# Lancashire County Council

Inspection date                6 February 2009

Inspection number              330961

# Contents

# 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:

- Health, public services and care
- Information and communication technology
- Education and training
- Preparation for life and work

# Description of the provider

1.  Lancashire County Council receives funding from Lancashire LSC to provide adult and community learning and work-based learning, mainly Train to Gain. Lancashire Adult Learning (LAL) is the service within the council with responsibility for the programmes. During 2007/08, 26,999 learners enrolled on adult and community learning courses, 8% of which led to qualifications including National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). In addition, LAL has 587 learners on Train to Gain programmes leading to NVQs.

2.  LAL provides learning at three main centres and over 600 community-based venues throughout the county. It provides courses in 15 sector subject areas, as well as family learning and community development. LAL's apprenticeship programme, with 20 apprentices, and its learndirect programme were not inspected.

3.  LAL is managed by a strategic management team, which includes the head of the service and two managers. The strategic management team reports to a strategic board which is composed of four councillors, a senior manager from the council's Community Services Directorate, two members with a business background and the strategic management team. The board reports to the council cabinet member for adult and community services.

4.  Lancashire has a population of just over 1 million people and more than 41,000 businesses with a total workforce of over 610,000. The county has 12 districts with an urban and rural mix. Significant areas of deprivation exist in some districts. About 7% of the population is from a minority ethnic background, similar to the north west of England as a whole.

# Summary of grades awarded

| Effectiveness of provision | Good: Grade 2 |
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| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
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| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

| Capacity to improve | Good: Grade 2 |
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| Achievement and standards | Good: Grade 2 |
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| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
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| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

| Quality of provision | Good: Grade 2 |
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| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
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| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

| Leadership and management | Good: Grade 2 |
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| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
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| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

| Equality of opportunity | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
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# Sector subject areas

| Health, public services and care | Good: Grade 2 |
|---|---|

| Information and communication technology | Good: Grade 2 |
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| Education and training | Good: Grade 2 |
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| Preparation for life and work | Good: Grade 2 |
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# Overall judgement

## Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning          Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain          Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

5.  The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards are good in adult and community learning and Train to Gain. Arrangements for recognising and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) on non-accredited courses are satisfactory and produce reliable data on retention and achievement.

6.  The quality of provision is good. Overall teaching and learning are good. Tutors use a wide range of strategies to facilitate learning. LAL's virtual learning environment is in the early stages of development and is not yet used or understood by all staff. Information learning technology is not always used to support learning in the classroom. The programmes and activities provided by LAL are outstanding and innovative. LAL meets the needs of the community, particularly hard-to-reach and isolated learners. Partnership working is outstanding. Support for learners and advice and guidance are good.

7.  Leadership and management are good. Strategic direction and management are strong. Curriculum management is good. LAL has a clear focus on improving the quality of the provision and retention and achievement rates, with good actions to drive the improvements. Subcontractors are monitored and supported well. Arrangements for quality assurance are good. The observation of teaching and learning is used to make improvements, although some observation grades were unjustifiably high. Equality of opportunity is good, although opportunities to reinforce learners' understanding of equality and diversity are often missed in sessions. Actions to widen participation are outstanding. A range of very effective strategies are used to engage with people from disadvantaged groups. Management information is used well to monitor participation and the performance of individual courses. The use of data to measure impact in some areas is insufficient.

## Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8.  LAL has a good capacity to improve. It has maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection and resolved most of the areas for improvement. Many improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The service has made some significant changes for example, restructuring the organisation, introducing a new and improved management information system, and launching a virtual learning environment. These changes have been managed well. LAL has

a range of clear action plans. Staff understand their role in implementing the identified actions. Achievement against plans is closely monitored.

9. Some grades were higher at this inspection than the previous one. Other grades were the same. The grade for equality of opportunity was lower than at the previous inspection. Arrangements for quality assurance remain good.

10. Self-assessment is good. The self-assessment process is inclusive and thorough, using a wide range of evidence such as retention, achievement and success rates, observation of teaching and learning records, feedback from staff, learners and subcontractors, and course reviews. The report is internally and externally moderated. Strengths and areas for improvement in the self-assessment report are broadly accurate. However, some strengths were overstated and some additional areas for improvement were identified. Some inspection grades were lower than those in the self-assessment report.

# Key strengths

- High retention and achievement rates on non-accredited provision
- Good teaching and learning
- Outstanding partnership working
- Good support and guidance
- Strong strategic direction and management
- Good curriculum management
- Good actions to drive improvements
- Outstanding actions to widen participation

# Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of data to measure impact
- Insufficient individualisation of learning

# Main findings

## Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning                    Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain                                   Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

11. Achievements and standards are good as noted in the self-assessment report. In 2007/08, non-accredited programmes represented 92% of provision. Retention and achievement on non-accredited programmes are good. Retention has improved from 2005/06 to 2007/08 by 9 points to 93%. Achievement rates have declined slightly to 90% in 2007/08. During this period, the RARPA process has become well established and more thorough. LAL produces reliable data on retention and achievement for their non-accredited provision. Retention and achievement rates are particularly high on education and training and health, public services and care non-accredited courses.

12. Overall success rates for the small number of learners on Train to Gain programmes in 2006/07 were very good. Timely success rates were good at 79%. In 2007/08, the programme expanded significantly. Overall success rates have remained good despite a decline to 84%. Timely success rates show a more significant drop to 48%. LAL has identified this issue and has clear actions in place to improve timely success rates. Overall success rates in 2007/08 for all NVQ courses are good at 83%. On other accredited adult and community learning provision, overall success rates are satisfactory.

13. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners are making good progress. Those learners receiving additional support achieve at the same rate as other learners. All learners develop particularly good personal and social skills, leading to increased confidence and self-esteem. Learners progress particularly well from first steps courses, employability courses and health, care and public services courses to further education, training and employment.

14. Staff in the sector subject areas monitor and manage attendance. No overall attendance data for the service exists, or for individual sector subject areas.

## Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning                    Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain                                   Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

15. Overall the quality of provision is good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors encourage learners to use their knowledge in everyday life. In the better sessions, learners are encouraged to work in pairs, individually and in groups. Tutors facilitate wide-ranging discussions

that enhance learners' understanding. They use effective questioning techniques to increase learners' understanding of their subject. In a few sessions, tutors rely too much on workbooks and do not challenge more confident learners.

16. The deployment and management of learning resources are good. Tutors have access to a wide range of learning and support materials and information learning technology. However, the technology is not always used to support learning in the classroom. LAL's virtual learning environment is in the early stages of development and is not yet used or understood by all staff.

17. LAL has developed a new RARPA process recently. It is working well where it is in use. A new learning portfolio allows learners to identify gaps in their knowledge but tutors do not always use this information to plan learning. In some sessions, learning is not planned for each learner individually. Assessment is satisfactory and feedback to learners is regular and supportive.

18. The programmes and activities provided by LAL are outstanding at meeting the needs of learners and the local community. Partnership working is outstanding. LAL offers a wide range of appropriate provision to hard-to-reach and isolated learners through three main sites and more than 600 community venues. Two sites are residential centres. Provision is designed to meet the needs of learners from very different cultural and geographical backgrounds. For many isolated learners, community centres are a lifeline and provide an invaluable resource which adds to the quality of their lives. Partners of LAL use one of LAL's residential centres to offer parent and child residential weekends. These courses are always full. Much of the work in the community is innovative and aims to encourage different cultures working together. In the voluntary services sector, one partner offers a programme for people with learning difficulties to act as volunteers. These learners work in the community helping others. LAL offers exciting opportunities for community-based offenders and ex-offenders as part of a rehabilitation programme. It works with other colleges, Jobcentre Plus and the probation service to offer employability programmes that help learners return to work. It engages well with employers and offers them a wide range of programmes that meet their needs very well.

19. Guidance and support for learners and the provision of literacy, numeracy and language support are good. Data shows that learners in need of support achieve at the same rate as learners not requiring support. Feedback shows that learners gain confidence, improve their literacy and numeracy and practise new skills. However, in a few cases where they work alongside tutors, support workers sometimes misunderstand the learning objectives.

20. Information and guidance officers work directly in the community. They provide individual appointments to learners in community centres. Advice and guidance is integrated well into the learning programmes. Tutors receive training in the provision of initial advice and guidance and a good tutor handbook is available.

# Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

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|---|---|
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |
| Equality of opportunity | Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 |

21. Leadership and management are good. Work with partners to widen participation is very good, as the self-assessment identified. LAL has a wide and productive range of local and strategic partnerships with council departments, training providers, employers and voluntary and community sector organisations. Partnerships are used very well to attract learners who are often isolated in the community and who would otherwise not participate in learning. LAL and its partners work together well to plan provision which removes competition and complements existing provision to the benefit of the communities they serve. Subcontractors are monitored closely and supported well through joint observations of teaching and learning, access to training, and good meetings. LAL helps partners build their capacity. Partners share their resources and expertise well to the benefit of learners.

22. Strategic direction and management are strong, as the previous inspection and self-assessment identified. LAL's three-year development plan is aligned with government and local strategies to reduce unemployment and upgrade the skills of the workforce. Curriculum managers and tutors are informed well about the strategy. Since the previous inspection, LAL has significantly increased the numbers of employers it works with and the quantity of apprenticeships and Train to Gain provision it offers. Good use is made of different funding streams to meet the needs of a wide range of groups and government priorities. Governance arrangements have been strengthened.

23. Very clear and appropriate key performance indicators are used to monitor business performance thoroughly. Regular useful reports on all aspects of the service's work enable managers to monitor performance. Attendance is monitored at a local level by curriculum managers and tutors. However, managers do not know the attendance rates, either for the whole organisation or for different types of provision or sector subject areas. The policy for managing attendance is insufficiently detailed and the criteria for managing attendance are not clear.

24. Value for money is good. Curriculum management is good. Sector subject areas have very clear management structures. Curriculum managers respond quickly to requests for new provision. They support staff well. Training of staff is fit for purpose and meets staff needs. Communication is good. The meeting structure is clear and includes meetings to ensure standardisation and share good practice. Data is used well at sector subject area level to monitor the provision.

25. Actions taken for quality improvement are good. LAL has a good range of action plans which are used well by all staff to drive and monitor improvement. Many

improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Arrangements for quality assurance are good. LAL has good systems to gain feedback from all stakeholders and to inform them of changes made as a result of their feedback. LAL responds to feedback and implements improvements. The observation of teaching and learning system has improved since the previous inspection. It is now good and is used to make improvements. Following observations, clear action plans are developed and monitored closely both by line managers and moderators. Good support is given to those observed through mentoring and further training. Good mentoring logs are kept, showing the action taken and evidence of impact clearly. However, some observations were overgraded.

26. The use of data to measure impact in some areas is insufficient, as identified by self-assessment. For example, data is not used routinely to analyse the effect of support on retention and achievement. Anecdotal evidence is used to measure the uptake of study skills. Attendance data is not collected and analysed for the whole organisation.

27. Equality of opportunity is good. Actions to widen participation are outstanding, as identified by self-assessment and the previous inspection. Strategies to engage disadvantaged groups are very effective. LAL works closely with a number of key agencies to remove barriers to participation and to support these groups. Good local market intelligence reports are used well by managers and learning organisers to target provision in areas of deprivation. Challenging key performance indicators to increase the participation of under-represented groups have been implemented recently and are monitored closely. Some very innovative marketing is used effectively to attract under-represented learners. All venues are now, as a minimum, compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The Skills for Life strategy is being implemented effectively to widen participation. Screening assessment on entry of learners' Skills for Life is most developed in information and communication technology (ICT) and visual and performing arts, but it is not yet in place in other areas. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. All staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance. All staff receive good mandatory equality and diversity and Skills for Life awareness training.

28. Opportunities to reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity are often missed in sessions. In some subject areas, materials contain insufficient reference to culture, gender and religion. Differentiation in teaching and learning, particularly to meet the needs of more able learners, is insufficient. In some sessions learners' views are not challenged sufficiently. As identified by self-assessment, staff ethnicity is not representative of those groups in the communities in which they work or the learners on the programmes.

## What learners like:

- Supportive assessor - 'I wouldn't have entered training again without her'
- 'Realising my ambition'
- Opportunity to learn more skills
- 'I can understand what my grandchildren are talking about now'
- Access to skills that employers want
- 'Using the internet has changed my life'
- Flexible timing of courses and geographical location
- Staff are approachable and helpful
- Supportive friendly tutors
- 'I can now work my own bills out, whereas before I had to rely on my husband'

## What learners think could improve:

- 'Sometimes the tutor is too busy to give me the time I need'
- 'At the start I did not like the initial loading of assignments'
- Would like more time and longer sessions

# Sector subject areas

## Health, public services and care

Good: Grade 2

### Context

29. LAL offers a range of non-accredited and accredited provision in the area of health, public services and care with 102 learners on non-accredited courses in counselling and complementary health studies and 493 learners on accredited courses, including drug use and misuse and counselling at levels 1, 2 and 3. In addition, LAL has learners on accredited courses covering drug awareness, healthier foods and special diets, conflict resolution, personal safety and health and safety. Currently 814 learners are working towards NVQs in health and social care and cleaning and support services. They work in a range of settings including residential accommodation, childcare centres, youth work centres and schools. LAL delivers this provision through Train to Gain. Some of the provision is subcontracted. Currently 27 tutors work in this area.

### Strengths

- High success rates
- Very good progression
- Good teaching and learning
- Very effective partnerships
- Good employer engagement on Train to Gain programmes
- Good guidance and support for learners
- Good curriculum management

### Areas for improvement

- No significant areas for improvement

### Achievement and standards

30. Achievements and standards are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. For most learners, success rates are high. On the Train to Gain programmes, overall success rates have improved significantly since 2005/06 to 78% in 2007/08. On non-accredited adult and community learning programmes, retention and achievement are good. In the period 2007/08, 92% of learners achieved their minimum learning outcomes. However, on accredited adult and community learning programmes, overall success rates have declined since 2005/06 to 66%. Changes have been made to the programmes and current learners are now on target to complete their qualifications.

31. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Portfolios are developed well and learners receive appropriate support in both the classroom and the workplace. Learners' confidence increases and they recognise the benefits of their learning in

other areas of their lives. LAL supports aspirations and promotes progression very well. Progression to higher level courses is good. Learners have a range of good opportunities to enhance their job role, voluntary work or career. Employers are very supportive of learners' progression at work.

## Quality of provision

32. The quality of provision is good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. Sessions are interesting and planned well with a range of activities. Learners are motivated and enthusiastic about the subject. Tutors have a good subject knowledge and make good use of a range of resources. Comprehensive links are made between learners' work and course content. Tutors have very good subject knowledge and additional links with partner organisations give access to tutors that are subject specialists. Learning is planned well. Teaching materials are appropriate, of good quality and are used effectively to extend learning. Lesson planning links theory to practical work well. Schemes of work are clear and detailed. Lesson plans are satisfactory, but little evidence exists to demonstrate how health and safety and equality and diversity are included in sessions. Assessment is satisfactory. Thorough monitoring of assessment is the norm on all programmes. Course, learning and assessment plans and performance are regularly sampled and audited.

33. LAL has very effective partnerships. Partnerships with employers are established well and highly productive. Communication between learners, assessors and employers, to plan training and assessment effectively, is good. Employer engagement is good on Train to Gain programmes. Employers are particularly responsive to the needs of the qualification and facilitate every opportunity for learners to gather evidence. Most workplaces have learning resources readily available for learners. Dedicated mentors and supervisors support learners in their training in the workplace. For example, a manager provided adapted equipment and a mentor at work. Learners taking work-based programmes are supported well. They work with appropriately qualified and experienced staff to develop their practical skills. LAL's staff adapt teaching materials to meet the learners' needs and additional time is allocated for assessment of practical skills. The range of programmes is good. Course design is very effective and responsive to the needs of partners, employers and learners.

34. Guidance and support for learners is good and the use of learning support is very effective. Learning support tutors carry out initial assessments and support is put in place quickly and effectively. On counselling courses, a supportive ethos helps learners to deal with sensitive issues. Information, advice and guidance are good. Tutors offer appropriate levels of advice and guidance to ensure the suitability of the programme and support for learners. Learners are given good information at the start of the programme about the requirements of the course. A comprehensive learners' handbook gives clear information about the facilities and services available.

## Leadership and management

35. Management of the area is good, as identified by self-assessment. Data is used effectively for the review of performance against targets. Team meetings are effective. They are held every two months to update tutors and share and develop good practice. Staff training and development are good. Continuing professional development is planned for each programme, ensuring teaching and assessment are current and meet awarding bodies' requirements. Other staff training needs are supported well, including in equality and diversity. Internal verification arrangements for accredited programmes are thorough.

36. LAL has developed very effective partnerships with other organisations. LAL works closely with other directorates in the authority, local employers, public services and care trusts to identify the training needs of their staff. Regular meetings are held with partners, and are effective in sharing good practice and identifying and addressing government's targets. LAL is working with employers to produce a level 3 cleaning support NVQ.

37. Staff are involved well in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is an accurate reflection of the provision. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

# Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

## Context

38. In ICT, two sector subject area leaders and a team of four part-time and 34 sessional tutors teach 1,151 learners. Most learners attend during the day. Subjects offered include introduction to using computers and common desktop applications, digital imaging, personal computer maintenance and website design. A further 35 learners are on Train to Gain courses in their workplaces. Courses are held in the two adult colleges and more than 40 learning venues in the community, such as in libraries and community centres.

## Strengths

- Good achievement and retention on non-accredited courses
- Very effective strategies to overcome barriers to learning
- Outstanding range of provision to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners
- Very effective use of partnerships
- Very good advice and guidance for learners
- Good sector subject area management

## Areas for improvement

- Low success rates on accredited courses
- Insufficient attention to learners' individual needs in some sessions

## Achievement and standards

39. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on non-accredited courses during 2007/08 were 84% and retention was 92%. However, overall success rates on accredited courses are low and fell to 54% in 2007/08. Success rates on Train to Gain courses are satisfactory. In 2007/08, they were 64%.

40. Learners make good progress in developing and applying their knowledge and skills. Many learners become more confident in using computers and different software applications as a result of their learning. They are more at ease in a technology-based world. They are able to apply their learning in different contexts outside the classroom. Learners, who have no experience of using computers, make rapid progress in their ability to navigate their way around a computer and in using different applications. Learners are highly motivated to learn and they produce good work during sessions. A significant number of learners progress from beginners' courses to more advanced levels of study.

Quality of provision

41. The quality of the provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors use very effective strategies to overcome barriers to learning. They are creative in using analogies and effective questioning during sessions to break down learners' fear of technology. They also encourage learners to build on any existing knowledge they have of computer technology. Personal learning goals are used effectively to motivate learners to apply their learning at home and at work. Induction is particularly effective in resolving learners' anxieties. In some sessions, insufficient attention is paid to learners' individual needs. A range of teaching and learning methods is not always used to relate to individual needs. Questioning techniques are not always used to challenge learners to further develop their knowledge and skills. Planning of learning in some sessions does not take sufficient account of learners' individual needs and goals. Monitoring of learning achievements often lacks detail.

42. The range of provision offered is outstanding and successfully attracts disadvantaged and hard-to-reach learners. Courses are developed to promote social inclusion. LAL is particularly responsive in meeting the needs of learners who have a fear of computer technology or who, for social reasons, have little or no access to computers. Some courses are targeted at specific groups such as deaf learners, learners from minority ethnic groups and learners in the workplace. To reach learners from under-represented groups, provision is targeted at areas of deprivation and in community-based locations such as libraries. LAL forms very effective partnerships. Managers liaise with local colleges to eliminate duplication. They make good use of resources on partners' sites, helping their partners, such as the library service and Age Concern, widen their service and reach their usage targets while providing access to learning for disadvantaged groups. They also provide excellent access to learning by forming good partnerships with organisations which work with people with disabilities and other organisations which work with particularly hard-to-reach groups such as offenders, ex-offenders and those people recovering from substance misuse.

43. Learners can choose to study in different ways, such as in taught structured sessions, in workshop-style sessions or by flexible learning. Learners can develop their ICT skills for use at work by enrolling on vocational courses that are customised to meet their needs. Clearly identified routes enable learners to progress, for example, from a short beginners' level course to a more advanced qualification in ICT.

44. Advice and guidance for learners are very good. Tutors write excellent course information sheets to provide detailed information about courses before enrolment. Tutors telephone prospective learners to discuss them. They are sensitive to the anxiety levels of learners. Learners are reassured that the course is appropriate for them, or are directed to more appropriate courses. Support for learners is good. Learners with additional support needs are identified early and referrals are made to the appropriate staff within the service. In-class support is

also available for learners who need additional help to achieve their learning goals. Use of adaptive technology is satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

45. Management of the area is good. Tutors are supported well by managers and have good access to training. Regular communication takes place at team meetings. These meetings are also used for sharing good practice. Mentors support new tutors well. Initiatives to improve retention and achievement are good, such as the development of pre-enrolment interviews and improved identification and support for those with literacy and numeracy needs. The RARPA system is implemented thoroughly.

46. Programme design is very effective in widening participation by groups traditionally under-represented in learning. Some very good practice in the promotion of equality of opportunity exists but is not shared sufficiently widely. The self-assessment includes the learners' views and staff are involved in the process. The judgements in the self-assessment report are broadly accurate. However, the evidence in the report does not match the grade for the area. The observation of teaching and learning process is satisfactory, although some grades assigned to sessions are not always supported by sufficient evidence that specifically relates to teaching and learning.

# Education and training

Good: Grade 2

## Context

47. LAL offers non-accredited, accredited and NVQ provision. Taster and first steps into teaching are offered as non-accredited sessions in community venues. Currently 22 learners attend these sessions. Accredited courses are offered in the community and at two main learning centres. Courses at level 2 and level 3 are offered in safeguarding children and young people, an initial classroom certificate, preparing to support learning, and planning and designing learning. Currently, 103 learners are following accredited programmes and 288 learners are on NVQ courses at levels 2 or 3 in supporting teaching and learning. Forty-six staff work in this sector, of which 22 are full time, 16 are hourly paid and eight are on fractional contracts.

## Strengths

- Very good achievement and retention on non-accredited courses
- High success rates on Train to Gain and accredited programmes
- Good progression to higher level qualifications
- Good individual assessment and support on Train to Gain programmes
- Good information and guidance
- Good sector subject area management

## Areas for improvement

- Insufficient individualisation to meet the needs of learners in formal sessions
- Insufficient promotion of diversity

## Achievement and standards

48. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Retention on accredited courses is consistently high, between 78% and 84%. Achievement rates on non-accredited courses are 95% or better and success rates on accredited courses are above 77%. Work-based learning achievement rates are 95% or above with a retention rate of 91%. Learner numbers have been consistently high over the previous three years and are growing rapidly in NVQ provision. Progression rates from lower level courses are very good. Many learners start non-accredited and level 2 courses and progress to level 4 and level 5 qualifications. Some voluntary workers have been taken into paid employment. Many learners have highly developed work skills and a vast range of experience. Some learners are given responsibility for literacy, numeracy and special needs support. Attendance and punctuality at sessions are very good. Learners are able to explain educational concepts, use them in context and apply theory to real examples. Many learners on NVQ programmes are making rapid progress.

## Quality of provision

49. The quality of the provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Tutors give clear, simple explanations and instructions to introduce and develop learning topics. Learning outcomes are achieved through relevant and sequential activities. Sessions are planned very well. Learning materials are developed and shared between tutors to support a standardised and consistent approach to learning. Training to meet individual needs is very accurately identified in the workplace. Current affairs are used well to highlight issues, but are rarely explored deeply enough by learners and tutors to stimulate thinking. Learning materials are insufficiently graduated to meet the needs of individual learners or create personalised learning. In taught sessions, individual learning targets are not established. The use of independent study and the development of learners' research skills are inadequate. In some sessions, tutors make insufficient use of information learning technology. Currently the virtual learning environment is incomplete and underused. In many sessions, learners' prior knowledge and experience are not used to promote learning or encourage learning by their peers. Discussions are not always dynamic or used to challenge learners' views and raise diversity issues.

50. Work-based learners receive regular and constructive feedback from assessors. Feedback clearly establishes how to progress and where to go for support and guidance. Assessors provide constructive, relevant and timely feedback after assessments. A good emphasis is placed on gathering natural evidence in a holistic way.

51. The provision meets learners' needs and interests satisfactorily. A range of courses at different levels focus on different aspects of education and training. The geographical spread of learning venues is good with some courses repeated in various locations. Learners are encouraged to meet with other learners during workshop sessions. Some partnership arrangements with other educational organisations and numerous council departments are good.

52. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners are informed well about the expectations and demands of their course. Employers work closely with the assessors to create a seamless experience for the learners and provide them with very good support. Good use is made of recently established workshops to promote learners' confidence, to increase communications and to develop shared experiences. Specialist advice and guidance is readily available from a dedicated information, advice and guidance team. Prompt action is taken to resolve learning needs once they are identified. Major changes to the range and application of assessment procedures have improved the progress of some learners significantly. Insufficient use is made of digital and electronic recording equipment to support and promote learners' achievements.

## Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are good. The management structure is clear and well defined. It effectively supports learning throughout the county. Communication is effective. All staff are well informed and included in the self-assessment process. The department works in harmony. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of each others' work. Leadership, managing the process of change and the introduction of new and variations to courses is good. Programme development is good and takes into account learners' and employers' views. Feedback from learners is collated and analysed regularly. Management information contributes to developments and is regularly reviewed during meetings. Programme managers and tutors understand retention and achievement trends. They are very aware of the need for continuous improvement. Staff appraisals are purposeful and mutually beneficial. Continuous personal development is prolific and encouraged for all staff. Staff are well qualified and experienced, and some have useful specialist qualifications.

54. Quality assurance procedures are generally satisfactory. Observations of teaching and learning are overgraded. Many judgements focus on teaching and omit learning. Action plans are written well and identify significant areas for improvement. These have not been significantly prioritised. Staff and managers have a good knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. However, opportunities are missed to raise diversity issues and challenge learners' views about culture, stereotyping and gender. How to recognise and report abuse is dealt with at a very superficial level. The self-assessment report was largely accurate in identifying strengths but failed to identify some areas for improvement.

# Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

## Context

55. In preparation for life and work, LAL has 2,446 learners. They attend courses in 239 venues throughout Lancashire. LAL has 84 courses in Skills for Life, 62 courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), 48 courses in employability, 150 courses in personal development and five pre-entry courses. Most provision takes place during the daytime. Of the learners, 57% are on accredited courses and 43% are on non-accredited courses. Currently 22% of all learners have learning difficulties or disabilities. The provision is managed by six full-time programme managers.

## Strengths

- Effective development of personal skills and confidence
- Very effective use of learning support
- Strong partnership working
- Good sector subject area management

## Areas for improvement

- Insufficient planning for individual learning

## Achievement and standards

56. Achievements and standards are good. Retention rates on non-accredited pre-entry and personal development courses are good at 90%, and achievement rates are over 90%. On accredited literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes, success rates are satisfactory at 72%. The number of learners gaining entry level qualifications has increased.

57. Learners make good progress. In a numeracy session, a learner is now able to understand the household bills herself and no longer relies on her husband. Personal skills and confidence are developed effectively. In ESOL sessions, learners work well individually and in small groups to build their language skills and improve pronunciation and vocabulary. They gain confidence in their ability to use English. In Skills for Life sessions, learners develop literacy and numeracy abilities which enhance their personal and job-related skills. On NVQ programmes, the development of literacy and numeracy skills effectively supports the requirements of the workplace. Learners on employability programmes are learning work related skills to attend interviews and give presentations. Pre-entry learners are developing skills in communication and working with others, as well as wider skills in pottery, Spanish and art.

58. The standard of learners' work in most sessions is good and learners have good opportunities to gain external accreditation. Attendance rates on most courses are satisfactory. Group sizes are often small. Systems are in place to follow up learners' absence.

## Quality of provision

59. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better sessions, teaching and learning activities are varied and include group and individual work. Sessions are planned and prepared well. Effective use is made of individualised learning. In the less effective sessions, worksheets are overused. Initial assessment is good. Learners are interviewed effectively and various diagnostic tools are used to assess their current skills. The initial assessment materials are contextualised and adapted to suit the learner's level and the subject area. Learners are placed on the right level course and good opportunities exist to change groups. Good use is made of formative assessment during sessions.

60. All learners have individual learning plans which are used appropriately. Learners on pre-entry programmes have a learning book which uses pictures and photographs to record progress against generic learning goals. On accredited provision in employability, learning goals include personal as well as curriculum specific ones. Reviews take place on a regular basis and revised targets are recorded well. The better learning plans contain learners' own evaluations of their progress and individual identification of new goals. In some cases planning for individual learning is insufficient. In many individual learning plans, the targets are too generic and lack precise individual targets or the steps to achieve them.

61. A good range of provision is offered. Strong partnership arrangements exist to develop and extend the provision. The range of provision is good. Programmes are targeted at under-represented groups, such as speakers of other languages, long-term unemployed people, learners with physical disabilities or difficulties, people recovering from drugs or substance misuse, travellers or homeless people. Key partners include schools, community centres, voluntary organisations, jobcentres, residential centres, the probation service, prisons and learndirect. The partner organisations identify learners and provide accommodation, resources and support.

62. Guidance and support for learners is good. Initial advice and guidance is good for employability learners who are interviewed by the guidance team on entry, during the programme and on leaving into employment. Community learning organisers play a key role in advising learners within their geographic areas. Tutors advise on progression opportunities and examples exist of good progression into voluntary work, full- and part-time employment and further study. In Skills for Life, good use is made of volunteer tutors who provide additional guidance and support in sessions. Clear protocols are in place, establishing the volunteers' roles and responsibilities. Publicity and information materials are readily available. Learner successes are celebrated at awards ceremonies.

## Leadership and management

63. Management of the area is good. Sector subject area planning and development are good and are based on national and local priorities. Requests for new provision are responded to quickly. The area is managed by six programme managers who meet regularly together, as well as each of them meeting with their team to review progress. Staff are supported and informed well. Staff collaborate well and share good practice and resources. Staff are appraised for their performance annually, resulting in clear targets and staff development. Staff are observed at least once every two years.

64. Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation at the main sites is good, creating a bright, welcoming environment and good access to materials. The facilities at some outreach centres are insufficient and tutors usually bring resources with them. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory. Courses are reviewed and evaluated regularly, including feedback from learners. The self-assessment process involves staff and learners and broadly reflects inspection findings.

65. Equality and diversity is satisfactory overall. Under-represented groups and areas are targeted but few male learners participate. Promotion of equality and diversity is insufficient within some courses.

# Annex

# Learners' achievements

Learners' achievements in FE funded, accredited provision offered by adult and community learning providers

Success rates on accredited entry and level 1 (combined) and level 2 qualifications, by length, expected end year and age 2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for GFE colleges.

| Notional Level | Exp End Year | 19+ | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Starts – Transfers | College Rate | National Rate | Diff |
| 1 long | 06/07 | 658 | 66.1 | 70.5 | -4.3 |
| | 07/08* | 456 | 69.7 | N/A | |
| 2 long | 06/07 | 535 | 76.1 | 69 | 7.1 |
| | 07/08* | 439 | 61 | N/A | |
| Short** | 06/07 | 945 | 79.8 | 82.9 | -3.1 |
| | 07/08* | 760 | 83.8 | N/A | |

*        Adult and community learning provider data not validated
**       Courses over 5 weeks long

## Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider 2006 to 2009

| Programme | End Year | Success rate | No. of learners* | Provider NVQ rate** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Train to Gain NVQ | 2006/07 | overall | 69 | 94% |
| | | timely | 82 | 79% |
| | 2007/08 | overall | 183 | 84% |
| | | timely | 249 | 48% |
| | 2008/09 (5 months) | overall | 288 | 73% |
| | | timely | 457 | 39% |

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

*        Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned
**       NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection