

INSPECTION REPORT

Cambridgeshire County 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. Cambridgeshire's adult and community learning service (the service) is the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council (the council). It is located within the council's community learning and development directorate which forms part of the office of environment and community services. Provision in adult and community learning is funded by Cambridgeshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC), with a small amount of additional financial support from other funding bodies.
2. Some 12,250 learners enrolled on programmes in 2005-06. The service has direct responsibility for family learning and for provision for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Approximately a third of the adult learning operational fund is allocated to these programmes. Since August 2004, the service has subcontracted all other non-accredited provision to three local colleges of further education: Cambridge Regional College, Huntingdonshire Regional College, and the College of West Anglia. Approximately two-thirds of the adult operational funding is allocated to the subcontracted provision. Courses are predominantly in information and communications technology (ICT), hospitality, sports and leisure, arts, media and publishing, and languages, literature and culture. The colleges are also separately funded by the LSC to offer accredited programmes and skills for life provision for community learning either directly or through franchise agreements. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The adult and community learning programme is offered at the three colleges, 17 village and community colleges and a wide range of other community venues. Taking into account the family learning and other provision supported by a development fund, over 200 venues are used.
3. Planning and management of the subcontracted provision is co-ordinated through the Cambridgeshire adult learning management group, which consists of the service's adult strategy manager, the principals of the three partner subcontractor colleges and local sixth form colleges, and a representative from Cambridgeshire secondary school head teachers. A subcommittee of this group, comprising the adult strategy manager and managers from the partner subcontractor colleges, oversees operational management and implementation of the curriculum. Local planning boards operate in each of the five areas bounded by the district councils. These are chaired by the partner subcontractor colleges' managers with representatives from local colleges and other bodies. The five areas are Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, and South Cambridgeshire.
4. learndirect is the responsibility of Cambridgeshire library learning services within the council's community learning and development directorate. The service operates eight delivery centres across the county with a further 90 outreach locations. A service manager for learndirect is supported by two area managers, each with responsibility for four learndirect centres.
5. The vision of the directorate is to 'help people improve their quality of life and fulfil their potential by developing their own knowledge, skills for life, skills for work, qualifications and interests; contributing to their personal health and well-being;

contributing to the improvement and development of their local communities and neighbourhoods’.

6. The county is one of contrasts with areas of affluence but also areas of urban deprivation and rural isolation. The population is widely dispersed with no large conurbations. Communications and transport difficulties and the rurality of the county add considerable infrastructure costs to any activity. There are significant numbers of migrant workers working in rural contexts. The unemployment rate in Cambridgeshire in September 2006 was 1.3 per cent, compared with the average for the Eastern region of 2 per cent and the national average of 2.6 per cent. According to the 2001 census, 4.1 per cent of the population of Cambridgeshire was from minority ethnic groups, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

7. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management and arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is good. Provision is satisfactory in preparation for life and work and in family learning. The overall effectiveness of the provision at the learndirect centres at Huntingdon and at Ely is satisfactory.

8. **Achievement and standards are good overall.** Learners on courses for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve their personal goals well and progress satisfactorily. Learners with mental health conditions gain self-esteem and increase their social skills through art-based projects. The rate of progression of these learners to further learning is good. Learners on family learning courses acquire good skills and knowledge. Their achievement in literacy and numeracy tests is good. Retention is low on family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) courses. Learners on learndirect programmes increase their skills and confidence and produce a satisfactory standard of work.

9. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Action taken to improve teaching and learning since the previous inspection has been effective. In the better sessions, tutors maintain learners’ interest and motivation by using a range of appropriate teaching methods and activities. In the less successful sessions in preparation for life, too much whole-group work allows more able or confident learners to dominate. In some family learning sessions, learners are not sufficiently challenged and insufficient focus is placed on the development of parents’ skills to support their children’s learning. Accommodation and facilities are satisfactory and in some cases good. Insufficient use is made of information and learning technology (ILT) by tutors in family learning and preparation for life programmes. Learners on learndirect programmes benefit from good teaching and personal support.

10. There is insufficient monitoring and recording of learners’ progress in the adult and community learning provision. Information gained at the start of courses is not used well in some cases to set targets from which to monitor learners’ progress. There is insufficient assessment in many sessions of each learner’s progress and development of skills to enable tutors to plan differentiated learning activities and outcomes. In contrast, arrangements to monitor learners’ progress are particularly effective at the learndirect centres. Individual learning plans for these learners are thoroughly documented and

accurately reflect their needs and interests.

11. The range of adult and community learning provision meets the needs and interests of learners particularly well. Courses are held at a wide range of venues throughout the county. The development fund has been effective in engaging new providers in the voluntary and community sector and in extending opportunities for new learners. Learners value the flexibility in the modes of study afforded by learndirect programmes. However, the range of courses at the learndirect centres is not wide enough and links with employers are not sufficiently developed.

12. Arrangements for support and guidance are satisfactory overall. Tutors, learning support staff and care assistants work well together to support learners on programmes. Marketing materials and induction arrangements are satisfactory. The provision of advice and guidance is satisfactory.

13. The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The process is well established. Self-assessment reports are comprehensive in coverage and well evidenced. Arrangements to involve subcontracted partners are effective. Good use is made of feedback from learners, tutors and other partners. Course reviews are appropriately evaluative. Moderation and procedures involving external scrutiny work well. Most judgements in the self-assessment closely correspond to the findings at inspection.

14. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. The service has made good progress in dealing with most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The monitoring of subcontracted provision is now well established. Measures have been taken to improve subcontracted provision in modern foreign languages. Internal quality assurance procedures have been strengthened. Areas for improvement are accurately identified in the self-assessment reports for the directly managed adult and community learning provision and actions are clearly outlined in the development plan. The service has made slow progress in rectifying some areas for improvement identified in the preparation for life provision, and data is not systematically analysed in family learning. There are good arrangements to share good practice between learndirect tutors but some of the key inspection findings are not identified in the self-assessment for the learndirect provision.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL:

- maintain initiatives to engage new learners
- improve the observations of teaching and learning to ensure they are appropriately evaluative
- strengthen the curriculum support and opportunities for professional development for tutors in the subcontracted provision
- continue to support tutors in recognising and recording learners' progress in a wide range of learning contexts
- continue working with partners in formulating future strategic direction and in refining the model of delivery

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		2
Quality improvement		3

Information and communications technology			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i> learndirect	81	3	

Preparation for life and work			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> learndirect	123	3	
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	354	3	

Family learning			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Adult and community learning</i> Adult and community learning	540	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

15. The service was first inspected by the ALI in February 2003, and reinspected in October 2004. Five inspectors visited the council for five days to carry out the inspection in November 2006. The inspection reported on and graded the two directly managed curriculum areas of preparation for life and work and family learning. Overall management arrangements were evaluated but the provision subcontracted to the three colleges was not inspected. In addition, two inspectors spent three days inspecting the learndirect centres at Huntingdon and Ely. The learndirect provision at the other six centres in the county was not inspected. Inspection findings from the learndirect centres sampled will contribute to a subsequent overall evaluation of learndirect in the Government Office region for the East of England.

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	31
Number of learners interviewed	93
Number of staff interviewed	45
Number of subcontractors interviewed	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	27
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	22

Leadership and management

Strengths

- well-formulated strategic framework
- particularly effective engagement with partners in the development of the service
- good promotion of equality and diversity in the community

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement
- insufficiently developed curriculum support for some adult and community learning tutors in the subcontracted provision
- insufficiently evaluative observations of teaching and learning

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Strengths

- good individual teaching
- good arrangements to monitor learners' progress

Weaknesses

- insufficient links with local employers
- insufficient range of courses

Preparation for life and work

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- particularly good support for learners
- good arrangements to monitor learners' progress

Weaknesses

- insufficient links with local employers
- insufficient range of courses

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- effective teamwork to manage learning
- good range of programmes to meet learners' needs

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning to meet individual needs
- insufficient monitoring and recording of progress
- slow implementation of quality improvement arrangements

Family learning

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- good achievement
- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- very effective partnership working

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment and monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient clarity in the aims of FLLN programmes
- insufficiently rigorous quality improvement arrangements

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL:

- the knowledgeable and helpful tutors
- the access to computers
- the classes close to home
- the crèche facilities
- applying their knowledge - 'learning new ideas to play with and help my child to learn'; 'I can now control my temper with my children'
- the social opportunities - 'making friends'
- gaining confidence - 'I'm not afraid to say something in this group'; 'I can come on the bus by myself'
- the flexibility of the learndirect delivery

WHAT LEARNERS THINK CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- the duration of courses and of individual sessions - 'more time on some courses - they go too quickly'
- the limited privacy and distracting noise at the learndirect centres

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- well-formulated strategic framework
- particularly effective engagement with partners in the development of the service
- good promotion of equality and diversity in the community

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement
- insufficiently developed curriculum support for some adult and community learning tutors in the subcontracted provision
- insufficiently evaluative observations of teaching and learning

16. A well-formulated strategic framework is presented in the council's three-year development plan for adult and community learning, covering the period 2005-08. The plan makes a clear response to the local LSC's priorities, regional priorities and skills needs. It incorporates the council's broader core values and the mission and objectives of the directorate of community learning and development. The role of adult and community learning in the county is recognised in promoting engagement and regeneration in more deprived communities and it features in local area agreements. The provision of adult and community learning has an identified role in the extension of integrated services which will be required the support of the council's ambitious strategy for the development of major new towns in Cambridgeshire.

17. A thorough annual business plan for adult learning sets out clear priorities for the service. District plans produced by partner colleges reflect the position in each of the five service districts and are used in the formulation of the overall adult learning plan. Clear objectives have been set within the context of an overall reduction in funding. Business planning is effectively supported by good use of data to review performance and to establish targets for subsequent years of operation. Data is available at district level and allows a thorough analysis of trends in the demographic profile of learners recruited to programmes. A service development group of elected members meets every two months and is effective in monitoring the strategic and business planning processes. Group members are well informed about the development of the service and its relation to other council service functions.

18. Adult and community learning managers are particularly effective in engaging with partners to develop the service. Managers have maintained good working relations with the three regional colleges in the county to develop and extend a countywide network of provision in a wide range of venues and educational settings. Good consultative procedures are in place to ensure provision is appropriately planned through the work of local partnership boards. The boards give providers an opportunity to meet with other external partners to review provision and identify needs. Regular operational monitoring

is conducted through the meetings of providers' senior managers at county level. There are further working groups of managers at the district level, involving those working in the county's community colleges, schools and community venues.

19. The adult and community learning team also works in internal partnership with other service departments within the directorate and more widely in the council, including libraries, the museums service, and the neighbourhood community development team, in capacity building and other engagement initiatives. Inter-agency working is effective in securing opportunities for matched funding. The adult and community learning team contributes to the council's targets for skills for life. A skills for life tutor forum has been established to share good practice.

20. The management of resources is satisfactory overall. The delivery model for adult and community learning involves complex subcontracting and further franchise arrangements. While effective in involving a range of providers, these arrangements make considerable demands on managers' time to ensure consistency in operational procedures and in performance monitoring. The council is currently working on alternative models of delivery as part of a review initiated by Cambridgeshire LSC. Financial management is satisfactory. Fees are set at county level with discretion for local variation at district board level to take account of local socio-economic factors.

21. The management of learners' additional support needs in literacy and numeracy and language is satisfactory overall on directly managed programmes. Some family learning programmes are insufficiently focused on identifying learners' literacy and numeracy needs. Recent arrangements have been put in place for learners to access additional learning support in the subcontracted adult and community learning provision through partner colleges. However, take-up of support has been low, and the availability of the support has been insufficiently promoted.

22. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory. The council has a lone-working policy and tutors have electronic access to a health and safety manual. Managers monitor incidence statistics and review health and safety matters and training needs every six months. Risk assessments of venues and of specific learning activities are carried out by centre managers, tutors and development workers. The monitoring of health and safety forms part of the service level agreement with subcontractors.

23. Curriculum management in the directly managed provision is satisfactory. Communication between tutors is effective and there are good opportunities for professional development. The service has a comprehensive ILT strategy which was introduced in 2005. It has resulted in the development of e-guides for each curriculum area on college websites, a CD for learners in modern foreign languages, and training for tutors in interactive whiteboards at the community colleges. However, tutors in the directly managed provision make insufficient use of ILT. An internet network for modern foreign language tutors and an electronic portal have been recently introduced to aid communication with and between family learning and preparation for life and work tutors. Arrangements for staff appraisal are satisfactory. The service has recently piloted a scheme to extend opportunities for appraisal to part-time tutors in adult and community learning.

24. Procedures to recognise and record progress and achievement in non-accredited

learning are insufficiently established in both subcontracted and directly delivered provision. The service has introduced a framework and provided guidance and training. However, some tutors are yet to become fully involved in the process and its purpose is not promoted well to learners. Some tutors are implementing all elements of the procedures well but others find it more difficult to apply the key stages of the procedures to their current teaching and learning activities.

25. Some adult and community learning tutors in subcontracted provision have not taken full advantage of the curriculum management expertise of staff in the partner colleges, or in the use of shared teaching and learning resources. Some of these tutors do not benefit from appropriate opportunities to participate in the respective colleges' programmes of professional development. The proportion of tutors with recognised teaching qualifications varies significantly between service districts. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in developing a county-wide support network for tutors in modern foreign languages. More recent initiatives have taken place for tutors in ICT and in art and design, including training in community venues. Partner colleges are at various stages in taking steps to strengthen curriculum management arrangements for adult and community learning tutors.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

26. The service promotes equality and diversity particularly well through engaging people in learning from a wide range of backgrounds and in an extensive range of operational contexts. Courses range in duration from initial taster sessions to year-long programmes and are held at different times of the day and at weekends to meet the needs of different target groups. The council aims to offer provision within seven miles of learners' homes. Sessions take place in over 200 venues across the county. The service's directly managed provision is effective in providing learning opportunities for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and includes, where appropriate, opportunities for learners to prepare vocational skills profiles and gain work experience. Transport and other support requirements are met effectively and learners are supported in travelling independently. The provision also includes classes for learners with mental health conditions and lip reading classes. Family learning community development workers make good use of local knowledge and work effectively with partners to engage new learners. The family learning provision contributes to strengthening the wider school community and includes provision specifically for young teenage mothers. Crèche provision or childcare is available for all family learning courses and workshops for adults.

27. In 2005-06, a quarter of the overall adult and community learning grant was allocated to a development fund to promote targeted community development projects involving voluntary and community providers. This has expanded the range of non-traditional providers and enabled a more flexible, in-year response to identified needs. Projects supported by the community development fund are the result of careful planning and research. Data including local demographic profiles is used well to identify target groups. Provision has been directed to rural areas where there is a high level of social and economic disadvantage, such as the Fenland service district, as well as disadvantage identified in urban areas. Programmes have included sessions to support people recovering from drug problems, provision for traveller communities, and classes in English for migrant workers who speak English as an additional language. Learners who had not been engaged in learning for some considerable time or have barriers to learning due to challenging personal circumstances are attending courses well and developing useful

skills. Outcomes from the development programme are good. In 2005-06, 85 per cent of learners progressed to further learning.

28. The response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 is good. The council's policy is rigorously enforced and alternative accommodation is sought if satisfactory adjustment to premises cannot be made. All new buildings meet the access needs for people with restricted mobility well. Support for learners with sensory impairments is extensively available when needs are identified. Support in classrooms for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

29. The service has made a good response to the Children Act 2004. The promotion of outcomes of the government's Every Child Matters initiative is good and thoroughly evaluated in the self-assessment report. The council carries out enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. The service has a child protection policy and has a designated officer for child protection and vulnerable adults. Staying healthy is promoted to vulnerable learners and learners on family learning programmes through courses involving gentle exercise, cookery and personal hygiene. On courses for young parents, learners benefit from modules on sexual health, self-awareness and personal development. New mothers receive sessions on health and safety in the home. Working with others to improve communication takes place within family talk programmes and family literacy. Where appropriate, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities take part in pathways to work programmes. Learners are helped to manage money, and family learning courses include budgeting skills. Programmes for learners working in childcare contribute to workforce development.

30. The council's corporate equality and diversity group works effectively with the adult and community learning managers. Specialist expertise within the council is used well and service managers have a very good understanding of equality and diversity. Equality and diversity policies and procedures are satisfactory. Regular training and equality events are provided for the council's staff. The requirements of providers of the subcontracted provision are clearly identified and closely monitored. Promotion of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity in the directly managed classes is satisfactory. Tutors foster good working relationships with learners and diverse groups are treated with respect. Some courses within the direct provision do not take sufficient account of learners' individual needs. Complaints procedures are satisfactory and complaints are handled sensitively. Recently introduced information and advice and guidance services for adults are satisfactory. Marketing and promotional materials have improved since the previous inspection.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

31. The self-assessment report contains much useful information and gives a comprehensive account of the local context and the present and future needs of people in Cambridgeshire. The report makes good use of data and identifies the strengths in the provision and areas for development well. It is appropriately evaluative and, for the most part, the judgements in the self-assessment report closely correspond to the findings at inspection.

32. The self-assessment process is fully inclusive and makes effective use of feedback from learners, tutors and managers. In the provision which is directly delivered, evaluations conducted at course level are thorough and well evidenced. Good use is

made of the self-assessments of the subcontracted provision provided by the partner colleges and their respective service districts. The final report and quality improvement plan is ratified by the county-wide group of senior managers and reviewed by elected members. As part of a moderation exercise, the report for 2005-06 was evaluated by managers from two neighbouring local authorities. The quality improvement plan clearly identifies actions to rectify weaknesses. Quality improvement plans are generally implemented well. Progress has been slow in rectifying some of the areas for improvement in the provision in preparation for life and work and data is not systematically analysed in family learning. The service's quality assurance policies and procedures are satisfactory and some of the guidance contained within the service's quality manual is good.

33. Approximately two-thirds of the provision is subcontracted. At the time of the previous inspection, new arrangements for monitoring subcontracted provision had been introduced but it was too early to judge their effectiveness. These arrangements are now well established and are working effectively. Service level agreements outline key quality processes thoroughly. The service sets a range of targets and these are monitored systematically. Service managers make regular visits to subcontracted partners and respective roles and responsibilities are clear. Provision in modern foreign languages, which was found to be inadequate at the previous inspection, has had significant investment. Retention rates in this curriculum area have improved and a number of initiatives have been introduced to support tutors.

34. Observations of teaching and learning are insufficiently evaluative. Procedures to observe teaching are well established in both the subcontracted and directly delivered provision. The council operates a range of observation activities, carried out by specialist and non-specialist observers. Good arrangements exist for observing new tutors. The moderation process is successful at recognising where observation information does not match grades. However, the written comments in many observations are not useful to tutors in helping them improve teaching and learning. Some observations by non-specialists show insufficient insight into subject-specific aspects of teaching and learning.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i> learndirect	81	3

35. The Huntingdon learndirect centre is one of eight learndirect centres operated by the council's library services. The centre is based on the second floor of the library in the centre of the town, and has 14 computers with scanning, printing and adaptive technology equipment. It is open for 37½ hours each week, including Friday evening, and provides courses in skills for life, ICT and some business and management courses. Inspection focused on the skills for life and ICT provision. There were too few learners on business and management courses for this area to be inspected.

36. There have been 42 enrolments on skills for life courses and 39 enrolments on ICT courses since August 2006. Most ICT learners take examination-based courses. Skills for life learners generally take short courses with the opportunity to take national tests in literacy and numeracy.

37. The centre is managed by an area manager who has responsibility for three other centres. There are three tutors at the centre but there is no centre administrator. An administrator at the county's central library services is responsible for collating learners' feedback and distributing other information which is shared between the library service's learndirect centres. The area manager reports to the service manager, who has overall responsibility for the learndirect provision within the library service.

ICT for users

Strengths

- good individual teaching
- good arrangements to monitor learners' progress

Weaknesses

- insufficient links with local employers
- insufficient range of courses

Achievement and standards

38. At the time of the inspection, the learner success data for learndirect was only available for the three-month period of August to October 2006 inclusive. This data shows that 46 per cent of the skills for life learners successfully achieved their learning aim. This is significantly below both regional and national averages. The success rate on ICT courses was 67 per cent which is above the regional and national averages.

39. Learners make good progress while attending the centre and many have progressed on to further courses. Learners gain increased skills and confidence, and produce a satisfactory standard of work.

The quality of provision

40. Learners benefit from good teaching and personal instruction. Tutors deliver individual coaching at an effective pace. Teaching is clear and concise, with good use of question and answer techniques to enhance learning and check learners' understanding at regular intervals. One learner who had a memory disability following an accident was given extensive training by the tutor, who showed great patience and sensitivity. The good instruction is recorded well and progression is clearly identified. Learners benefit from good support during the teaching sessions which meets their needs well. Tutors have also developed their own learning materials to supplement those provided by learndirect.

41. Good arrangements are in place to monitor learners' progress. Well-documented individual learning plans accurately reflect learners' needs and are closely related to the programme being followed. Thorough recording of learners' progress on the log sheets ensures that the continuity of support from tutors is maintained well. Learners can seek support from any one of the three resident tutors. External tutors are briefed well on learners' current levels of understanding and the progress they have made. There are good links with specialist support staff.

42. Resources are satisfactory. Equipment is up to date and replaced every three years. The centre has access to a good range of adaptive equipment for learners with disabilities or special needs, such as keyboards and specialist software. The centre is accessible to learners with restricted mobility. It is located in an open-plan part of the library which is subject to extraneous noise that some learners find distracting. There are no public toilet facilities at the library.

43. Initial information and advice is satisfactory. Learners are supported well during training sessions. Reviews are carried out regularly and learners taking courses online are invited to attend the centre for reviews. Initial assessment and induction are satisfactorily carried out in line with learndirect procedures.

44. Insufficient links exist with local employers. No formal employer consultation mechanism is in place. Employers are not routinely surveyed to determine their requirements and there are insufficient workforce development activities. No arrangements exist for seconding tutors to employers and there are no outreach facilities in local workplaces. Courses are not adequately linked to employers' needs.

45. The range of courses is insufficient. Only a basic computer literacy course and an examination-based qualification in information technology (IT) are currently offered. The centre has plans to introduce a further ICT qualification, but has no plans to introduce web design or any other specialist ICT courses. Similarly, there is a narrow range of business and other courses available. The centre only offers skills for life courses in literacy and numeracy. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses are not included in the contract from the Ufi region even though there are significant numbers of asylum seekers and migrant workers in the area.

Leadership and management

46. The centre and its provision are satisfactorily managed. The current management structure does not provide for a centre manager as the role is partly filled by the area manager. This arrangement has been reviewed and a senior co-ordinating tutor is due to be appointed in the near future who will also take the role of centre manager. An effective operating plan is in place that provides clearly defined strategies for meeting the service objectives and targets of the centre. These include plans to broaden the scope of the provision. Recent strategies have been developed to widen participation, and, in particular, to encourage younger learners and men to participate in programmes. Staff have a clear focus and are well motivated. Managers use meetings effectively to monitor progress towards the targets and review operational matters. Agreed actions are recorded and monitored.

47. Quality assurance arrangements, including the monitoring of instruction, are effective and contribute to the identification of training needs. There are good arrangements for the sharing of good practice, both within the centre and with other centres. Meetings are well managed and adequately documented. Tutors attend staff conferences which provide opportunities for sharing good practice and staff development. The self-assessment report focuses on service-wide requirements, issues and strengths, and does not provide sufficient centre-based information. The report does not recognise some of the strengths and weaknesses identified during inspection.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> learndirect	123	3
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	354	3

48. The Ely learndirect centre is one of eight learndirect centres operated by the council's library services. It is based on the first floor of the library in the centre of Ely, close to the main rail station and free car parks. The centre has 12 computers with scanning, printing and adaptive technology equipment. It is open for 37½ hours a week, including one evening and all day Saturday. The centre offers courses in skills for life and ICT.

49. There have been 87 enrolments on skills for life courses and 36 enrolments on ICT courses since August 2006. Most ICT learners take examination-based courses. Skills for life learners generally take short courses with the opportunity to take national tests in literacy and numeracy.

50. The centre is managed by an area manager who has responsibility for three other centres. There are two tutors at the centre but there is no centre administrator. An administrator based at the county's central library services is responsible for collating learners' feedback and distributing other information which is shared between the library service's learndirect centres. The area manager reports to the service manager, who has overall responsibility for the learndirect provision within the library services.

51. The adult and community learning service provides independent living and leisure skills courses for adults with physical, sensory, learning and mental health needs. Courses are 30 weeks in length and are held at 25 venues in village and community settings across the county. Classes include pathways to work, computer studies, creative crafts, and independent living skills including cookery, gardening and news reviews. Learners have individual programmes ranging from two hours to five hours a week.

52. In 2005-06, 459 learners were enrolled in 62 classes. Of these learners, 171 were men and 171 were new learners. Two per cent of learners had minority ethnic backgrounds. At the time of the inspection, 354 learners were enrolled. Of these, 146 were men and 171 were new learners. Some 53 classes are running in 2006-07, with 35 of these supporting adults with learning difficulties. An increasing number of courses allow learners to gain external accreditation through the Open College Network (OCN).

53. The service is directly managed by a full-time manager with three part-time district liaison and development officers. There are 22 part-time tutors and 14 teaching assistants in post, supported by an administration assistant.

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- particularly good support for learners
- good arrangements to monitor learners' progress

Weaknesses

- insufficient links with local employers
- insufficient range of courses

Achievement and standards

54. At the time of the inspection, the learner success data for learndirect was only available for the three-month period from August to October 2006 inclusive. This data shows that 71 per cent of the ICT learners successfully achieved their learning aim. This is significantly above both regional and national averages. The success rate for skills for life courses was 58 per cent which is below regional and national averages. However, the numbers involved in both cases are small.

55. Learners make good progress while attending the centre and many have progressed on to further courses. Learners gain increased skills and confidence, and produce a satisfactory standard of work.

The quality of provision

56. Support for learners is particularly good. Tutors encourage learners to attend regularly and complete their courses. Learner retention is very good, with only one withdrawal in the past three months. Tutors are patient and give clear and thorough explanations. Learners benefit from tutors' willingness to accommodate very flexible attendance patterns and their ability to extend programmes where necessary. One learner was absent for a long time due to illness. She was encouraged to return with an extension of the programme, and given significant support and encouragement. Learners are frequently praised by tutors and achievement is regularly celebrated. Tutors handle learners' problems with sensitivity.

57. Good arrangements are in place to monitor learners' progress. Well-documented individual learning plans accurately reflect learners' needs and are closely related to the programme being followed. Thorough recording of learners' progress on the log sheets ensures that the continuity of support from tutors is maintained well. Learners can seek support from any one of the three resident tutors. External tutors are well briefed on learners' current levels of understanding and the progress they have made. There are good links with specialist support staff.

58. Resources are satisfactory. Equipment is up to date and regularly replaced, but the layout of the current equipment is somewhat cramped. The centre has access to a good range of adaptive equipment for learners with disabilities or special needs, such as large and small keyboards, touch-screens, and specialist software. The centre is accessible to learners with restricted mobility. It is located in an open-plan part of the library, which can be very noisy on occasions. Some learners find this distracting. There is insufficient

privacy for learning and for the conduct of reviews. Some learners are also distracted by members of the public using the computers for non-learndirect activities.

59. Initial information and advice is satisfactory. Reviews are carried out regularly and learners taking courses online are invited to attend the centre for reviews. Initial assessment and induction are satisfactorily carried out in line with learndirect procedures.

60. Insufficient links exist with local employers. No formal employer consultation mechanism is in place. Employers are not routinely surveyed to determine their requirements and there are insufficient workforce development activities. No arrangements exist for seconding tutors to employers and there are no outreach facilities in local workplaces. Courses are not adequately linked to employers' needs.

61. The range of courses offered is insufficient. An introductory IT course, a basic computer literacy qualification and an examination-based qualification in IT are the only ICT courses currently offered. Although the centre has arrangements to offer the full range of learndirect courses by using specialist tutors from the learndirect central pool, there is no evidence that this is being taken up by learners. ESOL is not included in the contract from the Ufi region even though there are significant numbers of asylum seekers and migrant workers in the area.

Leadership and management

62. The centre and its provision are satisfactorily managed. The current management structure does not provide for a centre manager as the role is partly filled by the area manager. This arrangement has been reviewed and a senior co-ordinating tutor is due to be appointed in the near future who will also perform the centre manager's role. An effective operating plan is in place, which provides clearly defined strategies for meeting the service objectives and targets of the centre. These include plans to broaden the scope of the provision. Recent strategies have been developed to widen participation, and, in particular, to encourage travellers to participate in programmes. Staff have a clear focus and are well motivated. Managers use meetings effectively to monitor progress towards targets and to review operational matters. Agreed actions are recorded and monitored.

63. Quality assurance arrangements, including the monitoring of instruction, are effective and contribute to the identification of training needs. There are good arrangements for the sharing of good practice, both within the centre and with other centres. Meetings are well managed and adequately documented. Tutors attend staff conferences which provide opportunities for sharing good practice and staff development. Learners' feedback within the centre has only recently been introduced. The self-assessment report focuses on service-wide requirements, issues and strengths, and does not provide sufficient centre-based information. The report recognises the strength relating to learner support, but does not recognise any of the weaknesses identified during inspection.

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good achievement of personal learning goals
- effective teamwork to manage learning
- good range of programmes to meet learners' needs

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning to meet individual needs
- insufficient monitoring and recording of progress
- slow implementation of quality improvement arrangements

Achievement and standards

64. Achievement of personal learning goals is good. Over a period of three years, 80 per cent of learners have achieved their personal learning goals, with the achievement rate for 2005-06 standing at 83 per cent. Learners gain a range of skills in areas including confidence, teamwork, money management and independent travel. They can describe the steps they need to take to prepare healthy meals or make arrangements for a visit. However, goals set for some learners are insufficiently challenging and in some classes there is insufficient monitoring of the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. The achievement of OCN units for 2005-06 is satisfactory at 78 per cent with some learners gaining a number of units. Forty-five per cent of learners in 2005-06 chose not to pursue accreditation. Progression is satisfactory overall.

65. Learners with mental health conditions gain self-esteem and increase their social skills through art-based projects. Progression for these learners is good, with increasing numbers progressing to further learning opportunities.

66. Attendance is satisfactory at 83 per cent in 2005-06 and 81 per cent during the inspection. On a few courses, punctuality is unsatisfactory.

The quality of provision

67. Teamwork to manage learning is effective with tutors, learning support staff and care assistants working well together. Paired and group work and practical activities effectively ensure that learners who are anxious or lacking in confidence can move around classrooms safely and maintain their interest. Visits and enrichment activities are well prepared with good reinforcement of the purpose of the visit for learners and thorough risk assessment. Personal care needs, practical issues and transport are well organised. Tutors manage challenging behaviour effectively, taking actions to avoid confrontation and build the confidence of learners.

68. A good range of programmes and activities meets the needs of learners. Widening participation was a strength at the previous inspection and has been maintained. The curriculum is socially inclusive. Provision is placed in community venues near to learners' homes. Marketing and recruitment have improved, providing easy-to-read and well-presented handbooks for each area. Programmes are provided for the frail elderly and those with chronic ill health. The service has achieved its priority of increasing numbers of learners with mental health conditions despite reductions in funding.

69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Action taken to improve teaching and learning since the previous inspection has been effective and some teaching is now good. In better sessions the teaching is carefully planned. Pictorial clues, photographs and games are used to assist learners in understanding the meaning of words and sentences. However, in other sessions, inadequate assessment and too much whole-group work allows more able or confident members to dominate. The standard of work on classroom

whiteboards is too variable.

70. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and have improved since the previous inspection when foundation teaching and learning resources were identified as insufficient. Laptop computers are now available. However, there are insufficient opportunities for all learners to benefit from the use of ILT in lessons. Accommodation and facilities vary in quality. ICT facilities at the Wisbech centre and a number of art and craft rooms are good but other facilities are less suitable, particularly for cookery. Many rooms are too small for the number of learners. All accommodation is compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and is accessible for those with restricted mobility. Staff have satisfactory qualifications and experience.

71. Arrangements for support and guidance are satisfactory overall. Guidance services are adequate, and tutors give impartial advice on progression opportunities. Learners are given detailed initial advice to ensure that they are enrolled on appropriate courses. Attractive and simplified marketing materials assist the service in attracting the learners it prioritises. Leaflets and brochures are specifically produced for those adults with reading difficulties. Induction is satisfactory. Documents to explain equality and diversity and rights and responsibilities are simplified. Various methods are used to ensure learners know what is expected of them, and that they understand the purpose of their course.

72. Planning for meeting individual needs is insufficient. Some schemes of work and learning session plans take insufficient account of the information gained through initial assessment. In some sessions where there is a wide range of ability, activities are too tutor-led and learning is not sufficiently individualised, inhibiting the rate of progress for learners. Where whole-group activities take place, learners sometimes wait for attention, or support assistants complete tasks on a learner's behalf. Some sessions are conducted at a pace that is insufficiently responsive to the needs of some learners. A number of learners indicate their preference for using computers but there is insufficient use of ILT in sessions.

73. The monitoring and recording of learners' progress is insufficient. There is insufficient monitoring of progress in the development of skills, including literacy and numeracy. Individual learning plans are used inconsistently. The better examples set challenging learning goals and targets but others have targets that are too broad or too easily achieved. The recording of personal, social and cultural development is insufficient. Where accreditation is not appropriate, the recognition and recording of learners' starting points, formative and summative assessment are not well established. Some adults with learning difficulties and disabilities progress to further learning, employment or independent living but the destination of learners is not systematically monitored.

Leadership and management

74. Productive partnerships with other organisations enable the service to provide appropriate programmes with adequate progression opportunities. Communication has improved since the previous inspection. The team has regular meetings and tutors use e-mail and an intranet system to make frequent contact. Each development worker has an individual feedback session with their line manager once a month. All staff receive an annual appraisal and are offered appropriate opportunities for training. The number of teaching assistants is sufficient.

75. The direction for the future development of the provision and its priorities are clear. Management information reports are generated and are used increasingly for self-assessment and action-planning for improvement. However, there is insufficient analysis of some key aspects of the provision, such as the progress of different groups of learners and destinations of learners.

76. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The service provides a clear policy and framework of entitlements that is simplified for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is a culture of inclusion and good access to provision and venues. The promotion of equality and diversity is implicit in the provision but is not sufficiently promoted in some learning sessions.

77. Progress in implementing quality improvement arrangements is slow. A sound framework for quality assurance with clear procedures has been established. Some improvements have been made but the procedures are not yet fully implemented across the entire range of the provision. The use of documents such as learning session plans and individual learning plans is inconsistent. Observations of provision for adults with learning difficulties or disabilities are completed and staff training needs are identified as a result. However, there is insufficient rigour in the evaluation of teaching, and insufficient monitoring of the effect of the training received and the sharing of good practice that now takes place.

78. The self-assessment process is inclusive of staff. Most of the strengths identified in the report match the inspection findings. The report recognises the weaknesses but underestimates the effect on learners of the slow progress in implementing the improvements identified.

Family learning**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i> Adult and community learning	540	3

79. The service offers FLLN and wider family learning programmes, particularly in areas where there is a high level of social and economic disadvantage. Courses are offered during the day and in the evening, mostly in infant, primary and secondary schools but also in village halls and community and children's centres. The FLLN provision includes 'keeping up with the children' courses, family literacy and family numeracy, and courses for parents and carers of babies and toddlers. The wider family learning programme includes courses in computing and healthy eating. Wider family learning taster sessions and short courses are also offered during the annual family learning week in the autumn term.

80. In 2005-06, 1,084 learners enrolled on FLLN courses and 987 enrolled on wider family learning programmes. Forty per cent of the provision comprised courses of less than six hours. Just under 10 per cent of the learners were men and 3 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. At the time of the inspection, 432 learners were enrolled on FLLN courses and 108 learners were on wider family learning courses.

81. The family learning provision is managed by a full-time family learning manager who is supported by a team of four development workers and an administrative assistant. Eighteen part-time tutors teach on family learning programmes.

Adult and community learning*Strengths*

- good achievement
- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- very effective partnership working

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment and monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient clarity in the aims of FLLN programmes
- insufficiently rigorous quality improvement arrangements

Achievement and standards

82. Literacy and numeracy tests have been offered for the past three years. The number of learners who enter the national tests has increased substantially since 2004 and achievement rates in these tests are good. In 2004-05, 102 learners took the tests and 88 per cent passed. In 2005-06, 150 learners took the tests and 95 per cent passed. Learners on recently developed courses for child minders and pre-school workers achieved accreditation in key skills in communication at level 1 and gained credits in

communication skills for childcare.

83. In 2005-06, retention rates on some courses were good. For example, the rate was 90 per cent on wider family learning programmes and longer family literacy courses. However, the retention rate was poor overall on FLLN courses at 69 per cent. Attendance during the inspection was low.

84. Learners on both programmes acquire good skills and knowledge. Their self-confidence increases through their own understanding of how their children learn and many report improved confidence in their skills in supporting or interacting with their children. They learn how to use practical activities safely with young children in everyday situations. For example, they help their child with reading and experiment with creative play at home. Learners on 'family talk' programmes are encouraged to develop evaluative and reflective skills through their own learning and that of their child and apply these skills effectively at home. In some classes, parents' skills in supporting their child's learning are insufficiently developed.

85. Head teachers comment favourably on the effect of family learning programmes on their schools in helping to build relationships with parents and in supporting the transition of pre-school children into primary school. Parents become more involved in the school community by talking to the class teachers and forming supportive networks with other parents. Some learners also become volunteer helpers and school governors. Learners' aspirations are raised through attending courses and some learners progress to a variety of other learning opportunities, including skills for life and computing courses and courses for teaching assistants.

The quality of provision

86. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most sessions are well planned and are developed from detailed and appropriately themed schemes of work. In the better sessions, tutors explain the aims and objectives for the sessions at the start and maintain learners' interest and motivation by using a variety of appropriate teaching methods and activities such as games and quizzes. In these classes, tutors use questioning well to elicit learners' understanding and to check on learning. However, in some sessions designed for adults to work and play alongside their children, there is insufficient focus on developing the parents' skills to support their children's learning. In the weaker sessions there is insufficient modelling of approaches that parents and carers could use with their children at home and few links to home literacy and numeracy activities. In some sessions, some learners are not sufficiently challenged.

87. Accommodation and facilities are satisfactory. Most settings are adapted well to meet the needs of adult learners. Learning resources are satisfactory. In some cases, learning is enhanced by the good range of stimulating and practical resources provided by tutors. For example, in a joint session the tutor provided a variety of hand puppets, scarves and musical instruments to stimulate imaginative play and language. As the self-assessment report recognises, access to resources is difficult for many tutors due to the wide geographical spread of the provision. There is little use of ILT in family learning programmes. However, in one session, children enjoyed using hand-held computers to help them develop sequencing skills to tell stories.

88. The range of programmes is satisfactory. The service makes good use of national and

regional curriculum development initiatives to extend the range of programmes on offer locally. Courses in financial literacy and programmes for adults working in childcare have been developed as a result of this involvement. Programmes for particular groups, such as young teenage mothers and vulnerable young people, have been developed to engage learners not traditionally involved in learning. Courses in rural areas and on housing estates provide local learning opportunities for families who are unable to travel.

89. Support for learners is satisfactory. Crèche provision or childcare is offered on all courses and workshops for adults. Health visitors, nursery nurses and support assistants provide additional support for tutors on some courses. The provision of information and advice is also satisfactory. Information leaflets are distributed to learners and some schemes of work identify times in the programme when progression issues will be discussed. Learners also receive advice and information about progression routes to further learning opportunities from tutors and specialist guidance staff during family learning week. However, progression routes are not sufficiently promoted on some courses to encourage learners to plan the next stage of their learning and some learners are not clear about their progression opportunities.

90. Insufficient assessment and monitoring of learners' progress takes place. Initial assessment is not used systematically to identify learners' starting points and additional support needs in wider family learning and FLLN programmes. The self-assessment checklists that learners on FLLN programmes complete do not provide sufficient information about learners' literacy and numeracy skill levels. Information gained at the start of courses is not used well in most cases to set targets from which to monitor progress. There is insufficient assessment, in most sessions, of each learner's progress and development of skills to enable tutors to plan differentiated learning activities and outcomes.

Leadership and management

91. Effective collaboration with a range of partners supports the promotion of family learning and the development of programmes in areas of social and economic deprivation. The family learning team works closely with other departments and services such as local schools and colleges, children's centres, Sure Start, the early years and travellers' education teams and libraries and a range of other organisations to plan and promote suitable programmes. Family learning community development workers make good use of the local knowledge and contacts of partners, such as health visitors and voluntary groups, to recruit new learners. Partner organisations support an extensive programme of taster sessions offered through a well-established family learning week that encourages wider participation by families. Close collaboration enables the partners to make good use of shared resources and to use joint funding well to the benefit of learners. For example, free transport is provided to classes in rural areas.

92. Managers, community development workers and tutors communicate well through formal and informal meetings and e-mail. Staff development is satisfactory and has focused on supporting and developing appropriate staff skills. Equality of opportunity is promoted by targeting disadvantaged parents and carers. Some groups also agree a set of ground rules when they first meet which include a commitment to listen to and treat each other with respect.

93. The aims and objectives of FLLN programmes are not sufficiently clear to some

partners, tutors and learners. Some programmes do not focus sufficiently on developing the parents' skills. FLLN programmes do not use appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment to determine learners' skills levels and additional support needs and there is some inappropriate recruitment onto FLLN programmes. Some courses include learners who do not have literacy, numeracy or language skills support needs and who have higher-level qualifications than the targeted groups. These learners, although enjoying the courses, are not sufficiently challenged by the programmes. Many learners are not progressing from family learning courses to other learning opportunities but are repeating introductory courses for up to two years.

94. Quality improvement arrangements are not sufficiently rigorous. Learners' views are used well to evaluate and improve programmes. However, managers rely too heavily on anecdotal evidence and do not make systematic use of data to support the quality improvement process. There is, for example, no systematic collection or analysis of data on learners' progression for management purposes. The service's strategy to rectify poor attendance on programmes is not being implemented on programmes that have a history of irregular attendance. The recognition, recording and monitoring of learners' progress is not being implemented consistently across all family learning programmes.

95. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The family learning team is involved in the process and comments on the draft report. The most recent self-assessment report identifies the strengths and one of the weaknesses identified during the inspection.

