

INSPECTION REPORT

Bristol City Council

02 February 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Bristol City Council

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Bristol City Council	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	3
What learners like about Bristol City Council	5
What learners think Bristol City Council could improve	5

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	6
Equality of opportunity	8
Quality improvement	9
Preparation for life and work	10

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Bristol City Council's Learning Communities Team (the LCT) is part of the Children and Young People's Service Directorate of Bristol City Council. The LCT was established in August 2005 as a result of the West of England Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) Community Learning Strategy, and replaced the Bristol City Council Community Education Service. The West of England LSC now funds the LCT to target learners who have taken little part in formal learning since leaving school. From 1 August 2006, the LSC also funds the LCT to provide information and advice to learners in the Bristol area.

2. The overall purpose of the LCT is to engage and work with adults aged 19 or over who do not have a full level 2 qualification. These prospective learners are from particular districts of Bristol or are members of specific communities. In 2005-06, 75 per cent of learners were women, 16 per cent declared a disability or learning difficulty and just over 60 per cent were aged between 25 and 44 years.

3. A strategy leader (parents and learning communities) is responsible for the overall management of the LCT, supported by a performance and commissioning manager, a planning and information officer, 10 learning communities development workers, two information and advice workers, a finance manager and administrative staff. In 2005-06, the LCT has also recruited and trained 41 local people as learning champions, to help the learning communities development workers to recruit new learners.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** More specifically, leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good. Quality improvement is satisfactory. The quality of provision in preparation for life and work is good.

5. **Achievement and standards are good.** Retention rates are high and the learners' development of skills and confidence is good. Learners' new skills help them in their everyday lives and enable them to promote development in their local communities. In family learning, learners have greater confidence in approaching teachers and in helping children with their homework. However, there are insufficient progression opportunities available in the area, and too few learners progress to second step learning activities.

6. **The quality of provision is good.** Much of the teaching and learning is very effective. Tutors establish good relationships with learners and successfully encourage and motivate them to participate actively in learning activities. Learners work productively and enjoy their classes.

7. **Learner engagement is particularly effective.** The LCT works closely with individuals and local communities to identify their learning needs, and puts on learning activities in a wide range of accessible, local venues. Tutors provide learners with good personal support and are particularly sensitive to their needs. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs and the provision of information and advice are satisfactory.

8. The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The process is inclusive and consultative, and the self-assessment report for 2005-06 is comprehensive and suitably self-critical. Inspectors identified many of the same strengths and weaknesses as were identified in the report. The LCT uses self-assessment effectively to plan improvements in the provision.

9. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. The LCT has managed significant curriculum and organisational change very effectively, with strong leadership and management and a clear strategic direction. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and there is comprehensive action-planning to remedy identified weaknesses.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL:

- improve progression opportunities for learners
- improve curriculum planning to meet strategic priorities and targets
- fully implement arrangements for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement
- continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- continue to develop quality improvement arrangements
- maintain the effectiveness of partnership arrangements

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		3

Preparation for life and work		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Community learning		2
Adult and community learning	362	2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

10. One inspector visited Bristol City Council for two days in December 2006 and six inspectors visited for five days in January and February 2007, to carry out the inspection. They reported on and graded preparation for life and work (community learning), as well as leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	32
Number of learners interviewed	96
Number of staff interviewed	80
Number of employers interviewed	5
Number of subcontractors interviewed	16
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	18

Leadership and management

Strengths

- very effective leadership and management to implement significant change
- good strategic planning
- particularly effective partnership working
- good initiatives to engage with targeted priority groups

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of plans to support learners' progression
- insufficiently well-established arrangements for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement

Preparation for life and work

Community learning

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills and confidence
- much good teaching and learning
- particularly effective learner engagement
- good promotion of equality and inclusion

Weaknesses

- insufficient recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement
- insufficient curriculum planning to meet strategic priorities and targets

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL:

- 'the staff are really supportive, they are there for me all the time'
- 'the course has been the best thing that I have done in a long time. I have so much more confidence now'
- 'when I first came, I enjoyed finding other people as clueless as myself'
- 'I never knew I had so much patience before I came here'
- 'I was a bit isolated at home before I came here. Now I like being with the others in the class'
- 'the sense of achievement and sharing of experiences is great'
- 'I love the art activities'
- 'these classes will give me a brighter future'
- 'my mathematics is much better now'
- 'I can now produce newsletters and have had a go at producing grid charts'
- 'I know a lot more about the school and I really like coming'
- 'I can help my child with school work'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- 'more classes to learn more'
- 'longer classes'
- 'more classes that can help with future employment'
- 'gym and exercise classes to run alongside the healthy eating classes'
- 'more follow up from initial assessment'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- very effective leadership and management to implement significant change
- good strategic planning
- particularly effective partnership working
- good initiatives to engage with targeted priority groups

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of plans to support learners' progression
- insufficiently well-established arrangements for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement

11. The LCT's leadership and management has been very effective in the implementation of significant change. From 1 August 2005, the LCT has effectively managed the major transition from the Bristol City Council Community Education Service, which predominantly offered recreational and leisure learning for all learners, to a more streamlined organisation with targets for engagement and first steps provision for learners, often in disadvantaged areas. The approach to change has been very positive and consultative. The LCT has a reorganised management structure, with clearly identified roles and responsibilities which all staff understand.

12. From August 2005, the pressing need to engage learners and meet targets through developing appropriate community learning activities, was balanced well with sensitivity towards the needs of staff in a greatly changed context. Managers effectively involve staff in decision-making, and teamwork is good and morale high. Learning communities development workers have targets for learner engagement and a clear focus on what is expected of them. However, the targets relate to overall learner recruitment, rather than to specific types of provision that would meet LCT's key strategies, for example, in language, literacy and numeracy.

13. Communication within the LCT and between area teams of learning communities development workers is open and productive. Good use is made of effective formal and informal communication. The LCT supports staff well and is responsive to requests for training. Performance management is effective, with regular, well-structured appraisals. Community development workers provide good support to tutors. In August 2006, managers introduced a new and helpful tutor induction programme.

14. Strategic planning is good. The LCT produced a strong and well-documented implementation plan in response to the West of England LSC Community Learning Strategy. The LCT's strategic planning is integrated well with that of the Children and Young People's Services Directorate. There are well structured, formal mechanisms to promote joint strategic working both inside the directorate and with other council departments. The LCT's community learning plan contributes well to the delivery of the council's key priorities such as employability and raising achievement.

15. Partnership working is particularly effective. The LCT works closely with local schools and services for children and young people. It has contributed to the work of the extended schools programme and to the early years and children's centres strategy. Collaboration is developing with other council directorates on work such as the workforce development strategy and economic regeneration.

16. The local authority heads of service have collaborated well to build the capacity of adult and community learning in the region. They worked together effectively to plan a response to the LSC's strategy and to renegotiate targets in their first year of operation. Collaborative work has also resulted in the commissioning of a new management information system and the setting up of a management information group. Processes for the observation of teaching and learning were developed collaboratively. The services also share training opportunities and produce some common documents.

17. The use of management information is satisfactory. New arrangements are effectively established, staff appropriately trained and supporting documents incorporated into a useful handbook. Reports are now more accessible to staff, and management information is more readily used in self-assessment and to support planning for improvements. However progression data is still insufficiently reliable.

18. The contract to provide information and advice across Bristol is managed satisfactorily. The LCT makes effective use of subcontractors on this contract. The information, advice and guidance Gateway provides comprehensive and very helpful observations of information and advice sessions to support improvements. All LCT-commissioned learning activities include information and advice sessions, although the quality of these is inconsistent. There are some problems in ensuring that data is entered in a timely way onto the information, advice and guidance management information system.

19. The LCT's skills for life strategy contains clear statements of intent and objectives. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and language. There is some staff development in skills for life during induction and meetings, and two development workers have completed some national skills for life training. However, there is currently insufficient curriculum planning and systematic implementation of the skills for life strategy.

20. Bristol City Council makes satisfactory arrangements to implement the five themes of Every Child Matters. Good reference is made to Every Child Matters in strategic planning, and there is management training and regular leadership days on the five themes. The LCT's self-assessment report refers specifically to the relationship between the themes and family learning provision. Some tutors actively include aspects of Every Child Matters when planning learning sessions, but there is little mention of them in schemes of work. Learners are aware of some themes, such as 'being healthy' and 'enjoying and achieving'. Council staff undergo enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks, and agency staff undergo enhanced Criminal Records Bureau and protection of vulnerable adults checks.

21. The LCT has been slow to implement plans to support learners' progression, and there are currently insufficient progression opportunities. In many curriculum areas clear routes for learner progression, both internally and outside the LCT, are not well

established. In the first year of the new contract in 2005-06, the LCT focused heavily on building community relationships in order to engage targeted priority groups. It experienced some difficulties in recruiting sufficiently experienced tutors. Joint development work with local community and voluntary sector providers has established some useful progression pathways from first steps to second steps provision, for example in work with children. Collaboration with the local college to develop sufficient progression opportunities is still at an early stage.

22. The arrangements for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement are insufficiently well established. A framework is in place using a staged process linked to the development of individual learning plans. The LCT has taken action to improve tutors' understanding of the process, for example through induction and the tutors' handbook. However, the tutors do not all review and record learners' progress and achievement.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

23. The LCT's initiatives to support its engagement with targeted priority groups are good. The approach is very inclusive and consultative. Capacity building for local communities is central to the LCT's strategy. The organisations commissioned to provide courses have strong expertise in work with specific groups, such as people from black and minority ethnic groups or people with disabilities. Commissioning contracts set clear requirements for equality of opportunity. Funding through 'neighbourhood learning in deprived communities' effectively supports well-planned initial training for learning champions. Learning champions act as good role models, actively promoting and encouraging people to take part in learning. One learning champion recruited an impressive number of Somali men to a security guard course, after identifying training for work as a community need. About 50 per cent of the first group of learning champions progressed to further education, training or voluntary work in the community. The LCT plans future joint work with neighbourhood renewal projects to support sustainable development.

24. Good links through extended school partnerships help parents and carers from priority communities to re-engage with learning. The outcomes from a successful community consultation conference, organised by learning champions, contributed to curriculum planning and development. Voluntary sector providers are active in community learning action groups and help inform the LCT's community learning plan. Much information is presented in a wide range of accessible formats, for example using easy English and visual images or in large print. Translation into many community languages is available when needed.

25. The council collects and analyses equalities data and compares the achievements of different groups. In 2005-06, almost a third of learners were from black and minority ethnic groups and 16 per cent declared a disability or learning difficulty. The percentage of learners from these groups exceeds the proportion in Bristol's population. However participation by men is low. Specific recruitment targets and course developments are in place to improve this. For example, 'dads and lads' were recruited through a successful banner project. The project was well supported and publicised by the local football team. Some 'dads' have since progressed into voluntary work in their community.

26. The LCT has a wide range of detailed and up-to-date equalities policies and procedures. The equalities steering group includes a good balance of staff at various levels of Bristol City Council. The views of particular groups are sought through focus

groups. However, progress in implementing aspects of change through the equalities action plan has been slow. In the past, the council has offered a wide range of staff development in equality of opportunity for existing staff, but there has been little over the past two years since the restructure. The LCT is in the process of compiling an audit of training needs. New staff received satisfactory equality of opportunity training during recent induction. Access to schools and other learning centres visited by inspectors is mostly good. However, in a small minority of cases, access for people with restricted mobility is limited by steps, narrow corridors and small rooms. In a small number of schools, furniture was too small for adult use.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

27. The LCT has developed an effective quality improvement framework, which most staff understand and use satisfactorily. Procedures are tested by community development workers, who contribute usefully to amendments and improvements. The framework includes an effective range of mechanisms to evaluate the quality of the provision, such as reviews of tutor activity and checks on schemes of work. Learning communities development workers are well supported to carry out quality assessment checks on commissioned providers and to monitor the quality of this provision. The formal feedback from this monitoring includes an action plan which is followed up by the linked community development worker. A well-used quality improvement toolkit provides useful support for staff.

28. In May 2006, the LCT introduced effective and well-moderated arrangements for observing and reporting on teaching and learning. During the 2005-06 contract year, trained observers carried out 17 graded observations. In the current contract year, 11 observations have been completed and the sessions observed were graded as satisfactory or good. The observation process is thorough and indicates areas for improvement, such as in session planning and the need for tutors to meet more individual learning needs. Discussion during moderation processes indicated that observers focused more on teaching than on learning in their observations. In 2006-07, observers have remedied this.

29. Learners' views are collected in a variety of ways and used to contribute to self-assessment. Learners complete activity evaluations, and their views are sought as a formal part of the teaching and learning observation arrangements. A useful citizen's conference, involving learning champions and members of the public, was also used as an effective forum for discussion. A recent telephone survey monitored the progress of 10 per cent of learners who had completed community learning activities over the previous year. However, there is still too little monitoring of progression overall.

30. The self-assessment process is inclusive and consultative. The self-assessment report for 2005-06 is comprehensive and suitably self-critical. Inspectors identified many of the same strengths and weaknesses as were identified in the report. The LCT uses self-assessment effectively to action plan for improvements in the provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Community learning		2
Adult and community learning	362	2

31. Since August 2006, the LCT has offered 114 engagement and first steps activities at 30 different locations, including community venues, schools and early years settings. Most courses take place during the daytime and on weekdays. Courses include access to vocational training, career planning with jobsearch, information and communications technology (ICT) and basic skills courses, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), family learning, personal development and activities to widen participation.

32. Of the 1,574 learners in 2005-06, 75 per cent were women and 61 per cent were aged between 25 and 44. Thirty-three per cent were from minority ethnic groups and 16 per cent declared a learning difficulty or disability. At the time of inspection, there were 362 learners, of whom 155 were on vocational and employment-focused activities, 62 were on basic skills and ESOL activity, 39 were on family learning and 106 on widening participation activities.

33. The provision is managed by the strategy leader and a senior management team, supported by 10 development and two advice workers. The 23 staff include full-time and part-time appointments. In 2005-06, the team trained 39 people as local learning champions.

Community learning

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills and confidence
- much good teaching and learning
- particularly effective learner engagement
- good promotion of equality and inclusion

Weaknesses

- insufficient recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement
- insufficient curriculum planning to meet strategic priorities and targets

Achievement and standards

34. Retention on courses is high. In 2005-06, the proportion of learners who achieved their learning goals was good. However there is some variation in the quality of how learners' individual goals, progress and achievement are identified and recorded.

35. The development of learners' skills and confidence is good. Carefully planned

activities give learners very useful support to increase their interaction with each other and greatly improve their communication and team working skills. Learners also develop a good range of creative skills. One group of men and their sons worked very successfully on a large banner for use in the children's school, which they designed collaboratively and produced to a high standard. Another group worked collaboratively to create a good-quality resource pack for story telling in their local primary school.

36. Learners greatly increase their confidence and develop skills to help them in their everyday lives, for example though focusing on healthy eating and keeping safe. Groups of learners also have opportunities to develop valuable skills to help them promote development in their local communities. In family learning, learners greatly value opportunities to spend quality time with their children. Most parents say they have greater confidence in approaching teachers in school and helping children with their homework.

37. During the inspection, learners' attendance rate was 84 per cent. Punctuality was satisfactory, although in a few classes, learners arrived late. However, there are insufficient progression opportunities available for learners and learners' progression to second step learning activities is currently low.

The quality of provision

38. Much of the teaching and learning is good. Tutors are very enthusiastic, establish good relationships with learners and successfully encourage and motivate them to participate actively in learning. Lesson planning is often good and in some instances, very good. The content of courses is often negotiated well with learners to ensure that learning is relevant and appropriate. For example, groups particularly appreciate the valuable focus on healthy eating which is effectively linked to household budgets and shopping. Tutors use a good variety of activities in sessions. Learners work in a purposeful and productive way and also enjoy sessions and have fun.

39. In family learning, sessions are well paced and challenging for learners. Ice breakers and learner-centred games are used well to promote group interaction, build relationships and develop group cohesion. Tutors introduce information about the subjects taught and ways in which children learn in school. Learners are well motivated and enjoy building their own skills to better support their children's learning. The five themes of Every Child Matters are promoted well by some tutors.

40. Learner engagement is particularly effective. LCT has made good progress in getting disadvantaged Bristol residents back into learning. It has made effective use of enthusiastic local learning champions, for example in facilitating a Citizen's Conference in July 2006. The conference effectively promoted learning and identified the learning aspirations and perceived barriers to learning for local residents. Neighbourhood communities and communities of interest are appropriately involved in promoting and hosting provision. The LCT makes good use of local knowledge and the strong commitment of its staff. Particularly effective links are established with schools and children's centres to promote the engagement of parents. Inspectors met many learners who had been brought into learning through easy access to local facilities, and who appreciate the benefits they are gaining. Many learners are now confident enough to take part in further learning opportunities.

41. Tutors provide learners with good personal support and are particularly sensitive to their needs. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory. The provision of information and advice is satisfactory overall. All learning activities contain an information and advice session, although this varies in quality. Learners' access to individual information, advice and guidance is good.

42. There is insufficient recognising and recording of learners' progress and achievement. Managers have effectively reviewed the format of individual learning plans through full consultation with staff. Tutors on most courses use individual learning plans, and most learners develop them in the early stages of their course. However, tutors do not always identify learners' starting points, and when they do, they do not use the information sufficiently to plan learning. Learning goals are mostly based on group outcomes. When individual learning goals are stated, they are not always clear or suitably challenging and learners are not always sufficiently aware of them. Some tutors systematically evaluate and record the progress of individual learners. However, learner records do not always provide enough evidence of learners' progress, and there is insufficient detail about the skills learners have achieved.

Leadership and management

43. The promotion of equality and inclusion is good. Tutors plan good opportunities for learners to discuss and develop group rules, generating mutual respect within groups. Resources and learning materials are carefully considered by all tutors and used well to promote positive images and role models. Supportive materials are used well to meet the needs of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Independent learning, and the skills required to manage community groups effectively, are developed through well-planned capacity building activities. A good level of language support is provided for learners for whom whose English is an additional language.

44. Signs at most community venues are in several languages, helping learners to feel more comfortable in new environments. Childcare facilities are free of charge for children of learners on all first steps courses. Learning activities are held at the heart of communities, giving easy access and minimising barriers to learning. Area-based community development workers are supported well by teams of learning champions. Learning support assistants work well to support learners recovering from mental illness. Learners say that classes give them good opportunities to talk to, and build relationships with, people from many different cultures and backgrounds.

45. Tutors generally have satisfactory qualifications and experience in teaching adult learners. Good use is made of effective formal and informal communication. Staff training is well planned and the staff development programme is based on the teaching and learning observation reports and tutors' own expressed needs. The tutor induction is good, and staff are paid for attending. However some tutors working in commissioned organisations have not received an induction and do not sufficiently understand the required processes or paperwork. There are insufficient opportunities for tutors to share good practice, for example in family learning and ESOL.

46. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. Modern schools and community centres provide welcoming environments and easy access for learners with limited mobility. Some accommodation is, however, more difficult to access, with narrow corridors and small cluttered rooms. Specialist equipment is good. Modern ICT facilities are used by

learners at most centres. Some of the furniture in schools is too small for adults.

47. All staff are sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is appropriately self-critical and provides a clear view of the service's strengths and weaknesses.

48. There is insufficient curriculum planning to meet strategic priorities and targets. The LCT has a number of key strategies, such as the West of England local authority skills for life strategy, the family learning strategy and a strategy to support workforce development in Bristol City Council. Currently there is insufficient curriculum planning to implement these strategies systematically.

