

Leicestershire County Council Adult Learning Service

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Arts, media and publishing
- Languages, literature and culture
- Preparation for life and work
- Family learning

Description of the provider

1. Leicestershire Adult Learning Service (LALS) is one of the services within the council's children's and young persons' service department. Its offices are located at County Hall in the Glenfield district of Leicester. The service uses some 60 sites in community colleges, schools, village halls, care homes and voluntary sector organisations across the county.
2. LALS contracts with East Midlands LSC to provide accredited and non-accredited programmes in 14 of the 15 sector subject areas. In 2007/08, the service provided 2,065 accredited and non-accredited learning programmes. At the time of the inspection, 2,881 learners were on non-accredited programmes and 3,164 on accredited programmes. Of these learners, 790 were on programmes in arts, media and publishing, 1,667 in language, literature and culture and 1,235 in preparation for life and work. Other provision, largely in information and communication technology (ICT) and care and sport, was not inspected.
3. The local unemployment rate in 2007 was 4.5%, compared with a regional rate of 5.0% and the national rate of 5.4%. Leicestershire is ranked 136 out of 149 authorities in England for deprivation. Areas of relative deprivation exist within an otherwise relatively affluent and largely rural county. Approximately 7% of the county's population of 641,000 are from minority ethnic groups. This compares with the national rate of 9.1%. The average level of educational qualifications is slightly above the national rate, with 66% of the population holding an National Vocational Qualifications Level 2 or above and 48.7% of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C in 2007.

Summary of grades awarded

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Effectiveness of provision | Good: Grade 2 |
| Capacity to improve | Good: Grade 2 |
| Achievement and standards | Good: Grade 2 |
| Quality of provision | Good: Grade 2 |
| Leadership and management | Good: Grade 2 |
| Equality of opportunity | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

Sector subject areas

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Arts, media and publishing | Good: Grade 2 |
| Languages, literature and culture | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Preparation for life and work | Outstanding: Grade 1 |
| Family learning | Good: Grade 2 |

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of provision is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision, leadership and management and equality of opportunity are all good. The provision in preparation for life and work is outstanding. The provision in arts, media and publishing and family learning is good. The provision in languages, literature and culture remains satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

5. The provider demonstrates a good capacity to improve. At inspection in 2004, the overall quality of provision was inadequate. At reinspection in 2005, leadership and management were good, and all aspects were satisfactory. This inspection shows further improvement in most areas. The service has clear priorities and is managing change well. Quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive and effective. Retention rates for learners are particularly high. Overall success rates for learners are high, and continue to show an improving trend.
6. The self-assessment process is well established and inclusive. The draft 2007/08 self-assessment report, produced by the service before inspection provides a very accurate assessment of its performance and correctly identifies the strengths and areas for improvement in the provision. Self-assessment grades match those from inspection in all but preparation for life and work, which was graded as good by the provider and outstanding by inspectors.
7. The effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the previous inspection is good. The strength in leadership and management has been maintained and good action has been taken to improve the implementation of quality assurance procedures and the use of management information. Quality improvement is now a strength. Teaching and learning have improved overall, although the planning and monitoring of individual learning targets remain areas for improvement. The service has already begun to address these areas for improvement, which has been identified through the self-assessment process.

Key strengths

- High retention rates and good success rates
- Good development of personal, social and employability skills
- Good teaching and learning

- Good management of change
- Comprehensive and effective quality improvement arrangements
- Very good partnership working
- Extensive community development work to support the disadvantaged and promote regeneration

Key areas for improvement

- Underdeveloped planning and monitoring of individual learning targets
- Insufficient implementation of information learning technology (ILT) strategy
- Incomplete arrangements for monitoring learner progression

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

8. Achievement and standards are good overall. This is correctly identified in the self-assessment report. Retention rates are particularly high, with an overall retention rate in

2007/08 of 94.6%. The overall success rate in 2007/08 was 85.46%. The performance of learners from different backgrounds shows little variation from this rate. Overall success rates for accredited courses in 2007/08 were 79.2%, compared with the national average in 2006/07 of 72.47% for general further education colleges.

9. In non-accredited provision, learners achieve their course and personal goals well. The standard of learners' work is generally good. Learners develop good personal and social skills in many areas, which lead to increased confidence, self-esteem and higher aspirations. In preparation for life and work and family learning, the impact on individuals and groups is particularly good. Many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from improved relationships with their children, improved literacy and numeracy, good employability skills and the confidence to progress to work or further study.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

10. The quality of provision is good. This is identified correctly in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. The profile of grades awarded by inspectors is slightly higher than that awarded by LALS's own observations. Most tutors plan their lessons well and use an effective range of activities and resources. Learning sessions are well paced and engage and maintain the interest of learners. Learners generally participate well, interact positively with each other and are well supported by tutors. Resources are satisfactory, although access to ILT is insufficient in some local centres.
11. Initial assessment is thorough. Tutors know their learners well and generally set appropriate learning targets for them. In some classes, the results of initial assessment are not reflected adequately in individual learning plans. Regular reviews of learning plans help learners to recognise their achievements and motivate them to continue, but do not always set sufficiently individualised targets to help learners improve.
12. The range of programmes is good and meets the needs and interests of learners well. The service works closely with local districts and communities to plan its provision, and is very responsive to local needs. Courses are carefully located in venues accessible to learners across the county. Particularly good use is made of targeted provision for disadvantaged learners in more deprived areas.
13. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners have access to a range of good quality, pre-course information. This information is also available in different formats to meet the particular individual needs and skills of learners. Tutors are well informed of progression opportunities for learners. Community development workers are particularly skilled in providing guidance for disadvantaged learners. Learners have additional access to specialist agencies.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

14. Leadership and management are good. This is identified correctly in the self-assessment report. The management of change is good. Leaders have a clear strategic view of the priorities and direction of the service. The service was completely reorganised in 2005 from

provision largely managed locally by community colleges across the county to a centrally managed service. Further reviews and progressive improvements include the very effective appointment of district managers to identify particular needs in different areas of the county. Changes have been well managed following reduced funding and changed priorities. Managers engage staff through good communications and consult with them extensively. The implementation of changes has been well planned and executed with good use of detailed workflow plans.

15. Quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive and effective. Staff involvement in well established self-assessment processes is good. Managers monitor all aspects of the provision closely. Self-assessment reports are accurate and identify nearly all of the strengths and areas for improvement identified at inspection. Quality improvement plans address all areas for improvement well, and set realistic targets for completion. They are regularly reviewed and progress clearly recorded. Arrangements for observation of teaching and learning are good. Observation judgements have been improved through thorough moderation, curriculum specific criteria and joint observations. Action points from observations and curriculum reviews are used effectively to inform tutors' performance development reviews and to develop individual, curriculum area and service-wide training plans. The service supports tutors through continuous professional development activities and appropriate teaching qualifications. Managers use data appropriately to monitor performance and identify trends and areas for improvement. Staff are encouraged to identify areas for improvement using a well-designed 'need for action' form, and these are quickly addressed.
16. The provider works well with an extensive network of partnerships to meet local needs. As part of the strategic Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership, the service collaborates successfully to secure funding for learning, and in planning provision directly relevant to communities through local learning forums. LALS also works closely with local agencies, such as the Learning Disabilities Board and with the regional Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) in workforce development. LALS has also developed close inter-service working with other council departments which benefits learners.
17. Literacy, numeracy and language support are effectively integrated within provision. The strategy covers both individual support and established courses in literacy and numeracy.
18. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. The provider has been very active in responding to recent changes in legislation and has a clear, well documented safeguarding policy and procedures which ensure that learners feel safe. Managers receive appropriate training and all appropriate staff undergo the required checks.
19. LALS's ILT strategy has not yet been implemented sufficiently. They had identified the more widespread use of ILT as an area for improvement and added ICT equipment in many local centres. However, some centres or rooms still lack sufficient ICT equipment. In some cases tutors make insufficient or ineffective use of the equipment which is available. The use of ILT by tutors is recognised as a development area by the service.
20. Arrangements for monitoring learner progression outside the authority are incomplete. Too little data is collected in some curriculum areas to indicate learners' progression overall.

21. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. LALS demonstrates a strong commitment to promote and support equality of opportunity. The service has taken very effective measures to widen participation and engage under-represented groups. In particular, it carries out extensive community development work among the most disadvantaged groups in the county to support local regeneration and to provide individual opportunities for learning.
22. The service has clear policies and procedures which meet current legislation. The head of service takes lead responsibility for equality and diversity. An equality and diversity working group regularly review progress in the equality action plan against clear targets for the engagement of under-represented groups. All targets set for participation by under-represented groups in 2007/08 were achieved. Data on participation is also carefully monitored and is now being used increasingly effectively by managers to review in detail the progress made by different groups of learners and to set new targets. Managers made good use of a learner consultation day for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to inform curriculum planning.
23. LALS routinely provides training for all staff in equality of opportunity and diversity. This includes mandatory training for managers and tutors delivered through workshops and tutor briefings. Specific training was also provided for frontline administrative staff to support their understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity in responding to under-represented groups.
24. Promotional materials and programme information are carefully adapted to meet different needs and abilities of learners. Specially adapted versions of the learner handbook with simplified language and clear visuals are used where appropriate to promote equality of opportunity at induction with the support of tutors.

What learners like:

- Learning new things – ‘I understand a lot now that was lost as a child’
- Working together to support each other
- The sense of achievement – ‘My daughter didn’t know I could do anything’
- The support and feedback from tutors – ‘They help me learn’
- The way they are treated – ‘We are all treated like adults’
- Improving their literacy and numeracy skills – ‘It helps me with health and safety at work’; ‘It helps me to budget what to spend’
- Working at the right level – ‘It’s at a level we can understand’
- The support they receive – ‘The individual help I get to learn’
- The learning opportunities – ‘Doing something I have always wanted to do’
- Returning to an interest after many years of working/raising a family – ‘it’s wonderful, I haven’t touched a computer for ten years’

What learners think could improve:

- Longer learning sessions
- More classes at convenient times

Sector subject areas

Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

Context

25. LALS offers courses in visual arts and crafts, including drawing, painting, pottery, silversmithing, sewing, embroidery and upholstery, and a small number of courses in music and dance. In 2007/08, 249 courses took place in 49 venues across the county, with 1,407 learners. The curriculum manager oversees a team of 54 part-time tutors supported by a part-time curriculum coordinator and a part-time administrator support.
26. The great majority of provision (99%) is non-accredited. At the time of inspection, 82% of learners were female, and 81% of learners were over 40 years of age. Around 3% of learners were from minority ethnic group and 6% of learners declared a disability.

Strengths

- Outstanding retention rates
- Good attainment of practical skills
- Good teaching and learning
- Innovative approaches to recording progress and recognising achievement
- Good range of programmes offered cross-county
- Good programme monitoring and management

Areas for improvement

- Ineffective individual learning plans
- Insufficient progression opportunities

Achievement and standards

27. Achievement and standards are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. The retention rate on non-accredited provision during 2007/08 was outstanding at 98%. All courses maintained good retention rates. On accredited provision the retention rate was also high, with success rates of 95%. Learners both new to the subject and those more established on courses demonstrate good attainment of practical skills. They acquire a good understanding of processes and subject contexts. Some learners are working at levels well above course requirements, particularly in silversmithing and embroidery.

Quality of provision

28. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors prepare schemes of work appropriate to the learners' levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. Good lesson planning supports teaching sessions which are well paced, sustain learners' interest and help learners achieve. Resources are satisfactory overall and staff are well qualified. As learners progress, tutors achieve a good balance between teaching, periods of practical activity and critique. In better lessons, tutors develop learners' subject knowledge in a wider context, through viewing the work of artists and designers and through visits by professional practitioners. Learners use sketchbooks very effectively to develop their ideas and to experiment with materials.

29. Learners use evidence of their practical attainment as a very effective starting point for review of their progress and targets to be achieved. In particular, the innovative use of sketchbooks to record and review learner progress is particularly effective. Some learners now record their progress in individual learning plans, to review personal learning targets in a more focused way. However, most learners use personal learning statements, which are ineffective in reviewing and capturing progress and attainment. Personal learning statements identify the learners' achievement of course learning outcomes, but do not recognise learners' progress and development sufficiently and are not used effectively to set revised targets for learners.
30. The recent introduction of exhibitions of learners' work in venues across the county is very effective in recognising and celebrating learners' achievements. Learners value this opportunity to exhibit their work, and it is a goal to which many aspire. Exhibiting work has resulted in sales or commissions for some learners.
31. The range of provision is good. LALS provides a good range of creative arts courses accessible to learners across the county. The spread of provision is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. Most courses accommodate learners of mixed ability from new starters to continuing learners. Venues range from church and village halls, to local libraries and secondary schools.
32. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Course information is clear, and the arrangements for the development of learners' needs in language, literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Many learners choose to repeat the same course to progress and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Within much non-accredited provision, insufficient opportunities are provided for learners to progress through levels of study in a carefully considered way. Opportunities for new starters are sometimes too limited and returning learners are not always sufficiently challenged to attain higher standards. In one subject area, managers have responded effectively by developing a curriculum around key principles and subject characteristics, and a more personalised learning programme has been developed for each learner.

Leadership and management

34. Curriculum management is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Monitoring of the curriculum area is also good. Managers effectively bring a county-wide focus to subject management and delivery and are improving consistency in course management, administration and teaching and learning. Managers are also working effectively to promote good practice. The observation and review of most teaching staff leads to clear professional development targets so that teaching and learning are improved. Tutors are effectively supported through formal training. Communication between tutors and the curriculum manager, through informal class visits, telephone or email, is good. Tutors value the increased level of communication and benefit from meeting regularly as a curriculum group to share common interest. Managers also plan to use the recently established tutor e-learning platform

as a way of exchanging good practice and learning materials, but this is not yet fully developed.

35. Programme planning between curriculum and district managers is good overall. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory and planning is used well to widen access to learning and to respond to identified needs. Managers recognise that enrolments in the curriculum area do not yet fully reflect the diverse population profile of the county, and they are working to extend collaboration across the service. Creative arts are now being used increasingly to support community and family learning. For example, sewing and handicraft courses are provided for disadvantaged learners to develop employability skills, including team working. Carnival costume-making for a parents and toddlers group introduced learning in an informal manner and led learners on to a more structured language and play course.
36. Managers have worked hard to address the areas for improvement highlighted at the previous inspection. The curriculum area self-assessment of 2007/08 is accurate and inspectors agreed with many strengths and areas for improvement identified through self-assessment.

Languages, literature and culture

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

37. LALS provides courses at 35 centres in modern foreign languages and British sign language (BSL). Seventy-four per cent of courses are accredited. Nine language courses are available at beginners' level, with courses in French, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish and BSL being offered at intermediate level, and French and Spanish offered at advanced level. At the time of inspection 1,667 learners were enrolled on 152 courses. Sixty-seven per cent of learners are female. Most courses take place in the evening and last for two hours, varying in length from five weeks to 30 weeks. Two full-time managers and three curriculum coordinators manage a team of 70 part-time tutors, all of whom hold a relevant teaching qualification. Seventy-seven per cent are native speakers of the languages they teach.

Strengths

- High retention and success rates on accredited long courses at Levels 1 and 2
- Wide range of learning opportunities
- Good professional development
- Good internal communication

Areas for improvement

- Poor lesson planning to meet individual needs

Achievement and standards

38. Achievement and standards are good overall. Retention and success rates on Level 1 and 2 long accredited courses are high, as identified correctly in the self-assessment report. Retention and success rates have improved significantly from 2006/07. In 2007/08, the overall retention rate on Level 1 courses was 97.3%, and the overall success rate for the same period was 93.6%. In the same period, the retention rate at Level 2 was 94% and the success rate 80%. On non-accredited courses, retention and success rates in 2007/08 were high at 91%.
39. The development of learners' language skills is satisfactory. In all classes learners can communicate at an appropriate level. In most classes learners are able to extract information from recorded dialogues or respond to requests and instructions from tutors in the foreign language. Learners in advanced classes write the foreign language with few mistakes. Reading skills are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

40. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as identified in the self-assessment report. Many tutors employ an imaginative range of teaching strategies such as games, quizzes and songs to motivate learners. Tutors have access to a satisfactory range of resources, including laptops and data projectors, for use in community venues. They make effective use of audio and visual materials from the internet to present a variety of speakers and accents to learners to improve their listening and speaking skills. Tutors are skilled linguists, and many are native speakers of the language they teach. Most use the target language effectively, although some tutors use English too much when giving instructions. In the better lessons, the lively presentation of new vocabulary by tutors and their sympathetic correction of language mistakes create a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere which encourages learning. In these lessons, learners are challenged and given good opportunities to progress. Too often, however, lesson planning is poor and does not meet the needs of individual learners. Most classes have learners of differing ability and levels of previous experience, and the results of initial assessment of learners do not influence the content of lessons sufficiently. Learning outcomes for many lessons are vague and not sufficiently individualised. Activities are not amended adequately for learners who are struggling to keep up or for those who complete tasks early. Some activities are centred for too long on the teacher or a small number of learners while other learners remain silent.

41. LALS provides a wide range of language learning opportunities. This is identified correctly as a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners can choose to study BSL, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Makaton, Russian and Spanish. Classes are held at 35 centres across the county with 30% taking place during the day. In the larger centres it is possible to study most languages beyond beginners' level and many learners progress to higher levels. District managers work effectively with local communities to identify their learning needs and to attract new learners from under-represented groups. Many of these would not normally have considered studying a language. The service also has good links with a local charity to provide higher level courses in BSL.
42. Arrangements for information, advice and guidance to learners are satisfactory. Learners speak warmly about the personal support they receive from their tutors especially when the learners have been absent. Pre-course information is clear and readily available, and this enables learners generally to select an appropriate course. When more specific advice is needed, learners can contact the curriculum managers to evaluate their level of skill. Effective assistance is available to ensure learners can fully participate in learning opportunities. Arrangements for the development of learners' needs in language, literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. The learner handbook, course information and the induction process make learners aware of the support available.

Leadership and management

43. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Professional development for tutors is good. This is identified in the self-assessment report. A comprehensive training plan contains generic and language specific activities aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. Staff development sessions occur at regular intervals and are well attended. These provide tutors with opportunities to share good practice and ideas and to discuss teaching methods. Topics reflect the areas for improvement identified in observations and from tutors' own assessment of their training needs. LALS has placed a strong focus on training to improve the use of ICT in the classroom, and inspectors noted the positive impact of this training during inspection. The service supports staff to attend external training. One co-ordinator qualified as a subject learning coach and is now using the gained skills with colleagues to improve teaching and learning. BSL tutors have attended external training to prepare for the new exam syllabus.
44. Internal communications are good. Tutors are kept well informed through a regular newsletter which contains good tips and ideas to improve practice, information on service targets and advice on documentation. Regular briefing meetings for tutors take place once a term and those unable to attend receive a briefing sheet or meet individually with a manager.
45. The service sets challenging targets for retention, success and achievement. Although managers plan the language programmes carefully to meet a range of targets, 43% of courses were cancelled in 2007/08 and 35% in 2008/09. Managers now have access to a wider range of data and are making more effective use of this to develop a more strategic approach to programme planning.

46. The self-assessment process is inclusive and makes effective use of both tutor and learner feedback. The self-assessment report broadly matches inspectors' findings, although it does not fully recognise lesson planning as an area for improvement. The observation of teaching and learning process places too little emphasis on the learning and attainment of learners.
47. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The celebration of cultural diversity is a constant theme in modern foreign languages lessons. Tutors use an accessibility checklist to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues.

Preparation for life and work

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

48. LALS offers programmes in preparation for life and work. These include literacy, numeracy, language, community learning, employability and provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Currently 1,567 learners are enrolled, with 69% working towards a qualification and the remainder following non-accredited courses. The participation rate for male learners is 30% and for minority ethnic learners is 31%. Most courses run during the day with some in the evening and at weekends. Courses range from one to three hours per week and from four to 40 weeks a year in a range of community venues such as education centres, schools, libraries and community centres.

Strengths

- Very good achievement of personal and employability skills
- Very good teaching and learning
- Particularly well targeted provision for learners
- Highly effective support for learners
- Particularly strong strategic management

Areas for improvement

- No areas for improvement identified

Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are very good. This is correctly identified in the self-assessment report. Retention and success rates are high. For example, on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, the success rate on accredited courses is 98.8%.

50. The service plays a highly effective role in encouraging on to programmes many severely disadvantaged learners who have no recent history of engagement in educational or social activities and who lack any confidence. Learners achieve high levels of confidence, as well as the educational and social skills required to continue with learning and to seek to re-enter employment. An outstanding transition learning project, which provides a full time course for learners with complex and multiple learning needs, leads to particularly good participation by learners in the local community. Learners also gain excellent employability skills, and at the time of inspection 26% of learners on community learning programmes had gained employment. Progression on courses is very good, with many learners undertaking further study and gaining employment. One disadvantaged learner successfully established a small catering business after an employment course. Another learner with a severe medical disability gained the confidence to progress to further learning after an ICT course. A lone parent with young children went on to gain five national qualifications after her initial literacy course. Many learners on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes have progressed to higher levels of ESOL and some have gained employment in care homes and as teaching assistants.

Quality of provision

52. Teaching and learning are very good. This was correctly identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors plan sessions meticulously and use a wide range of imaginative teaching methods. Initial assessment is very good and this informs lesson plans that provide well differentiated tasks for learners. Learners are enthused by the excellent teaching and are set challenging yet achievable targets. In many sessions learners are asked to complete tasks at home in preparation for the next session and these are completed by learners without exception. Tutors are particularly aware of the changing needs of learners and respond very quickly to their needs. For example, after hearing that a large local employer was only accepting job applications online, a tutor developed and introduced a new ICT module covering online curriculum vitae applications. Tutors use experiential learning activities which are very closely related to employment and to learners' everyday lives. The high levels of enthusiasm and commitment by tutors motivates learners to engage in new challenges. The recording of learner achievement and progress is good. Tutors make very effective use of initial assessment, individual learning plans and learner diaries. Learners complete individual learning plans regularly, and realistic targets are set and monitored very effectively. Learners with particularly complex needs have a highly effective interactive individual learning plan, which staff use with learners to demonstrate achievement at annual reviews and at multi-agency meetings. However, in literacy and ESOL sessions, some targets and reviews are insufficiently detailed to identify progress or to help learners improve. Most resources are satisfactory or good. Some sessions in local communities are held in cramped accommodation with limited access to ICT facilities. Managers are aware of this and are working to address these issues.
53. The range of provision is very good, a strength correctly identified in the self-assessment report. The provider recruits a wide range of learners from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds and those with mental health and complex needs. Many learners have a history of minimal involvement in formal education and training. The service has developed a strong and innovative range of partnerships to recruit and support learners. These include excellent partnership work with the Prince's Trust, community colleges, Connexions, health trusts and numerous community and voluntary organisations. Provision is focused on local communities

in identified areas of deprivation. Courses are held in libraries, community centres and other locations nearest to the learners' communities. All learners spoke positively of being able to access a course locally and in an informal setting. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities have a particularly good range of enrichment activities, which enhances their learning and integrates them into the community. This includes residential outdoor pursuits, health events, visits to local drama performances and fundraising events.

54. Support for learners is highly effective. This is again correctly identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors give very good individual support to learners. Initial advice and guidance are particularly effective. Learners receive positive and realistic advice on the skills necessary to enter employment and are set achievable learning goals that increase their confidence. An extensive range of promotional materials is available in a range of modified formats to meet the needs of different learners. Induction for learners with complex needs starts with a very comprehensive transition in the summer term. Particularly effective induction encourages each learner to become familiar with new activities and to get to know the staff before the start of the course. Good additional learning support is provided for learners identified as having particular development needs in literacy and numeracy. Experienced and qualified tutors give learners very good advice on further progression opportunities. In addition, the service provider has excellent network links with agencies able to give specialist support to learners. For example a learner with a severe neurological disability was given specialist equipment and put in contact with the local support network. Literacy and numeracy provision is good, and is particularly targeted at learners who wish to improve their employability skills.

Leadership and management

55. Leadership and management are outstanding. The strategic management of preparation for life and work programmes is particularly strong. This is correctly identified in the self-assessment report. The provider has a very clear policy of targeting community learning in those communities and learners in greatest need. Staff understand and share this ethos.
56. The provider has excellent quality improvement processes in place. Tutors are regularly monitored and appraised and the observation of teaching and learning is particularly robust and supportive. For example, staff who teach learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities received 149 group monitoring visits by managers, as well as scheduled lesson observations. Tutors speak positively of this process, which contributes to improved teaching and learning. Staff development is very good. For example, effective information, advice and guidance is a priority in the retention of learners, and several tutors are undertaking accreditation in this field. Managers are very supportive, and staff receive regular supervision whenever requested. The impact of staff development on learners is systematically reviewed through lesson observations.
57. The service has a strong culture of mutual support, and good practice is routinely shared. In one area, all tutors and support staff receive regular supervision. The promotion of equality of opportunity is very good. Good practice in equality and diversity is thoroughly established in all programmes and is well promoted in classroom activities.
58. The self-assessment process is thorough and accurate, and all staff are actively involved. The findings of the inspection closely reflect the LALS's own self-assessment report.

Family learning

Good: Grade 2

Context

59. LALS offers provision for family learning in literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN), and wider family learning (WFL). In 2007/08, 323 learners attended 53 FLLN workshops and programmes and 814 learners attended 87 WFL programmes. In the same period, 1,180 children attended family learning provision. Programmes range in length from short informal sessions to longer more formal programmes extending over 20 weeks. In 2007/08, 42% of the FLNN programmes offered external accreditation. The WFL programmes are non-accredited.
60. FLLN provision is managed by one family learning strategy officer supported by six family learning development tutors and three Skills for Life tutors. WFL is managed by six district managers and supported by six community learning development workers. WFL is delivered by 34 tutors who also work in other curriculum areas of the service.
61. In 2007/08, 14% of the learners on family learning programmes were men. Three per cent of learners attending family learning programmes declared a learning difficulty, and 16% were from minority ethnic groups.

Strengths

- Good progress and standard of work on family learning programmes
- Good teaching and learning
- Particularly effective targeting of provision in disadvantaged areas
- Good personal support for learners

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient access to ICT equipment at some centres
- Insufficient monitoring of performance on family learning programmes

Achievement and standards

62. Achievement and standards on family learning programmes are good. Learners make good progress and achieve high standards of work. This is correctly identified in the self-assessment report. Learners achieve personal targets identified in individual and group learning plans. In 2007/08, 74% of learners completed their learning goals, and an increasing number of learners on FLLN programmes now progress to national awards in literacy and numeracy.
63. Learners express their pleasure at having a second chance to learn and acquire sufficient confidence to support their children's learning. Many learners report the positive benefits that family learning has on the relationships with their children. This contributes effectively to the local authority's Every Child Matters targets under 'enjoying and achieving'. Learners' achievements impact positively on their self-esteem and raise aspirations for their children and themselves. Learners' increased vocational aspirations also encourage satisfactory

progression on to further learning opportunities including literacy, numeracy and vocational courses.

Quality of provision

64. Teaching and learning are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors plan sessions very effectively to meet the group and individual goals of learners and inspire learners to develop new skills and interests. Tutors are well qualified and experienced, holding appropriate national teaching qualifications and, on FLLN programmes, Level 4 qualifications in Skills for Life. They use a good variety of methods to check learners' understanding and give clear feedback. For many learners this is their first experience of positive and constructive comments, both verbal and written, in a learning environment. Tutors use different assessment methods to suit the ability and confidence levels of learners. These range from self-assessment and screening to more in-depth assessments. The results of initial assessment are recorded effectively in learners' files, and are used as an appropriate starting point for setting learning and personal goals. Parents and carers on WFL programmes benefit from sharing stimulating learning experiences. All learners keep learning diaries which record individual progress effectively and enable learners to reflect on the achievement of their learning goals. The monitoring of progress is satisfactory and learners are encouraged to continue with their learning when they complete their programmes.
65. Tutors use a variety of innovative teaching aids and materials to meet the needs of their learners. Although some tutors use ILT equipment effectively to enhance teaching where available, it is used inconsistently. Access to ICT equipment is insufficient in some centres. Many FLLN programmes are delivered in primary schools where the equipment is in constant use by children and not available for use in family learning programmes. Not all learners have access to personal computers at home. The limited opportunities to acquire information technology skills impact on some learners' employment potential.
66. LALS offers a good range of programmes. FLLN programmes are carefully designed for parents and carers wishing to support their children at school. Many learners also wish to improve their own literacy and numeracy skills. WFL programmes enable parents and children to enjoy learning together. Many parents and carers progress into more formal learning opportunities. Targeting of provision in disadvantaged areas is particularly effective. The delivery of FLLN and WFL in areas of high deprivation enables the family learning development workers to engage with parents and carers with low skill levels. Many learners in these disadvantaged areas have low levels of self-esteem and confidence not only in themselves but also in their children. Engagement and progression programmes are held in local venues, for example community halls and neighbourhood schools. This is very successful in breaking down the barriers learners experience in accessing learning opportunities.
67. The service offers a good range of WFL programmes, including healthy cooking and eating, creative crafts, modern languages, computing and story sacks, all of which offer short informal routes into positive learning experiences. These programmes support several aspects of Every Child Matters. In particular, being healthy, enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution through participating in community events.
68. Personal support for parents and carers on family learning programmes is good. Many learners have multiple and complex barriers to learning. Tutors recognise and identify these

needs effectively and adapt sessions to address them. Tutors enable learners to share their concerns with other learners and to engage in peer support to find solutions. Information, advice and guidance for learners is satisfactory. LALS works effectively with partners to provide information and advice on employment and learning opportunities for learners. Tutors have a good understanding of the progression opportunities available to learners within LALS. This contributes to the 'achieving economic wellbeing' aspect of Every Child Matters.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management in family learning are good overall. Managers set a clear direction leading to improvement, as indicated in the self-assessment report. Managers have set clear targets to increase the number of learners gaining accreditation. Good links are made with other organisations, and programme development in partnership with other agencies makes a positive contribution within the Every Child Matters agenda. Equality of opportunity is promoted very well, particularly with disadvantaged groups. Staff are well trained and supported. Tutors can access clear information about local and national initiatives via the service's learning platform. Safeguarding arrangements are good, and this contributes to the 'staying safe' aspect of Every Child Matters.
70. Managers do not monitor overall performance sufficiently. Information on learner attendance is collected but is not always analysed sufficiently to measure performance or to set targets. Service level agreements have been established with schools, but they are not always reviewed thoroughly with head tutors.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Learners' achievements in FE funded, accredited provision offered by Leicestershire Adult Learning Service

Success rates on accredited entry and Level 1 (combined) and Level 2 qualifications, by length, expected end year and age.

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 19+ | | | |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| | | Starts – Transfers | Provider Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| 1 long | 06/07 | 3,124 | 69.6% | 70.5% | -0.9% |
| | 07/08* | 1,794 | 87.4% | N/A | N/A |
| 2 long | 06/07 | 388 | 66.3% | 69.9% | -3.6% |
| | 07/08* | 824 | 69.3% | N/A | N/A |
| Short** | 06/07 | 8,919 | 67.8% | 80.7% | -12.9% |
| | 07/08* | 4,005 | 81.2% | N/A | N/A |

* ACL provider data not validated

** Courses over 5 weeks long