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MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Calderdale Adult Learning
                      Service
Date of visit: 12 June 2008

Context

Calderdale Adult Learning Service serves a population of 200,000 people in
Calderdale. It has three main learning centres based in Halifax, Todmorden and
Brighouse. The service also delivers sessions in over 50 outreach centres. The service
operates in an area where 31% of all people of working age have no qualifications
compared with the national figure of 27%. In 2006/07, a total of 2,600 learners were
enrolled on courses covering 12 of the 15 sector subject areas funded by the West
Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Of the learners enrolled, 78.3% are
female, 22.6% are over the age of 60 and 13.7% are from minority ethnic
backgrounds compared with a local demographic of 7%.

At the inspection in June 2007, all aspects of provision were satisfactory except for
family learning, which was good.

Achievement and standards

Has the provider improved its rates of achievement since inspection?	Insufficient progress

At the previous inspection achievements and standards were satisfactory. The service
has taken insufficient action to improve already satisfactory achievements and
standards. Overall retention continues to be good, although in 2006/07 it declined
slightly to 88%, with an overall decline of around 20% in learner numbers and
enrolments.

In 2006/07, the retention rates on health, public services and care; leisure, travel
and tourism; arts, media and publishing and languages, literature and culture
courses were maintained or improved. However, during the same period the
retention rates on information and communication technology (ICT), preparation for
life and work, and family learning declined by around 10%. Some indications show
that retention rates on preparation for life and work courses in 2007/08 are
improving. The service has made significant improvements in the retention rates of
minority ethnic groups, however the overall retention rates of minority groups in
2006/07 is lower than the intake as a whole at 80%. Achievement rates on long

accredited courses in 2006/07 continue to be good at 87.8%, though this represents a slight decline from 90% at the previous inspection.

| How is accreditation used to motivate learners and to make provision relevant for the local and national context? | Insufficient progress |

Insufficient use of accreditation was a key area for improvement at the previous inspection. Insufficient successful actions have been taken since the inspection to increase the use of accreditation. The service complies with its contract with the LSC, which does not demand accredited provision. Since the previous inspection, the overall percentage of learners on accredited courses has improved slightly from 7.1% to 8.5% in 2006/07. However, since the inspection the number of learners who were entered for qualifications in ICT has declined by around 30%, and in arts, media and publishing, the number of learners entered has further declined and is now below the 15% it was at the previous inspection. The service now better promotes the value of accredited courses to its learners, including some older learners who do not recognise the value of qualification. Around 75% of the learners claim some form of social benefits and do not pay course fees. The service attempts to motivate these learners to apply for qualifications. Actions are also being taken to offer shorter accredited courses.

Quality of provision

| How is initial assessment used in planning and recognising and recording progress and achievement? | Insufficient progress |

At the previous inspection no formal initial assessment existed for all learners, and for recognising and recording achievement, was ineffective. This has not changed. Instead tutors interview learners, and this information is used to start individual learning plans. However, these plans are often incomplete or absent. The poor use of individual learning plans to recognise and record progress and achievement is frequently criticised in the provider's own records of observations of teaching and learning. Target-setting and monitoring are insufficiently precise in many cases. In some sector subject areas such as arts, photographic and video evidence are being used to record progress. However, this is not fully established, and too few mechanisms are in place to ensure that learners' progress is properly planned and monitored.

| Is the implementation of the skills for life strategy effective in improving provision for learners? | Reasonable progress |

The implementation of a skills for life strategy was slow at the previous inspection. The provider has worked hard on this, and although much work is still to be done, reasonable progress has been made. Most tutors have had skills for life awareness training, and plans are in place to extend this training to all tutors. More tutors are qualified to level two in literacy and numeracy, and all tutors are expected to gain these qualifications within the next year. Good levels of support exist for partner

organisations, including sharing in staff development programmes, to further the recognition of literacy and numeracy needs and to ensure that provision is available for the local population. The provider has a substantial offer of ICT courses, and many of these are used as a medium for delivering skills for life to local people. The current offer is tailored to the needs of the local population, and progression within and outside the service is now better mapped to the acquisition of skills for life, including employability skills.

Leadership and management

How does the promotion of equality and diversity support learners?	Reasonable progress

The promotion of equality and diversity to support learners was satisfactory at the previous inspection, and reasonable progress has been made in developing this further. Much better joint planning now exists with partners to identify the specific needs of local people and to provide for these needs. Participation by members of under-represented target groups has, and continues to grow. Advertising now includes comprehensive information on opportunities available from other providers, and, where necessary, prospective learners are directed to other providers if their provision is deemed to be more suitable for their needs. The provider analyses data to track the participation and success rates of its learners, comparing one group against another, and putting measures in place to support those groups needing extra help. Improvements have been made to the main buildings used by the provider to make them more accessible, and specialised equipment is provided for learners who need it. Additional staff support learners with particular learning needs in sessions, and the provider's data shows an improvement in completion rates for those learners in receipt of this support. Partner organisations have benefited from the same training as the provider's staff, and their capacity to serve the needs of the local population has increased.

Are self-assessment and post inspection action planning effective in improving provision?	Insufficient progress

The self-assessment process is well established and is inclusive. Judgements made in the self-assessment report are sometimes accurate. However, the provider has insufficiently prioritised actions on some of its areas for improvement to improve provision within a reasonable timescale. This is particularly the case with the establishment of a reliable system for initially assessing learners who may have a range of additional learning needs, and with recognising and recording progress and achievement within an offer that is largely non-accredited. The provider has made partial progress in resolving some areas for improvement. This includes the insufficient use of information and learning technology in teaching and learning through implementing good staff training and project work. This casts tutors as learners, and individual learning plans are used to recognise and record progress and achievement within this project. However, this practice has not yet been adopted service-wide by tutors in their own teaching. Observations of teaching and learning are well established, but records of observations fail to identify strengths and areas

for improvement in teaching, learning and attainment, focusing more closely on systems and compliance. They do, however, identify the absence of a universal system of recognising and recording progress and achievement.