

INSPECTION REPORT

Shropshire County Council

03 November 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
- **learn**direct provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Shropshire County Council adult and community learning (Shropshire adult and community learning) is part of the learning, employment and training service, within the learning and culture division of the community services directorate of Shropshire County Council. The learning and culture division strategically develops and delivers a range of services, such as libraries, museums, heritage and arts, as well as adult learning and training services. Shropshire adult and community learning operates from the Gateway Education and Art Centre in Shrewsbury and through a number of community venues located across the county. Most of the provision is non-accredited.
2. Shropshire is a large, rural county, with pockets of urban and rural deprivation. It is a traditionally rural economy, with other key sectors including social care, tourism and hospitality. Shropshire County Council is one of the largest employers in the area.
3. Shropshire adult and community learning receives funding from Shropshire Learning and Skills Council, predominantly for personal and community development, first steps provision and for family learning. It also receives funding to support neighbourhood learning in deprived communities. An adult and community learning manager, who is responsible to the head of the learning, employment and training service, manages the provision, supported by curriculum leaders, development workers and part-time tutors. In 2005-06, the largest areas of provision were arts, media and publishing and information and communications technology (ICT).

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory. The quality of provision is good in arts, media and publishing, and in languages, literature and culture. It is satisfactory in ICT, in leisure, travel and tourism and in family learning.
5. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Actions to improve retention are very effective, with good retention across the provision. In languages, literature and culture, in arts, media and publishing and in family learning, learners develop a good range of personal and practical skills and increase their confidence. Standards are satisfactory in ICT and in leisure, travel and tourism. Weaknesses in the measuring and recording of learners' progress and achievement make it difficult to measure accurately learners' progress and achievement on the largely non-accredited provision.
6. The quality of provision is satisfactory. The standards of teaching and learning are good in arts, media and publishing and in languages, literature and culture. Standards are satisfactory in ICT, in leisure, travel and tourism, and in family learning. Inspectors found little outstanding and little inadequate teaching and learning. Resources are satisfactory. Shropshire adult and community learning service has made insufficient progress in implementing processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement.

7. The range of programmes to meet the needs and activities of learners is satisfactory. Programmes in ICT, in leisure, travel and tourism and in languages, literature and culture are well planned. However, progression opportunities in family learning are insufficient. Support for learners is satisfactory.

8. The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The self-assessment process is inclusive, involving learners and key staff, and the self-assessment report is detailed. However, the latest self-assessment report is not accurate enough and does not identify many of the key strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection. The grades in the self-assessment report were also higher than those given by inspectors in three of the curriculum areas inspected and in leadership and management.

9. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements. Shropshire County Council is making good progress in the management of change, with significant improvements in the quality of provision. It still needs to make further improvements in teaching and learning and to improve the monitoring and implementation of the quality improvement processes.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL:

- fully implement quality improvement processes
- continue to improve teaching and learning
- improve the reviewing and recording of learners' progress and achievement
- improve target-setting
- improve skills for life provision
- improve the monitoring of equality of opportunity

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Information and communications technology			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i>		3	
Adult and community learning	142	3	

Leisure, travel and tourism 3		
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i> Adult and community learning	213	3 3

Arts, media and publishing 2		
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Dance</i> Adult and community learning	117	2
<i>Music</i> Adult and community learning	63	2
<i>Fine arts</i> Adult and community learning	8	2
<i>Crafts</i> Adult and community learning	362	2

Languages, literature and culture 2		
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	387	2 2

Family learning 3		
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i> Adult and community learning	182	3 3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

10. Seven inspectors visited the provider for 39 days. They inspected ICT, leisure, travel and tourism, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture and family learning, as well as leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	39
Number of learners interviewed	205
Number of staff interviewed	30
Number of employers interviewed	8
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	25

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- good management of change
- good management of staff
- good initiatives to widen participation
- very effective actions to improve retention

Weaknesses

- ineffective target-setting
- slow implementation of skills for life strategy
- insufficient monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities strategies
- insufficient monitoring of quality improvement processes

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Strengths

- good and improving retention
- well-planned programmes
- good management of part-time staff

Weaknesses

- insufficient identification and assessment of learning goals
- insufficient implementation of quality improvement systems

Leisure, travel and tourism

Sport, leisure and recreation

Strengths

- good and improving retention
- well-planned range of programmes
- good management of part-time staff

Weaknesses

- inadequate assessment in fitness programmes
- ineffective use of quality improvement processes

Arts, media and publishing

Strengths

- good retention
- good development and application of learners' practical skills
- good teaching and learning
- good staff development and support for tutors
- effective management of the promotion and celebration of learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress and achievement
- poor initial assessment in dance

Languages, literature and culture

Other languages, literature and culture

Strengths

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- good retention and progression
- good teaching and learning
- highly effective curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient reviewing and recording of learners' progress

Family learning

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- very good links with schools
- good formal and informal sharing of good practice

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to learners' individual needs
- few progression opportunities
- ineffective implementation of teaching and learning system

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL:

- the flexible approach to learning
- the wonderful staff
- developing new skills
- 'enrolment is easy'
- 'tutors make you feel at ease'
- 'It's relaxed and friendly'
- 'coming to classes gives a structure to my week'
- 'getting the old brain cells going'
- 'I felt that when I was at school my teacher had no time for me. Here it is different.'
- 'I enjoy coming and I'm not so scared now'
- 'it's fun'
- 'it helps me keep fit'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- the directions to centres
- the number of classes in the evening
- the access to computers for independent study
- information on how much materials will cost before enrolling

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good management of change
- good management of staff
- good initiatives to widen participation
- very effective actions to improve retention

Weaknesses

- ineffective target-setting
- slow implementation of skills for life strategy
- insufficient monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities strategies
- insufficient monitoring of quality improvement processes

11. The management of change is good. Shropshire adult and community learning has made many significant changes to improve the provision since its previous inspection. The provider is now firmly positioned in the community services directorate, which strongly supports Shropshire adult and community learning and has a clear strategic vision for its further development. Shropshire adult and community learning now comes within the learning, employment and training service, which has a strong track record in providing good-quality learning opportunities. The appointment of a new adult and community learning manager and curriculum leaders for all areas of learning is greatly strengthening the operational management of the provision. Curriculum management is very effective in languages, literature and culture. In addition, a team of development workers are working well to develop the provision across Shropshire, particularly in areas of high economic and social deprivation.

12. The management of staff is good. Staff receive particularly good support in ICT, leisure, travel and tourism and art, media and publishing. Often this is individual support. Communication is good. Staff are well motivated and enthusiastic. They value the open communication style and fully understand the changes to the provider's direction. Staff training is satisfactory and improving. A yearly staff training planner is in place. In addition, Shropshire adult and community learning provides in-house staff development on specific issues arising from the observations of teaching and learning. Resources are adequately managed and deployed, with some good use of shared community premises.

13. Appraisal processes are satisfactory. All Shropshire adult and community learning staff on substantive contracts have a formal appraisal, under Shropshire County Council's appraisal process. Staff reflect on past performance and discuss their work record with their line managers. Managers set targets related to service development. However, not all targets are specific and measurable. Part-time tutors record any training needs on a self-appraisal form. These are collated by curriculum leaders and contribute to the staff development programme. This process relies too much on the knowledge and self-awareness of individual part-time tutors.

14. The management of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. Arrangements to access impartial, qualified staff are mainly informal, but are understood well by the provider's staff. Tutors give good informal advice, particularly about their area of expertise. Leaflets, brochures and pre-course information are adequate.

15. Health and safety is satisfactory overall. A health and safety officer carries out generic risk assessments. However, tutors in fitness programmes do not always sufficiently follow through the actions required as a result of medical assessments.

16. Target-setting for staff in Shropshire adult and community learning is ineffective. Targets in action plans and development plans are not sufficiently clear in directing individual staff or curriculum teams to secure improvements. Targets are set for the recruitment of very specific groups of learners, for example increasing participation by men. However, curriculum leaders have insufficient understanding of their role in meeting these targets. Development workers each have an action plan, but these contain insufficiently specific and measurable targets. There is insufficient recognition of how individual action plans feed into team plans and then into overall service plans.

17. The implementation of skills for life across the provision is slow. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. A comprehensive skills for life strategy document has not led to timely improvements in skills for life practice. Managers do not sufficiently monitor the skills for life strategy, which has few targets for its implementation. Development workers do identify skills for life needs and are setting up some limited community-based provision, such as courses on budgeting, with well-planned opportunities for progression. Another approach develops skills for life through family learning, but these programmes do not sufficiently meet the individual literacy and numeracy needs of learners. The third approach is to teach skills for life within the curriculum subject areas. This work is insufficiently monitored and is currently having little effect on learners' skills development in literacy and numeracy.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

18. Shropshire adult and community learning has good initiatives to widen participation. It has a clear strategy in place to develop the provision in targeted areas of Shropshire, particularly in areas of high economic and social deprivation. This includes a specific focus on developing opportunities for learners across Shropshire who do not usually take part in adult learning. Shropshire adult and community learning works closely with a good range of partners, both within Shropshire County Council itself and across a wide range of voluntary and statutory agencies, to increase opportunities for learners. Family learning managers and tutors have very good links with over 45 schools across Shropshire, to develop courses for parents and children. Staff enhance this work through close relationships with the county council's extended schools team. Shropshire adult and community learning makes good use of several adult education centres located on school sites.

19. A good range of well-planned promotion and marketing events, from Oswestry in the north of the county to Ludlow in the south, enables staff to reach out to learners in creative and engaging ways. Development workers usefully identify and meet individual and community needs and put on appropriate courses for learners, located in their own communities. These consist of taster sessions, workshops and short courses, and include

constructive planning of progression opportunities. The staff approach to learners, both more traditional adult education learners and newer learners, demonstrates a high degree of respect and a strong emphasis on building good individual relationships.

20. Shropshire adult and community learning has a satisfactory equal opportunities and diversity policy, based on Shropshire County Council's policy. Within learning, employment and training services, which includes Shropshire adult and community learning, policies and procedures for child protection are clear and detailed and include a detailed analysis of progress against the five outcomes for the government's 'Every Child Matters' initiative. In addition, Shropshire adult and community learning produces a clear equal opportunities code of practice for staff and a 'fair for all' charter for learners, which usefully explains key terms and indicates learners' rights and responsibilities. The tutors' handbook reinforces expectations on equality of opportunity, as well as providing helpful information for tutors on working with learners to meet their individual learning needs. The learners' handbook helpfully sets out what learners can expect and includes information on what to do if they become aware of any prejudice, bullying or harassment. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. Arrangements for additional support for learners are satisfactory.

21. Training for staff on equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Part-time tutors can access a wide range of in-house courses, including awareness raising courses on skills for life, disability awareness, race equality and training in the use of appropriate learning resources, for example considering the use of images and the readability of handouts. Approximately 66 per cent of current tutors attended in-house training in equality of opportunity in 2005-06. Seven staff in family learning are working towards level 4 qualifications in literacy. However, managers have not given sufficient consideration to achieving the target in their training plan, to train all staff in cultural awareness by the end of 2006. Across the sites used for adult and community learning, access for learners with restricted mobility is generally satisfactory.

22. The monitoring and evaluation of strategies for equality of opportunity is insufficient. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the equal opportunities and diversity policy are not sufficiently clear. Some monitoring of the provision with regard to equality of opportunity does take place, but this is not up to date and does not contain sufficient analysis of equal opportunities data. Shropshire adult and community learning is included in Shropshire County Council's race equality scheme, which is comprehensive and includes a detailed action plan. However, the monitoring of this plan within adult and community learning is insufficient. Targets for equality of opportunity are in place, for example to increase the number of male learners and the number of learners from minority ethnic groups. However, managers do not regularly discuss these targets at management meetings and curriculum leaders are not always sufficiently clear of their specific responsibilities with regard to meeting these targets. Managers do not sufficiently monitor the effect of tutors' training in equality of opportunity on changes in their teaching and learning practices. Feedback from the observations of teaching and learning make little mention of equality of opportunity.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

23. Shropshire adult and community learning is implementing very effective actions to improve retention, which is good and improving across the provision. Tutors carefully monitor learners' absence and make regular contact with learners. Managers' use of data

is much improved. Overall retention rose from 90 per cent in 2003-04 to 96 per cent in 2005-06.

24. Teaching and learning is improving and is now good in arts, media and publishing and in languages, literature and culture. Managers provide very effective individual support for part-time staff. Inspectors observed only two inadequate sessions during the inspection. However, they also observed few outstanding sessions. Shropshire adult and community learning is taking effective actions to improve the quality of the provision of its one subcontracted provider. Monitoring is regular and very focused on quality. Observations of teaching and learning indicated that some teaching was inadequate and effective actions were taken to secure improvements.

25. The use of management information is satisfactory. Managers analyse data on the basis of recruitment, retention and achievement. In particular they analyse the recruitment of men and women, learners from minority ethnic groups and learners with disabilities. However, they make insufficient use of this analysis actively to plan and develop the provision.

26. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is an inclusive process, involving key staff and learners. Managers use helpful information from course evaluations and make some use of data. The latest self-assessment report is detailed. However, it is insufficiently accurate and critical and does not identify many of the key strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection. The grades were also higher than those given by inspectors in three of the curriculum areas inspected and in leadership and management.

27. Shropshire adult and community learning carries out insufficient monitoring of its quality improvement processes. Although the observation of teaching and learning is working well in arts, media and publishing and in languages, literature and culture, with standards of teaching and learning significantly improving, managers do not consistently apply this process across all the curriculum areas. The moderation or standardisation of teaching and learning observations is insufficient, both within most curriculum areas and across the provision, with some over-grading of observations. Observers do not always adequately record actions or consistently follow up the action-planning process. Managers are insufficiently aware of the weaknesses in the identification, measuring and recording of learners' progress and achievement. Initial assessment does not always adequately identify learners' starting points and reviews are not always effective in measuring distance travelled in terms of achievement.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ICT for users		3
Adult and community learning	142	3

28. During 2005-06, 919 learners enrolled on 154 courses in ICT. In the year 2006-07 to date, 248 learners have enrolled on 48 courses. At the time of the inspection, there were 142 learners on 29 different courses. Courses are for beginners or improvers, many covering the basic office software applications. Other courses cover web design, digital photography and specific uses of the internet. None of the courses are accredited. Courses range in length from up to 10 weeks in two- to three-hour sessions, to single session courses run for a full morning or a full day. Courses run mainly during daytimes, with a small amount of evening and weekend provision. They are mostly held in Shropshire adult and community learning's main centre, with a minority held in community centres and libraries. Of the learners enrolled during 2005-06, 32 per cent were men, 60 per cent were aged over 55, 9.5 per cent declared a disability and 2 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. The provision is delivered by 11 part-time tutors.

ICT for users

Strengths

- good and improving retention
- well-planned programmes
- good management of part-time staff

Weaknesses

- insufficient identification and assessment of learning goals
- insufficient implementation of quality improvement systems

Achievement and standards

29. Retention is good. It has improved consistently over the past three years, from 94 per cent in 2003-04, to 97 per cent for 2005-06. This includes a proportion of one-day and short-length courses.

30. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. On introductory programmes, learners quickly learn the basic operation of the computer, keyboard and mouse and go on to use a word processor. Some learners learn to use spreadsheets and the internet. Others learn elements of web page creation, digital photography and image manipulation.

31. Attendance at observed sessions was satisfactory at 82 per cent. Learners are mostly punctual for the start of sessions.

The quality of provision

32. The ICT programmes are well planned and responsive to learners' needs. The range of courses aimed at learners with relatively few or no computing skills is good. Development workers are active in identifying and assembling groups of learners who can benefit from a first-steps course in computing. They work with the curriculum leader to arrange appropriate courses for learners in a range of community venues. Courses are modified in response to learners' feedback at the end of each course. The courses are not accredited, as part of a strategic decision that such courses are offered in adequate numbers by other providers in the area. The number of learners enrolling on courses is increasing.

33. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. In the best sessions, tutors give good demonstrations. Working relationships are good and tutors create a good learning environment, in which learners feel comfortable to ask questions and to help one another. Tutors use question and answer techniques well, to involve learners actively in the lesson and to check and promote learning and understanding. They use a range of stimulating activities to promote individual learning and helpful learning materials. Tutors' explanations include sufficient background information to put individual computer operations into a wider perspective.

34. In other sessions, learners are not sufficiently aware of what they can expect to achieve in the session. The sessions are less well structured and the exercises are dull or repetitive. Learners only proceed under the direct instruction of the tutor. There is insufficient planning to take account of learners' individual needs and the faster learners are left without sufficient work. In giving support, tutors tend to take over control of the learners' computers and do not give learners sufficient opportunities to practise exercises they have been having difficulty with.

35. The support that learners receive is satisfactory overall. They all receive a comprehensive course information sheet before starting their course and are invited to declare any additional support needs on enrolment. Tutors refer learners who do so to a learning services worker, who discusses their support needs with them and, with their agreement, contacts the tutor to discuss learners' needs. Tutors have attended awareness training in providing literacy and numeracy support within sessions. They have easy access to a good range of adaptive technology, which they routinely offer to all learners. In some classes, volunteer helpers assist the tutor during practical sessions. The skills of these volunteers are inconsistent and the quality of the help they give the learners varies from poor to good.

36. Learning goals are not sufficiently identified and assessed. The course information sheets are the only definition of what learners can expect to achieve. This information is not detailed in the individual learning plan and often describes with too little precision what learners can expect to be able to do by the end of the course. For example, one of the four goals set for a 'computers for beginners' course is 'alter, edit and format text'. This covers a wide range of skill levels, making it difficult for tutors to measure learners' skill levels at the start of a course. It also leaves too much discretion to individual tutors to assess learners' achievement. The achievement rates quoted by the provider are unreliable.

Leadership and management

37. The management of part-time teaching staff is good. Managers observe all tutors annually. Following observations, observers draw up action plans to support tutors' development in areas of identified weakness. They check these actions at agreed dates. Tutors who are assessed as inadequate receive extensive individual support. Tutors receive frequent, less formal support from the curriculum leader.

38. The ICT team meets termly and notes key actions, although they do not date the minutes and discussions mainly concern administrative matters. Staff are well qualified and experienced in both ICT and teaching. A number have relevant vocational experience. ICT resources in the main centre are satisfactory. Up-to-date computers have flat-screen monitors and a good range of application software. Learners have appropriate chairs and sufficient desk space to allow them to consult notes while working. Tutors' computers have a data projector to allow learners to see demonstrations of complex software operations more easily.

39. Targets are in place for recruitment, retention and achievement, which the head of adult and community learning and the curriculum leader monitor. The recruitment of male learners is consistently above target and there are good strategies to ensure this continues. The proportion of learners recruited from the black and minority ethnic communities is greater than that in the local population. There is satisfactory access to all rooms for learners with restricted mobility and centres have appropriate facilities. Teaching rooms have rising tables to allow wheelchair users to access computers with ease.

40. The implementation of quality improvement systems is insufficient. Although managers check schemes of work, courses at the same level and topic can vary greatly between tutors, with different outcomes for learners. Paper-based learning resources are not routinely subject to quality checks and some have poor readability. The observation of teaching and learning reports and grades are not routinely moderated, with some over-grading in relation to observers' judgements. Some forms are poorly completed, containing insufficient evidence to substantiate the grade. The sharing of good practice is insufficient. For example, observers do not routinely share the good practice they identify through observations of teaching and learning. The self-assessment report identified more strengths than identified at inspection and did not identify the key weaknesses.

Leisure, travel and tourism**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		3
Adult and community learning	213	3

41. Shropshire adult and community learning has 12 courses in sport, leisure and recreation and an additional 12 health-related courses. There are currently no programmes leading to national accreditation. In 2005-06 a total of 392 learners took sport, leisure and recreation programmes. In 2006-2007 125 learners have enrolled to date on these programmes, which include tai chi, yoga, posture exercises and navigation for hill walkers. In health-related programmes there were 367 learners in 2005-06, with 88 enrolled to date in 2006-2007. The courses vary from one-day short courses to 10-week programmes and run during the daytime and evenings. Most of the provision is held at the Gateway Centre, with other sessions at three further centres including a local school. Eighty-six per cent of learners are women, 14 per cent are disabled, 2 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 16 per cent are over 65 years of age. Two curriculum leaders share the role, working one day a week each, with eight part-time tutors in sport, leisure and recreation and four teaching health-related courses.

Sport, leisure and recreation***Strengths***

- good and improving retention
- well-planned range of programmes
- good management of part-time staff

Weaknesses

- inadequate assessment in fitness programmes
- ineffective use of quality improvement processes

Achievement and standards

42. Retention is good and improving. Retention increased from 88 per cent in 2003-04 to 96 per cent in 2005-06, with many programmes, including longer programmes of between five to 12 weeks, having 100 per cent retention. Learners experience satisfactory benefits to their health and develop physically, mentally and emotionally. In the better sessions, learners demonstrate good acquisition of skills and improvements in confidence. Some learners progress onto other programmes within or outside of the provision. Attendance during inspection week was satisfactory at 81 per cent.

The quality of provision

43. The range of programmes is well planned. Although the provision is small, a good variety of courses is on offer, providing a coherent and well-balanced programme covering many different aspects of health and fitness. Managers have a clear vision and

aim, to implement Shropshire County Council's mission to improve the health of the people of Shropshire. Careful research on the local health and fitness industry and other sports and leisure providers takes place, to ensure that provision is not duplicated. Plans are in place to widen the geographical spread of the programmes, with taster days to attract people living in areas of high deprivation. However, the main sessions are currently on offer mainly at centres in Shrewsbury.

44. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although the standard varies considerably between lessons in some cases. In the better sessions, tutors quickly build a good working relationship with learners and provide a supportive environment for learning to take place. Learners receive good individual support and specific feedback and make good progress in acquiring new skills. Sessions are highly interactive and use a good variety of creative teaching and learning activities. In the poorer sessions, there is too much unnecessary tutor talking or demonstrating by tutors and insufficient involvement of learners. Learners are uninspired and do not receive sufficient individual support.

45. Resources are satisfactory. Learners have access to sufficient equipment in exercise classes and the venue at the Gateway Centre provides an appropriate setting for classes such as yoga. Staff are suitably qualified and many have good up-to-date industry experience.

46. Learners receive sufficient information before the start of their course and can enrol through a variety of methods. Arrangements to identify and meet literacy and numeracy skills support needs are satisfactory. Some learners receive additional support from volunteer support workers and many take advantage of a fee waiver. There is adequate guidance about progression.

47. Assessment in fitness programmes is inadequate. Although pre-activity questionnaires are completed at the start of the programme, medical referrals for learners with contra-indications to exercise do not generally take place. Learners express their fitness goals at the start of a course, but tutors do not measure fitness levels, making progress towards these goals difficult to measure. Tutors do monitor progress towards group learning goals in some sessions, but this is not consistent. In the poorer sessions, there is insufficient individual assessment, feedback and correction for learners.

Leadership and management

48. The management of part-time staff is good. The two curriculum leaders communicate well and have clear roles and responsibilities. New systems are successful in improving communication between managers and tutors. Tutors are involved in management decisions and feel valued. Staff are sufficiently qualified. Managers mentor new staff and all staff receive individual support. Tutors have good opportunities to attend staff development, such as training in using interactive whiteboards, information learning technology (ILT), supporting learners with particular learning needs and cultural diversity.

49. The use of quality improvement processes is ineffective. Although managers monitor schemes of work, they do not sufficiently identify actions for improvement. The recording and monitoring of learners' progress is insufficiently monitored and weaknesses about initial assessment have not been identified. Some new tutors have not yet been observed. Tutors are often not observed by a subject specialist, with some areas of weakness not

identified through this process. There is inconsistency in the standard of teaching and learning. There is insufficient awareness of suitable methods to assess and monitor health and fitness goals. The self-assessment report is inaccurate. It does not substantiate key strengths and does not identify a key weakness found during inspection.

50. Managers set targets to increase participation by men. However, there is no clear action plan to implement these targets and no specific marketing to target male learners. There are some attempts to raise awareness of cultural diversity in areas of deprivation. However, although tutors have attended cultural diversity training, there is little reference to cultural diversity in schemes or work or within sessions.

Arts, media and publishing**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance Adult and community learning	117	2
Music Adult and community learning	63	2
Fine arts Adult and community learning	8	2
Crafts Adult and community learning	362	2

51. Shropshire adult and community learning offers courses in arts, media and publishing at three locations in Shrewsbury and in a number of community venues across the county. There are 37 sessional hourly paid specialist tutors. The programme is non-accredited and includes classes in visual art, crafts, dance and music. Courses are available during the daytime, evening and on Saturdays in two centres in Shrewsbury and in other community venues throughout the county, including adult education centres, schools, village halls and libraries. Courses run from half-day taster sessions, to programmes run over 12 weeks. A Saturday programme is run throughout the year offering a series of one-day creative workshops in topics such as stage make up. In 2005-06 there were 1,908 learners. Of these, 20 per cent were men, 1.8 per cent were from minority ethnic groups and 13 per cent had a disability. At the time of inspection, 550 learners were enrolled.

Strengths

- good retention
- good development and application of learners' practical skills
- good teaching and learning
- good staff development and support for tutors
- effective management of the promotion and celebration of learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress and achievement
- poor initial assessment in dance

Achievement and standards

52. Retention of learners on courses is good at 95 per cent in 2005-06 and shows steady improvement from 92 per cent in 2003-04. An effective system is in place to contact learners after an absence of three sessions. Learners respect the system of telephoning the centre or the tutor if they know they will be absent and they receive good support in catching up on any learning they miss.

53. Learners show good development of their practical skills. They apply these new skills well in class, at home, at work and in the community. In art and craft classes learners develop a good understanding of art and design principles and use these concepts well in

their own drawing and painting. For example, in one life drawing class learners used line and tone creatively to produce drawings expressing gesture and emotion. In music classes, skills in reading musical scores and in recognising and using rhythms are used well. In dance classes, new and more complex dance steps and techniques are applied well in choreographed routines. Attendance is generally good.

The quality of provision

54. Teaching and learning are good. Many tutors plan their sessions well. The pace of learning is generally good. Tutors provide effective practical demonstrations that are accompanied by clear verbal instructions for learners. Many classes feature a wide variety of challenging learning activities that are planned to motivate and stimulate learners. Individual support for learners is good, with tutors giving positive verbal criticism to enable learners to identify how they can improve their skills and techniques. Tutors make very good use of focused questioning to establish learners' levels of understanding and to recap previous learning. In many classes learners have very good opportunities to negotiate their own challenging learning goals. In many two- and three-dimensional art and craft projects learners enjoy exciting experimental work.

55. Specialist accommodation and resources are utilised well. Many rooms have smartboards and projectors with internet access available. Although some tutors use these facilities as learning tools, most tutors make insufficient use of ICT. Tutors are generally well qualified and experienced in their specialist subjects. Many are practising artists with local and national reputations and some have worked professionally in the design, performance and publishing industries. All tutors have teaching qualifications.

56. In most courses adequate initial assessment forms part of the planning process and enables learners to express their personal learning goals. Good verbal feedback is usually provided for learners. This enables them to know how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

57. Learners receive satisfactory support and guidance. Pre-course information for learners is generally satisfactory, with course information leaflets that provide all essential information. Tutors generally provide satisfactory on-course and exit guidance. A satisfactory referral system is in place to support specific learning needs. Access to independent advice and guidance is satisfactory.

58. In dance classes the initial assessment is inadequate. Health checks are not carried out consistently and are not used sufficiently in planning individual learning. Self-assessments are used to identify learners' starting points. However these are generally misunderstood by learners and not used sufficiently by tutors to plan differentiation in learning outcomes.

59. Learners' progress and achievement are not sufficiently recorded. In the better sessions, the individual learning plans are used very well by tutors and learners to identify starting points, plan personal learning goals, record progress and for learners to identify what they need to do to reach their goals and aspirations. However, in other sessions individual learning plans are not used effectively to support learning. Some tutors do not adequately record progress and achievement, while others do not involve learners sufficiently in the process. Some tutors and learners have a poor understanding of the

benefits and use of recording progress and achievement.

Leadership and management

60. Staff development and support for tutors are good. A comprehensive strategy for the area of learning provides a clear direction, which tutors value. Tutors receive good support. Tutors' meetings are held termly and include opportunities to share good practice. New tutors receive good induction and ongoing support. A designated mentor works closely with the tutors, providing a number of observations, followed by discussion and advice to improve practical aspects of teaching and learning. The teaching and learning observation process includes positive feedback, in-depth discussion and effective action-planning. Specific and effective training events greatly support tutors in improving teaching and learning.

61. Staff effectively manage the promotion and celebration of learning. Public performance evenings celebrate the achievement in dance and music. In visual art and crafts, staff and learners organise an exciting schedule of exhibitions and displays at the Gateway and in libraries, museums and other venues throughout Shropshire.

62. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Studios and classrooms are suitable for purpose, generally light and airy and many have good ILT facilities. Basic materials and resources are available for tutors who wish to demonstrate art and craft subjects.

63. Effective partnerships include internal partnerships within Shropshire County Council such as with the arts and museum service, extended schools, the library service, youth service and social services. The provider also has a large number of external partners from the voluntary sector and local industries.

64. Equality of opportunity is largely satisfactory. The learners' handbook includes information regarding learners' rights and how to make a complaint. This is reinforced by tutors at induction. In classes, tutors treat learners with respect. However, the celebration of diversity and cultural influences on the arts is not routinely planned in learning activities.

65. Quality assurance procedures are satisfactory. The observation system is generally implemented well. However, observation reports are not moderated, with some differences in the accuracy and standards of the reports. Some reports do not comment on key issues such as health and safety, and adequate planning of learning outcomes for sessions. A few tutors have not implemented the improvements agreed in action plans.

66. The self-assessment report does not sufficiently identify the key strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. The supporting text is largely descriptive and does not provide sufficient evidence to support the judgements made. The process was not sufficiently inclusive of all staff and learners.

Languages, literature and culture**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i>		2
Adult and community learning	387	2

67. Shropshire adult and community learning offers 28 courses in French, German, Italian, Spanish and Japanese as well as Latin and Greek literature, with progression routes on most modern languages courses. Classes take place in four learning centres and at an Army base. They are provided during the day and in the evenings and last from six to 10 weeks. At the time of inspection, out of the 387 learners, 173 were new learners. In 2005-06, 70 per cent of learners were women and 53 per cent were aged 55 or over. Nearly 3 per cent were from minority ethnic groups and 7 per cent had a declared learning or physical disability. The provision is managed by a curriculum leader, with eight part-time tutors.

Other languages, literature and culture*Strengths*

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- good retention and progression
- good teaching and learning
- highly effective curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient reviewing and recording of learners' progress

Achievement and standards

68. Learners develop good skills and confidence. Language learners are keen to experiment with language. They become confident speakers and achieve good pronunciation and high levels of accuracy. They apply their new skills successfully at home, at work and on holiday. Learners develop a good understanding of different cultures and acquire the subtleties of different types of humour. Literature learners develop very good analytical and critical skills through discussions on styles and engage with passion in the translation of Latin and Greek texts. Older learners report an increased memory and greatly value their courses for keeping them active.

69. Retention is very high at 99 per cent. Learners progress well either to more advanced levels within their subject or onto other languages and subjects. Latin or Greek literature learners join summer schools at university and publish their work.

The quality of provision

70. Teaching and learning are good. In the best sessions, activities are well paced and cater for different learning needs and styles. Tutors carefully plan activities to maximise

learners' interaction and to ensure that all learners complete tasks successfully. Tutors monitor progress well and give effective verbal feedback. Languages and literature are presented in meaningful contexts. For example, literature learners explore texts in the history of classical times, discussing Greek leadership and Roman water engineering. Learners are encouraged to share knowledge, practise pronunciation extensively and correct errors. Humour is used well to stimulate learning and learners have fun. For example, in an evening Spanish session, learners practise giving and receiving directions through an energetic line-dancing exercise. The use of the target language is good. Tutors carefully design materials and use ILT very effectively.

71. Accommodation is satisfactory. Classrooms are equipped well with interactive whiteboards and audiovisual equipment. The main bank of resources is continuously reviewed and upgraded. Staff have at least a basic teaching qualification and all are expert in their subject.

72. The range of provision and progression routes are satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance for learners are satisfactory. When tutors identify learners' additional support needs, they refer them appropriately.

73. Although tutors routinely carry out initial assessments, learners' progress is not reviewed and recorded rigorously enough. Tutors do not always identify learners' starting points or do not consistently use this information to support the planning of learning. Reviews of progress do not systematically measure specific language development.

Leadership and management

74. Curriculum management is highly effective. Managers provide a clear sense of direction and use data and feedback from learners well to review and develop programmes to meet changing local needs. Tutors attend regular and purposeful meetings and become involved in the planning of change. They are actively encouraged to exchange effective teaching and learning materials and best practice. Tutors are supported well through timely and appropriate staff development. Management has been very active in developing ILT and in monitoring its effectiveness.

75. Specialist observers carry out the observations of teaching and learning. Judgements reflect grades accurately and observers moderate the reports and grades. Action-planning with tutors reflects priorities for improvement. Managers effectively monitor actions and use clear and challenging timescales. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall, with adequate staff and learner awareness. The self-assessment report accurately identifies most strengths and areas for improvement.

Family learning**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		3
Adult and community learning	182	3

76. The family learning provision comprises family literacy, language and numeracy (FLNN) and wider family learning courses. Wider family learning courses are mostly between four and 10 hours in length, with one course of 20 hours planned. Courses are on offer in ICT, art, cookery and play. The larger proportion of the provision is FLLN. Many of these courses are up to a maximum of 68 hours and include 'keeping up with the children', 'playing with language' and 'early start' as well as family literacy and numeracy. In most courses the adults spend some time learning without the children and also have some shared time.

77. Courses are held across the county, mainly in schools. Two are in partnership with Sure Start. During 2005-06, 557 learners enrolled on family learning, 367 of these in FLLN and 190 in wider family learning programmes. Five per cent of learners were men and 3 per cent were from black and minority ethnic groups. In 2006-2007, 182 learners are enrolled to date, 50 in wider family learning and 132 in FLLN programmes. The post of family learning manager was vacant at the time of inspection. Five part-time family learning development workers are each responsible for a local district. Thirty part-time tutors teach the family learning courses.

Adult and community learning***Strengths***

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- very good links with schools
- good formal and informal sharing of good practice

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to learners' individual needs
- few progression opportunities
- ineffective implementation of teaching and learning system

Achievement and standards

78. Learners increase their confidence and develop new skills by attending family learning courses. Many extend their understanding of how literacy and numeracy are taught in school and are better able to help their children. They are more patient and manage the behaviour of their children better. They also develop new skills. In one wider family learning class, a group of women with no previous computer knowledge competently demonstrated the use of the internet to their children. Many learners greatly value the increased social contact and new links into local communities that they gain. Parents are more confident to participate in school activities. In one school, two learners progressed

to take on responsibilities in the parent teacher association.

79. Many learners improve their own literacy and numeracy skills. Learners achieve successful outcomes on external accreditation, with 116 learners gaining literacy and numeracy qualifications in 2005-06.

The quality of provision

80. Links with schools are very good. A large number of schools are involved in family learning. In 2005-06, 47 schools were involved and there are plans to work with 51 in 2006-2007. The geographical spread is wide, with a strong focus on areas of social and economic disadvantage and rural isolation. Some partnerships with schools are new, and many are sustained over time. Staff put in much energy and effort to maintain this good involvement with the schools. There are good examples of consultation to reflect the needs of parents, not just children. One school surveyed parents and another holds regular meetings with parents. Headteachers value family learning and are very well supported by committed and skilled development workers.

81. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors value learners and use sensitive approaches to learning. In the better sessions, tutors challenge learners and use a wide range of activities to motivate learners. Learning is built up in appropriate steps. Tutors often call on learners to explain or provide answers to reinforce their learning and support others. In the less good classes, the pace is often slow. In one class there was insufficient focus on the learning of the adults. Outside of specific computer classes, the use of ILT is poor.

82. Guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Schools promote the courses well through leaflets and personal contact. Clear information leaflets are available for learners before the start of the course. Tutors introduced better guidance on progression, but this is having little effect as yet. Tutors consistently follow up learners who miss sessions. Learners value the crèche, which enables them to participate in learning.

83. Tutors pay insufficient attention to learners' individual needs. Tutors have varying levels of awareness on how to meet the specific needs of learners, particularly those related to the literacy and numeracy of the adults. Most tutors use the good range of assessments, individual learning plans and recording materials available. However, in one five-week class there was no recording of progress. Understanding of how the recording of learners' progress guides lesson planning is inconsistent. There is a reluctance to make ongoing judgements on progress in relation to the specific literacy or numeracy needs of the adults.

84. Progression opportunities are few. Some learners do progress into employment and some to different family learning courses. However, progression opportunities are generally limited. As a result a few learners repeat the same course at a later date. The development workers are working to identify further needs.

Leadership and management

85. The formal and informal sharing of good practice is good. Staff meetings regularly encourage the sharing of good practice. For example, one tutor took along her attractive story boxes. Tutors value and learn from the sessions. In addition, a small group of tutors

meet socially and share ideas. Development workers identify good practice and put tutors in touch with each other to decrease their isolation in rural areas. Good mentoring arrangements help new tutors learn from more experienced staff.

86. Tutors are appropriately qualified and very well supported. Curriculum guidance packs and a range of assessment and record-keeping materials are available for tutors. The management of resources is satisfactory. Some school accommodation is good. One school secured extended schools funding for a high-quality community room used for family learning. Inappropriate furniture is still used in a few schools. Equality of opportunity is overall satisfactory. Staff target provision in areas of deprivation. Tutors do not introduce cultural awareness sufficiently with learners and there are very few initiatives to target men.

87. Quality improvement systems are in place. However, their application across family learning is inconsistent. The implementation of the system to improve teaching and learning is ineffective. Observations are carried out, but observers do not moderate reports and grades. Some judgements are insufficiently detailed to support thorough action-planning. The checking of the completion of follow-up actions is not formalised. The self-assessment process in family learning does not sufficiently identify the key strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection.

