

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **Blackpool LEA Reinspection**

**26 January 2007**



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
- **learndirect** 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.

## 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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### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Grades	1
About the reinspection	3
Preparation for life and work	4

## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Blackpool Council's adult and community learning service (BACLS) has managed adult and community learning since 1998 when Blackpool became a unitary authority. Following a restructuring in 2004, the adult and community learning team became part of the council's new leisure, culture and community learning department. BACLS receives funding from the Lancashire Learning and Skills Council, but this does not cover skills for life, which is the government's strategy for training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, or accredited provision. Most of the provision is delivered through two main subcontractors, Blackpool and The Fylde College and Montgomery High School, a specialist language school. The central team consists of a head of service, a quality and contracts manager, a financial literacy co-ordinator and three full time curriculum managers.

2. At the time of the inspection, 35 part-time tutors were teaching courses provided directly by the council, on which 1,088 learners were enrolled. The two subcontractors provide courses for 1,598 learners. Each of the subcontractors has a manager responsible for the delivery and management of the subcontracted provision, and a team of tutors.

3. The BACLS provision is delivered in a variety of locations, including the local libraries, the City Learning Centre, community venues, the Grundy Art Gallery, social services establishments, and community and voluntary organisations. Blackpool has a very small proportion of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds, at less than 1 per cent. It is the UK's 32nd most deprived authority, with the third-lowest gross domestic product per head of population in the Northwest. The unemployment rate is 4.2 per cent, compared with 2.3 per cent in England overall. In the 2001 census, 40 per cent of residents declared themselves to have no qualifications, 24.7 per cent have poor literacy skills and 25.4 per cent have poor numeracy skills. In 2005-06, almost 50 per cent of school leavers did not achieve a full level 2 qualification.

### GRADES

*grade 1 = 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		3

Information and communications technology			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i>		3	
Adult and community learning	298	3	

BLACKPOOL LEA REINSPECTION

Leisure, travel and tourism		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i> Adult and community learning	127	3 3

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Crafts</i> Adult and community learning	235	3 3

Languages, literature and culture		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	136	3 3

Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	173	4 4

Grades awarded at reinspection

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Independent living and leisure skills</i> Adult and community learning	13	3
<i>Access programmes</i> Adult and community learning	68	3

## ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

4. At the previous inspection, information and communications technology (ICT), leisure, travel and tourism, arts media and publishing, and languages, literature and culture were all judged satisfactory, as was BACLS's leadership and management and its arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity. Preparation for life and work was inadequate. At this reinspection, inspectors reported on and graded the preparation for life and work provision and, at the end of the reinspection process, it was judged satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of the provision remains satisfactory.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	14
Number of learners interviewed	18
Number of staff interviewed	16
Number of subcontractors interviewed	4
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	7
Number of visits	3

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Preparation for life and work

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Independent living and leisure skills</i></b> Adult and community learning	13	3
<b><i>Access programmes</i></b> Adult and community learning	68	3

5. BACLS provides a range of preparation for life and work programmes. Sixty-eight learners attend personal development and first steps courses and 13 follow programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Sixty-three of the learners are women and 89 per cent are white. Learners can study accredited and non-accredited programmes in ICT, financial literacy and confidence-building, film studies and local history. Courses are designed to meet the needs of people with mental health difficulties, travellers, homeless people and other socially excluded groups. BACLS is directly responsible for all the provision except for confidence-building, which is subcontracted to the Blackpool and The Fylde College. Most courses are taught during the day in two-hour sessions over 10 or 20 weeks. The financial literacy course is taught as a series of one-day workshops and is externally accredited. Courses are taught in a range of community venues.

6. The curriculum co-ordinator is currently on long-term sick leave and the head of service is managing the provision in her absence. She is assisted by a full-time lead tutor for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and a co-ordinator who is responsible for the financial literacy course. There are four part-time tutors.

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of personal goals
- very effective partnerships to promote participation in learning
- particularly effective actions to improve the provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- incomplete arrangements for recording individual barriers to learning on some access programmes
- slow implementation of strategies to develop the curriculum for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

### **Achievement and standards**

7. Learners' achievement of personal goals is good. This strength was identified during the previous inspection and recognised in BACLS's self-assessment report. Courses enable learners to develop the confidence to make significant changes in their lives. Learners develop skills in team-working, problem solving, ICT, and money management, and gain a greater understanding of local history. Learners who have had few positive

experiences of education have qualifications in financial literacy 'make maths matter'. Many learners have overcome significant barriers to learning, such as homelessness and drug and alcohol misuse. Learners on non-accredited programmes who achieve their personal goals are awarded an in-house certificate. This helps them to recognise and record their progress. Sixty-eight per cent of the 132 learners who attended the financial literacy course in 2006-07 achieved the qualification. Learners on the film-making course develop good skills in video filming and editing.

### **The quality of provision**

8. Partnerships are very effective in promoting participation in learning by those who have not benefited recently from formal education. This strength was identified during the previous inspection and is recognised in the self-assessment report. Staff from BACLS work with local organisations such as the Salvation Army, Sure Start, the local authority social services department, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation agencies. The partnerships promote learning opportunities for homeless people, ex-offenders, people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, people with mental health difficulties, travellers and people who live in areas of social deprivation. Collaborative work with partners has met the learning needs of the most disadvantaged groups in the community. Courses are taught in venues that are convenient and attractive to learners, many of whom are intimidated by more formal learning environments.

9. Teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection. Tutors show great empathy with learners. Learners are enthusiastic, display interest and ask challenging and perceptive questions. Tutors give careful thought to differentiation in the resources, learning activities and assessment methods they use. The learning materials they produce are accessible and clearly presented to meet the needs of learners with a wide range of abilities and learning styles. Tutors make effective use of visiting speakers to promote learning. ICT is used effectively to enhance learning. Monitoring and assessment of learning are satisfactory.

10. Information, advice and guidance for learners are now satisfactory. BACLS and its key partners jointly produce marketing and publicity materials. Course information and guidance is comprehensive and is available in large print, Braille and audiocassette. Sources of further information, advice and guidance are clearly signposted for learners. Tutors and visiting speakers provide helpful advice on progression opportunities during sessions. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities complete a pre-entry questionnaire to determine their suitability for programmes. Short taster sessions are used effectively to help learners and tutors make decisions about suitable courses of study.

11. Arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs are satisfactory. Staff have received skills for life training and have a good understanding of how initial assessment can be used to support learners. Staff are adequately qualified to help learners with literacy and numeracy. Some tutors are working towards graduate qualifications in basic skills.

12. Arrangements for recording individual barriers to learning on some access programmes are incomplete. Although clear guidance is given to staff on how to identify and record learners' literacy and numeracy skills, there is insufficient guidance on how additional barriers to learning should be identified and recorded. Many learners have a wide range of personal difficulties which may prevent them from learning effectively. Staff



generally understand these difficulties but do not systematically record them to benefit learners.

13. BACLS has been slow to implement strategies to develop the curriculum for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Managers identified this weakness in the self-assessment report. Provision has been significantly reduced since the previous inspection and the curriculum offer is now small. Managers have carried out a needs analysis with a local steering group and devised a broad strategy for the development of the provision with partners. However, there is no established curriculum framework or structured programme of courses with clearly identified progression routes for learners.

### **Leadership and management**

14. Managers have taken particularly effective actions to improve the provision. Strengths identified during the previous inspection have been maintained and most weaknesses successfully resolved. A new head of service was appointed shortly after the previous inspection, and leadership and management of the provision is now satisfactory. Strategic direction is clear and staff understand the organisation's vision. New appointments have been made to promote skills for life and to co-ordinate provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Partnerships have been strengthened. Continuous professional development activities are well focused and meet the needs of learners. Staff have benefited from training in the core and pre-entry curriculum, skills for life, and in recognising and recording progress in non-accredited learning. An intranet system has been developed to help tutors share learning resources. Data management has improved and the service is now able to give managers accurate information about learner numbers and achievements.

15. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners are treated with respect and consideration of their individual needs. Tutors and care assistants are aware of the diverse needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with mental health difficulties. Most tutors demonstrate appropriate awareness of equality of opportunity principles during teaching and learning sessions. There is good access to learning venues for those with restricted mobility and an appropriate range of specialist resources and facilities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

16. Quality improvement arrangements are effective. BACLS carries out rigorous audits of all aspects of its provision and closely monitors the performance of the subcontractor. A detailed scheme for the observation of teaching and learning is now in place. Tutors are observed once a year and receive constructive feedback which helps them to improve. Observation reports are moderated to ensure consistency. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive. The views of learners, staff, the subcontractor and external partners are used effectively to make judgements. The service identified the same strengths and weaknesses found by the inspectors and gave the same grades.

