

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **London Borough of Islington**

**13 October 2006**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

## Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

## Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Grading

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

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

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## **London Borough of Islington**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. London Borough of Islington Council (the council) is contracted by London Central Learning and Skills Council to provide adult and community learning services to more than 5,500 learners each year, most of whom live in Islington and other surrounding London boroughs. The adult and community learning service (the service) is part of the council's environment and regeneration department. The service's main aims are to widen participation in learning, to support learners to develop essential skills that will enable them to achieve and progress, and to provide a high standard of community-based learning in welcoming and accessible environments.
2. The service provides courses both directly and through subcontracting arrangements with a number of local voluntary and community organisations for community learning, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and family learning. Independent living and leisure skills provision, which accounts for approximately 15 per cent of enrolments, is subcontracted to City and Islington College (the college). Most of the provision at entry level is non-accredited, but the proportion of accredited provision on level 1 and level 2 courses has risen over the past three years. In 2005-06, there were 5,779 enrolments on 497 adult and community learning courses provided by the council, of which over 40 per cent were on community learning programmes. Enrolments on entry level and level 1 courses accounted for 95 per cent of the total enrolments in 2005-06.
3. The service is managed by the head of adult and community learning, who reports to the assistant director for regeneration. The management team comprises an e-learning and information and communications technology (ICT) manager, a quality and curriculum manager, a project and office manager responsible for arts, media and publishing, a skills for life manager, and a family learning manager. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The provision is delivered by approximately 90 tutors, of whom 14 work at City and Islington College. Most of the tutors work part time.
4. Islington is one of the smallest but most densely populated London boroughs. The population of the borough is approximately 181,000. The council, the college and two universities are the major employers in the borough, followed by real estate, renting and business activities, wholesale and retail trade, and health and social work. It is an area of London with great social contrasts. There is much wealth and prosperity, but also significant poverty and deprivation. The unemployment in the borough in June 2006 was 4.9 per cent. This was higher than the national average of 2.5 per cent and the London average of 3.4 per cent. According to the 2001 census, 24.6 per cent of the borough's population is from minority ethnic groups, compared with 9.1 per cent of the population nationally. The proportion of young people who achieved five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in 2005 was 44 per cent, compared with the national average of 57 per cent.

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

### Grade 3

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management and quality improvement are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is good. The quality of provision in preparation for life and work is good, and in family learning is satisfactory.

6. **Achievement and standards are good.** Retention rates and achievements are good on accredited community learning courses. Many of the learners who enrol on the service's courses have very few prior educational attainments or qualifications. The development and application of learners' skills are very good on community learning courses. Many learners on community learning and family learning programmes are able to identify the significant effects that learning has on their lives. Success rates and the development of learners' English skills on ESOL courses are satisfactory. Achievement rates are good for the small number of learners on accredited family learning courses.

7. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Of the 25 learning sessions observed by inspectors, 32 per cent were judged to be good or better, 52 per cent were satisfactory and 14 per cent were inadequate. On the best courses in all areas of learning, lessons are planned well and include a good range of practical activities. However, in many classes, insufficient work is carried out to meet learners' individual learning needs. Resources are satisfactory overall. The service has taken an active role in the improvement of many subcontractors' accommodation at learning centres. It has not made enough progress to implement the process of recognising and recording progress and achievement on non-accredited courses.

8. The range of programmes is broad and provided in line with identified community needs. Courses are available in all parts of the borough. The service has made a deliberate decision to subcontract much of its provision to providers located in the most economically disadvantaged wards. Much of the provision is offered at entry level and level 1 and supports well those courses run by other education and training providers, particularly the local college. Too few evening courses are available.

9. Support for learners is satisfactory. Tutors provide good personal support for learners and are very experienced at working with adults who are unsure about taking part in formal classes. The service makes good use of the expertise of external agencies to support particularly hard-to-reach learners. However, the arrangements to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are insufficient in community learning and family learning. The provision of information, advice and guidance for learners in family learning is not sufficiently systematic.

10. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is inclusive. It includes the views of staff, subcontractors, learners and external partners. The council has developed good procedures to record the strengths and weaknesses of each subcontractor and to summarise them accurately in its overall self-assessment report. The most recent report is detailed and critical, particularly with regard to the areas of learning. The strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors matched those given in the self-assessment report.

11. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.**

Since the previous inspection, the council has made significant progress to change the strategic focus of the service, but important weaknesses in teaching and learning remain. Many of the curriculum managers are still relatively new in post. Curriculum plans for each area of learning have been developed for 2006-07. The quality improvement plan is detailed and contains clear targets to bring about improvements. However, many of the service's processes and procedures are new or have been recently updated.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON:

- continue to develop the strategic role of the service in the regeneration of the borough
- improve the support for the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills across the service
- continue to develop the process for the observation of teaching and learning
- improve the focus on meeting the individual needs of learners in the classroom
- maintain the support for hard-to-reach learners
- continue to develop the self-assessment process
- develop a process for the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning

## GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

<b>Preparation for life and work</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>ESOL</b>		<b>4</b>	
Adult and community learning	274	4	
<b>Community learning</b>		<b>2</b>	
Adult and community learning	443	2	

<b>Family learning</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Adult and community learning</b>		<b>3</b>	
Adult and community learning	159	3	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

12. The council was first inspected in December 2002, and received a quality monitoring visit in September 2005. Six inspectors visited the council for five days to carry out the inspection in October 2006. They reported on and graded two areas of learning, including the contributory areas of ESOL and community learning. The provision in the contributory area of independent living and leisure skills was not inspected.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	30
Number of learners interviewed	120
Number of staff interviewed	58
Number of subcontractors interviewed	27
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	23
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	12
Number of visits	1

### Leadership and management

#### Strengths

- good strategic development of the service to support access to learning and local regeneration
- good support to develop the skills of subcontracted voluntary and community organisations
- particularly effective self-assessment process

#### Weaknesses

- slow implementation of strategies to improve learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills
- ineffective arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning

### Preparation for life and work

#### ESOL

##### *Strengths*

- responsive provision to meet the needs of the community

##### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient focus on meeting learners' needs in the classroom
- ineffective initial assessment for target-setting
- ineffective process for the observation of teaching and learning



## ***Community learning***

### *Strengths*

- good retention rates and achievements on courses leading to qualifications
- very good development and application of learners' skills
- good teaching strategies to engage learners
- particularly successful strategies to recruit and retain non-traditional learners

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient attention to learners' individual learning needs in some classes
- insufficient arrangements to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs
- insufficiently developed sharing of good practice in teaching and learning

## **Family learning**

### ***Adult and community learning***

### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' confidence to support their children's learning
- good range of courses to meet learners' needs and interests
- very effective strategies to recruit hard-to-reach learners

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient support for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs
- ineffective assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- insufficiently systematic information, advice and guidance
- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching and learning

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON:**

- the sensitive, friendly and approachable tutors – ‘they really help me with my homework with my children’
- the good development of skills – ‘it is amazing, I can understand multiplication for the first time’
- the social aspects of the classes – ‘I can meet other people like me’
- the good range of courses
- the standard of advice and guidance
- the good standards of teaching – ‘we are learning such a lot’

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON COULD IMPROVE:**

- the quality of advice and guidance on family learning courses – ‘no one has told me anything about other classes’
- the opening times at some learning centres
- the availability of higher-level courses
- the lack of challenge for learners in some classes
- the opportunity to check spellings in other languages on computers
- the availability of longer courses

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

#### Strengths

- good strategic development of the service to support access to learning and local regeneration
- good support to develop the skills of subcontracted voluntary and community organisations
- particularly effective self-assessment process

#### Weaknesses

- slow implementation of strategies to improve learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills
- ineffective arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning

13. The strategic development of the service to support access to learning and local regeneration is good. A comprehensive review of the service in 2003-04 has led to the targeting of resources at those adults most in need across the borough. At the previous inspection, much of the provision was leisure and recreational learning which took place at the subcontracted college. The role of the service has been defined clearly in relation to the provision offered by the college and voluntary and community organisations. In 2005-06, enrolments on community-based entry level and level 1 courses accounted for 37 per cent and 58 per cent of the total enrolments respectively. Forty-one per cent of the enrolments were on community learning programmes. Senior staff within the council have a very good knowledge of adult and community learning and clearly understand its contribution to the regeneration of the borough. The location of the service in the council's environment and regeneration department sends out a clear message to other parts of the council and external organisations about the importance of adult learning as a stimulus for neighbourhood renewal and economic regeneration. Managers make good use of thorough research on local needs analysis to target resources very effectively. Careful planning is carried out to ensure equity of access to learning across the borough. Many of the learning centres are located in the most economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Good partnerships exist with a number of agencies to support access to learning for very hard-to-reach groups of learners. However, the service's three-year strategic plan for 2006-09 does not identify clear strategies for its development.

14. The council has a productive working relationship with the college. Senior managers in the service and the college have worked well together to develop a clear understanding of each organisation's strengths and how they can be used to benefit adult learners across the borough. The contract with the college identifies clear targets and the responsibilities of each organisation. The curriculum for the subcontracted independent living and leisure skills provision has been changed for 2006-07 to focus much more on learners' employability and life skills. The service has supported the continued provision of some ESOL courses which were at risk due to funding cuts imposed on the college. Staff in both organisations have started to work closely together to identify progression routes from the service's provision, which is predominantly at entry level and level 1, to higher-level courses at the college. Staff in the service are currently arranging a series of

open days at the college to offer advice and guidance to individual groups of learners from different learning centres.

15. The council provides good support to develop the skills of subcontracted voluntary and community organisations. The support given by the service to subcontractors has enabled the provision of a coherent and sustainable curriculum across the borough. The service uses a thorough, well-structured contract tendering process to ensure that voluntary and community organisations analyse carefully their target learners, avoid any duplication of provision, and provide progression routes. Contracts for 2006-07 are detailed and contain appropriate qualitative and quantitative targets. Subcontracted providers have a good knowledge of the service's key priorities. The service has provided additional funding to subcontractors to carry out refurbishment of premises and to cover non-teaching overheads. The standards of accommodation and equipment are good at many learning centres. The service's curriculum managers who act as contract managers work well to support the development of individual subcontractors. Staff at most learning centres comment that their contract managers are approachable, responsive and supportive. At the same time, contract managers are not afraid to take difficult decisions and funding is withheld where providers do not meet their contract targets. The service's widening participation officer plays a very significant role in engaging with particularly hard-to-reach learners and supporting their attendance at classes. The service has developed a good comprehensive quality assurance toolkit in consultation with subcontractors.

16. Resources are satisfactory overall. The service has taken an active role in improving the standards of accommodation at many learning centres. Subcontractors make suitable arrangements to meet the needs of learners with restricted mobility at most venues. Some learning centres have benefited from recent investment in new equipment to assist teaching and learning, which is used well by tutors. However, some learning materials are not of a satisfactory standard.

17. Curriculum management and planning are satisfactory. Most of the curriculum managers have been appointed within the past 18 months and many have previous experience of working in the voluntary and community sector. Teamwork and communications are good and managers have a very positive approach to bringing about improvements in the service. The service did not have a curriculum plan last year, but has developed an overall curriculum framework for 2006-07. The priorities identified in the overall framework have been used by each curriculum manager to produce detailed plans for each subject area. Individual curriculum managers are starting to improve links between the curriculum areas and to develop more coherent internal and external progression routes for learners.

18. The use of management information to monitor and set targets is satisfactory. Curriculum managers have not had access to reliable data for individual curriculum areas to evaluate accurately the effects of some actions. However, data is used well to analyse the needs of local communities and to ensure effective targeting of resources. Monthly data reports for each subcontractor are used well to monitor performance and to take actions where providers do not meet the targets set for them. The targets set for individual subcontractors are realistic.

19. The council has not made enough progress to implement processes to identify and

record progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. The quality assurance toolkit issued to all subcontractors contains detailed guidance on assessment practices and includes examples of paperwork that can be used to record learners' progress and achievement. The service has carried out useful training for subcontractors on the implementation of appropriate processes for non-accredited courses. Some tutors monitor learners' progress and achievements well, particularly on community learning courses. However, on family learning courses where most of the provision is non-accredited, the assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' progress are ineffective.

20. The implementation of strategies to improve learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is slow. This weakness was identified by inspectors at the previous inspection and at the subsequent quality monitoring inspection. A number of improvements have been made during 2005-06. A new skills for life manager has been appointed. A range of new discrete skills for life courses have been developed, together with courses where literacy, numeracy and language skills are integrated with subjects such as ICT, fashion design, making video diaries and radio production. The number of enrolments on skills for life courses has risen from 443 in 2004-05 to over 700 in 2005-06. However, examination entries for national tests in literacy and/or numeracy have fallen during the same period. Much of the provision now takes place in community-based learning centres. Fourteen of the service's 17 learning centres in 2005-06 offered skills for life provision. The service's skills for life strategy incorporates good research to identify target groups and the issues facing the service locally. The priorities for 2006-07 are identified clearly in the quality improvement plan. However, at the time of the inspection, individual learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are not being met in most curriculum areas. The service does not have adequate arrangements to meet the needs of all learners who require additional support to develop their literacy, numeracy and language skills. Initial assessment is not always used to plan individual learning. The service does not carry out sufficient monitoring of the number of learners who receive support or the effect that any support given has on learners' achievements. In some cases, the offer of additional support relies too much on tutors' awareness of the availability of support, rather than on any set procedures. Some learners are expected to travel to unfamiliar centres for additional literacy, numeracy and language support. The ESOL provision does not adequately meet the needs of learners

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

21. Equality of opportunity is good. Social inclusion lies at the heart of the work of the service. Adult and community learning plays an important role in the regeneration of the borough. Good use is made of research to plan the service's provision and to bring about strategies that successfully attract hard-to-reach learners from a diverse range of backgrounds. In many cases, the service has deliberately targeted particularly vulnerable learners such as homeless people and those recovering from alcohol and drug misuse. Entry level and level 1 courses account for a substantial proportion of the service's total provision. The service's key plans, frameworks and contracts with subcontractors all contain appropriate targets to increase participation in learning by particular groups of under-represented adults. Targets are monitored at management meetings and as part of the contract monitoring process. Actions are taken where targets are not met. Important performance indicators for different groups of learners are monitored to assess the effect of the service's widening participation strategies. Access to learning is good across the borough, but there are too few opportunities to attend courses in the evening. The

service's widening participation officer plays a significant role in recruiting new learners most in need of support, through very good links with agencies such as housing offices, doctors' surgeries and local schools. The service's policies on fee concessions and the waiving of fees remove a significant barrier to learning for many adults in the borough.

22. The council has a satisfactory range of equality and diversity policies. All staff are set an individual equalities target as part of the appraisal process. Subcontractors are required to comply with the council's 'dignity for all' policy and its equality of opportunity policies are checked by the service. The quality assurance toolkit incorporates suitable electronic templates for important policies and procedures, which can be adapted by individual providers. Most learning centres are accessible to learners with restricted mobility and the service has provided specific funding to improve accessibility and the range of adaptive and assistive technology at some venues. Learners' achievements are celebrated at a number of events throughout the borough each year. Equality of opportunity is reinforced appropriately in most learning sessions. For example, in a digital photography class, a tutor demonstrated sensitive use of different skin tones and textures when explaining how to compose digital photographs.

23. Insufficient focus is given to meeting the needs of individual learners in the classroom. Some learners are not given sufficient support to develop their literacy, numeracy and language skills. However, the service has identified this weakness in its most recent self-assessment report. It has a number of detailed targets in the quality improvement plan for 2006-07 to rectify this issue in individual curriculum areas.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 3**

24. Quality improvement is satisfactory. Quality improvement processes across the service closely match the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework. The service has started to develop a clear framework for quality improvement, but many of the procedures are either very new or have been recently updated. They have not yet been in place for sufficient time to assess their effect on the quality of provision. Managers have started to hold quality meetings to review data and feedback from a range of sources and to monitor progress against the quality improvement plan. Contract managers have started to check the quality of learners' paperwork in subcontracted providers through the contract monitoring process. Funding is withheld until providers meet the requirements of the contract in terms of supplying important paperwork such as schemes of work and individual learning plans. However, contract managers do not allow sufficient time at contract monitoring review meetings to carry out all aspects of the review and action plans following the meetings are insufficiently detailed. The service has developed an appropriate system to internally verify assessments on accredited courses where small voluntary and community organisations do not have sufficient staff to carry out internal verification on their own.

25. The self-assessment process is particularly effective. Managers in the service have a critical and honest approach to identifying improvements to the provision. The service has started to incorporate continuous reviews of performance into its quality framework through contract management meetings with subcontractors. Managers have a good awareness of the differences in the quality of provision between individual learning centres. Learners' feedback is collected in a number of different ways and incorporated into the self-assessment process. The service has a clear procedure for the production of self-assessment reports. Managers give good support to individual subcontractors that

have little previous experience of self-assessment to produce comprehensive reports. Curriculum managers use subcontractors' self-assessment reports to write an overall report for each area of learning and a summary report for the service. The final self-assessment report is an accurate representation of subcontractors' individual reports. The service's most recent self-assessment report is evaluative and realistic. It identifies clearly many of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and the supporting evidence for each judgement. Inspectors' judgements match many of those for the areas of learning in the most recent self-assessment report. However, weaknesses found by inspectors in leadership and management are not identified in the leadership and management section of the report. Learning centres receive copies of the final self-assessment report and the quality improvement plan. The plan incorporates clear objectives and actions to rectify the weaknesses in the self-assessment report and to continue to maintain the strengths. However, a number of weaknesses remain from the previous inspection and it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the most recent self-assessment report and quality improvement plan. Insufficient action has been taken to resolve some important weaknesses in teaching and learning identified at the previous inspection. The management team is still relatively new and curriculum planning is incomplete.

26. Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning are ineffective. Wide variations exist in the quality of provision across the service. The service has recently developed a new process for the observation of teaching and learning. Observations carried out using the previous system in 2005-06 were too descriptive. The grades given by observers did not accurately reflect the written feedback. The revised process is structured well. New paperwork used for observation provides a useful prompt for observers, but does not contain a reminder to assess the teaching and learning of literacy, language and numeracy skills. All observers have been trained in how to carry out lesson observations, but some observers do not identify important weaknesses in teaching and learning, such as poor literacy, language and numeracy support. Some do not have the necessary experience and qualifications to observe classes accurately and confidently. In some cases, observers are unable to substantiate accurately the observation grades they give for classes. There is insufficient sharing of good practice across the service. Good practice observed in classes during the inspection is not shared between tutors. The service does not yet carry out any moderation of assessment practices on non-accredited courses.



## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Preparation for life and work

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>ESOL</b>		<b>4</b>
Adult and community learning	274	4
<b>Community learning</b>		<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning	443	2

27. At the time of the inspection, 443 learners were enrolled on 78 accredited and non-accredited community learning courses and 274 learners were enrolled on 22 ESOL programmes. Community learning courses account for just over 40 per cent of the service's total provision. In 2005-06, there were 2,653 enrolments on 280 community learning courses and 451 enrolments on ESOL programmes. Programmes are delivered directly by the service through subcontracting arrangements with a range of voluntary and community organisations. Community learning courses range from entry level to level 2 in ICT, arts, media and publishing, and literacy and numeracy. They include accredited ICT programmes at level 1 and level 2, literacy, numeracy, web design and video production. The ESOL provision is made up mainly of English language courses at entry levels 1, 2 and 3 and levels 1 and 2. In addition to general English courses, some of the provision is integrated with vocational subjects such as ICT, fashion, healthy eating and media. Most community learning and ESOL courses take place during the daytime, and run for between two and 15 hours each week. They vary in length from two weeks to courses which run for a full year. There are a small number of courses which take place in the evening. Courses are offered at 17 community-based venues, including community centres, learning centres in schools, a mobile bus and the Arsenal football stadium. Approximately two-thirds of the learners on community learning courses are women. One third of the learners are aged between 30 and 44, and just under a quarter are aged 45 to 60. Seventy per cent of the learners on community learning programmes are from minority ethnic groups. Learners on ESOL courses come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, with the main regions of origin being Turkey, Cyprus, Bangladesh and Eastern Europe. Three curriculum managers are responsible for community learning and they work with approximately 50 staff who are employed either directly by the service or by the subcontracted learning centres. The service's skills for life manager is responsible for the ESOL provision, assisted by six centre managers. They manage 12 part-time tutors.

### ESOL

#### Strengths

- responsive provision to meet the needs of the community

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on meeting learners' needs in the classroom
- ineffective initial assessment for target-setting



- ineffective process for the observation of teaching and learning

### **Achievement and standards**

28. Success rates are satisfactory overall. In 2005-06, the success rate on accredited courses was 69 per cent. Success rates for entry level 1 courses were poor in 2005-06 at 64 per cent. They were satisfactory at entry level 2 and entry level 3 at 69 per cent and 72 per cent respectively. Ninety-four per cent of the total enrolments last year were on entry level courses. The success rate for the 16 learners on level 1 courses was good at 100 per cent. The service has taken positive steps to rectify the poor success rates on entry level 1 courses through the introduction of non-accredited provision for beginners. Retention rates are satisfactory. In 2005-06, the overall retention rate was 76 per cent. Attendance rates are satisfactory, but only averaged 63 per cent in the classes observed during the inspection. However, the inspection took place during an important Muslim religious festival. Attendance was particularly poor at the inadequate classes.

29. In 2005-06, all non-accredited courses were delivered at entry level. Most of the non-accredited provision is integrated with a vocational subject such as fashion and radio production. Retention and success rates on non-accredited courses are satisfactory.

30. The development of learners' English skills is satisfactory overall. However, there are significant variations in learners' attainment between courses. Where teaching standards are good, learners make very good progress, for example in their ability to use new vocabulary and language structures. However, in the weaker learning sessions, learners' progress is poor. The poor targets set for some learners do not help them to develop their individual personal and learning skills.

### **The quality of provision**

31. The good range of ESOL courses is provided in response to the needs of the community. The service works well with partners to offer programmes in accessible learning centres throughout the borough. Different groups of learners are attracted to different locations and types of provision. Courses are offered at a wide range of levels, ranging from pre-entry level to level 2. Some courses are integrated well with vocational subjects. However, very few courses are offered in the evening for those adults who work during the daytime.

32. Resources are generally satisfactory. Most classrooms in learning centres are spacious, bright and furnished appropriately. However, the accommodation at one venue is small and noisy. Most centres have a good range of multimedia equipment, such as computers, compact disc players, and interactive whiteboards. However, many tutors do not use these multimedia resources. Learners at some centres have access to good books, audio and video tapes and skills for life resources. Learning materials used in some classes are poor. Handouts are not reproduced well and are hard to read. Most tutors are appropriately qualified and the service actively supports those teaching staff who want to study for professional teacher training qualifications.

33. There is insufficient focus on meeting learners' needs in the classroom. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors in a small number of learning sessions observed during the inspection provided good learning. They plan lessons well and use imaginative and stimulating subjects to develop learners' speaking, listening, reading and

writing skills. They give learners constructive feedback on their use of language and provide good opportunities for learners to consolidate new aspects of language learning over time. However, aspects of the teaching and learning are poor in many lessons. Most learners receive little or no feedback on the standard of their spoken English. Learners' grammatical, pronunciation and intonation mistakes are not corrected. Most lesson plans do not contain strategies to anticipate individual learners' needs, such as their difficulty with understanding spoken instructions or the need for additional materials to occupy faster learners. Tutors' teaching practices do not adequately meet the needs of learners who are at different stages of language learning. Some learners who are not provided with sufficiently challenging activities to help them to achieve higher standards become frustrated and bored in lessons.

34. Initial assessment for target-setting is ineffective, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Initial assessments of learners' reading and writing skills are carried out at most learning centres, but the information is not used sufficiently to set learners detailed targets. Initial assessments contain insufficient evidence of learners' ability to speak and understand English, and evaluative comment on these skills is inadequate. Tasks to assess reading and writing skills are not assessed thoroughly. Insufficient analysis is carried out of learners' abilities.

### **Leadership and management**

35. The service has good systems to develop new courses and to manage its subcontractors. The quality improvement plan accurately identifies important areas for improvement and includes clear and measurable targets. However, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of most of these changes on the quality of the provision. Management information is not always used effectively to monitor performance of the curriculum area.

36. Support for staff is satisfactory. Some tutors receive good support from their managers at learning centres. However, not all centres provide tutors with sufficient support for language-specific aspects of teaching and learning. Teaching staff do not have enough opportunities to meet and share good practice. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Tutors have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Teaching materials and publicity reflect the diverse nature of the local community. The strengths and weaknesses in the service's most recent self-assessment report for skills for life match most of those identified by inspectors. However, the report does not adequately identify the effects of some of the weaknesses in ESOL on the quality of teaching and learning.

37. Processes to observe the quality of teaching and learning are ineffective. Observers' written comments following observations are too descriptive and are not sufficiently evaluative. Too much emphasis is placed on the performance of the tutor, and there is not enough focus on what learning takes place. Significant weaknesses identified in observers' written reports are not always followed up with tutors through action-planning to improve teaching and learning. Feedback in the reports does not always match the grade given by observers. The service has produced a useful summary analysis of the weaknesses identified through observations of learning sessions, but the report focuses too much on procedures and not enough on the quality of teaching and learning.

## ***Community learning***

### *Strengths*

- good retention rates and achievements on courses leading to qualifications
- very good development and application of learners' skills
- good teaching strategies to engage learners
- particularly successful strategies to recruit and retain non-traditional learners

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient attention to learners' individual learning needs in some classes
- insufficient arrangements to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs
- insufficiently developed sharing of good practice in teaching and learning

## **Achievement and standards**

38. Retention rates and achievements are good on courses leading to qualifications. Many of the learners join accredited courses with very few prior educational attainments or qualifications. In 2004-05, the retention and success rates on one of the main ICT courses offered at level 1 and level 2 were 84 per cent and 77 per cent respectively. In 2005-06, 66 per cent of learners achieved the full level 2 qualification. Many of these learners had no previous experience of ICT. Of the 45 learners who started the computer graphics course in 2004-05, 87 per cent completed the course and 75 per cent achieved the qualification. In 2005-06, the success rate improved to 85 per cent. Eighty-three per cent of the learners who entered for the national literacy test at level 1 in 2004-05 achieved the qualification. At level 2, the success rate was 77 per cent.

39. Learners' progression to other courses within the service is good. The service only has data for internal progression rates. Learners on literacy and numeracy courses progress from entry level to level 1 courses. In 2005-06, 44 per cent of the learners progressed to a course at a higher level. In arts, media and publishing, just over half of the learners progressed to other courses in 2005-06. In ICT, just under half of the learners at one of the main centres and just over a third at another main centre progressed internally to other courses in 2005-06.

40. The development and application of learners' skills are very good. Many learners are able to identify the significant effect that learning has on their lives and the social well-being promoted by regular attendance at learning sessions. They gain in self-confidence and self-esteem. For example, learners on a creative writing course to improve their literacy skills have had their work published in local magazines. Learners on media courses have had their work displayed on the internet. Many learners on ICT courses use their skills to send e-mails to relatives in other countries, to access the internet to carry out their own research, and to keep up with their children and grandchildren. In a business administration class, the learners displayed a good range of personal and practical skills as they applied their understanding of hierarchies to management organisations.

41. The standard of learners' work in learning sessions is satisfactory. Many learners

make good progress during the time they are on a course. However, some learners are not given sufficient opportunity to develop their independent learning skills.

### **The quality of provision**

42. Tutors use good teaching strategies. Standards of teaching and learning are good overall. In the better learning sessions, tutors use good instructional techniques to present and demonstrate new learning. For example, they use interactive whiteboards well to explain how to complete word-processing tasks and how to manipulate digital photographic images. Learners follow tutors' instructions carefully and enjoy practising their new skills. Tutors encourage learners to participate in classes through the use of challenging questions. For example, in one learning session where English was not the learners' first language, learners shared their answers to questions on the interactive whiteboard and practised the use of technical vocabulary associated with the software application. Tutors ensure that learning activities are varied with regular changes from group work to working alone and in pairs. In another class, the tutor used peer learning and feedback particularly well to demonstrate the completion of the set task. Volunteer helpers are used well to support learners in many learning sessions.

43. Resources are generally good. Some learning centres have very good facilities for learning and most venues have benefited from recent investment in new technology, including interactive whiteboards and new computers. However, the classrooms at a few learning centres are small and have inadequate desk space for learners. The computer network is slow at times.

44. The range of community learning courses is satisfactory. The location of learning venues meets community needs. The service ensures that learning centres are spread across the borough. Good use is made of the mobile computer bus to make learning available in those areas that are less well served by learning centres. Learners benefit from the opportunity to attend workshops and open-access sessions at many centres. They are able to practise the skills learnt in the classroom and they receive good individual support. However, there are too few literacy and numeracy courses to meet learners' needs. The service offers little evening provision for those learners who have to work during the daytime.

45. Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Very few staff at learning centres have professional qualifications in information, advice and guidance, but some are able to offer good informal guidance on further education and training. Personal support for learners is effective. Tutors know their learners well and respond sensitively to their individual needs. Learners value the support they receive in learning sessions and in their spare time. Some learning centres work well with external agencies to provide specialist support for learners, and dyslexia support is good. However, the arrangements for support at some venues rely too much on individual tutors' skills and knowledge.

46. Insufficient attention is given to learners' individual learning needs in some classes. In the less effective learning sessions, tutors' lesson plans do not identify approaches to learning that meet learners' individual needs and abilities. Some learning sessions are not sufficiently challenging for more capable learners. The pace of some classes does not ensure that sufficient time is available for more able learners to develop their skills further.

In some instances, tutors use inappropriate teaching styles to meet learners' identified needs. For example, some tutors rely on lengthy oral presentations to deliver practical content and do not provide learners with any suitable guidelines to help them remember important points when they come to carry out the tasks themselves.

47. The arrangements to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are insufficient. The service has identified this weakness in its most recent self-assessment report. The quality of initial assessment varies across the different centres. At some subcontractors, initial assessment does not identify learners' additional support needs. The service does not have sufficient resources to respond effectively to the support needs of all learners. Where initial assessment is carried out appropriately, the service does not monitor effectively learners' subsequent participation in literacy, numeracy and language classes. The service has developed a number of community learning courses that integrate literacy and numeracy well. However, the teaching of literacy, numeracy and language skills is poor on some vocational courses which are advertised to incorporate the development of these skills. The number of learners entering for national tests in literacy and numeracy has fallen in the past two years.

### **Leadership and management**

48. Strategies to recruit and retain non-traditional learners are particularly successful. The service has developed good strategic partnerships with many local community groups, libraries, training providers and other internal council departments, to promote learning opportunities in the community to vulnerable and hard-to-reach learners. All courses are free of charge. The service sets subcontractors realistic targets to recruit specific under-represented groups of learners and monitors recruitment closely. Good use is made of partners' facilities and skills to remove barriers to learning. For example, learning advisers accompany learners to their first class to introduce them to the learning environment and to help them gain confidence. The service works well with agencies that represent refugees, asylum seekers and former substance abusers to support their progress towards active citizenship. Good links between the service and Arsenal Football Club ensure that learners benefit from free access to the club's museum as a learning resource, tours of the stadium and use of the excellent ICT facilities. Innovative ideas are used to attract learners into learning. For example, one initiative is modelled on a football match and involves learners studying essential skills for 45 minutes, and then playing football for the remaining 45 minutes.

49. Since the reorganisation of the service in 2003-04, curriculum managers have worked well to establish a coherent approach to curriculum planning. Managers carry out contract monitoring visits to subcontractors each term, which focus on recruitment, retention and achievement data and areas for improvement. Progress towards recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement on non-accredited courses is satisfactory. The service has established a quality framework for this process and has held a number of useful staff development sessions.

50. The self-assessment process is largely inclusive. It incorporates the views of curriculum managers, managers at the subcontracted learning centres, tutors, learners and most external partners. The most recent self-assessment report for community learning is evaluative and highlights many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. The subsequent quality improvement plan contains detailed targets for improvement for each curriculum area in community learning. However, the implementation of some

quality improvement initiatives has been slow in community learning, such as the development of subcontractors' skills to carry out observations of teaching and learning.

51. The sharing of good practice in teaching and learning is insufficiently developed. The quality of learning resources varies between different centres. Some tutors evaluate their learning sessions regularly as part of their planning and review process, but others do not. Some tutors help learners to record their learning carefully and to evaluate it thoughtfully, but this good practice is not shared with other staff. There were wide variations in the quality of teaching and learning in the classes observed by inspectors during the inspection.

**Family learning****Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	159	3

52. The council provides family literacy, language and numeracy programmes, and courses for wider family learning. The provision offers a range of opportunities for parents to develop their own skills and to support their children's learning. Courses are delivered directly by the service and through subcontracting arrangements with four providers including the college and the Workers' Educational Association. At the time of the inspection, 159 learners were enrolled on 17 courses at 15 learning centres across the borough. In 2005-06, there were 947 enrolments on family learning courses. The service worked with 44 partners last year to deliver family learning, including primary schools, secondary schools, libraries, children's centres and neighbourhood learning centres. Eighty-six family literacy, language and numeracy courses were offered in 2005-06, of which seven were GCSEs in learners' first language. The 40 wider family learning courses included three accredited 'helping in schools' programmes. In 2006-07, the wider family learning programmes include making Indian shadow puppets, dads and lads computer games, mothers and daughters technology and costume making. Some courses are targeted at specific groups of learners in the Turkish, Somali and Bengali communities. The service's family learning manager is responsible for the provision.

***Adult and community learning******Strengths***

- good development of learners' confidence to support their children's learning
- good range of courses to meet learners' needs and interests
- very effective strategies to recruit hard-to-reach learners

***Weaknesses***

- insufficient support for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs
- ineffective assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- insufficiently systematic information, advice and guidance
- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching and learning

**Achievement and standards**

53. There is good development of learners' confidence to support their children's learning. Parents and carers discover the enjoyment of learning and the importance of the role of play in the education of young children. They gain self-confidence through talking to tutors and feel more able to express views and opinions about their own, and their children's, learning. Learners increase their understanding of how children learn and of the strategies and specialist language used by teachers to teach literacy and numeracy in schools. They are able to use the skills they learn to support their children at home. For example, learners with babies and very young children learn how to use books and games



creatively to support the early development of language skills. Learners on a family learning numeracy course observed by inspectors enjoyed practising their multiplication skills with number lines and a flashcard question game. They improve their understanding of important mathematical concepts. Many learners benefit from improved relationships with their children after spending time working with them on activities at home.

54. Retention rates are good. In 2005-06, the overall retention rate was 90 per cent. However, many of the courses were one-day workshops or short 12-hour programmes. Of the 35 learners enrolled on 'mother tongue' GCSE courses in 2005-06, 77 per cent achieved the qualification. Forty-six per cent of learners achieved a GCSE at grades C or above. Many of these learners had only limited previous educational opportunities and valued the opportunity to gain a GCSE qualification. Achievement rates for the 29 learners on the accredited 'helping in schools' course were very good in 2005-06 at 97 per cent.

### **The quality of provision**

55. The range of family learning courses to meet learners' needs and interests is good. Good partnership arrangements ensure that family learning courses take place in the most disadvantaged parts of the borough. The learning centres provide a welcoming and reassuring environment for non-traditional groups of learners unsure about attending classes for the first time. Classes are held in convenient locations at times that suit learners who have other commitments. Many parents and carers progress from introductory workshop sessions to specific longer courses. Successful initiatives to target learners from minority ethnic groups include the opportunity to study for GCSEs in their first language, such as Bengali and Arabic, alongside their children in year 6 at school.

56. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory on family learning programmes. Some classes are planned and managed well to develop discussion on issues relating to children's learning. The better learning sessions include a good range of practical activities and learners enjoy the classes. However, in the weaker learning sessions, teaching and learning do not always meet the needs of individual learners. Joint learning activities for parents and children are not adequately planned. Resources are generally satisfactory. Some classrooms have small chairs and low tables that are not suitable for adults. Some teaching and learning resources are not always adapted appropriately to meet the needs of learners who require additional language support.

57. Insufficient support is given to learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs. Initial assessments focus on identifying learners' needs as parents and the aspects of parenting skills which they wish to improve, but do not set sufficient targets to improve learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills. Learners often have difficulties with writing or understanding language in learning sessions. Many family learning tutors are not sufficiently aware of the good opportunities that arise in parenting activity classes for learners to practise their literacy, numeracy and language skills. Some tutors are not sufficiently confident to talk to learners about their individual strengths and areas for development.

58. The assessment, monitoring and recording of learners' progress are ineffective. Initial assessment activities are informal and are often carried out as part of an introductory learning session on how to use games to stimulate learning. Some tutors record the outcomes from initial assessment carefully, but others do not record any of the



information formally. The skills and needs identified for development during initial assessment are often not shared with learners. Learners on family literacy, language and numeracy courses have individual learning plans, but the targets identified are based on general aims for the group rather than explicit outcomes for each individual learner. Learners do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the skills to monitor their own progress effectively.

59. The procedures for providing information, advice and guidance for learners are not sufficiently systematic. More experienced tutors who have a good knowledge of adult learning opportunities within the borough are able to give learners informal advice on further education and training. However, the quality of information, advice and guidance relies too much on the knowledge of individual tutors, some of whom only have a background in teaching children. There are no formal procedures to provide learners with appropriate information, advice and guidance across the family learning provision. Advice and guidance sessions are not routinely included in tutors' schemes of work. Some learners enrol on courses that are not appropriate to meet their needs and remain on the programme because their tutor does not have sufficient knowledge of other more suitable learning opportunities. Learners at some venues do not have access to sufficient promotional literature on further education and training.

### **Leadership and management**

60. The service has very effective strategies to recruit hard-to-reach learners. In 2005-06, 77 per cent of the learners were from a minority ethnic background and almost 20 per cent of the learners were men. Family learning staff work hard to develop good working relationships with a wide range of external agencies and internal council departments. These include the ethnic minority achievement service, the extended schools service, primary schools, Sure Start and the library service. The family learning manager plays an important role in a local partnership with parent's forum, which helps to bring about effective planning and opportunities to promote the role of family learning. Good use of subcontractors enhances the range of skills available to widen the curriculum offer for learners. The service has developed a family learning quality assurance toolkit to support consistency in teaching and learning across a diverse range of partners. However, it is too early to assess the impact of the toolkit on all providers as some have not yet been trained in how to implement its guidelines and procedures. The service responds well to learner feedback and is currently negotiating the introduction of longer family literacy, language and numeracy courses in primary schools following requests made by parents and carers.

61. There is insufficient sharing of good practice. Evaluations carried out by tutors and learners identify some areas of good practice which are not subsequently shared across the service. Some tutors spend a long time developing good teaching and learning strategies and resources and others produce learning materials when they already exist elsewhere. Attendance at staff training and development events is poor and tutors have insufficient time to develop ideas and good practice with each other.

62. The most recent self-assessment report accurately identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses of the family learning provision. Inspectors' judgements matched those of the service. The report is honest and self-critical and demonstrates a good understanding of what improvements are required.

