly about what they have learnt and understand the progress they are making.

106. Support is good. Support for learners with additional learning needs was a strength in the previous inspection and remains good. Tutors make effective use of bilingual assistants in lessons where language is a barrier to learning. Tutors use skills for life materials well to provide support within classes. Literacy, numeracy or language development are built into many programmes. The service has good access to specialist resources for learners with physical disabilities. Tutors have good knowledge of the progression routes available locally, and learners receive good information. Where more specialist information, advice and guidance is required, learners are referred promptly to the relevant organisation. Learners who are absent or who withdraw from the programme are followed up by staff. Crèche provision is available in most of the learning centres.

107. Resources are satisfactory. All accommodation and furniture is fit for purpose and some of it is good. Materials, games, equipment and handouts are appropriate for requirements.

108. The recognising and recording of progress and achievement is satisfactory. Individual learning goals are identified and incorporated in the group goals and also used in planning. An initial assessment is used for literacy, numeracy and ICT. A structured initial assessment is conducted in ESOL provision to determine the learner's level of language skills. All learners have an individual learning plan. Tutors are developing the skill of setting clear targets, but some are more proficient than others. The previous inspection identified a weakness of insufficient use of individual learning plans to monitor learners' progress. This has been resolved and the plans are now used to review and record learners' progress. Another previous weakness was insufficient feedback to learners. Tutors now systematically provide written feedback to learners about their work and their contributions to group activities.

109. The service has a satisfactory curriculum range. Courses range from pre-entry to level 2. Managers work closely with the council's primary support team to identify schools and areas that would benefit most from family learning. Headteachers request provision to meet the needs of specific learners. Individual workshops are used effectively to recruit new learners, particularly fathers and male carers. The participation rate by men has risen from 3 per cent in 2004-05, to 10 per cent in 2005-06.

110. The service does not carry out enough systematic recording of learners' progression. Learners do progress to further courses within the service or take up other opportunities, and there is some anecdotal evidence. However, there is no consistent approach to recording progression outcomes or an overall view of where learners progress to. Family learning is often the first step to other provision or to employment, but the service has no effective way of assessing its success in getting learners to progress.

Leadership and management

111. Curriculum management is strong. The family learning programme is very clear about its strategic role and how it contributes to the council's priorities for families in deprived communities. Staff meet regularly to develop aspects of the curriculum and for operational meetings. There is strong team ownership of systems, courses and materials. Staff development is used well to resolve the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. Good practice is shared formally and informally. Quality improvement is secured through good management. All the procedures are implemented and monitored regularly, and the observation of teaching and learning has had a positive effect. All tutors have been observed and there is a moderation process. The internal grade profile was similar to that given by the inspection team. Data is analysed and used to improve the provision regarding the type and location of courses. Risk assessments have been conducted on all premises and activities. The self-assessment process broadly reflects the findings of the inspection team.

112. Equality and diversity is satisfactory. Effective initiatives have widened participation. Bilingual materials and images reflect a diverse community. New Citizen courses are being given to support the learners who are seeking British citizenship.