

# Staffordshire County Council

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Inspection date

27 February 2009

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Inspection number

331437

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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](http://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](http://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:

- Information and communication technology
- Education and training
- Preparation for life and work
- Family learning

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## Description of the provider

1. Staffordshire County Council (the Council) contracts with Staffordshire LSC to provide learning opportunities in adult and community learning, work-based learning and Train to Gain. The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service had just over 15,000 part-time learners in 2007/08 and is part of the Culture and Lifelong Learning division within the Council's Children and Lifelong Learning directorate. Much of the provision is subcontracted to seven colleges, two schools and voluntary and community sector organisations. The ACL service directly delivers first-steps, short-course provision.
2. The ACL service manages Pendrell Hall College in the south of the county. This provides residential learning opportunities in personal and community development learning and for learners on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and family learning programmes, as well as providing a venue for conferences and training courses.
3. The Council's Quality Learning Service (QLS) has responsibility for work-based learning and Train to Gain and is part of the school improvement division within the Council's Children and Lifelong Learning directorate. This includes apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in supporting teaching and learning in schools, and has 25 learners. From 2006 to 2008, the Council was the lead contract holder for a Train to Gain consortium across Staffordshire providing National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at levels 2 and 3 for teaching assistants. At the beginning of February 2009, 87 learners remained on this legacy contract. From August 2008, the Council's QLS has a subcontract with Stafford College to provide these qualifications, with 28 learners.
4. Staffordshire contains areas with a high density of population, for example in Tamworth and areas where the population is much lower, such as Staffordshire Moorlands. This is a reflection of the urban and rural diversity of the county. In August 2007, the rate of unemployment in Staffordshire was low at 1.5%. In 2008, the number of young people achieving five or more GCSEs at A\* to C was 59.7% compared with the national average of 60.8%.

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## Summary of grades awarded

|                              |                                           |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Effectiveness of provision   | Satisfactory: Grade 3                     |
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning          | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Train to Gain                | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4   |
| Capacity to improve          | Satisfactory: Grade 3                     |
| Achievement and standards    | Satisfactory: Grade 3                     |
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning          | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Train to Gain                | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4   |
| Quality of provision         | Satisfactory: Grade 3                     |
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning          | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Train to Gain                | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4   |
| Leadership and management    | Satisfactory: Grade 3                     |
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning          | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Train to Gain                | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4   |
| Equality of opportunity      | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

## Sector subject areas

|                                          |                       |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Information and communication technology | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Education and training                   | Inadequate: Grade 4   |
| Preparation for life and work            | Good: Grade 2         |
| Family learning                          | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

5. The effectiveness of the Council's provision is satisfactory for adult and community learning and work-based learning and inadequate for Train to Gain. Provision is good in preparation for life and work, satisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT) and family learning, and inadequate in education and training.
6. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Learners develop good personal, practical and employability skills. Success rates are improving on the Council's directly delivered apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes and are at least satisfactory. Learners on the Train to Gain subcontracted provision are making slow progress and success rates are low.
7. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory in adult and community learning and good in work-based learning apprenticeship programmes for teaching assistants. The range of programmes meets the needs of learners and employers well.
8. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory overall. Information, advice and guidance are usually appropriate in adult and community learning. In work-based learning in May 2006 a group of 16 learners were enrolled on an advanced apprenticeship programme and none of them achieved the full apprenticeship framework. The support given by employers in schools is highly effective in work-based learning. Not all learners currently enrolled on the Train to Gain programme meet the eligibility criteria.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The Council sets a clear strategic direction for all its provision, with an appropriate focus on meeting its priorities, as well as those of the LSC. Partnership working is particularly effective, which benefits learners and the wider community. Curriculum management is good in preparation for life and work, satisfactory in ICT and family learning, and inadequate in education and training.
10. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. In adult and community learning, partnership working to widen participation is highly effective. The monitoring of equality of opportunity and action planning to secure improvements is generally robust, but tutors do not receive sufficient information or training on the promotion of equality of opportunity. In work-based learning and Train to Gain, the monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity is insufficient.

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**PROTECT – INSPECTION****Capacity to improve****Satisfactory: Grade 3**

11. The council has demonstrated satisfactory capacity to improve. Since the last full inspection in March 2005, the ACL service has maintained its strong focus on securing improvements in its programmes. Strategic planning continues to be effective and the provision remains carefully targeted to widen participation. Although many of the previous weaknesses identified have been rectified, progress in providing adequate arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language support and in ensuring that learners' progress and achievement is appropriately measured and recorded on non-accredited provision. The previous inspection of work-based learning was in April 2003. The Council's QLS has maintained strengths in strategic planning, in providing good training in work-based learning and in good links with employers. However areas for improvement remain in the monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity and in fully implementing quality assurance arrangements. Train to Gain provision has not been previously inspected.
  
12. The Council's self-assessment processes are satisfactory and sufficiently consultative and inclusive in adult and community learning and work-based learning. The ACL service's self-assessment report of December 2008 is comprehensive, broadly accurate and includes a detailed action plan to secure further improvements. The report recognises many of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors. The work-based learning and Train to Gain self-assessment report of December 2008 is broadly accurate and self-critical for the work-based learning provision, but is insufficiently detailed and unduly positive for the Train to Gain provision.

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## Key strengths

- Good development of personal, social and employment skills
- Good strategic planning
- Very effective partnership working in adult and community learning to widen participation
- Highly effective employer support in the schools in work-based learning

## Key areas for improvement

- The management and quality assurance of the Train to Gain subcontracted provision
- The further implementation of processes to identify and record progress and achievement in non-accredited learning
- The further implementation of the Skills for Life strategy.



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## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning  
 Work-based learning  
 Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
 Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
 Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

13. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Learners develop good personal, practical and employment skills. On apprenticeship programmes, learners develop skills which help them and their employers in the workplace. Learners on ICT, family learning, literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes develop skills which help them in their everyday lives and at work. Retention is high in adult and community learning.

14. Framework completion for advanced apprenticeships for teaching assistants was poor in 2005/07, with none of the 16 apprentices completing the apprenticeship framework. Progress for these learners in the achievement of NVQs has been slow, but by 2008/09 15 have successfully completed an NVQ. Success rates on the Council's directly-delivered Train to Gain programmes improved in 2007/08 and are satisfactory or better for many learners. Success rates on the Train to Gain subcontracted provision are low, with too many learners making slow progress.

### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning  
 Work-based learning  
 Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
 Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
 Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

15. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall, as are teaching and learning. In work-based learning, apprentices receive good off-the-job training which supports their development as teaching assistants very well. In adult and community learning, teaching and learning are good in ESOL, with learners making particularly good progress in the development of their speaking and listening skills. Groups of learners in ESOL and family learning have good opportunities to accompany their children on beneficial residential weekends, where they participate in outdoor activities, share new experiences and gain in confidence. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in ICT and family learning.

16. Training in the subcontracted Train to Gain provision is not sufficiently recorded by the subcontracted providers. The Council does not have a sufficiently clear understanding of the quality of this training. Progress for many of these learners in achieving an NVQ is slow.

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17. Most learners have access to an appropriate range of learning resources. Accommodation for the apprenticeship off-the-job training is in well equipped and spacious classrooms. Accommodation in adult and community learning is broadly satisfactory, although in wider family learning some of the accommodation is cramped, with examples of the inappropriate use of child-sized chairs for parents.
18. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. The ACL service carefully targets the provision to widen participation. Courses are available across Staffordshire, in rural and urban communities. The work-based learning provision and the directly-delivered Train to Gain provision meets the needs and interests of teaching assistants and their employers.
19. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory overall. Information, advice and guidance are usually appropriate in adult and community learning. Employer support in the schools in work-based learning is good. However, in May 2006, a group of 16 learners were enrolled on an advanced apprenticeship programme and none of them achieved the apprenticeship framework. Current learners on Train to Gain have not all received the correct advice and guidance and not all are eligible to be on the programme. Some learners do not benefit from effective support to meet their literacy, numeracy and language needs.

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## Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

|                              |                                           |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Adult and community learning | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning          | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Train to Gain                | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4   |
| Equality of opportunity      | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

20. Leadership and management are satisfactory in adult and community learning and work-based learning, and inadequate in Train to Gain. Strategic planning and leadership are good across all the provision. Well thought out strategic planning ensures that the provision makes an effective contribution to the achievement of both the Council's and the LSC's strategic priorities. This is recognised in the self-assessment reports. Managers make good use of local, regional and national data to inform the planning process and to ensure that the provision meets the needs of learners in both rural and urban communities, as well as those of employers. Managers have a good understanding of future planning challenges and have started to formulate appropriate responses.

21. The Council makes very effective use of a range of different sources of funding to remove barriers for learners and to enrich learning. The council itself provides substantial additional funds to enhance the LSC funded provision. The ACL service uses this very effectively to provide support for a wide range of individual and group activities. For example, the ACL service runs weekend residential courses for ESOL learners and for parents and children on family learning programmes. The ACL service also uses European Social Funding very effectively, for example, to support programmes for learners with enduring mental health problems. Another project provided ESOL classes to meet an identified need and managers have subsequently developed this work into the mainstream adult and community learning provision.

22. Communication is satisfactory. Tutors are well supported, with regular opportunities to share good practice. The Council has an appropriate system of appraisal for its staff. Development opportunities for tutors to improve their skills and update their knowledge are satisfactory. All tutors employed directly by the Council are registered with the Institute for Learning. Off-the-job training facilities for apprentices are good. Classrooms are modern, well furnished and provide an environment which enhances their learning experience. Learners generally have appropriate access to ICT.

23. The ACL service places a strong emphasis on quality improvement and has established a suitable range of processes to monitor the quality of the adult and community learning provision. Observations of teaching and learning place an appropriate focus on learning as well as teaching and tutors receive helpful feedback to enable them to improve their performance. During 2007/08 an insufficient number of observations took place but the number of observations has significantly improved in 2008/09. The monitoring of the provision delivered

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by the college subcontractors is insufficient, which the service recognises as an area for improvement. Although monitoring visits do take place, they do not provide sufficient detail to allow the service to make robust judgements about the quality of this provision.

24. The quality assurance of the work-based learning provision is mainly informal and currently works because the number of apprentices overall is relatively small. More formal, systematic quality assurance of the provision is still not sufficiently developed. In work-based learning and Train to Gain, the use of data is insufficient to monitor the provision effectively. Some of the data are incomplete and managers do not always have access to, or make adequate use of, accurate and up-to-date data regarding the retention, achievement and success rates of learners.
25. The Council's quality assurance arrangements for the Train to Gain subcontracted provision are inadequate. At Council level, management roles and responsibilities are not sufficiently clearly defined with regard to the monitoring of this contract. Success rates at several of the subcontracted partners were low in 2007/08, with significant numbers of learners going beyond the expected completion date for their programme. The Council has insufficient up-to-date information on the quality of this provision. Some significant problems were identified in November 2007 with regard to contract compliance. These remained unresolved in 2008 and will result in a significant financial refund to the LSC.
26. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. In adult and community learning, partnership working to widen participation for learners is very effective. Outreach workers are particularly effective in linking with individuals and organisations to identify needs and to promote social inclusion and entry on to carefully targeted courses at a local level.
27. The Council complies with all equalities legislation and has appropriate equalities policies in place for race, disability and gender, with clearly identified action plans at overall Council level. The ACL service also has appropriate equality of opportunity policies in place which specifically relate to learners. Detailed and thorough monitoring in relation to equality of opportunity results in comprehensive action planning to secure improvements. Tutors however, currently receive insufficient information or training on how to promote equality of opportunity during lessons. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory.
28. The monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity in work-based learning and Train to Gain are insufficient. Equality of opportunity policies in relation to learners are not fully developed. The statement on equality of opportunity that learners receive and are asked to sign is not sufficiently clear. Insufficient monitoring takes place in relation to equality of opportunity, and action planning to secure further improvements is also insufficient. The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity issues with learners, for example in progress reviews, are insufficient. This was a weakness at the previous inspection in 2003.

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29. A satisfactory Skills for Life strategy is in place, but has yet to be fully implemented. The availability of literacy and numeracy support is insufficient across the provision.
30. The ACL service's self-assessment report acknowledges that processes to recognise and record progress and achievement are not yet fully implemented. Tutors' use of these processes is not of a sufficiently good or consistent quality across the non-accredited provision.
31. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. All staff are appropriately vetted before being allowed to work unsupervised with learners. Central records are held by the Council. Staff are made aware of the Council's safeguarding policy and procedures. Appropriate safeguarding training has taken place.

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## What learners like:

- Classes being held locally, near to people's homes
- Classes which are about the right length
- The very helpful tutors and assessors
- Tutors who are specialists in their field
- The opportunities to progress on to further courses
- 'I can talk to my doctor and the school now as I have more confidence'
- 'I really enjoy meeting new people'
- 'Attending classes will help me get a job'
- 'It helps to keep my brain active'
- 'Attending the family learning residential helped me to bond with my child'
- 'I am now able to use the internet and to email my children who live abroad'

## What learners think could improve:

- The publicity about the courses so that more people get to hear about them
- The use of computers
- Apprenticeship pay

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## Sector subject areas

### Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

32. The ACL service provides computing classes throughout Staffordshire. Much of this work is subcontracted to six colleges of further education, with 461 learners enrolled on 80 courses at the time of inspection. An additional 276 learners attend 58 courses in venues in the voluntary and community sector. Most courses are available in the mornings and/or afternoons, with a small number of courses available in the evenings. The courses are predominantly non-accredited and for most learners represent their first steps in learning ICT. Seven courses offer external accreditation from entry level to level 3.

### Strengths

- High retention rates
- Good development of learners' basic computing skills and confidence
- Well targeted courses to meet the needs and interests of learners

### Areas for Improvement

- Ineffective use of individual learning plans
- Insufficient literacy and numeracy support
- Insufficient implementation of processes to recognise and record achievement

### Achievement and standards

33. Achievement and standards are good. Retention is high at 97% in 2007/08. The development of learners' basic computing skills and confidence is good. Learners produce work of a good standard. Many learners who are complete novices when they start courses learn to use ICT equipment with confidence. They are able to complete tasks accurately and in a timely fashion. Learners are well motivated and enthusiastic. They become sufficiently confident to experiment more, for example by looking for more specific websites, or altering images or layouts of documents unaided. Achievement on the seven accredited courses is high at 86%. The processes for recognising and recording of progress and achievement in non-accredited provision are not yet sufficiently implemented.

### Quality of provision

34. The quality of provision overall, and teaching and learning, are satisfactory. Schemes of work and lesson planning are satisfactory and tutors use an adequate range of activities with learners. Learners receive effective individual coaching and help in carrying out practical tasks. Tutors work particularly well with learners with a range of disabilities, enabling them to take part fully in planned activities.

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35. The use of individual learning plans is ineffective. In the better individual learning plans, a clear initial assessment takes place and progress is fully recorded. However, the initial assessment of existing computing skills is not consistently carried out with all learners. Many learning plans have few comments about what the learner wants to achieve, with insufficient use of target-setting. The recording of learning outcomes is also insufficient in many cases.
36. The use of learning resources is satisfactory overall. Although ICT resources are generally good, data projectors or interactive whiteboards are not always available at community venues and not all tutors have received training in their use. Learners with a range of disabilities have access to appropriate specialist equipment.
37. Courses are well targeted to meet the needs and interests of learners. Outreach workers use their local knowledge to good effect to identify a wide range of venues, in both urban and rural locations, that are easily accessible for learners. They regularly talk to local people to find out what specific computer skills they need. Outreach workers actively encourage learners with learning difficulties and disabilities to join the courses. Learners greatly appreciate the local venues and welcoming learning environments.
38. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance. Support for learners with disabilities is good, with some classes having additional tutor support. All learners receive helpful information on progression at the end of their courses. Appropriate progression opportunities from introductory classes are available, particularly through the subcontracted provision.
39. Support to meet learners' literacy and numeracy needs is insufficient. Where assessment of learners' needs does take place, it is often too late in the course to fully benefit learners. Specialist support for learners on courses is insufficient, as is signposting to appropriate additional help.

#### Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Processes to improve the quality of the provision are satisfactory. Observations of teaching and learning take place; the feedback is clear and it leads to appropriate action planning. Findings are broadly in line with those of inspectors. Managers make suitable use of data. Tutors have access to an on-line discussion forum, which they are now frequently accessing. An e-safeguarding programme for tutors and parents is supporting them in protecting children from inappropriate websites. Tutors receive insufficient training in the use of new technology to support teaching and learning.
41. Communication with tutors is satisfactory, as are opportunities to share information and good practice. Staff provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for learners and treat them with respect. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Teaching staff have had training in



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recognising and recording of progress and achievement, but many have failed to fully instigate changes in their assessment and recording practices.

42. The self-assessment process is inclusive. The report is not subject-specific to ICT, but forms part of the report on the Council's outreach strategy and provision. It reflects many of the inspection findings, although some of the strengths are overstated.

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## Education and training

Inadequate: Grade 4

### Context

43. The Council's QLS delivers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in supporting teaching and learning in schools. At the time of the inspection, 15 learners were on apprenticeships and 10 learners were on advanced apprenticeships. They undertake off-the-job training at a training centre in Stafford for one day a week.
44. QLS also manages and delivers Train to Gain NVO programmes at levels 2 and 3 in supporting teaching and learning in schools. The Council manages a legacy Train to Gain contract from 2006/08, when it was the main contract holder for a Staffordshire-wide consortium, with both Council directly-delivered provision as well as subcontracted provision with six colleges across Staffordshire. In 2007/08, 170 learners were enrolled on this programme. At the beginning of February 2009, 87 learners were still on programme. From August 2008, the Council is a subcontractor of Stafford college to deliver the Train to Gain programmes, with 28 learners. All learners are employed in primary and secondary schools across Staffordshire.

### Strengths

- Good skills development on apprenticeship programmes
- Good off-the-job training for apprentices
- Highly effective employer support on apprenticeship programmes

### Areas for improvement

- Poor success rates and slow progress on Train to Gain subcontracted provision
- Insufficient support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs
- Inadequate management of the Train to Gain subcontracted provision
- Insufficient promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity

### Achievement and standards

45. Achievement and standards are inadequate overall. They are satisfactory on apprenticeship programmes but inadequate in Train to Gain. Personal, social and work related skills development by learners on the current apprenticeship programmes are good. Learners demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of their role as a teaching assistant have increased self-confidence and produce work of a high standard. They are highly motivated and are making good progress. Many apprentices take an active role in lesson planning with their class teachers and display an increased knowledge and awareness of classroom management strategies.

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46. However, in 2005 to 2007, of the 16 learners starting on a pilot level 3 advanced apprenticeship programme, none of them achieved the full apprenticeship framework. Timely completion of the NVQ part of the framework was slow. In 2007/08, only four of the 16 learners achieved an NVQ with a further 11 completing it in 2008/09. In September 2007, 13 learners started a level 2 apprenticeship. Of these, 10 have achieved the framework in 2008/09.
47. In 2008/09, current Train to Gain learners on the Council's directly delivered provision are making satisfactory progress in their skills development and produce work of a broadly satisfactory standard. Success rates for the directly delivered Train to Gain provision improved from 86% in 2006/07 with 22 learners, to 100% in 2007/08, with 14 learners. The timely completion of these learners was lower at 76%.
48. On the legacy Train to Gain programmes with the Council's subcontractors, success rates were low in 2007/08. In February 2009, 87 learners were still on the programme, with many making slow progress and remaining on the programme for longer than their planned completion dates. The Council's QLS self-assessment report from December 2008 identifies success rates for this subcontracted provision as low as 11% and up to only 62%.

## Quality of provision

49. The quality of the provision is inadequate overall. It is satisfactory on the apprenticeship programmes but inadequate in Train to Gain. In 2008/09, teaching and learning in the off-the-job training sessions for all apprentices are good. Sessions are well planned, with good use by the trainer/assessor of a wide range of teaching and learning approaches to meet the needs of learners, and with effective links between theory and the learners' practice as teaching assistants. Learners are encouraged to share good practice with each other and to become more reflective about their developing skills. Assessment practice on apprenticeship programmes is appropriate and effective.
50. Training for learners on the Council's directly delivered Train to Gain programme is satisfactory and is provided on a individual basis or in small groups, usually in the schools where the learners work. The Council's QLS has insufficient information on the quality of training or of assessment practice on the subcontracted provision, where success rates are low. This was first identified in November 2007, but remains an area for improvement in 2009.
51. Learning resources for apprentices at the Council's main training centre are good, with large and well equipped training rooms, appropriate textbooks and well produced handouts. Trainers/assessors are suitably qualified. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the awarding bodies.
52. The extent to which the range of provision for teaching assistants meets the needs and interests of learners and employers, is satisfactory. The Council is responsive to local circumstances.

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53. Guidance and support are inadequate overall. They are satisfactory on apprenticeship programmes and inadequate on Train to Gain programmes. Current learners are on the correct level of apprenticeship programme, and information, advice and guidance are satisfactory on the Council's directly-delivered Train to Gain programmes. The Council does not have sufficient information on the quality of information, advice and guidance on the Train to Gain subcontracted provision. An audit in November 2008 identified that not all of these learners currently meet the eligibility criteria.
54. Employer support in the schools for the Council's directly-delivered apprenticeship programmes is highly effective. All learners have a formally identified mentor within the workplace, for example the head teacher, classroom teacher or a higher level teaching assistant. Mentors contribute to reviews of learners' progress and provide highly effective support.
55. Train to Gain learners on the Council's programmes do not have a dedicated mentor within the workplace. Many employers are unaware of the specific requirements of the qualifications and most do not meet regularly with the assessor and learner to discuss progress. Employers do respond to learners' requests for support and take action to accommodate learners' needs.
56. Support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs is insufficient. The Council does not provide any formal Skills for Life support for learners with identified needs. Assessors provide informal individual support for learners, but they do not hold recognised Skills for Life teaching qualifications. The Council does not have sufficient information on the availability or quality of literacy and numeracy support on the Train to Gain subcontracted provision.

### Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are inadequate overall, although management action has led to improvements in the apprenticeship programmes since 2007. Communication is satisfactory although more formal meetings do not sufficiently identify action points for ongoing quality improvement. Managers are not able to clearly discuss the data they hold on learners' outcomes. Anomalies exist in the LSC data on the Council's apprenticeship programmes. The most recent self-assessment report of December 2008 does not identify any issues with regard to LSC data for the apprenticeship programmes.
58. The Council's management of the Train to Gain subcontracted provision is inadequate. Roles and responsibilities in the monitoring of this contract are not well defined. The Council has insufficient information on success rates and the quality of this provision. Managers carried out some monitoring visits in 2007, but since then little monitoring of any significance has taken place.
59. Steering group meetings focus predominantly on contract compliance. Some issues identified in November 2007 remained largely unresolved in November 2008, when an audit identified errors in contract compliance by subcontractors,

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including learners enrolled on Train to Gain who are not eligible for this funding. These errors will result in a significant financial refund to the LSC.

60. The promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity is insufficient. The equality and diversity statement that learners receive is not sufficiently clear or useful. Action planning for improvements in relation to equality and diversity is insufficient. The promotion of equality and diversity issues with learners, for example in progress reviews, is insufficient. This was a weakness in the previous inspection of work-based learning in 2003.

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## Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

### Context

61. The Council's ACL service manages the literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes and provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. At the time of the inspection, 300 learners were enrolled on these programmes. The Council offers classes from pre-entry to level 2 in schools and community venues across Staffordshire. Learners can join courses at the beginning of each term. Learners work to achieve individual learning goals and have opportunities to achieve units of Skills for Life qualifications, agreed with them at the start of their programme of learning.

### Strengths

- High retention and achievement in ESOL
- Good teaching and learning
- Good information advice and guidance
- Very effective curriculum management

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of targets to support individual learning

### Achievements and standards

62. Achievement and standards are good. Retention on ESOL programmes is high at 95% and the achievement of external qualifications is very high at 97%. Learners greatly enjoy their classes. Across all programmes, learners gain a good range of new skills and the confidence to apply these skills at home, in the workplace and in their community. In particular, ESOL learners increase their confidence in speaking and listening. They are better able to speak to doctors and staff at their children's schools. The standard of learners' work is good. Attendance is also good.

### Quality of provision

63. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are also good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are well thought out, with clearly identified learning objectives which learners understand and are able to achieve. Learners benefit from a wide range of teaching and learning activities, which include very effective use of group, paired and individual work to stimulate and promote learning. Lessons are routinely planned to meet identified individual needs as well as course requirements. Tutors and learners make good use of interactive

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whiteboards, where these are available, and learners have opportunities to use computers to develop independent learning.

64. Initial and diagnostic assessments are satisfactory. Tutors and learners use assessment results to develop individual learning plans, which are focused on learners' needs and aspirations and developed in a language framework that learners understand. In the better sessions, for example in most ESOL classes, target-setting is thorough. Tutors and learners regularly review these targets and set appropriate new targets. However, the use of target-setting to support individual learning across all the provision is insufficient. Not all learners are sufficiently clear about the specific targets they need to focus on to maximise their progress.
65. Learners' work in class and their homework is carefully marked and learners receive constructive feedback on their written work. The recording of individual learner progress is good in ESOL and satisfactory overall.
66. The range of courses meets the needs of individuals and communities very well. The Council locates classes in areas where learners traditionally would not engage in learning. The Council initially developed the ESOL provision as part of a funded project to meet specific needs in the community. In 2007/08, the Council has further developed and extended this provision to form part of the mainstream programme. All programmes cover courses from entry level to level 2 and include intensive courses as well as short courses. Enrichment activities are available for learners. For example, a group of ESOL learners spent a day at a local college, where the focus was on teamwork and on participation in a range of social and cultural activities. ESOL learners also have the opportunity to attend a residential weekend of activities.
67. Guidance and support are good overall. Information, advice and guidance are good. Tutors and outreach workers provide very informative initial advice and guidance at entry on to programmes. Learners then have access to further information on progression routes within the Council's directly delivered provision, as well as on other courses available in the local community or at the colleges. Outreach workers are also available at most centres by appointment, or can be easily contacted by telephone.

#### Leadership and management

68. Curriculum management is very effective. Staff are well qualified and experienced and have good opportunities for further development. Staff work well together in teams to secure improvements in the provision and staff morale is high. Tutors are well supported and internal communication is good. The sharing of good practice is routinely an agenda item at staff meetings. Internal moderation is well planned and effective. Progression of learners within the provision is carefully recorded and progression is satisfactory overall.
69. Quality assurance arrangements for the Council's directly delivered provision are very effective. The observations of teaching and learning focus sufficiently on

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learning as well as teaching, with the identification of clear action points to secure improvements. Course evaluations and learner feedback contribute to curriculum planning and development. Accommodation in all venues is good and crèche facilities are available for most learners with young children.

70. A Skills for Life strategy and action plan are in place and are satisfactory. The planned whole organisation approach to skills for life development is not yet fully established. Plans to integrate literacy and numeracy into short courses are still at the pilot stage and not all learners with identified literacy, numeracy or language needs have access to additional support.
71. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners have good opportunities to reach their potential and develop a good understanding of social and cultural diversity. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the report is broadly accurate. Inspectors agree with many of the strengths and areas for improvement.



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## Family Learning

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

72. The Council's ACL service subcontracts all family learning provision to other organisations and does not directly deliver family learning programmes. There are 721 learners on family language, literacy and numeracy programmes and 1020 on wider family learning programmes. Six colleges of further education in Staffordshire deliver the FLLN programmes in association with schools. Wider family learning programmes take place in organisations which include schools, children's centres and libraries. In total family learning takes place in 133 organisations. During 2007/08, 11% of learners were men and four per cent from minority ethnic communities.

### Strengths

- Good development of skills and confidence
- Particularly wide range of courses to meet learners' needs and enrich learning
- Highly effective partnerships

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient identification and recording of individual learning goals
- Slow progress in implementing quality improvements

### Achievement and standards

73. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The development of learners' personal skills and confidence is good. Learners make good progress and the standards of work are generally good. Learners are well motivated and enjoy learning and achieving. They become more involved with their children's school work, confidently talk about their children's progress and have raised expectations of their children's attainment. They develop transferable skills that enable them to continue working with their children at home.

74. The achievement of qualifications in family literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall, at 65% in 2007/08. Data for non-accredited provision, based upon recognising and recording progress and achievement, are not yet sufficiently well developed.

### Quality of provision

75. The quality of provision overall is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory. Family learning sessions are well planned and adapted to meet individual learner needs. An appropriate variety of learning activities provide sufficient challenge for learners. Lessons are well structured and enjoyable.

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Learners are clear about the learning outcomes of the sessions and in most sessions have appropriate opportunities to reflect on what they have learned.

76. Learning resources are generally satisfactory and most providers have easily accessible ICT facilities. Accommodation in some premises is cramped, with some examples of the inappropriate use of child-sized chairs for parents.
77. The identification and recording of individual learning goals is insufficient. Many tutors make insufficient use of the family learning plan to record learners' goals. The format of the family learning plan is overly complicated for short wider family learning programmes. The use of the plan and its presentation does not sufficiently assist the learners and tutors in the recording of individual progress and achievement. This area for improvement is recognised in the self-assessment report, with identified actions for improvement.
78. A particularly wide range of courses meets learners' needs and enriches learning very well. The provision is carefully targeted to attract relevant learners and to address strategic priorities, with courses located in areas of greatest need. One course in design and technology attracted fathers, mothers and grandparents, to assist their children/grandchildren in the construction of moving models. Groups of learners have good opportunities to accompany their children on beneficial residential weekends, where they all participate in outdoor activities and share new experiences. One particular residential, enabled learners and children to meet with and to undertake activities with participants from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds.
79. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Tutors signpost learners to other agencies where extra personal or family support is available. Some children's centres offer support with health issues or on-site counselling support. Additional literacy and numeracy support is available for learners on family literacy, language and numeracy programmes, but this is not always available for learners on wider family learning programmes. Most learners receive appropriate information and advice on progression.

#### Leadership and management

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategic planning is well thought out and clear and the Council has highly effective partnerships to promote and deliver family learning programmes. Partners from colleges, primary and secondary schools work well together to design, plan and deliver family literacy, language and numeracy programmes, in association with the Council's school improvement division. Tutors from different services successfully collaborate to deliver courses on topics that benefit learners and their children. The development of new family learning initiatives is encouraged, for example a course for parents who may have a child who is particularly gifted and talented.

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81. Staff are experienced and appropriately qualified. Regular meetings between tutors take place. A development officer with responsibility for curriculum development and training has recently been established. The promotion of equality and diversity across family learning programmes is satisfactory. Initiatives are in place to attract more men through activities involving design and technology. Close attention is paid by all partners to welcoming learners from different communities to join in family learning activities.
82. Progress in implementing key improvements is slow. An evaluation of the family learning processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement has been undertaken, which identifies improvements to be made. Currently these have not yet been fully implemented. The number of lesson observations on family learning programmes is low and does not enable the Council to monitor sufficiently the quality of teaching and learning. The monitoring of family learning programmes is insufficiently systematic and thorough.
83. The self-assessment process involves partners who submit their own self-assessment reports. The overall family learning self-assessment report identifies the key strengths and areas for improvement in family learning. The analysis of the family language, literacy and numeracy provision is less thorough than that of the wider family learning provision.