

INSPECTION REPORT

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council

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

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (GMBC) is one of five local authorities in Tyne and Wear. Adult and community learning is part of the remit of the raising achievement service, one of the five services that form GMBC's learning and children's directorate. The raising achievement service is responsible for commissioning and assuring the quality of service delivery.
2. GMBC receives government funding through Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (TWLSC) for adult and community learning, further education, neighbourhood learning in deprived communities, first steps learning, family learning, and train to gain provision. GMBC also receives European social funding from TWLSC and neighbourhood renewal funding from government office through two projects that support literacy and numeracy provision. Charges for the provision were introduced in 2005. Concessions are available and none of the provision is fully self-funded by learners.
3. GMBC has held a direct contract for further education provision since 2005. It currently has 22 delivery partners. The council's youth and community learning service is its main delivery partner, providing approximately 70 per cent of the provision.
4. Provision is offered at 93 venues throughout the borough, 55 of which were in use during the inspection. There is a higher concentration of venues within those wards of greatest deprivation. In some of the centres, a full-time youth and community learning worker supervises activities and is assisted by part-time paid or voluntary staff. The other centres have part-time paid or voluntary staff, but no full-time worker. Each centre has its own voluntary management committee.
5. In 2005-06, 7,364 people took part in activities which were directly managed by the raising achievement service. Eighty-nine per cent of these people were 25 years of age or over. Many took part in more than one activity or course. Eighty per cent of learners were women, 17 per cent were 65 years of age or older, approximately 4 per cent were from a minority ethnic group, and 10 per cent had a declared disability. Fifty-nine per cent were new learners and 24 per cent were entitled to concessionary fees.
6. The main areas of learning are community learning, community development, family learning, and literacy and numeracy. Provision is offered up to level 3. At the time of the inspection there were over 3,000 learners.
7. GMBC serves a population of 191,300 in an area extending approximately 12 miles along the south bank of the River Tyne. The unemployment rate currently stands at 3 per cent, which is above the national average of 2.6 per cent. People from minority ethnic groups make up less than 2 per cent of the population, compared with the national average of 9 per cent. There is a large Orthodox Jewish community, representing around less than 1 per cent of Gateshead's population.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good. Quality improvement is satisfactory. The quality of provision in family learning, and literacy and numeracy is outstanding. The quality of provision in community development is good. The quality of provision in community learning is satisfactory.

9. Achievement and standards are good. On literacy and numeracy programmes, achievement and standards are very good. In family learning there is good development of learners' skills and knowledge to benefit families. Learners following community development programmes significantly raise their aspirations and awareness of their own capabilities. Progression to further learning, volunteering and paid employment is good. Attainment of skills is good in community learning. Learners on all programmes increase in confidence and are proud of their achievements.

10. Teaching and learning are good. Seventy-two per cent of observed sessions were graded good or better, of which 14 per cent were outstanding, 58 per cent were good, 25 per cent were satisfactory and 3 per cent were inadequate. Outstanding teaching was observed in all of the curriculum areas sampled. Teaching and learning are well planned to meet individual learners' needs. Learners enjoy their programmes and sessions are fun. They benefit from being taught by particularly well-qualified literacy and numeracy, and family learning staff. All assessment is at least satisfactory.

11. The range of programmes is good and meets learners' needs. Links with the local and wider communities and with partner organisations are good in all areas and successfully widen participation and engage disadvantaged groups. In community development, the provision has been restructured effectively to provide engaging learning activities that lead to a range of progression routes. In family learning, there is a good range of courses to meet the needs of parents and children. In community learning, there is insufficient clarity of identification of first steps learners, suitable progression routes to level 2 programmes and the central place of first steps learning in the curriculum.

12. Overall support for learners is good and is individualised to meet their needs. On family learning and literacy and numeracy programmes, support is highly effective. GMBC provides a number of services, including support workers, creche facilities, learner transport, and adaptive and assistive technology. Tutors support the learners well. Recording of learners' starting points and progress is not always adequate.

13. The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process. Staff and centre managers make significant contributions to self-assessment, and the views of learners and other stakeholders receive adequate consideration. Most of the current report is appropriately self-critical and reflects much of the provision well. A good proportion of the identified strengths and weaknesses have a significant effect on learning. Inspectors agreed with many of these judgements, identifying some additional strengths and weaknesses. Some grades given by inspectors were higher than those in the report, while others were the same. Data was used in some sections of the report to make judgements on retention and achievement, but was missing or incomplete in others. The self-assessment process and the quality of reporting have improved, compared with the previous report. The development plan significantly contributes to improving the provision.

14. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.

Since the previous inspection, GMBC has introduced many good initiatives to improve the quality of the provision. Following recent appointments, the management team has sufficient capacity and capability to co-ordinate the cross-curricular services and curriculum areas effectively. It has developed and published a good strategy to deal with literacy and numeracy needs across the borough and is implementing this well. Regular award ceremonies have been introduced to recognise and celebrate learners' achievement. The proportion of appropriately qualified tutors has increased, with many holding or working toward teaching qualifications. GMBC has contracted with new providers to improve the range and quality of the offer it makes. Good progress has been made in tackling areas where weaknesses remain, particularly in data and quality improvement systems.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL:

- develop a comprehensive system for recording learners' progress and achievement
- maintain the high quality of family learning and literacy and numeracy provision
- identify, share and implement best practice
- continue to improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning grades
- systematically share and use data to improve provision
- clearly identify community learning and the progress routes for first steps learners
- better implement quality improvement arrangements

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Preparation for life and work			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		<i>1</i>	
Adult and community learning	130	1	
<i>Community learning</i>		<i>3</i>	
Adult and community learning	2,840	3	

Family learning		1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning Adult and community learning	292	1 1

Community development		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning Adult and community learning	200	2 2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

15. The adult and community learning provision inspected included community learning, literacy and numeracy, family learning, and community development. GMBC's new train to gain provision was not inspected separately but was sampled as part of leadership and management, and literacy and numeracy.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	29
Number of learners interviewed	148
Number of staff interviewed	63
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	36
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	16
Number of visits	1

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic planning and management of learning
- successful action to maintain and develop provision
- good collaborative working
- very effective measures to promote social inclusion in teaching and learning
- many good initiatives to improve the quality of the provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data
- inconsistent practice in target-setting and recording learners' progress

- some insufficiently developed quality improvement arrangements

Preparation for life and work

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- very good achievement and success rates
- excellent use of individual learning plans
- good learner-centred teaching sessions
- very effective support for learners
- very strong teamworking
- productive use of links with other organisations

Weaknesses

- insufficient information on progression routes for learners

Community learning

Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- very well-planned teaching and learning
- effective action to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of learners' goals and progress
- insufficient planning of first steps learning

Family learning

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- very good retention
- good development of skills and knowledge to benefit families
- good teaching and learning
- excellent range of courses and events
- highly effective support for learners
- very good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress and achievements

Community development

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- good development of learners' self-awareness, confidence and capabilities
- good progression to further learning, volunteering and paid employment
- good partnership work to engage priority groups

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring of quality of provision

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL:

- 'I've now got my own certificates. It makes you feel excellent because you've done it yourself'
- 'discovering possibilities when things didn't seem possible'
- 'the chance to meet other people with similar problems'
- 'I've learnt more since I've been here than I have in the rest of my life'
- 'it's made me who I am today - I like myself now'
- 'pensioners are not invisible here, they are treated with respect'
- 'all staff are so helpful and friendly'
- 'having great fun and learning without realising it'
- 'there is no way that I would know what to do to help my child without this course'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- information relating to follow-on provision
- the large volume of paperwork in non-certificated learning
- the opportunity to retain handouts and workbooks in some classes

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good strategic planning and management of learning
- successful action to maintain and develop provision
- good collaborative working
- very effective measures to promote social inclusion in teaching and learning
- many good initiatives to improve the quality of the provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data
- inconsistent practice in target-setting and recording learners' progress
- some insufficiently developed quality improvement arrangements

16. Strategic planning of adult learning is good. GMBC has a vision of 'local people realising their full potential'. Within this the adult learning service plays an important part by raising the aims and achievements of people within the area's communities, and fostering social cohesion. The council's vision is developed explicitly in the wide range of adult learning planning documents which contribute to priorities in GMBC's community strategies. Adult learning plans also align closely to local and national targets, for example increasing the number of adults with qualifications at level 2. The council has taken specific action to retain strong links between adult learning and education for children and young people.

17. Senior officers and relevant portfolio-holders take a keen interest in the development of the service. They have a good understanding of its key strengths, and much of what it needs to develop. This engagement, for example, extends to senior officer participation in face-to-face consultation with representatives of local centre management committees. Leadership of adult learning is strong. The management of cross-curricular services and curriculum areas is effective.

18. GMBC has acted successfully to maintain and develop its training provision. It responded effectively when a local college withdrew from providing adult learning within the community, identifying alternative providers and increasing its directly managed provision where these were not available. This has ensured continuation of an adult learning offer in the affected areas. In the past two years, GMBC has developed important new areas of work, securing significant additional funding from TWLSC. These include skills for life provision in literacy and numeracy, and providing national vocational qualification (NVQ) training and assessment for council employees through the train to gain programme. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The service has identified some important areas for development. For example, it has recognised a need to provide English for speakers of other languages courses to meet demand, and has well-advanced plans to offer this.

19. Collaborative working between the adult learning service, other council service areas and external partners is good. Adult learning commissions more than half of the learning it offers, mostly from other council service areas. Strong and productive working relationships exist with these and other providers. Regular informal contact supplements well the standardised and appropriate service level agreements in place with all of the training providers. Arrangements for monitoring service level agreements are appropriate. Each training provider makes a distinctive and valuable contribution to the breadth of learning the service offers. The youth and community learning service, responsible for most commissioned provision, offers learning in a wide range of community venues. Management committees, predominantly drawn from the local community, and the centre's community development workers effectively help ensure provision in each centre is responsive to local needs. The library and the museums services offer distinctive provision capitalising on their particular resources. Close working with a large number of schools fosters the good family learning provision the council makes, supplemented well by courses run in children's centres. Adult learning also works well with a growing number of specialist independent organisations to extend the range of learning it offers. For example, it commissions music workshops from a nationally renowned centre for music. Adult learning also maintains productive relationships with other organisations to share good practice. The head of lifelong learning co-ordinates the local learning partnership, which draws together around 100 providers of learning in the Gateshead area. Skills for life staff have very effective links with neighbouring adult learning services to share and develop practice in their curriculum area.

20. Communication within the central management team is good. Management meetings are regular and recorded appropriately. Curriculum management of skills for life and family learning is good. It is satisfactory in community development and the areas that form community learning. Staff team meetings are regular, although attendance at the service-wide meetings by the largely part-time staff varies. Staff training and development are good across the service. Many staff, particularly those working full time, are well qualified. Significant numbers hold or are working towards tutor qualifications at level 3 or 4.

21. Appropriate aspects of the five outcomes of Every Child Matters (ECM) are routinely integrated with adult learning's strategies and plans. A good written statement outlines how family learning is used to support the five ECM outcomes. The tutors' handbook includes clear information regarding how to include these in session planning. All children's centres and schools have colourful, informative posters that are designed and created by children and young people, and displayed in parent and family rooms. Learners have some awareness of the outcomes of ECM, particularly being healthy and enjoying and achieving.

22. Data collection and analysis were weaknesses at the previous inspection. Progress in remedying these weaknesses has been slow until recently. Since the appointment of the current data manager, improvement has been rapid and has dealt largely with problems of collection and analysis. GMBC now has reliable historic data on learners' characteristics, recruitment, retention and achievement for 2005-06, and for its current activity. A satisfactory and growing range of reports is available. However, reliable data has been available for only two months. Staff are largely enthusiastic and increasingly knowledgeable about the potential offered by the availability of timely and reliable data, but it is too early for this to have significant effects.

23. Currently, adult learning does not use data sufficiently to develop its provision. The service does not yet use data to help set appropriate targets for retention or achievement. Targets for improvement or growth in action plans are rarely numeric and measurable. Insufficient data exists for managers to identify trends of good and under-performance with confidence, and decide which areas of provision to expand or reduce. Data on learners' progress is poor. GMBC does not collect information sufficiently systematically on what learners do on completion of their programmes. In community learning, the organisation does not use data routinely to identify first steps learners. Possible progression routes to level 2 programmes are not adequately set out. GMBC does not prioritise sufficiently the central place of first steps learning in the community learning curriculum.

24. Practice in target-setting and recording learners' progress is inconsistent. GMBC has developed a standard individual learning plan to use on all programmes. This is often unpopular with tutors and learners, who mostly do not see its relevance to learning. Some tutors have developed very effective ways of agreeing targets for learning, measuring and recording learners' progress. However, in too many programmes, practice is inadequate. Adult learning has identified this problem and those areas where planning and recording of individual learning is particularly good. Across the service there are a wide range of effective ways to recognise and record achievement. Learners' achievements are celebrated well through award ceremonies. All learners receive a GMBC certificate and a letter of commendation from the director of service.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

25. GMBC's measures to promote social inclusion in learning are very effective. Learning is widely provided across the Gateshead area, in a good range of centres easily accessible to local residents. In 2005-06, programmes were offered in 92 venues. Much provision is sited deliberately in areas of high economic deprivation. Half of GMBC's learners are from these areas. The extensive range of settings for programmes includes schools, museums, art galleries, children's centres and council offices. Encouragement of local involvement in providing learning is strong. Many programmes take place in community centres run by management committees. These largely comprise local people, often themselves former learners. Together with community development workers employed by the centres, they play an important role in identifying local learning needs, and encouraging new learners to join programmes.

26. GMBC acts effectively to involve learners from groups traditionally under-represented in learning. Men comprise only 20 per cent of adult learners in Gateshead. An innovative, highly successful project encouraged men to participate in programmes such as 'Bushcraft for Blokes' and has been cited as good practice nationally. Strong links with local minority community organisations foster participation well in specifically designed provision, such as yoga for Muslim women, and newly developed programmes for Orthodox Jewish women.

27. A good range of support is available to enable people with different needs to participate in learning. A mobile crèche provides childcare in a wide range of settings. On some programmes, GMBC provides transport for learners unable to make their way to classes. Learning support in classes provides well for those with physical or literacy and numeracy support needs. On many programmes, GMBC provides adaptive technology,

for example to help sight-impaired learners take part in information and communications technology (ICT) courses. Across the service tutors routinely plan and teach learning sessions to cater effectively for the learners' range of abilities.

28. The council has a wide range of well-established policies and procedures covering equality and diversity. The adult learning service has recently developed its own schemes on equality and disability to supplement these, accompanied by adequately detailed implementation plans. All learners now receive a new learner handbook, which explains well the most important principles of equality of opportunity in learning. It is accompanied by clear and straightforward information on harassment and bullying, and what learners should do if it occurs. A widely distributed learners' charter sets out clearly their rights and responsibilities in learning. On some programmes, tutors supplement these well with activities which underline the importance of tolerance and mutual respect.

29. At the previous inspection, only 33 per cent of centres where learning took place were fully accessible to learners with mobility difficulties. This has improved significantly to 95 per cent. Training for staff in equality and diversity is satisfactory. Events take place at least annually.

30. GMBC now routinely collects and collates data on learners' gender, age, disability and ethnicity. It uses some of this very effectively, for example, in identifying that men are under-represented in learning. Reports are starting to be produced at centre level, including postcode analysis indicating levels of deprivation in the immediate area learners live. However, data collected on ethnicity does not sufficiently distinguish the diversity of white learners.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

31. Since the previous inspection, when quality assurance was inadequate, GMBC has introduced many good initiatives to improve the quality of the provision. Following recent appointments, the management team has sufficient capacity and capability to co-ordinate effectively cross-curricular services and curriculum areas. It has developed and published a good strategy to deal with literacy and numeracy needs across the borough and is implementing this well. A lack of strategy and provision in this area was a weakness at the previous inspection. To recognise and celebrate learners' achievement, GMBC has introduced regular award ceremonies. The proportion of appropriately qualified tutors has increased, with many holding or working towards teaching qualifications. To encourage this development, GMBC has introduced enhanced pay rates for sessional tutors holding level 4 qualifications. GMBC has contracted new training providers to improve the range and quality of the offer it makes. Appropriate standardised service level agreements establish adequately the responsibilities of GMBC and the providers of learning. Good progress has been made in tackling areas where weaknesses remain, particularly in data and quality improvement systems.

32. Arrangements to gather learners' views of the provision are satisfactory. These include service-wide questionnaires and regular focus groups of current and former learners. GMBC collates these results, analyses them and reports on them. However, responses do not sufficiently take into account the views of the small number of learners who leave their programmes early. GMBC also receives more wide-ranging feedback from responses to questions on adult learning included in surveys the council sends to households across the borough. This is helpful in identifying how the service can

successfully recruit new learners. GMBC uses survey results effectively, for example when developing fee-charging policies for adult learning.

33. Internal verification of NVQ programmes is satisfactory. Assessment standardisation meetings are regular and scheduled. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements. External verifiers' reports are largely favourable. Practice in internal verification, and responses to action arising from external verification, are closely monitored by the quality assurance co-ordinator.

34. Some quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently developed. Quality improvement in the skills for life and family learning areas is systematic, thorough and effective, relying in part on additional measures these teams have developed. Most subcontractors' quality improvement arrangements are not sufficiently well developed, but GMBC is working hard to share good practice with subcontractors about arrangements to improve quality. A newly introduced scheme for observing teaching and learning covered two-thirds of tutors in the 2005-06 academic year, but the number of trained observers has halved and is no longer adequate to ensure sufficient observations take place. GMBC does not use the outcomes of observations sufficiently to raise standards. Most observation reports include actions tutors should follow to improve their teaching, but progress is only monitored and followed up in the small number of cases where the previous teaching session was inadequate.

35. GMBC has a wide range of strategic and operational planning documents aimed at improving the service. Accompanying action plans rarely detail specific outcomes so that managers can identify whether they are being achieved. A new quality improvement framework contains appropriate measures to assure and improve the quality of key processes, but it is much too recent to have had any effects. Previous arrangements were incomplete, often cumbersome and sometimes ignored.

36. GMBC produced a draft of the current self-assessment report in November 2006. The final version of the report was produced in December 2006. Staff and centre managers made significant contributions to its content, and the views of learners and other stakeholders were considered adequately. Most of the report is detailed, well written and appropriately self-critical. It reflects much of the provision well. A good proportion of the strengths and weaknesses it contains have a significant effect on learning. Inspectors agreed with many of these judgements, identifying some additional strengths and weaknesses. Some grades given by inspectors were higher than those in the report, while others were the same. Judgements on leadership and management in the community learning sections fail to differentiate adequately between different strands of this provision. The self-assessment process and the quality of reporting have improved, compared with the previous report published in January 2006. The development plan significantly contributes to improving the provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Preparation for life and work

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> Adult and community learning	130	<i>1</i> 1
<i>Community learning</i> Adult and community learning	2,840	<i>3</i> 3

37. GMBC offers literacy and numeracy, and community learning programmes. The skills for life team was established in 2004-05 and is part of GMBC's lifelong learning team. The skills for life strategy focuses on working with hard-to-reach learners and increasing the skills of council employees. There were 48 learners on literacy and numeracy activities in 2004-05, 348 in 2005-06 and 135 so far this year. Provision is currently offered at 15 community-based venues throughout the borough and it is free. Most activities are during the day with some twilight classes. Seventy-one per cent of the learners are women and 2 per cent of the learners are from minority ethnic groups. There is a skills for life manager, three full-time development officers and a small pool of part-time tutors.

38. Currently, 2,840 learners attend 181 community learning courses at 57 venues across the borough. Subjects include using computers, digital camera and video editing, dance, fitness, music, arts and crafts, and history. Most courses are unaccredited but some certification is available in ICT, art and design, languages, counselling and British Sign Language (BSL). Accreditation is from entry level to level 3. Most courses last for 10 weeks and are run from Mondays to Saturdays in mornings, afternoons or evenings. Venues include adult learning centres, community centres or premises belonging to one of the 22 partner organisations. All community learning programmes are partly funded by learners, with concessions available. Programmes are run by 118 part-time tutors employed by the adult learning service. Special additional support is available from a learner support team.

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- very good achievement and success rates
- excellent use of individual learning plans
- good learner-centred teaching sessions
- very effective support for learners
- very strong teamworking
- productive use of links with other organisations

Weaknesses

- insufficient information on progression routes for learners

Achievement and standards

39. Achievement and success rates are very good. Learners supported by two of the funding streams work towards the national tests. In 2005-06, the success rate for further education-funded learning was 86 per cent and for Basic Skills for Community Capacity Building-funded learning, 88 per cent. Learners are achieving within the planned time period for the course. Achievement in both areas was good at 95 per cent and 97 per cent. The criterion for achievement on non-accredited learning courses is the completion of 80 per cent of the targets on the individual learning plan. Most learners complete these. Development of a broader range of skills, such as computing, working as part of a team and helping each other, is also good. The learners' agreement includes being respectful to the needs of other learners within the group. Learners significantly increase their confidence and self-esteem.

The quality of provision

40. GMBC makes excellent use of well-designed individual learning plans to record learners' progress and achievements. Tutors involve learners in all stages of their individual learning plan. An extensive range of initial assessment resources is used to identify the learners' starting point. A few learners have a verbal initial assessment but most have an initial assessment and diagnostic assessment for literacy and/or numeracy. An individual list of measurable targets is recorded initially by the tutor but, where appropriate, learners take responsibility for these. Tutors use creative methods to support learners in this. One group of learners, working towards a national test, has a menu of targets. They work with the tutor and use the results of their diagnostic test to choose the appropriate targets and identify timescales. On a non-accredited course, a group of learners discussed how to write and use measurable targets to identify their progress. Tutors effectively reinforce learners' progress and achievements. There are two reviews against the targets during the course and weekly reviews of each session. Learners and tutors record progress. The end of course review effectively summarises the learners' work and progress. Tutors refer to the individual learning plans during teaching sessions to remind learners to record specific achievements. At present, there is no recording of personal and wider targets beyond the literacy and numeracy core curriculum, but tutors reinforce these during learning sessions.

41. Teaching and learning are good and learning sessions are fun. Sessions focus closely on learners' needs and link with the targets in the individual learning plans. All team members are very experienced and have completed a level 4 in teaching adult literacy or numeracy. One tutor has achieved both and one tutor is working towards the second qualification. Tutors promote a positive learning environment and develop high levels of trust and mutual respect. Generic literacy and numeracy skills are well taught. For example, a group of learners had a very good understanding of division, which helped them in their work on fractions and percentages. Well-prepared sessions include a good variety of teaching methods, activities and resources, which take account of learners' preferred learning styles and support needs. Work and resources are planned at levels appropriate for the learner. Learners enjoy attending learning sessions and are so motivated that many request additional work to do outside the session.

42. GMBC is creative in encouraging council workers to take part in learning, including incorporating literacy into a communications and computer course which attracted traditionally hard-to-reach men. Recording skills, rather than literacy, is now part of the

programme for domiciliary care workers who are working towards their NVQs at level 2. Learners also work towards the national literacy tests at levels 1 or 2.

43. Support for learners is very effective. Initial assessment identifies individual support needs which are planned into the programme. Examples of the support provided include additional learning support assistants, support for learners with disabilities, such as a height-adjustable desk and a support assistant for a visually-impaired learner. All full-time tutors have been trained in dyslexia awareness and are able to identify and support learners. They also refer learners for additional assessments. Tutors offer additional support outside learning sessions where learners request it. Learners who find it hard to work in a group are referred to the Gateshead Voluntary and Community sector project. Approximately 18 learners have benefited from this support. After receiving individual support, the learner is encouraged to rejoin the group. The excellent links with specialist local organisations provides information and support. Crèche facilities are available.

Leadership and management

44. Teamwork at GMBC is strong. The management team is new and has made enormous progress in a very short time. The team is enthusiastic and dedicated. Work is shared and members support each other. The manager covers classes for tutors when they are absent. The manager knows the learners and the local communities. The team members support each other when developing new programmes in communities and attracting new learners. They effectively gain the trust of local people who have not previously considered literacy and numeracy support. The health and safety of staff working out in the community is a priority. For example, home visits are always in pairs. There is very close working with other teams in lifelong learning. For example, before developing any work that uses school premises there is discussion with the family learning team to ensure that there is no conflict of interests.

45. The team focuses on delivery of the skills for life strategy. The comprehensive strategy includes challenging targets. There is a weekly meeting to discuss operational issues and share and develop best practice. Systems monitor targets against contracts and new areas of work are identified and planned. These are linked back to the strategy. Actions are recorded and reviewed. Contract targets have been met or exceeded. The termly appraisals are comprehensive and identify measurable targets and development needs. Tutors are encouraged to take part in development opportunities and share learning points with the team.

46. Links with other organisations are very productive and GMBC uses them effectively to develop the service. The organisation identifies, gathers and adopts ideas, information and resources. The lifelong learning team and other local professionals and services support the manager in developing the new service. GMBC has made good use of the skills for life initiative. The skills for life steering group includes representatives from local specialist organisations. It encourages co-operative working to ensure that the skills for life strategy is implemented effectively. New local initiatives offer opportunities to the community and a new drop-in centre is due to open at the Civic Hall. A local LSC-funded project promotes literacy and numeracy assessment and accreditation. The excellent partnership working effectively targets under-represented groups in the community. Research on the ALI's good practice database identified an alternative initial assessment, which GMBC has adapted to meet the needs of learners.

47. Quality monitoring and improvement are effective. Audits and observations of learning sessions are carried out. The skills for life manager monitors and reviews the provision with support from external consultants from the skills for life quality initiative. Individual learning plans, progress reviews, registers and evaluations have been developed, reviewed and improved, incorporating best practice from other teams within lifelong learning, tutors' and learners' feedback, and the many organisations and individuals with which the team has links.

48. The promotion of equality of opportunity to learners is satisfactory. They receive a copy of the learners' handbook and the tutor works through this with them. Tutors are successful in building up a culture of respect within the group and learners support each other.

49. Information on progression routes for learners is insufficient. Many learners progress to other literacy and numeracy activities, and some achieve additional qualifications. Others progress onto other learning opportunities, but GMBC does not collect or analyse any formal data. There are no clearly defined progression routes to enable learners to work towards longer-term targets and goals. At present, the tutors carry this out informally.

50. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process and included views of their learners. The self-assessment report is self-critical and inspectors agreed with the judgements made and identified additional strengths. Inspectors judged the provision to be outstanding rather than good.

Community learning

Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- very well-planned teaching and learning
- effective action to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of learners' goals and progress
- insufficient planning of first steps learning

Achievement and standards

51. Learners' work is of a good standard. Achievement records include completion of individual learning plans as well as qualifications. Learners maintain portfolios of completed work that are of a consistently high standard and reflect the pride learners take in their achievements. GMBC uses learners' files effectively to promote recognition of new skills attained and to demonstrate progress for learners' own self-awareness. Tutors' feedback is motivational and encouraging. Learners' personal and social skills are enhanced alongside the vocational skills learnt. They are more confident in demonstrating their skills in home and community environments, and many develop an ongoing interest in continuous learning. Learners' work is displayed at various venues and in some cases it is sold to members of the public. Learners in craft classes were invited to attend a prestigious craft fair, where they participated fully alongside professional businesses and ran workshops for visitors. Some learners gain good therapeutic value from attending

classes in arts and crafts and health-related fitness.

52. In 2005-06, retention was 87 per cent and achievement was 83 per cent. Both were satisfactory.

The quality of provision

53. Teaching and learning are very well planned to meet learners' needs. Very detailed lesson plans and schemes of work are used for planning and to ensure progress. Resources are very good quality. Tutors are extremely enthusiastic and motivate learners. The highly effective use of electronic whiteboards and projectors generates enthusiasm and vastly increases learners' understanding and the pace at which the lessons progress. All tutors demonstrate good awareness of different abilities within a class and plan accordingly. Tutors are skilled at identifying when individual learners require individual support and then provide it. Initial assessment methods clearly identify prior learning. Some creative methods are used to identify specific needs. For example, in a yoga class for Muslim women, where English is not the first language of some learners, the tutor provides charts outlining a body shape so that learners can indicate any illnesses or pains on the chart. Tutors make good use of this information when planning lessons. In an ICT programme an additional session was added at learners' request. Additional software has been purchased to enable tutors to link work carried out in a video-editing programme to learners' own home personal computer use.

54. Partnership working to broaden the range of learning programmes within local priority areas is very good. Provision is increasing and participation is widening. These partnerships include other council services, such as youth learning and libraries, as well as external organisations such as the Sage Music Centre, the Muslim Centre, the Soundroom Community Music Project and community associations. Forty-nine per cent of learners are from economically deprived areas. There is excellent understanding of local needs such as low ownership of home computers and limited internet access. The number of venues providing ICT courses has been increased from 13 in 2004-05 to 38 in 2005-06. Two new ICT learning centres have been established in the civic centre and central library, both located in priority areas. Excellent new ICT resources have been installed in other learning venues. Centres provide a highly interesting range of innovative courses designed to encourage people into learning. Courses include a 'car boot in your computer' course where people can quickly and safely learn how to buy and sell items online, a 'trace your family tree using computers', and a wide variety of courses on using digital cameras and associated software, which improve learners' abilities to use complex technical equipment to enrich their lives.

55. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Tutors provide good support in-house. Learners are aware of the availability of specialist support if required for specific difficulties. Support workers effectively assist learners in classes to achieve understanding, demonstrate skills and carry out practical tasks. Transport or an escort can be provided to enable learners to access programmes which would otherwise be out of their reach. Tutors provide information on progression routes. Learners are encouraged to go on developing their skills and broadening their interests. Accredited courses in ICT, art and design, languages, counselling and BSL are available within the adult and community learning service. Certification from entry level up to level 3 is available. Lateral progression is promoted, with learners able to move into classes with additional interests, such as family trees with ICT or using the computer to produce their own stationery.

56. Recording of learners' goals and progress is inadequate. Progress is demonstrated in learners' work and in displays within centres. Innovative use of diagrams of postures very effectively helps yoga learners to identify their progress. However, learners' progress is not always formally recorded. Individual learning plans are in place but these are not always used to record progress and achievement appropriately. Individual target-setting is inadequate. Learners' personal goals or social aims are not recorded and achievements are not formally recognised. GMBC has recognised this weakness.

Leadership and management

57. Tutors are observed and graded in order to identify training needs and improve the quality of the learning provision. Most community learning tutors have now been observed and notified of grades awarded within the planned cycle of observations. Good practice is shared among tutors, who often work at more than one venue. The quality of accommodation is good and venues are well resourced for community learning programmes. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Most centres are easily accessible to people with mobility difficulties.

58. Planning of first steps learning is insufficient. Programmes are provided within areas of deprivation and 49 per cent of learners in current programmes are from priority groups. However, first steps provision for new learners is not clearly identified within the curriculum. GMBC does not systematically collect and analyse data to show which programmes first steps learners are following or how well they achieve. Although new learners progress to internal and external programmes, the organisation does not capture this data systematically or use it to inform planning.

Family learning**Grade 1**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		<i>1</i>
Adult and community learning	292	1

59. GMBC offers family learning programmes in 63 community venues across the borough. Programmes are planned and managed by a family learning manager and three full-time family learning development workers. Teaching is carried out by the development workers and a team of sessional, hourly paid tutors. Courses are offered during the daytime and early evening in schools, children's centres, community centres and libraries. Courses last for between two and 30 hours. The provision includes family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN), which offers national qualifications from entry level 3 to level 1 and 2. Wider family learning (WFL) includes family classes in art and craft, information technology (IT), music and healthy eating. Currently, 292 learners are enrolled on programmes, of whom 127 are following FLLN programmes and 165 are following WFL courses.

60. In 2005-06 there were 863 learners, of whom 526 were on FLLN and 337 were on WFL programmes. Six per cent were men, 3 per cent were from minority ethnic groups and 6 per cent had a declared disability.

Adult and community learning*Strengths*

- very good retention
- good development of skills and knowledge to benefit families
- good teaching and learning
- excellent range of courses and events
- highly effective support for learners
- very good curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress and achievements

Achievement and standards

61. Retention is very good and exceeds national rates. It was 87 per cent in 2005-06 and has increased in the current year to 95 per cent for WFL and 84 per cent for FLLN.

62. Parents develop good skills and knowledge which benefit their families. They acquire an understanding of how children learn, of the school curriculum and of the teaching methods used in schools. They develop successful strategies to help and support their own children with homework, and engage well together in leisure activities such as craft and music. Parents, grandparents and carers improve their own skills in literacy and numeracy, and often use these new skills to progress to further learning, voluntary work

and paid employment.

63. Progression from WFL to FLLN is satisfactory. Achievement of those registered for national qualifications was good at 92 per cent in 2005-06. In many classes, learners produce high standards of work, including precision measuring to make boxes, and analysis of numerical data to create bar charts, pie charts and graphs. Celebrations of learning are routinely organised and are highly valued by learners, children and partner organisations.

The quality of provision

64. Teaching and learning are good. Sessions are well planned and have clear aims and learning outcomes that learners understand. Activities challenge learners and are linked well to the school curriculum and children's learning and development. Adults and children learn well together. For example, in one IT session, parents and children were making a speaking book about the school. They learnt the skills required in digital photography and successfully used advanced computer presentation functions. Tutors provide very good demonstrations, with clear verbal instruction. Supportive individual tuition, with focused questioning and critical comment, enables learners to make progress. Well-qualified and experienced tutors have good knowledge about children's learning. All development workers have achieved a relevant level 4 award and talk with confidence about the school curriculum and the ways in which children learn. Accommodation and resources are good and support learning well. These include a wide variety of paper-based materials and information and learning technology facilities which the tutors and learners use well.

65. The range of courses and events is excellent and is planned well to meet the needs of parents and children across the borough. Courses are held in all 10 children's centres which act as a learning hub within communities. A variety of services work together, including schools, adult learning, social services and children's services, resulting in some innovative developments. For example, one pilot programme, 'Prepare Your Child for School', is engaging all the infant schools in the local community so that parents can learn about the school and what their child will experience. A wide variety of taster courses are provided in venues across the borough, including art, craft, music, IT, healthy living, keep fit and cookery. These taster sessions are often planned well to run over two or three weeks to promote the idea of regular attendance. Planning of progression routes between WFL and FLLN is good.

66. Support for learners is highly effective. Sessions where the adult tutor and school teacher plan and deliver sessions together supports learners well. Good support is provided by tutors who, for example, issue business cards which offer a 'life line', enabling all learners to contact them regarding further learning needs and progression. Good course information sheets include clear information, enabling learners to understand what the course entails and how it can support working with their children. Tutors use effective strategies to follow up absences, using a user-friendly postcard system and learners are encouraged to provide a 'buddy' arrangement to help and support each other.

67. Materials are well designed to support individual learner's needs effectively. Excellent arrangements are made for childcare. In addition to high-quality crèche facilities, including a mobile crèche, GMBC also employs child minders. Effective transport arrangements are made when learners are unable to make their own way to classes. A cloth bag printed

with the family learning logo is given to all learners who perceive it as a badge of pride.

68. Initial assessment and recognition of learners starting points is mainly satisfactory and recorded on individual learning plans. Learners identify what they can do and how well they can do it using a useful self-evaluation process. They are then asked to indicate what progress they have made at the end of the course and the distance travelled.

69. GMBC does not sufficiently record learners' progress and achievement or discuss it with them. However, this does not significantly affect learners who make good progress and have a good understanding of their achievements. Verbal feedback is satisfactory and helps to build learners' confidence effectively. GMBC uses a tick sheet to record learners' progress but this does not sufficiently record how well they have done, nor how well they can apply their new skills and knowledge. The organisation does not systematically collect progression and destination information and use it to promote successful outcomes and how learning can create possibilities for learners' future lives.

Leadership and management

70. Curriculum management is very good. The strategic direction and rationale for family learning is excellent and clearly helps develop the planning and successful operational management of the area. All schools, children's centres and community centres are consulted regarding their needs and wants. These are cross-referenced with deprivation indices and schools' performance in order to prioritise and plan the programme. Excellent planning of promotional events and two-week taster courses minimises perceived barriers to learning, particularly for at-risk and vulnerable families. Careful planning of progression routes ensures FLLN courses follow on from WFL and tasters in schools and children's centres. Many developments are innovative and highly successful, for example a project designed to engage grandfathers, fathers and sons.

71. Partnerships are strong and work very effectively to extend the curriculum and widen participation in geographical communities and communities of interest, religion and culture. These partnerships extend across the borough, with courses offered in 62 venues last year. Partnerships with schools, libraries, museums and The Sage Music Centre, not only widen participation but also significantly extend learners' life experiences. Further courses are well planned to follow on from first steps experiences. Classes held in local libraries often result in learners registering as new library members.

72. Communication and support within the family learning team is excellent. Weekly meetings are minuted and clear targets set. Responsibilities are clearly defined, with tasks and activities negotiated and agreed within the team. Development workers are each responsible for the outstanding liaison work with a cluster of schools and children's centres. They work extremely well together to develop a coherent framework for the operational management of the programme. Support for continuing professional development is very good. Full-time development workers have achieved level 4 in literacy and numeracy and been supported well to achieve relevant teaching qualifications to degree level. Dyslexia awareness has been attended by all tutors and dyslexia qualifications achieved by one. Good support for attendance at national and regional events and conferences ensures that tutors are up to date with current trends. Very good opportunities exist for tutors to share good practice.

73. Implementation of the quality improvement system is good. Annual tutor observation

reports have sound judgements and good action plans to ensure improvement in teaching and learning. Session evaluations are used well to improve future sessions. Course evaluations are completed by all tutors and analysed to help develop improvements and to contribute to the self-assessment process. Termly performance reviews for full-time staff are used very well to monitor performance against targets.

74. Equality of opportunity is promoted well at all levels of management, development and delivery. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities, which they discuss and agree at the first session. Equality is promoted throughout sessions. Diversity is celebrated in many classes. For instance, in one craft class, held in an Orthodox Jewish Centre, parents were producing high standard bilingual work using Hebrew and English. Courses are planned to successfully recruit men.

75. The self-assessment report is largely accurate, but the identified strengths and weaknesses are repetitive and do not always recognise the real strengths of the programme. The process includes all staff employed within family learning but does not always sufficiently include partner organisations.

Community development**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		2
Adult and community learning	200	2

76. Two hundred learners are following community development programmes. GMBC offers programmes that promote community partnership, leadership and volunteering, and programmes that aim to increase learners' confidence and their ability to learn. The range of programmes includes outdoor activities for older people, projects with young women failed by the education system, volunteer development, and a programme to help men learn to talk to their children about sex. Accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities are available. Courses are offered at different times of day and evening in a wide range of venues, including parks and community centres, to attract specific target groups. Special additional support is available from a learner support team. The adult learning manager has overall responsibility for community development.

77. GMBC delivered community development programmes in 25 centres to 613 learners in 2005-06. Thirty-three per cent of learners were men, 8 per cent were from minority ethnic groups and 20 per cent declared a disability.

Adult and community learning***Strengths***

- good development of learners' self-awareness, confidence and capabilities
- good progression to further learning, volunteering and paid employment
- good partnership work to engage priority groups

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring of quality of provision

Achievement and standards

78. Learners develop good personal and interpersonal skills that increase their capacity to become active citizens. They gain in confidence and self-esteem, and become aware of the effect of this on their lives. In a class for young women with few qualifications and low self-esteem, a learner gave a presentation to peers, dealing competently with questions and demonstrating authoritative management skills. Learners apply their learning in wider contexts and develop improved communication techniques and problem-solving skills. There is a strong emphasis on working with others, valuing diversity, making choices and raising aspirations. The range of courses offered in conjunction with a good number of partners reflects these values. The standard of learners' work is generally good. In a class for learners with learning disabilities, learners achieved level 2 qualifications in digital imaging, and have been commissioned to produce work for a partner organisation.

79. GMBC runs courses in some of its most disadvantaged communities and successfully matches these courses to the needs of the communities. It has succeeded in attracting

men from a specific economically disadvantaged community into an adventure education course. These learners have engaged in further learning which has helped to develop their parenting and other social skills. In some cases, learners rediscover skills they thought they had lost as a result of progressive impairment, or they learn new skills to compensate for those lost.

The quality of provision

80. Teaching and learning are generally good. In the best lessons, learners are challenged to reach their potential in a supportive atmosphere. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their progress both in their learning and in their personal development. Most learning is negotiated with learners to meet their needs and aspirations, and lessons are largely learner-focused and learner-led. Adequate support is provided for learners to be able to participate in provision successfully. Literacy, numeracy and language support needs are identified at enrolment. All staff have had basic skills awareness training. Learners are offered support at the start of their programmes, but if they choose not to receive it at that stage, opportunities are available to take up this support at later stages of the programmes.

81. Progression to further learning, volunteering or paid employment is good. Of the 613 learners who were on courses in 2005-06, 62 per cent progressed. Learners are attracted into engaging activities, then shown further possibilities which raise their aspirations. There is clear cross-referencing to other opportunities, and learners are often introduced to these through contact with their colleagues. There is a good deal of support to enable people to engage in these activities. Many parents take part classes that would be impossible for them to attend without the provision of a crèche. A good number of women go on to other courses that enable them to make valuable contributions to society, often helping other women to gain the same experience that has benefited them. There are many instances of learners engaging in first steps learning, building on this, gaining qualifications and experience, then becoming tutors or volunteers. One tutor who followed this route still lives in the area of economic disadvantage that he came from, and successfully campaigns to engage more men from that community in learning. Learners have become politically active as a result of their learning, and now play a role in local community development. Many learners have acquired employability skills through their learning, and some are now economically active for the first time in their lives. Learners become involved in management committees, and take responsibility for influencing and shaping local initiatives. It is common for learners to fulfil multiple roles as learners, support workers and volunteer tutors.

82. Partnership work to widen participation and engage disadvantaged groups is good. GMBC has sought out groups working with their identified priority groups, and has formed productive links with them to provide wider networks and support mechanisms for learners. In some cases it has liaised with the community groups that provide learning, to support them financially and to help raise the quality of their provision. In other cases it has tapped in to the wide support networks operated by specific groups and has extended these to all learners. The number of groups with whom the council works has reduced this year, following the introduction of more stringent quality measures to record learners' achievement. The council continues to develop more effective ways of recording learners' progress in conjunction with some of these groups. The partnerships provide additional opportunities for learners, and help the council to plan relevant progression routes for people.

Leadership and management

83. Monitoring of the quality of the provision is inadequate. There are too few staff to carry out observations of teaching and learning across all of the area, and when observations do take place, they are not always sufficiently detailed to form action plans for tutors. Where actions are identified, there is no monitoring of their implementation and success. Some partner organisations have their own quality systems to monitor their provision, but GMBC does not have a clear overview of the real effect of these. GMBC is still working on developing more effective ways to work with partner groups to record learners' starting points and identify and meet specific needs. Some partner groups use their own documents and systems to record this information, then share it with the council. The council provides training for these groups and helps them to develop their systems. However, at present, GMBC is unable to assure the quality of all aspects of its provision, and has insufficient resources to monitor the effectiveness of some of the training it delivers.

84. The council has clear priorities and values for its community development work. This work is led and managed satisfactorily. Resources are generally satisfactory, and in some cases they are very good. In most cases they are acquired or adapted to meet the specific needs of learners. Access to learning venues is generally satisfactory. GMBC provides transport for learners who would not otherwise be able to attend courses. Self-assessment is accurate in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes, and measures are in place to continue to improve the provision. Equality and diversity are integral to all of the learning programmes, and all council staff have regular training in these areas. Partner groups also have a strong ethos of equality and diversity. However, there is insufficient monitoring of the implementation of this in classes.

