

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Slough Borough Council**

**03 November 2006**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **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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## **Slough Borough Council**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Slough Borough Council (the council) receives funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning and adult and community learning. The council's Workstep provision, funded through the Jobcentre Plus, was reinspected in March 2006 and was not included in this inspection. Slough Borough Council contributes approximately 50 per cent of the funding for the adult and community provision, which is managed by the lifelong learning service. This service forms part of the cultural engagement services section of the community and cultural services directorate and provides a small programme of courses in information and communications technology (ICT), visual and performing arts, literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), hair and beauty, yoga and aerobics, flower arranging and family learning. Since September 2006 the service has received just over 1,000 enrolments. Approximately 17 per cent of this provision is subcontracted to Thames Valley University and the Workers' Educational Association. Other council departments provide some of the sports and arts programmes. The council's community learning provision is managed by the department for economic development, diversity and equality, and it is funded jointly by the LSC and the European Social Fund (ESF).

2. Slough Borough Council's apprenticeship scheme in business administration is managed by the human resources department based at the town hall. The off-the-job training and assessment is subcontracted to the Aylesbury Training Group. East Berkshire College provides additional provision in literacy, numeracy and language support.

3. Slough's population increased significantly, by approximately 14 per cent, between 1991 and the last census, and it has one of the highest minority ethnic group populations outside London, at 37 per cent. Over 50 different languages are spoken as a first language in Slough. The borough has minority ethnic groups that are already established, as well as relatively high numbers of new arrivals and asylum seekers from more than 70 different countries. Slough was ranked 107th on the Index of Deprivation 2000, and moved to 129th by 2004. According to an economic assessment, carried out by the council in 2006, Slough has significant skills deficits. For example, approximately 24,000 people within Slough are without qualifications and the proportion of the population without qualifications above level 1 is 46 per cent, with only 28 per cent of the population having qualifications at level 3 or above. In September 2006, unemployment rates in Slough were 3.1 per cent, which is just above the national average of 2.6 per cent.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

#### Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** In adult and community learning, provision is good in arts, media and publishing and preparation for life and work, and it is satisfactory in ICT. In work-based learning, provision in business administration and law is outstanding. Overall, leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good and arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory.

5. **Achievement and standards are good.** Learners develop their confidence and skills

well on all programmes and achieve good standards of work. Success rates in work-based learning are particularly good. Retention rates and achievement of qualifications are satisfactory in adult and community learning.

**6. The quality of provision is good.** The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In work-based learning, learners receive exceptionally good training and they develop their vocational and employability skills extremely well. In adult and community learning, just over 61 per cent of the 23 learning sessions observed on inspection were judged to be good or better. Some learning sessions are well managed with a good range of activities, but some tutors do not use individual learning plans adequately when planning learning sessions. Resources are satisfactory, but arrangements for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievements are not used well enough on all programmes.

**7. Arrangements for putting on courses that meet the needs of learners and communities are outstanding.** Managers collaborate very effectively with members of local communities and other partners to plan the provision and recruit under-represented learners or people from identified target groups. The content and context of work-based learning and programmes in community learning, ESOL and arts programmes at the Slough Young People's Centre (SYPC) are particularly well planned.

8. Learners receive satisfactory guidance and support. In work-based learning, arrangements for providing individual personal support and reviewing learners' progress are outstanding. In adult and community learning, most learners receive appropriate information about their programmes and some learners, especially those on ESOL programmes, receive good individual guidance on future careers and possible progression routes. However, too few learners are aware of this facility. The council's main learning centres have well-used and appropriate creche facilities.

**9. The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Slough Borough Council uses the self-assessment processes well to evaluate its provision. The process is initially managed by three different council departments, which produced three separate self-assessment reports for 2005-06, shortly before the inspection. All three departments adopt an inclusive approach and use a good range of evidence to support most of the judgements. The overall moderation process on behalf of the council as a whole is particularly effective, especially as some of the subcontractors' contributions have insufficient information or are too descriptive. The final self-assessment reports provide an appropriate summary of the quality of the provision, although the adult and community learning report and the report for the ESF-funded provision identify the lack of data to measure learners' achievements and/or monitor their destinations on leaving the ESOL and community learning programmes.

**10. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** The council has made steady progress in improving its programmes since the previous inspections. In work-based learning, the council has rectified most of the previously identified weaknesses, although it still does not provide sufficient opportunities for workplace supervisors to share good practice. Similarly, many of the previous weaknesses identified in the adult and community learning report are at least satisfactory. However, the council has been slow to implement procedures for recording learners' progress and achievement. Most actions plans have realistic targets and are monitored appropriately.

However, the council does not identify sufficiently specific targets to help subcontractors rectify weaknesses identified through self-assessment.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL:

- maintain the very good standards in the apprenticeship programmes
- maintain the outstanding initiatives to meet the needs and interests of learners
- improve the processes for recognising and recording achievement
- complete the development and use of data
- improve the sharing of good practice
- improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the promotion of equality and diversity as part of the curriculum

## GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		3

<b>Information and communications technology</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>ICT for users</b>		<b>3</b>	
Adult and community learning	133	3	

<b>Arts, media and publishing</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Dance</b>			
Adult and community learning	45	2	
<b>Music</b>			
Adult and community learning	30	2	
<b>Crafts</b>			
Adult and community learning	82	2	

Preparation for life and work		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>ESOL</b> Adult and community learning	166	<b>2</b> 2
<b>Community learning</b> Adult and community learning	104	<b>3</b> 3

Business administration and law		1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	35	<b>1</b> 1

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

11. This inspection covered all the council's LSC-funded provision. The work-based learning and adult and community learning provision had previously been inspected separately. The council's work-based learning provision is in business administration. In adult and community learning, two inspectors carried out one visit each before the main inspection week to observe learning sessions in arts, media and publishing and community learning. These areas of learning were also inspected during the main inspection, with ICT. The contributory areas of preparation for life and work that were inspected were ESOL and community learning. Inspectors also examined evidence from programmes in hair and beauty, yoga and aerobics, flower arranging and family learning, which were not reported on separately, to support judgements in the leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	28
Number of learners interviewed	172
Number of staff interviewed	53
Number of employers interviewed	5
Number of subcontractors interviewed	6
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	6
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	15
Number of visits	3



## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- successful strategy for the development of learning and skills
- very effective use of a range of funding sources to support learning
- very good use of internal and external partners' expertise
- good initiatives to support community integration and social cohesion
- very good promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity in work-based learning

### **Weaknesses**

- weak recording of achievement on many adult and community learning courses
- slow development of management information systems to plan and evaluate the adult and community learning provision
- insufficiently established monitoring of the quality of provision contracted out to internal and external partners

## **Information and communications technology**

### ***ICT for users***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills and self-esteem
- well-managed learning sessions on many courses
- good development of provision to meet new learners' needs

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficiently developed recording of learners' progress and attainment
- insufficient systems to measure and monitor the quality of the provision

## **Arts, media and publishing**

#### *Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work
- well-structured practical sessions
- good initiatives to engage under-represented groups
- good additional learning and development activities at SYPC

#### *Weaknesses*

- ineffective recording of learners' progress on programmes not leading to qualifications
- insufficiently thorough procedures for quality improvement

## **Preparation for life and work**

### ***ESOL***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- particularly effective learning activities in most sessions
- well-planned provision to meet the needs of learners and communities
- good advice and guidance
- good management of the ESOL provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of ICT
- ineffective use of data to monitor provision

### ***Community learning***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- good range of stimulating and relevant learning activities and 'taster' courses
- particularly successful recruitment strategies

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient development of learners' understanding of equal opportunities
- inadequate planning, management and monitoring of the ESOL provision
- insufficient systems for monitoring learners' achievements and destinations

## **Business administration and law**

### ***Administration***

#### *Strengths*

- particularly good success rates
- exceptionally good development of learners' vocational and employability skills
- inclusive recruitment procedures to meet local community needs
- excellent support for learners
- particularly effective operational management of the programme
- very good promotion of equality and diversity

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient sharing of good practice among workplace supervisors

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL:**

- 'the courses are in central locations and at convenient times, including Saturdays'
- 'free courses, close to home'
- gaining the confidence to achieve things they had previously thought impossible
- the very good teaching by tutors who know their subjects so well
- 'meeting so many people from different backgrounds and cultures'
- staff that are very friendly, helpful and go out of their way to support them
- developing the skills to help them get a job

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:**

- the information they receive about other courses
- the length of some of the short courses - they are too short
- the number of courses that lead to a qualification
- the provision of certificates to show their achievements - even on short courses

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

#### Strengths

- successful strategy for the development of learning and skills
- very effective use of a range of funding sources to support learning
- very good use of internal and external partners' expertise
- good initiatives to support community integration and social cohesion
- very good promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity in work-based learning

#### Weaknesses

- weak recording of achievement on many adult and community learning courses
- slow development of management information systems to plan and evaluate the adult and community learning provision
- insufficiently established monitoring of the quality of provision contracted out to internal and external partners

12. Slough Borough Council's strategy for the development of learning and skills is successful. At the previous inspection, much of the adult and community provision was in personal development learning and the service did not offer any skills for life programmes. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Managers have used the council's strategic priorities well to redefine the service. The provision in ESOL has increased significantly, and the service now has a good strategy to develop family learning, literacy and numeracy courses. Community learning has also been introduced successfully by the department for economic development, diversity and equality. Senior staff in the council have a very good knowledge and understanding of adult and community learning and support its development well to help contribute to economic growth and social cohesion. The council has established the permanent role of a head of lifelong learning. The provision is planned well and takes place primarily in the most economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The council has provided effective leadership in a Thames Valley-wide project, part of which is aimed at improving adults' levels of skills in Slough, which fall significantly below those of the working population in the Southeast. The apprenticeship scheme also has a clearly stated role in the borough council's strategic plan. The work-based learning programme makes an important contribution to the development of the council's human resources and is a significant part of the department's three-year service plan.

13. The council commits a significant financial investment to implement its strategy for learning and skills. It currently provides half of the core funding for its adult and community learning provision and contributes significantly to financing the overheads of the provision. Almost all adult and community learning courses are currently free of charge. The service has consulted widely with local residents about the possible introduction of course fees from January 2007. The council has been successful in gaining external funding to extend its provision and support its investment in resources. For

example, external funding is used particularly well to support the development of provision for learners who are new to learning or who have not taken part in any formal learning for a considerable period of time. Following uncertainties about the future funding of the work-based learning programme for young people in 2005-06, the council decided to relaunch and extend the apprenticeship programme from September 2006. Council members have agreed to finance the costs of administering the work-based learning and the remuneration of apprentices.

14. The council makes very good use of internal and external partners' expertise to attract new learners from identified target groups to its learning programmes. The successful outreach work to recruit apprentices involves very good collaboration with schools and community organisations that specialise in working with young people from economically disadvantaged communities. The council is also successful in bringing together internal and external partners that have the relevant expertise to create new adult and community learning programmes and projects, and to provide the necessary infrastructure for learning to take place in community venues. These partners collaborate well with each other, often under the council's leadership, and have agreed an effective protocol to help avoid the duplication of programmes and to maximise referrals between providers. For example, the council has worked particularly well with a local college and an external organisation to identify each provider's expertise in teaching ESOL and has established clear progression routes in the region. The 'hub and spoke' initiative to raise the skills levels of residents in Slough successfully brings together representatives from nextstep, the local college and the council to provide information, advice and guidance for residents in economically disadvantaged areas of the borough. Similarly, the council makes good use of the expertise of a national children's organisation and a local children's centre to provide some of its crèche facilities at the school. The enterprise group makes particularly good use of partners' local knowledge and community links to develop its community learning provision.

15. Resources are satisfactory overall. The council has improved the standards of accommodation at some learning centres. For example, some venues have benefited from recent investment in new computers and other information and learning technology (ILT), such as interactive whiteboards. However, learners on ESOL programmes do not have sufficient access to computers and ESOL tutors make little use of ILT. The specialist facilities for dance and music at the SYPC are good, but some of the rooms are in poor decorative order. Resources are satisfactory in work-based learning.

16. Staff training and development are satisfactory overall, but are good in work-based learning. The programme co-ordinators receive good support and development opportunities and they, in turn, provide excellent training and support for the workplace supervisors to help them carry out their roles. The council has started to keep more accurate records of staff training carried out by adult and community learning tutors and has recently agreed a training policy. Subcontractors value the opportunity to attend meetings organised by the service to share good practice and to develop the provision. Staff training is particularly good for ESOL tutors, who receive good support to help them gain the required qualifications. However, too few opportunities exist for the service to respond to subcontractors' individual training needs identified as part of the contract review process.

17. Curriculum management and planning are satisfactory. In work-based learning,

managers make continuous improvements to the structure of the programme and manage the arrangements for learners to work in different departments extremely well. However, the development of curriculum management and planning has been slow in adult and community learning. Curriculum management and planning are good in ESOL, but they are in the early stages of development in most other areas of learning. The service has recently appointed curriculum managers for skills for life and ICT, and it is planning to make an appointment to manage the vocational curriculum.

18. The council's implementation of its strategy for skills for life is satisfactory. The new skills for life strategy has very clear and appropriate targets that reflect the council's commitment towards the development of learners' literacy, numeracy, language and ICT skills. In adult and community learning, additional support for learners in the classroom is satisfactory, but the service does not have sufficient arrangements to meet the needs of learners who require additional support. For example, the council does not have a referral process for learners identified with literacy, numeracy or language needs. The service has started to develop courses where skills for life are integrated with vocational subjects. Learners are supported very well on work-based learning programmes to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, and learners who speak English as an additional language receive good language support.

19. The recording of achievement on many adult and community learning courses is weak. Approximately 90 per cent of the provision does not lead to national qualifications. The council does not provide tutors with standard paperwork for the recording of learners' progress and achievements. The implementation of processes to record learners' progress and achievements has been slow. Many tutors do not use initial assessment sufficiently well to identify learners' prior attainments and skills, or to agree detailed individual learning plans with learners. The recording of learners' progress is not detailed enough on many courses. Where examples of good practice in recognising and recording learners' progress and achievements do exist, for example in the ESOL provision, they are not shared sufficiently with all tutors. The service has identified this weakness and plans to carry out further training and sharing of good practice with other partner organisations.

20. Work-based learning managers use data well to manage the apprenticeships. Targets for work-based learning are well defined and monitored closely. However, Slough Borough Council has been slow to develop its systems to plan and evaluate the adult and community learning provision. Although the council has recently made significant improvements to its management information systems, some use of data is still insufficiently developed. For example, the council does not have an appropriate definition of retention and achievement on courses that do not lead to a qualification. Targets for retention rates were too low in 2005-06. Although some staff have used their own informal data systems well to plan and monitor provision, some staff have not received sufficient training to use management information to plan and review the provision. Important data is not always gathered concerning, for example, the numbers of new learners or the recruitment of learners from priority postcodes in the borough.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 2**

21. Slough Borough Council implements its equal opportunities policies well. In particular, the council has many successful initiatives to help encourage community integration and social cohesion in a borough that is made up of many diverse and complex communities. The council's policies on fees concessions and the waiving of fees

remove a significant barrier to learning for many adults in the borough. Learners come from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, social and educational backgrounds. The council plans courses well to take account of learners who do not wish to attend classes during religious festivals. It encourages learners with few prior educational attainments to join the apprenticeship programmes. In 2005-06, 20 per cent of the apprentices had a learning difficulty. The number of men on the programme is increasing. The provision of introductory short courses and women-only adult and community learning programmes effectively encourages particular groups in the community to take part in learning for the first time. The council encourages learners to attend courses and events in unfamiliar environments and to integrate with other learners from different backgrounds. Staff provide good support to help meet learners' diverse needs. Learners receive excellent individual and personal support, including good specialist support for learners with a specific learning disability. Managers of the adult and community learning provision give a high priority to the development of learners' self-confidence and self-esteem, and to raising their aspirations. Managers, support staff, tutors and workplace supervisors provide good role models for many learners and are particularly effective, and at the same time sensitive and supportive, in encouraging learners to cross personal boundaries to help them realise their potential.

22. The promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity in work-based learning are very good. The council has particularly thorough arrangements to monitor the effect of its equality of opportunity policies and procedures on recruitment and training of employees. Race equality and dignity at work are important priorities. Staff use well-designed materials at induction to reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. The council's human resources department monitors these processes well. Learners show a good understanding of equality and diversity through their interaction with residents from a diverse range of local communities. However, managers do not monitor systematically some subcontracted training providers' equal opportunities practices.

23. The reinforcement of equality of opportunity is satisfactory in adult and community learning. The lifelong learning department uses the council's equal opportunities policies effectively to guide its practices in promoting equality of opportunity, but it does not have its own equal opportunities policy for adult and community learning. Managers check subcontractors' arrangements for equality of opportunity effectively and learning centres are accessible to learners with restricted mobility, although specialist recording equipment at SYPC is not easily accessible to learners with a disability. Staff training and development in equality and diversity are satisfactory. Tutors in ESOL provision demonstrate good awareness of cultural diversity and implement this well in their learning sessions. However, staff do not develop learners' understanding of equal opportunities sufficiently in community learning.

24. The council's use of data to monitor equality of opportunity is not developed sufficiently. However, it is currently implementing procedures to set targets for recruiting learners from priority postcodes, and it is also developing appropriate systems for systematically monitoring retention by groups of learners from different backgrounds.

## **Quality improvement**

## **Contributory grade 3**

25. Many aspects of quality improvement procedures are good in work-based learning. Managers monitor thoroughly and systematically all aspects of the provision provided directly by the council's staff. They check documents and forms, such as individual



learning plans and records of reviews, effectively. Managers also use the views of learners and partners well to improve the provision and have good procedures for the sharing of good practice between the subcontracted providers. However, workplace supervisors do not have sufficient opportunities to share good practice.

26. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory in adult and community learning provision. The council has started to develop a clear framework for quality improvement for adult and community learning, but many of the procedures and initiatives are either new or have been updated recently and it is too early to determine their effect on the quality of provision. Managers have a self-critical and honest approach to identifying what improvements need to be made in the provision. Similarly, the council has satisfactory arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. It has developed a systematic process for the moderation of lesson observations. However, this process does not always identify important weaknesses in the quality of learning or the quality of feedback that learners receive on their performance. The council does not have adequate systems for sharing good practice within some areas of learning, such as ESOL and ICT, and throughout the provision.

27. The council uses its self-assessment processes well to evaluate many aspects of the provision. Three separate self-assessment reports were written for the council's LSC-funded provision in 2005-06. The self-assessment process is inclusive in all three departments. Although some subcontractors' self-assessment reports are not sufficiently detailed or evaluative, the service has an effective moderation process to ensure that the final self-assessment reports are an appropriate summary of the quality of the provision. Inspectors' judgements for leadership and management in adult and community learning match many of those in the most recent self-assessment report. The area of learning reports are detailed, but they are not sufficiently evaluative for ICT and the ESOL provision. Although inspectors' judgements match many of the strengths in the report for the ESF-funded provision, much of the report is too descriptive and fails to identify some of the main weaknesses in community learning. The work-based learning self-assessment report identifies many of the key strengths in the area of learning, but it does not acknowledge sufficiently the strengths in leadership and management.

28. The monitoring of the quality of provision contracted out to internal and external partners is not established sufficiently. Contracts with subcontractors are detailed and set out clearly the responsibilities of the council and the subcontracted provider. The council has only recently developed a formal service level agreement with work-based learning subcontractors. Managers rely excessively on assurances from subcontractors that the correct systems are in place to support teaching and learning. They do not adequately monitor key procedures, such as course evaluation and the use of individual learning plans. Similarly, managers do not have a sufficiently accurate overview of the quality of teaching and learning, or of subcontractors' observation schedules. Some subcontractors carry out too few observations of learning sessions. Retention and achievement rates are not monitored sufficiently at review meetings in adult and community learning, and insufficient analysis takes place of other important performance indicators, such as participation rates for particular groups of adults. Where training is identified as a requirement for tutors in individual subcontractors, it is not always carried out. The council does not have sufficient access to all of the appropriate information to monitor the quality improvements in work-based learning. For example, it does not receive reports from subcontractors that carry out their own observations, to monitor the quality of



learning sessions and assessments.

29. Managers do not use data sufficiently to identify trends in performance. For example, insufficient data exists to analyse achievement rates on many courses. Where data on achievements is available, for example in ESOL provision, it is not accurately summarised through the service's management information system. Until recently, managers have not had regular data reports to help them to monitor adequately the performance of curriculum areas or subcontractors in adult and community learning. The council does not routinely collect sufficient information on learners' progression to further education, training or employment on programmes, such as community learning, where progression is one of the key objectives. The service has identified this weakness, and has recently started to produce more accurate data to help managers plan for 2006-07.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Information and communications technology

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>ICT for users</b>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	133	3

30. Slough Borough Council currently directly manages 18 courses in using ICT and employs five part-time tutors, who teach these courses in the council's two main adult learning centres and at other community venues, such as children or family centres and community centres. Three courses currently lead to qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Short introductory and 'taster' courses aim to encourage learners to develop computing skills such as basic word processing, using e-mails and the internet, and using software required for digital photography. Approximately 14 per cent of the ICT provision is subcontracted to the Thames Valley University, which provides courses to help learners develop the technical skills required to progress to higher education.

#### **ICT for users**

##### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills and self-esteem
- well-managed learning sessions on many courses
- good development of provision to meet new learners' needs

##### *Weaknesses*

- insufficiently developed recording of learners' progress and attainment
- insufficient systems to measure and monitor the quality of the provision

#### **Achievement and standards**

31. Learners develop their skills and confidence well on Slough Borough Council's ICT provision. Most learners are successful in increasing their confidence in carrying out computing tasks independently. Some learners make very good progress in mastering computing techniques that are new to them, such as creating spreadsheets, researching on the internet and diagnosing simple faults on a computer. Learners at entry level are proud about conquering their fear of technology and they develop useful basic computing skills for work or at home. Retention is good on short courses, but attendance by some learners on some of the longer courses is poor and their progress is often slow.

32. Achievement of qualifications is at least satisfactory. Achievement was outstanding in 2004-05, when all of the 27 learners on the accredited courses gained a qualification. However, in 2005-06, only 73 per cent of learners on similar courses achieved a qualification. Retention rates on the more advanced courses that were introduced in 2005-06 are good, but it is too early to make a judgement on learners' achievement of the full qualification.

## The quality of provision

33. Most learning sessions are managed well. Most tutors structure their sessions well and incorporate a good mix of discussions, demonstrations and practical work. In particular, most learning sessions are planned flexibly to include individual coaching and peer support. Tutors are aware that many learners have different experiences in using a computer and many tutors provide good opportunities for learners to receive individual tuition or have more time for additional practice. Some tutors have devised very good learning materials that include extended exercises for learners who progress faster. Many tutors use a good range of stimulating learning activities to engage learners' interest and develop their confidence and independence in using computers. Some tutors make good use of electronic whiteboards, where available, to elicit learners' prior understanding of a topic, reinforce aspects previously covered or to introduce a new technique. However, although tutors give clear explanations, and successfully encourage learners to participate in discussions, some tutors do not sufficiently check learners' understanding or encourage them to develop their own methods for achieving a task. Some learning materials use unnecessarily complex language or jargon.

34. Slough Borough Council has developed its provision well to attract new learners to its ICT courses. Courses are designed well to meet the needs of individuals, as well as those of local communities. Staff consult particularly effectively with community organisations to identify groups of learners who have not previously attended adult and community learning provision or who are new to using computers. Plans for new provision include careful consideration of the location, venue and schedule of courses, additional support, as well as the content and level of the programmes. Staff work well to customise short taster courses to the requirements of specific groups of potential learners. For example, the multilingual skills of members of staff are used well to recruit and support women who have previously been very reluctant to attend courses in this country. These women-only courses are designed effectively to provide a learning environment that learners find appropriate and comfortable, but also one that will help encourage them to progress to a wider range of courses, if appropriate. Short courses on Saturdays or in the evening also provide good opportunities for learners to develop specific skills in subjects such as using computers for digital photography. Computing facilities are satisfactory in most centres, and include some good-quality computers and up-to-date software.

35. The council provides satisfactory additional support to meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. Although learners participate in an initial assessment when they join a programme, the process is not sufficiently thorough on all courses. Tutors who are multilingual and also teach ESOL, use their skills well to support learners who speak English as an additional language. Similarly, tutors provide satisfactory individual support to help learners overcome literacy and numeracy difficulties that are preventing them from completing an ICT-related task. One centre has a learning support assistant for most courses and learners attending this centre receive useful individual support. Some learners attending ICT courses have received satisfactory advice and guidance about learning opportunities available locally. However, too few learners are aware of this service.

36. Systems for recording learners' progress and attainment are not developed sufficiently. Although all learners have individual learning plans with appropriate group learning goals for their course, many learners are not encouraged to set their own

individual targets for learning. Some tutors have developed particularly effective systems to help learners evaluate and record the progress they have made, at the end of each learning session. These tutors use this information well to plan future learning sessions and provide an overall record of learners' attainment. However, this process is not used effectively on all programmes. Some learners are not supported sufficiently to evaluate their own progress and some tutors' records of learning are little more than a list of activities completed during the course.

### **Leadership and management**

37. The management of Slough Borough Council's ICT provision is satisfactory. Managers have used external funding well, often in partnership with other organisations, to enhance the computing facilities and learning centres used for ICT courses. A specialist ICT manager was appointed in August 2006. Communications are satisfactory. Staff receive appropriate support and advice at team meetings and through the manager's visits to classes. Most staff either have or are working towards appropriate teaching qualifications. Staff development is satisfactory. However, a large proportion of staff teaching on ICT programmes have not participated in recent training in equality and diversity. Some learning materials do not take sufficient account of learners' diverse cultural backgrounds or their literacy and language levels.

38. The council has insufficient systems to measure and monitor the quality of its ICT provision. The council has identified that systems for recording and measuring achievement on courses that do not lead to qualifications are weak. Managers do not have sufficient information to evaluate the achievement and standards of all of its ICT provision. Although self-assessment of the ICT provision is an inclusive process that involves all staff and makes good use of the views of learners and some partners, the report for 2005-06 failed to identify the weak monitoring of some aspects of the quality of the provision. Some aspects of the ICT provision are still fragmented and are not sufficiently co-ordinated. For example, some courses with the same title do not have a similar focus and learners on similar courses take part in different types of initial assessments. Staff do not share learning materials and good practice sufficiently. Some learning materials are excellent, but some are either too easy or too complex for the groups of learners using them. Although observation of learning sessions is now a systematic part of the quality improvement strategy, not all tutors have been observed and the process does not sufficiently focus on monitoring the quality of learning. Course reviews are inconsistent. Some are evaluative and thorough, but others are too formulaic.

**Arts, media and publishing****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Dance</b> Adult and community learning	45	2
<b>Music</b> Adult and community learning	30	2
<b>Crafts</b> Adult and community learning	82	2

39. Approximately two-thirds of the current learners are enrolled on visual and performing arts courses that do not lead to qualifications and are directly managed by Slough Borough Council's lifelong learning department. Four tutors currently teach on nine courses in garment design and manufacture, dance, printing and design, and other arts and crafts, which mostly take place in the two main adult learning centres. Approximately one-third of learners are attending courses at the After-hours Arts Academy at SYPC, which receives LSC funding through the lifelong learning department. These courses are targeted at disadvantaged young people aged between 19 and 30 who are not in education, training or employment. Courses are offered in music, music technology, media, dance and related performance arts, and they are held in the evening and at weekends. Approximately 10 per cent of these learners are on courses leading to a qualification. Most arts courses last for 10 weeks.

*Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work
- well-structured practical sessions
- good initiatives to engage under-represented groups
- good additional learning and development activities at SYPC

*Weaknesses*

- ineffective recording of learners' progress on programmes not leading to qualifications
- insufficiently thorough procedures for quality improvement

**Achievement and standards**

40. Learners achieve good standards of work. They enjoy their classes and work productively. Most learners develop good practical skills and demonstrate good body co-ordination and spatial awareness on dance courses, and good design and fabrication on craft courses. Similarly, learners on textile courses develop good techniques in cutting, making and finishing garments and other items. Learners use music technology software creatively to explore ideas.

41. Retention is good at 88 per cent and has improved by 10 per cent since 2004-05. Achievement on the few accredited programmes is also good. In 2004-05, 51 learners gained 55 national qualifications in art and music technology. In 2005-06, 53 learners have completed 66 accredited programmes that are waiting external moderation.

## **The quality of provision**

42. Teaching and learning are good. Practical sessions are particularly well structured and tutors manage group work very effectively. They negotiate learning goals carefully with learners and use this information well to help identify an appropriate range of learning activities for each learner. Many learners work at different levels within each course. Tutors make purposeful individual interventions to provide support and most tutors provide clear feedback to learners' on their progress. Most tutors are professional practitioners. They are well informed about their subject and keen to foster enthusiasm in others. In a minority of sessions, some learning points in demonstrations are not made sufficiently clear or reinforced well enough with all learners.

43. Slough Borough Council has developed good initiatives to engage under-represented groups. For example, SYPC runs a good range of stimulating taster programmes in community-based venues and provides a popular drop-in social facility at the centre. Learners have good opportunities to attend informal workshops and progress to more formal non-accredited and accredited learning programmes. Progression for young learners to more advanced programmes when they reach the age of 19 is managed well. Links with Connexions, the Prince's Trust, and the youth offending team are used effectively to recruit and support learners. The centre runs introductory programmes in the cultural industries specifically aimed at the re-engagement of young people not in education, training or employment. SYPC has good procedures to consult with learners in the planning of the curriculum. The centre has increased the number of women recruited to sound technology courses and the number of men to dance classes. Some of the lifelong learning courses are timetabled effectively to help meet the needs of learners often under-represented in this area of learning. For example, some courses are linked to local crèche provision and have successfully attracted lone parents. Overall, the percentage of learners from identified target groups attending programmes in this curriculum area is high.

44. SYPC provides good additional learning and development activities. Learners make good use of a wide variety of specialist facilities and rehearsal spaces for extended learning beyond classes and for self-directed work. Learners also attend the interesting range of presentations and demonstrations by professionals working in the cultural industries that the centre hosts, and they participate in trips to London theatres and film studios. Similarly, a good proportion of learners participate in the centre's multi-disciplinary projects, such as a peer-led community radio station and in projects leading to cultural products such as compact discs (CDs). The centre celebrates learners' work very effectively through public performances at the centre and at other community venues.

45. Accommodation and equipment are satisfactory overall. SYPC provides a good dance studio, a well-equipped sound studio and good-quality mixing and video-editing facilities, with a good range of cultural industries-related information technology (IT), rehearsal and performance space. The accommodation is in poor decorative order and some specialist facilities are not accessible to learners with mobility difficulties. The sound studio is small and affected by noise from an adjoining room. Accommodation at the other centres is satisfactory but there are no mirrors for dance classes and some of the tables used for textiles classes are too small.

46. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. A good range of services available at SYPC includes support for job applications, housing advice, confidential counselling and guidance on sexual health and substance misuse issues. Course information sheets provide appropriate details on course content and the materials required. Learners' prior experience is evaluated appropriately as part of an initial assessment, but this does not include an assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. Learners who request additional support are referred to the skills for life provision.

47. The recording of learners' progress is ineffective on programmes not leading to national qualifications. Most learners complete individual learning plans which list group goals. However, few record individual goals, even though at the initial assessment stage, many learners discuss with tutors their specific reasons for enrolling on the programme. Some goals are not specific or measurable and formative assessment is insufficiently evaluative. Many learners simply list a task attempted without reflecting on the learning that has taken place. Logbooks are kept regularly by some learners but entries are descriptive rather than evaluating the progress made and identifying areas for improvement. In contrast, on accredited programmes, progress is regularly assessed against a set of criteria and learners receive useful and constructive feedback.

### **Leadership and management**

48. The management post for this curriculum area is currently unfilled, with temporary cover provided by the council's head of lifelong learning. Curriculum planning and management of resources at SYPC are good. Most programmes are effective in promoting learners' understanding of cultural diversity. Tutors have good vocational experience and most of them have appropriate teaching qualifications or are currently enrolled on a programme to achieve this. Procedures for risk assessment and the monitoring of health and safety practices are appropriate.

49. Procedures for quality improvement are not sufficiently thorough. Observations of tutors' teaching and learning on the lifelong learning provision are of a good standard, with clear identification of action points. However, the monitoring of this agreed action is not recorded systematically. The monitoring of the quality of teaching at SYPC is poor. The self-assessment report for this centre does not provide a sufficiently evaluative assessment of teaching and learning. Course reviews are of variable quality. Some are overly descriptive and do not identify areas for improvement. Although some lifelong learning tutors link with the tutors who work at SYPC, the council does not take full advantage of opportunities to share subject-specific expertise. The overall self-assessment report for the curriculum area provides an accurate assessment of the provision.



**Preparation for life and work****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>ESOL</b> Adult and community learning	166	<b>2</b> 2
<b>Community learning</b> Adult and community learning	104	<b>3</b> 3

50. Slough Borough Council currently offers 11 ESOL courses that are managed by the lifelong learning department and include much of its First Steps provision. They take place at the council's two main adult learning centres and are taught by eight part-time tutors. Learners can join the courses at the beginning of each term and usually attend between one and three learning sessions a week. The courses cover the contexts of work, everyday life, community settings and citizenship. Approximately 10 per cent of the learners work towards a nationally recognised qualification in ESOL at entry level 3. Learners at entry levels 1 and 2 work towards individual learning targets. The council has arrangements for its learners to progress from entry level 3 to level 1 provision at other local providers.

51. Slough Borough Council's current community learning provision is managed by the enterprise group, which is part of the economic development diversity and equality department. The enterprise group has offered ESF-funded provision since 2002 and currently has two co-financed projects which are designed to provide opportunities for women at risk of exclusion from education, training and employment. Aurat Enterprise, which runs from April 2004 to June 2007, aims to provide training in ESOL, numeracy, literacy, self-confidence and ICT to at least 450 women from minority ethnic groups. The project known as Opening Doors was launched in April 2006 and aims to help women to break through both external and self-imposed barriers and fulfil their potential by providing vocational tasters, study skill programmes and information, advice and guidance. This project intends to work with at least 220 women from local communities over two years. Community learning courses take place throughout the borough and vary from short workshops to courses of one or two sessions a week over a period of up to 10 weeks. Aurat Enterprise is currently running six ESOL courses and four personal effectiveness courses with 104 learners. Overall, approximately 301 people are still recorded as participants on the council's ESF-funded provision, and are invited to attend individual interviews, group workshops, conferences or training programmes.

**ESOL***Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- particularly effective learning activities in most sessions
- well-planned provision to meet the needs of learners and communities
- good advice and guidance
- good management of the ESOL provision



### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of ICT
- ineffective use of data to monitor provision

### **Achievement and standards**

52. Learners make good progress in developing their language skills and achieve good standards of work. In particular, many learners increase their vocabulary significantly and improve their listening and speaking skills well. They are pleased with their progress and use these skills well in their daily lives. Some learners have not previously attended formal education and develop good learning skills. For example, most learners develop their confidence particularly well and participate effectively in group discussions and activities. Some learners are adept at completing activities on the interactive whiteboards. Most learners' portfolios of work are of a good standard and provide good reference material for use at home or on future courses. Retention rates were good in 2005-06 at 85 per cent. Only 13 of the 533 learners on the ESOL programmes that year worked towards a qualification. However, pass rates were very good at 92 per cent.

### **The quality of provision**

53. Learning activities are particularly effective in most sessions. Most tutors plan their learning sessions very effectively and use a wide range of styles and methods. They include a good range of listening and speaking activities, and use reading and writing tasks well to help develop learners' skills and provide a useful record of their work. A very good variety of good-quality and stimulating learning materials is the main focus of many learning activities. For example, tutors use real items, such as menus, packaging and maps imaginatively to develop learners' vocabulary and encourage them to practise their speaking skills. Tutor-made visual prompts are bright and professionally finished, and many are put up on classroom walls to provide useful prompts and reinforce learning. Many tutors and learners are now also making good use of the recently installed interactive whiteboards. Most tutors make good use of individual learning plans and group schemes of work to plan group and individual activities. Most learners are aware of their agreed learning journey and can see how the learning activities are helping them to achieve their learning goals. Although some tutors provide constructive feedback to learners on the quality of their written and oral work, not all learners receive sufficient feedback on their progress during learning sessions.

54. Slough Borough Council provides a good range of courses to meet the needs of the learners and local communities. The courses are planned well to take place in convenient locations at the centre of communities with a high number of potential learners and at appropriate times of the day or evening. The council consults widely with a good range of agencies and organisations when planning its ESOL curriculum or making arrangements for referrals to its programmes. In particular, the council works well with the other local providers of ESOL provision to plan coherent progression routes and minimise unnecessary duplication of courses or competition between providers. Managers also use feedback from learners and course reviews well when selecting the curriculum. Many of the courses are now designed to focus on developing learners' language skills for work or their knowledge in citizenship.

55. Learners on the council's ESOL provision receive good advice and guidance. Some

staff are multilingual and use their skills well to provide advice and information in the learners' main language. Learners receive detailed information about the courses and potential progression routes. The council also provides specialist information on the transferability of international qualifications to the system in the United Kingdom. This service is highly valued by learners who intend to pursue their careers in this country, once they have improved their language skills. The initial assessment process is thorough and tutors use it well to identify learners' individual learning goals. Some tutors also use this information to compile a detailed profile of learners on their courses. This includes learners' backgrounds, their aims and their support needs. The provision of crèche facilities has increased recently and is satisfactory.

56. The accommodation used for the council's ESOL provision is satisfactory. Most classrooms are spacious and bright. However, learners and tutors do not have sufficient access to computing facilities. Too few learners are able to develop their language skills through the use of computers. Although tutors use a wide range of paper-based and practical learning materials, very few learning activities involve the use of word processors or the internet. Although some tutors use the interactive whiteboards well for visual prompts, the use of this equipment is not developed sufficiently.

### **Leadership and management**

57. Slough Borough Council's ESOL provision is managed well. The council's skills for life strategy has very clear and realistic aims and the implementation plan includes appropriate targets. The number of courses has increased steadily since 2004. Although the council has found it difficult to recruit teaching staff for some of its provision, the current part-time tutors receive good support. Managers link well with other local providers to arrange training for the council's staff. Most tutors have, or are working towards, appropriate teaching qualifications and some of them are working towards the specialist ESOL qualification. Communication within the skills for life team is good. Tutors receive effective advice and guidance on completing paperwork such as individual training plans and schemes of work. Arrangements for peer support are also good, with an effective mentoring scheme to provide support for new staff from more experienced colleagues.

58. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Most staff have taken part in training on equality and diversity, including training from an external agency. Most tutors promote cultural awareness effectively to learners in their learning sessions and use a good variety of multicultural images and concepts.

59. Many of the quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. The observation of learning scheme is used well to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, to identify good practice and to develop tutors' teaching skills. Managers monitor most course documents effectively and set appropriately high standards. The council uses the self-assessment process well to consult with staff and learners to evaluate many aspects of the provision. However, it does not use data sufficiently as part of the evaluation process. Most of the provision does not currently lead to qualifications and the council does not have an adequate system to measure achievement on these non-accredited programmes. Although staff have worked well with partners to plan progression routes, they do not keep enough data on learners' destinations on leaving a programme to help evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes.

## ***Community learning***

### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' confidence and skills
- good range of stimulating and relevant learning activities and 'taster' courses
- particularly successful recruitment strategies

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient development of learners' understanding of equal opportunities
- inadequate planning, management and monitoring of the ESOL provision
- insufficient systems for monitoring learners' achievements and destinations

## **Achievement and standards**

60. Learners develop their confidence and self-esteem particularly well on the Aurat Enterprise programmes. Many learners joining the personal effectiveness programmes have been successful in their own countries or communities, but say they have little confidence when participating in the wider community in this country. These learners make good use of the provision to cross personal boundaries. They develop the confidence to participate well in the challenging learning activities and discussions and reflect on their own potential. Some learners attending a group workshop for over 40 people, observed on inspection, had the confidence to stand on a podium and use a microphone to present the views of their group to the whole audience. These brief presentations were confident, well structured and thought-provoking.

61. Many learners also develop a good range of practical and employability skills. These include creative art skills, such as painting and work with fabric to help them express their views and emotions. Twelve women have successfully completed a course in minibus driving and have obtained a five-year driving licence. They feel they can now make a significant contribution to their own communities. Many learners also use the short courses well to build on their existing language, literacy and ICT skills or to gain a useful initial understanding about specific topics such as midwifery or car maintenance.

62. Some learners are successful in progressing to work and/or further training courses. Out of the 284 learners who have left the Aurat Enterprise programme, 114 destinations are known. Of these, progression rates are good at 68 per cent, with 35 learners progressing to work and 42 to further learning programmes. Some learners provide very good case studies of individual achievement. For example, in 2005-06, nine learners were successful in starting their own business in services such as interior design, accountancy, catering and tutoring in seated aerobics.

## **The quality of provision**

63. Slough Borough Council's community learning provision includes a good range of learning activities and taster courses. For example, Aurat Enterprise's extensive and varied programme since April 2004 has included courses in personal effectiveness, ESOL, creative skills and starting a business. Managers consult widely with local organisations and agencies when setting up these courses and they take place in a wide range of

community venues throughout the region. The programme also caters very well for people who are uncertain about their potential for a career or involvement in the wider community. Take-up of the short taster courses and workshops on subjects such as car mechanics, bookkeeping, food hygiene, healthy eating and personal image is very good. Learners come from very diverse social, cultural and educational backgrounds and work very well together to explore their understanding of specific topics and share their views. Similarly, the visits to places of interest, such as Windsor Castle and Bournemouth, and community events such as bazaars, fetes and coffee mornings are successful in providing interesting contexts to help learners meet other people and explore their own potential.

64. Teaching is satisfactory. Some learning sessions and workshops are very well structured. Many of the workshops and dissemination events take place in good-quality conference centres and include a very good range of well-planned activities that are successful in involving all the participants. Some learning sessions in personal effectiveness provide a good range of learning activities and tutors are skilled at encouraging learners to participate in discussions. Learners on these programmes keep a good record of their learning in a reflective journal, using a wide variety of formats such as photographs, drawings and charts. However, some tutors dominate some activities too much and do not carry out sufficient checks of learners' understanding of their explanations or the vocabulary they have used. Although some tutors on the programmes designed to teach literacy and language skills in the context of personal effectiveness are successful in helping learners improve some aspects of their literacy skills, they do not provide sufficient guidance in helping learners develop their own strategies for improving specific skills, such as spelling or using punctuation correctly.

65. Learners receive satisfactory guidance and support. Staff from the council's enterprise group have good links with the council's staff, providing information, advice and guidance. Many learners receive good and impartial initial advice on the range of adult learning provision available. Some learners also receive helpful individual guidance to help them identify their career or employment aims. For example, some of the learners recently joining the Opening Doors programme have realistic development plans to help them plan their future. However, some learners attending the community learning programmes are not fully aware of the advice and guidance service and some learners do not receive sufficient information on possible progression routes at an appropriate stage of their programme. Staff provide good individual personal support and many learners make good use of the crèche facilities.

66. The council's community learning programmes do not sufficiently develop learners' understanding of equal opportunities. Staff represent a wide range of cultures and provide good role models for learners who are hoping to make greater use of the potential opportunities for employment or involvement in communities throughout the borough. However, equality and diversity issues are not included sufficiently in learning programmes. For example, on the personal effectiveness programmes, the council uses Eurocentric norms when training learners to understand and use concepts such as assertive or passive behaviour, with insufficient discussion on the effect this may have on people from different cultures. Similarly, external speakers receive insufficient briefing about the cultural backgrounds of the learners to help them plan the content of their presentations.

## Leadership and management

67. The enterprise group has developed particularly successful strategies for recruiting learners to its ESF-funded programmes. Staff have developed very good links with community groups and organisations and promote the projects well. Since April 2004, 548 learners have joined the Aurat Enterprise programme, which is well above the previous overall target for 450 learners. Although the Opening Doors project had a slow start, this programme is also recruiting well. In particular, the projects are increasingly attracting learners who are new arrivals to Slough, either from another country or from other part of this country. Managers keep good records of all participants' backgrounds and are quick to make links with community groups to help widen participation when they identify new target groups for potential learners.

68. Many aspects of the provision are managed well. Communications within the team are good and most staff receive good support to develop their skills. However, the ESOL provision is not planned, managed or monitored adequately. Many learners develop their vocabulary and pronunciation well, but the programme does not provide them with sufficient opportunities to develop their listening or speaking skills. One tutor is currently teaching all six programmes single-handedly and receives insufficient support to develop the curriculum. The council does not monitor the quality of the teaching and learning adequately. Attendance is good, but most of the courses are at entry level and have too many learners to allow the tutor to provide sufficient individual support or feedback.

69. The council's self-assessment report identifies the lack of systems to monitor learners' achievements and destinations. Although many learners keep good records of their personal achievements, this information is not captured adequately to measure the effectiveness of individual courses or the overall provision. Managers use data well to record participation in each course and event, but they do not have adequate systems to record learners' destinations on leaving the programme. Progression to employment or further learning is one of the main criteria for evaluating the provision. Staff have had to resort to the rather laborious method of telephoning all of the previous learners and have not been able to identify the outcome of the programme for approximately one-third of these learners.

**Business administration and law****Grade 1**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	35	<b>1</b> 1

70. Slough Borough Council's work-based learning programme is managed by the human resources department. Thirty-three learners are currently following the apprenticeship framework in business administration and two are on the advanced apprenticeship programme. Approximately half of the learners are women and over three-quarters are from minority ethnic groups. All learners are employed by the council, initially on one-year contracts. Most learners work in two departments within the council's service directorates for six months each. Off-the-job training and assessments for the technical certificates, the national vocational qualification (NVQ) and key skills are subcontracted to the Aylesbury Training Group. Training in literacy and numeracy is provided by East Berkshire College. A learning co-ordinator and a development officer manage the apprenticeship contract for the council on a part-time basis, totalling 37 hours a week. This work includes recruiting the learners, managing the induction programme, reviewing learners' progress and liaising with the learners' supervisors and the subcontracted tutors and assessors.

**Administration***Strengths*

- particularly good success rates
- exceptionally good development of learners' vocational and employability skills
- inclusive recruitment procedures to meet local community needs
- excellent support for learners
- particularly effective operational management of the programme
- very good promotion of equality and diversity

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient sharing of good practice among workplace supervisors

**Achievement and standards**

71. Success rates are particularly good and have been well above national averages since 2003. In 2004-05 they were outstanding, when all 19 learners who left the programme achieved the full framework. However, some learners' progress was a little slow and they did not achieve within the expected timescale. In 2005-06, although a few learners left the programme at an early stage, success rates were still good, with 69 per cent of the 16 learners leaving with the full framework. The rates of progress of learners following the apprenticeship programmes improved significantly, as all of them completed with the agreed timescale. All learners currently in training are making good or better progress towards completing the framework.



72. Many learners recruited to the programme start with low levels of prior attainment and significant barriers to learning. Indeed, the development of learners' vocational and employability skills is exceptional. Most of them achieve and maintain the high standards they are set at work. Learners are highly motivated and gradually and successfully take on increased responsibility. In particular, learners develop good work ethics, such as showing respect to colleagues and the council's internal and external customers. Learners are articulate and confident when dealing with colleagues and the wider public. They also develop good skills in using an appropriate tone in their verbal and written communications. Learners often set themselves challenging targets and have clear aims. Many learners attend meetings and are seconded to committees and working groups as full participating members. Some of their portfolios show that they have influenced the introduction of new practices in to their departments. Progression into permanent employment is good, with an average of 86 per cent of learners gaining jobs or progressing to further education.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	3	33	46	33	28
		timely	4	25	30	25	18
	2004-05	overall	4	100	47	100	31
		timely	3	67	35	67	23
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	13	62	51	31	37
		timely	16	0	25	0	18
	2004-05	overall	15	100	56	100	45
		timely	6	17	35	17	28

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

### The quality of provision

73. Learners receive exceptionally good training and coaching. All learners attend a comprehensive induction, during which they develop relevant basic skills such as answering the telephone and writing messages clearly. Learners' work is supervised and monitored thoroughly, and learners receive good coaching to help them achieve and maintain high standards. Workplace supervisors and the learners' work-based colleagues are particularly skilled at coaching the learners expertly and patiently, to help them develop their skills and become confident in performing increasingly more complex tasks. Learners also attend a wide range of additional courses to learn practical skills, such as using IT, first aid, assertiveness and time management. Learners, their managers and support staff make good use of the comprehensive individual learning plans to identify learners' progress and further development needs and plan their training. The training is planned very well. The skills and knowledge learners develop at work or at additional training courses are linked closely to the requirements of the NVQ. Learners receive adequate time during working hours to work on their NVQ portfolios and meet with workplace supervisors, mentors, assessors and programme co-ordinators. They also receive good recognition for their progress. For example, as their skills and knowledge become more advanced, they are given greater degrees of responsibility, such as direct

contact with members of the public and the task of supporting new members of staff. Learning resources are satisfactory. Learners use appropriate facilities at work and during training sessions.

74. Recruitment to the programme is particularly effective in meeting local community needs. The apprenticeship scheme is restricted to residents of the borough and is marketed successfully in local schools, mosques and other community organisations to attract disadvantaged young people. The council successfully adopts an inclusive approach to recruitment. Potential learners are told about the support arrangements for learners and are encouraged to apply, regardless of their prior educational attainment. A thorough selection procedure involves a well-designed assessment centre. A high proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups are recruited in each year and the number of men recruited has increased. In 2005-06, 20 per cent of learners with a declared learning difficulty were recruited and 12 per cent in 2006-07. The content and context of the programme is planned well to meet learners' needs as well as those of local employers and the council. Learners' skills and interests are considered carefully when they are allocated to their first department in one of the council directorates. Similarly, as learners progress to their second department, the programme co-ordinators take good account of learners' progress, as well as future employment prospects.

75. Learners receive excellent support. The induction training is particularly effective and provides good initial training and a very useful background to the programme and each of the departments where the learners will work. Initial assessments are thorough and managed well. The process is used very well to identify learners' prior attainment and experience, as well as any additional learning needs. Arrangements for additional training in literacy, numeracy and language support are good. Processes to review learners' progress are wide-ranging and inclusive. Workplace supervisors and programme co-ordinators have a very good understanding of their different roles and work very well with the learners to identify and resolve issues. Learners receive realistic and constructive feedback and are fully aware of all the support available to them. Records of the review meetings are comprehensive and used well to plan the next stage of the programme. Learners with disabilities are particularly well supported. Support has included a signer for corporate training, and physical adaptations to the working environment. Personal support for learners is also managed very well. Staff use successful approaches to build learners' confidence and self-esteem. They identify problems quickly and deal with them sympathetically and appropriately. Each learner has a mentor who is an existing or former apprentice. Mentors receive effective training for their role and provide useful support to help learners settle into a department or to provide learners with a 'sounding board' to help them talk through emerging problems in confidence. Learners also receive constructive advice and guidance on progression opportunities, including useful help to apply for a permanent job or for a place in higher education.

### **Leadership and management**

76. Slough Borough Council's apprenticeship programmes are designed well and managed very effectively. A distinctive and successful feature of the programme is the arrangements for learners to be allocated to two separate placements during the programme. The council has extended the number of service directorates and departments involved in the programme and now offers a wider range of placements. The programme co-ordinators provide very good training and support for workplace supervisors and mentors. Roles and responsibilities are very clear. Similarly, the



subcontracted training providers receive detailed information about their role in the programme. Learners' entry into a new department is co-ordinated well. Procedures for sharing information about the learners, a weakness at the previous inspection, are now very effective. Workplace supervisors receive an appropriate range of relevant information about the learners' progress and their development and support needs. The council also celebrates learners' work and achievements well and the staff newsletter often includes articles that promote individual learners' successes and achievements. Data management is good. The programme co-ordinators keep careful records of learners' progress and use this information well to manage their learning and monitor the effectiveness of the programme.

77. The council promotes and monitors equality of opportunity very effectively. Learners develop a very good understanding of equality and diversity. Literature on the council's equal opportunities policies they receive at induction has been revised effectively in response to the findings of the previous inspection. Programme co-ordinators use the progress review meetings well to check that learners are protected from harassment, bullying and discrimination, and to monitor their understanding of relevant issues. Learners apply their keen understanding of equality of opportunity very effectively at work. Many learners are successfully encouraged to work in departments that work with people with diverse needs. They have a good awareness of some of the challenges in dealing with a diverse local community in public-facing roles, and they adopt appropriate behaviour, modes and register of communication when working with the public, either face-to-face or on the telephone. In particular, many learners are very competent at communicating appropriately and effectively with people with mental health problems, physical disabilities or language barriers.

78. Procedures for quality improvement are good overall. The organisation's most recent self-assessment report was very thorough, well evidenced and appropriately evaluative. The council collects feedback from learners regularly and responds to it appropriately. For example, changes have been made to the induction process to reduce the burden of information. Internal verification is satisfactory. However, although workplace supervisors now receive appropriately detailed information about learners, and are involved effectively in progress reviews and assessments, the council does not provide sufficient opportunities for them to share good practice. For example, they do not share their approaches to supporting learners particularly in the transition period between ending the first placement and beginning the second. Some workplace supervisors use very different strategies for identifying appropriate learning opportunities and helping learners record evidence of their achievements. Some meetings for workplace supervisors have not been well attended. An induction for new supervisors has been held recently.

