

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Derby City Council  
Date of visit: 16 July 2008

### Context

Derby Adult Learning Service (DALs) is part of the Children and Young People's Service Department. It operates within the City Council's policies and procedures. DALs provides learning opportunities at seven centres across the city and focuses its activity on the city wards that are classified as areas of high socio-economic deprivation.

The provider is funded by Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) through two funding streams; adult community learning and further education (FE). In 2006/07 there were 4,429 learners and 8,063 enrolments. DALs also has a contract with nextstep to provide information, advice and guidance and with Central Education and Training for the provision of accredited NVQ childcare courses. Train to Gain will be a significant, new area of growth for the service in 2008/09.

The previous inspection was in May 2007. The organisation's overall effectiveness, leadership and management, the approach to equality of opportunity, quality improvement and outcomes for achievement and standards were then judged as satisfactory. Information and communication technology, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work and family learning were judged good.

The theme of management of change was included at the request of the provider.

### Achievement and standards

Has DALs continued to improve achievement and standards?	Reasonable progress
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Achievement and standards were satisfactory overall at the previous inspection. Success rates for 2006/07 have been maintained in FE funded provision at 60% and have improved in personal and community development learning (PCDL) provision from 72% in the previous year to 79%. Individual sector areas success rates have improved in some areas by as much as 43%. Retention has improved for PCDL provision from 72% in 2005/06 to 82% in 2006/07 but the overall retention rate for FE courses has fallen by the same percentage in the same period. DALs has identified that the reason for this decrease was the poor retention of skills for life

learners and has taken prompt action to address this situation. Changes to programme delivery, providing shorter more intensive courses, has resulted in significant retention improvements from 57% in 2006/07 to 83% in 2007/08 for skills for life provision.

The previous inspection reported variations in performance across accredited and non accredited provision. DALs is responding more quickly to these variations. An 11% decrease in achievement and 5% decrease in retention on accredited long courses for 16 to 18 year olds for 2006/07 have prompted DALs to provide more bespoke programmes for those aged 16 to 18. Retention and achievement has improved for all short courses, accredited and non-accredited.

British Sign Language (BSL) success rates at 52% are below the 55% minimum threshold. DALs has arranged monthly network meetings to support tutor understanding of the new accreditation procedures and bridging courses to facilitate progression from Level 1 and 2.

#### Quality of provision

What progress has DALs made in implementing an effective system for individual planning and recording of learner progress?	Significant progress
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A key challenge at the previous inspection, DALs has made significant progress in implementing an effective system for individual planning and recording of learner progress. Staff received training and updating on effective implementation of recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA). The service now offers staff a wide range of opportunities to share good practice and implement improvements and tutors benefited from new line manager support via curriculum specialists. The service has introduced better processes and documentation for use in the planning and monitoring of learners' individual programmes and progress. For example, individual learning plans have been translated into target languages within modern foreign language programmes. DALs has introduced improvements in the use of information technology (IT) for both the recording of achievement and the facilitation of e-learning. The setting and recording of personal development target achievement is now more consistent across the service. The annual monitoring of teaching and learning through observation now includes the recording of the key stages of RARPA. Individual meetings between tutors and managers effectively evaluate the impact of the implementation of RARPA. Quality audits routinely check the quality of relevant documentation and identify areas for improvement.

How much progress has been made to improve the focus on equality and diversity at service level?	Reasonable progress
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Since the previous inspection the provider has made reasonable progress to improve the focus on equality and diversity at service level. A recently launched calendar

enhances tutors' understanding of equality and diversity issues through activities to promote and reinforce learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Policies and procedures are updated to reflect current legislation and professional practice. A learners' charter is due to be implemented during the next academic year.

Recruitment of hard to reach groups is successful, particularly among the Polish and Traveller communities. Tutors' participation in diversity training has improved. The service has now effectively prioritised and targeted training for relevant staff to meet individual needs. Training in key areas covering cultural, racial, disability and mental health awareness are now mandatory. This is offered over a wide range of times and dates to meet participants' requirements.

The observation of teaching and learning process includes an assessment of tutors' use of equality and diversity practice. Observations now apply to learning support workers. DALs is involved in the Derby City Council wide initiative to improve the employment prospects of people in the Pakistani community by providing opportunities to undertake skills for life courses. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of staff from minority ethnic communities has increased and is comparable with that found regionally. However, the proportion of male employees remains comparatively low.

#### Leadership and management

What progress has been made to improve both the management information system and its use?	Reasonable progress
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DALS has made reasonable progress in improving both the management information system and its use. The provider has raised tutors' understanding of issues relating to the effective collection and use of data. Staff effectively consider issues relating to management information system data during tutor meetings, service wide communications and at the annual DALs conference. Useful and detailed reports are now produced by curriculum area and learning aim, rather than by learning centre. The service has curtailed use of secondary databases to prevent the duplication and use of multiple data sets.

DALS now effectively collects and uses RARPA achievement data for both monitoring and planning purposes. The analysis and use of skills for life programme data has improved. Since the previous inspection, DALs has undertaken suitable planning and actions to establish an online data system. However, full implementation of the system is not due until September 2008. The service has bid for external funds to improve the flexibility of the current management information system with a view to improving timely responses to service needs. The provider has well developed plans to significantly reduce the duplication of data input. However, these have yet to fully impact on operational activities. Since the previous inspection, the use of data to identify trends over time has improved. The provider recognises this process does

not yet include a fully evaluative summary of the trends that clearly link to the self-assessment process.

How effectively has DALS managed the restructuring of the organisation?	Significant progress
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Significant and radical restructuring of the service started in 2006 and was completed in January 2008 with final appointments of staff to the new structure. DALS has worked sensitively and productively with staff at all levels to ensure the transition process not only meets the needs of the new organisational structure, changing government initiatives and funding constraints, but also meets the needs of staff. Senior managers have ensured effective implementation of service vision and plans with the establishment of clear systems and procedures. Line management responsibilities and communication links are very clear.

External support has been used highly effectively to improve leadership and management and to develop staff at all levels. This includes support from the quality improvement agency and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership. Staff at all levels received an intensive induction into the new structure. Administrative staff now have a career development structure.

New areas of development have been successfully initiated with good use of existing and new partnership arrangements. For example, NVQ growth targets progressed from 10 learners in 2005/06 to 116 in 2007/08.

Learners are benefiting from the changes through a new centralised support system with one team and one point of contact. Changes to contracts have resulted in advice and guidance being available to learners throughout the summer months. New partnership activities are attracting new learners.

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

How has DALS continued to improve the quality systems?	Reasonable progress
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DALS is making reasonable progress with its arrangements to improve quality systems. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Quality audits of files and systems have improved. There is now an effective system for monitoring both observation of teaching and learning and audit action plans. Delays in actions are systematically picked up and appropriate staff notified of the delay.

The self-assessment process is inclusive and draws on the views of learners and tutors. It is sufficiently self-critical and evaluative. Strengths and weaknesses are well evidenced and prefaced by clear judgements. Judgements are given against the common inspection framework. However, the impact of leadership and management

on achievement and standards is not yet sufficiently evidenced for a self-assessed grade 2 for leadership and management. Family Learning has addressed weaknesses in involving tutors and learners in the self-assessment report. Informal consultation is now enhanced by formal focus groups.

All managers have a quality role in the new structure which is clearly understood. The Service improvement plan is a live document and regularly reviewed by curriculum managers who collate information for updating the document every six weeks. Curriculum managers discuss progress on improvements through network and individual meetings. However, individual responsibilities for carrying out improvements are not consistently clear in the plan.