# West Sussex LEA Reinspection

Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection Report 27 January 2006

**Reinspection date**                          23 November 2007

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# Background information

## Inspection judgements

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

# Description of the provider

1.  The West Sussex Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) is part of the county council's children and young people's services directorate. It provides a range of programmes in a variety of venues across the county including libraries, village halls and schools. Its contract with the Learning and Skills Council includes accredited and non-accredited learning and personal and community development learning (PCDL) provision. The new head of service was appointed in September 2006 and is supported by two senior managers. One manages service improvement and the other localities and resources. Following a radical restructure, curriculum managers have been appointed to lead each subject area. West Sussex is a diverse county with seaside resorts in the South, rural areas in the middle and urban Crawley in the North East.

# Grades

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

Grades awarded at previous inspection

| Leadership and management | 3 |
|---|---|
| Contributory grades: | |
| Equality of opportunity | 3 |
| Quality improvement | 4 |

| Information and communications technology | | 4 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *ICT for users* | | *4* |
| Adult and community learning | 1,024 | 4 |

| Leisure, travel and tourism | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Sport, leisure and recreation* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 2,857 | 3 |

| Arts, media and publishing | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Dance* | | |
| Adult and community learning | 721 | 3 |
| *Dramatic arts* | | |
| Adult and community learning | 10 | 3 |
| *Music* | | |
| Adult and community learning | 225 | 3 |
| *Fine arts* | | |
| Adult and community learning | 1,326 | 3 |
| *Crafts* | | |
| Adult and community learning | 525 | 3 |
| *Design* | | |
| Adult and community learning | 28 | 3 |
| *Media and communication* | | |
| Adult and community learning | 55 | 3 |

| Languages, literature and culture | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Language, literature and culture of the British Isles* Adult and community learning | 102 | 3 |
| *Other languages, literature and culture* Adult and community learning | 2,090 | 3 |

| Preparation for life and work | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *ESOL* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 523 | 3 |
| *Literacy and numeracy* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 780 | 3 |
| *Independent living and leisure skills* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 267 | 3 |

| Family learning | | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Adult and community learning* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 338 | 2 |

Grades awarded at reinspection

| Information and communications technology | | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *ICT for users* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 727 | 2 |

# About the reinspection

2.  The previous inspection judged all except two sector subject areas to be satisfactory. Family learning was graded good and information and communications technology (ICT) was graded unsatisfactory. The contributory grade for quality assurance was also unsatisfactory. The reinspection focused entirely on ICT for users and did not examine quality assurance as a whole. Three monitoring visits included joint observations with provider staff and discussions about progress. Following the reinspection, all sector subject areas are judged satisfactory or better. Overall effectiveness remains satisfactory. Provision in ICT for users is now good.

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of inspectors | 2 |
| Number of inspection days | 12 |
| Number of learners interviewed | 109 |
| Number of staff interviewed | 12 |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 15 |
| Number of visits to the provider | 4 * |

* includes three monitoring visits

# Areas of learning

## Information and communications technology          Grade 2

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *ICT for users* | | *2* |
| Adult and Community Learning | 727 | 2 |

3.  The provider had 727 learners enrolled on 83 courses during the inspection week. On courses leading to qualifications at level 1 to 3, there were 155 learners. On long non-accredited courses there were 181 learners and 391 on short introductory programmes. Venues include libraries, schools and community centres as well as centres solely dedicated to adult learning. Daytime, evening and weekend courses are available as well as distance learning for the European Computer Driving Licence.

*ICT for users*

*Strengths*

- high and rising success rates and good skills development
- much good teaching and learning
- very strong partnership work to develop community projects
- highly effective action to improve the quality of ICT provision

*Weaknesses*

- insufficiently developed systems to record learner progress
- insufficiently co-ordinated information advice and guidance on some courses

**Achievement and standards**

4.  Success rates are good and improving. Overall success rates have risen in the last three years from 84% to 90%. The success rate on the distance learning programme, highlighted as a weakness at the previous inspection, rose from 59% to 75%. The service has a good strategy to follow up repeated absence from sessions. Attendance at sessions observed was satisfactory at 86%.

5.  Learners develop good skills and confidence in using a range of software. For instance, emailing newsletters for voluntary organisations, helping children with homework, producing attractive digital photographs and shopping via the internet. Learners enjoy and are stimulated by their learning.

6.  Learners make satisfactory progress in lessons at a level appropriate to their previous experience and their chosen course. Progression between courses and levels is good.

**The quality of provision**

7. Most teaching and learning is good. Two thirds of the lessons observed were graded good or better, including three outstanding sessions. Lessons are well planned with a wide variety of activities to develop and reinforce learning. Many tutors use well designed presentations punctuated with lively discussions, for example in one session learners had a spirited discussion on e-commerce, in another the pros and cons of different search engines. Questioning technique is used very well to check learning and develop new topics. Activities build productively on previous learning to consolidate skills. Tutors make good use of learners' work to illustrate learning points. Learners have topical learning materials of good quality containing helpful graphics that enable them to consolidate their learning at home. In several sessions, interactive whiteboards were used very effectively to demonstrate software techniques. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic tutors are flexible about the pace, running order and content both within sessions and through the whole programme. They are highly responsive to learners' requests to cover relevant topics of special interest. They take care to pace the learning appropriately for learners who might find it difficult to retain information, with prompt reinforcement of demonstrations through practising newly acquired skills. They are sensitive to individual learners' needs in suggesting approaches suitable for those learners with less mobility for instance, to avoid mouse clicks. Tutors give good individual support during practical sessions, rarely taking control of the learner's computer.

8. However, in a few sessions, tutors were too prescriptive and did not give learners sufficient opportunity to extend their skills in their own way. They did not sufficiently check learning. Learners spent too little time engaged productively and made slow progress in learning.

9. Very strong partnerships within the council and the voluntary sector generate innovative community projects that change lives. Partnerships within the council allow the service to offer courses in a wide and increasing range of congenial settings, including libraries and schools close to learners' homes. External partners appreciate the service's flexible response to need and demand is growing from non traditional groups. Outreach work with surgeries identified a need amongst vulnerable elderly people and isolated carers. They learned to use mobile phones to summon help or receive messages from the doctor, and internet courses enabled them to shop without leaving home. A particularly helpful outcome was a 'survival kit' contact card that all learners made during the course. Learners' own stories creatively captured on video present a powerful testament to the project's impact. Another very successful project at a nursery empowered young mothers to overcome post natal depression. Many achieved useful qualifications. A highly individualised and topical course for elderly people in a charity-owned centre develops mental acuity and co-ordination as well as useful ICT skills.

10. The systems to record learners' progress are insufficiently developed. The previous inspection identified that tutors did not plan sufficiently to meet the diverse needs of the learners in their classes. There were no individual learning plans and few session plans. A new system is developing steadily but is not yet mature or consistent. The nature and quality of what is recorded varies considerably between different courses. All tutors use well structured session plans and learners all have an individual learning plan which they update at each session. Some tutors have devised very good monitoring systems, encouraging learners to reflect on their progress in detail and record areas they wish to repeat or expand upon. However, some do not sufficiently recognise the value of reflecting on learning. The service has not yet clearly communicated what should be

recorded and how. Many learning plans are too task oriented and contain little detail about the development of skills. Very few record individual learner goals. Progress is recorded on tutors' monitoring sheets but these are sometimes too general with little information about what learners can or cannot do.

11. Information and guidance for some courses is insufficiently co-ordinated. Although work is in progress to improve the information that learners receive about courses, initial guidance is sometimes ineffective. The service has worked hard to standardise most course titles and content. Most learners find course descriptions clear and helpful although some are unsure about how they can progress further. However, a few remaining courses have not yet been reviewed. Some learners have difficulty in understanding descriptions of these courses. Some are frustrated by the slow pace of classes or find the level too high. Some learners attend only to find there is no place because offices across the county cannot access each others' booking systems. The service is developing ways to fix this.

## Leadership and management

12. Highly effective management action has radically improved ICT provision. The service views ICT as a vital strategic resource to assist West Sussex in community regeneration. The previous inspection commented on the complete lack of co-ordination of ICT courses across West Sussex. The recent restructure has addressed this problem with new managers focused on subject areas rather than geographical location. An experienced and capable curriculum manager was appointed in 2006. ICT tutors now have a good team ethos and have worked very productively together to overhaul and revise the curriculum. There are standardised schemes of work for nearly all courses and all staff use similar session plans. A new quality assurance framework includes an effective lesson observation system which has been used well to find good practice and to plan suitable staff development. Particularly skilled teachers identified through this process have been trained to carry out observations and are supporting colleagues in developing materials and teaching skills. In the previous inspection, 27% of sessions (seven lessons) were graded unsatisfactory, and less than half were good or better. The reinspection found two thirds good or better and saw only two unsatisfactory sessions out of 17. Management information systems, criticised in the previous inspection, now provide useful and detailed reports

which inform sharp target-setting. Regular and rigorous review of targets ensures prompt action to improve poor performance. Support for staff and learners has improved. Systems to gather learner feedback have been developed. However, the procedures are new and have yet to impact fully. Some learning materials used in classes were poor and some systems have been inconsistently applied. There is still work to do in sharing good practice. Work on a virtual learning environment has started but this is not yet fully developed.

13. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the report is satisfactory. It is self-critical and identifies many of the issues inspectors noted. However, in places it is too descriptive and not sufficiently evaluative.

14. Tutors pay good attention to health and safety. Most venues have satisfactory equipment and facilities, but in some, compromises have been made to ensure that courses can be provided locally. For instance printing in libraries is poor and some venues do not have adjustable seating. Most venues have good access for people with limited mobility. Staff have received training in equality of opportunity and show good awareness of disability. Diversity is also promoted through a broad range of appropriate learning materials.