

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Tameside Adult Learning Service  
Date of visit: 10 June 2008

### Context

Tameside Adult Learning Service is part of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. This monitoring visit follows the inspection, which took place in May 2007. At the inspection achievements and standards of the adult and community learning provision were good. Equality of opportunity and provision in information and communication technology (ICT) were also good. Provision in preparation for life and work was satisfactory. Effectiveness of the provision, capacity to improve and leadership and management were also satisfactory.

Tameside Adult Learning Service is funded by Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council. Approximately 55% of learners are enrolled on adult learning courses with the remainder on further education programmes. The council continues to offer a range of programmes funded by a neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC) programme which, as during the previous inspection, is managed by a different department within the council.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has there been in raising achievement and standards?	Reasonable progress
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The service has taken reasonable action to improve already good achievements and standards. Success rates overall continue to be high. In ICT overall success rates improved slightly from 75% in 2005/06, to 76% in 2006/07. Indications from courses that have already finished show further improvements. Although skills for life success rates declined to 55% in 2006/07, this has already improved to 71% in 2007/08. Learners with learning difficulties or disabilities continue to achieve well on accredited programmes. However retention has fallen, following changes in the council's policy on providing transport for learners. Retention on all other courses remains high. Attendance is good, and from September 2008, a new system to monitor registers is planned. This aims to ensure that poor attendance is identified and reported to managers more quickly than at present.

What progress has there been in improving initial assessment?	Reasonable progress
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Identification of learners needs was a key area for improvement at the previous inspection. Reasonable progress has been taken since the inspection to improve initial assessment. The service acknowledged the need to introduce a more objective and systematic method, particularly for learners on level 2 and 3 courses, and purchased an externally developed system. Since 2007/08 the information generated by this system is used to help decide which courses are most appropriate for ICT learners. Following the introduction of this process, success rates for these learners have risen and are currently 10% above 2006/07 rates. Initial assessment of skills for life learners has also improved and is now applied consistently on each course. Initial assessment for learners on family learning programmes now includes the learner's own evaluation of their existing skills. The same process is used for learners on courses in English for speakers of other languages, which had just started at the time of the previous inspection. For learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, the initial assessment process is designed appropriately to reflect individual needs. Tutors work hard to ensure that before assessment, learners, and particularly their carers, are aware of the commitment required to complete accredited courses.

What progress has been made to improve target-setting and progress reviews for learners?	Reasonable progress
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The service has made reasonable progress in improving target-setting for learners, which was a key area for improvement at the previous inspection. Good practice, identified in the skills for life provision, has been shared with other sector subject areas to ensure consistency across the service. Teaching staff have had training on setting targets for small measures of achievement which are time-bound. Tutors are planning to identify evidence and record learners' progress more formally. Schemes of work, lesson plans and initial assessments have been reviewed to identify where target-setting is appropriate or needs to be improved. Individual learning plans for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities now incorporate targets for skills for life.

## Leadership and management

What steps have been taken to improve the quality assurance arrangements?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection the arrangements for quality assurance and improvements for the adult learning provision were poor, but in NLDC were satisfactory. Improvement targets for staff and courses were insufficient. The service has made reasonable progress in improving many aspects of its quality systems including the teaching and learning observation arrangements. The quality manual has been

updated with new procedures which now monitor most stages of the learners' experience from recruitment to exit. A clear schedule of activities now exist which focus on improving the quality of provision. Regular meetings and feedback from staff ensure they are fully involved in the development and implementation of the quality arrangements. Audits of learning processes are effective in identifying areas for improvements. The service continues to respond effectively to feedback from learners. It now focuses more closely on setting improvement targets for courses and staff. Monthly meetings and individual discussions are used well to support staff to achieve these targets. However, the service's quality improvement strategies are ineffective in improving some aspects of the training process. For example, staff do not always complete sufficiently thorough recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) records for learners.

What progress has the service made in preparing action plans for improvement, following observations of teaching and learning?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection, the service's action planning following observations of teaching and learning was identified as an area for improvement. The service has developed comprehensive procedures for the observation of teaching and learning since the previous inspection and these are now much improved. The new procedures are detailed and focus on teaching, learning and attainment and make good use of learners' feedback. The service has good arrangements for training staff who observe teaching sessions, which includes a number of joint observation sessions. Regular meetings are held to quality assure the findings of these observations. At the time of the previous inspection the service had no record of actions taken to improve teaching and learning following lesson observations. This has now significantly improved. Tutors now agree clear and detailed action plans following each observation and implementation of these plans is monitored well. During 2006/07 only 48% of tutors were observed. During 2007/08, all but three have been observed. These tutors are scheduled to be observed during the next few weeks. All the poor teaching identified through the observation process has already improved. Observation records are clear and informative. However, a small number pay insufficient attention to learning and focus too much on teaching.

What progress has been made to make the self-assessment process more inclusive and use the development plan more effectively?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the previous inspection, arrangements for self-assessment were satisfactory but community partners were not involved. The service has made reasonable progress in improving aspects of its self-assessment. It is appropriately evaluative. The self-assessment process makes good use of learner performance data in addition to other evidence to support its clear judgements. Learner feedback continues to contribute to the self-assessment process, although no use is made of

learner forums to evaluate the self-assessment report as a whole. Although sound arrangements are in place to involve community partners for the service's 2008/09 self-assessment, the service has made insufficient use of its partners' views in its latest report produced in May 2007.

The use of post-inspection action plans and development plans based on the self-assessment report is satisfactory. The development plan is detailed with clear arrangements for monitoring of the actions.