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Ms P Garraway  
Corporate Director Housing and Community Living  
Luton Borough Council  
2nd Floor Unity House  
111 Stuart Street  
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Dear Ms Garraway

**Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: numeracy - tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 and 25 June 2010 to look at your work in numeracy.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with learners, teaching and training staff, and managers, including workplace supervisors; observation of three teaching and learning sessions; and a review of the documents that you provided.

Overall, Luton Borough Council is satisfactory at tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives.

**Key findings**

- The council has identified numeracy as a priority for development in its recent local economic assessment. Managers have recognised the wider benefits of improved numeracy skills, such as increasing employability and improving social cohesion, and it has increased its adult and community learning provision in numeracy, including in family numeracy. The council uses partnerships very well to identify the need for numeracy provision and it has set up programmes in a wide range of community venues in particularly deprived areas. Recruitment to these programmes is good. The council also promotes its apprenticeship programmes well and the number of apprentices has nearly doubled in the last two years. However,

take-up of numeracy support by adult learners doing vocational courses and working towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVOs) is low.

- The council has good procedures for identifying learners' development needs in numeracy. Staff use a wide range of appropriate initial screening assessments, including interviews, that gives a good indication of the learners' levels of numeracy when they join family learning provision, adult and community learning programmes and apprenticeships. Staff use thorough further initial and diagnostic assessments to identify the apprentices' development needs in more detail. Senior managers have recently developed a procedure to audit the skills of all of its employees as part of a council-wide training needs analysis. They also intend to use the findings to assess the impact of the apprenticeship programme on improving numeracy and literacy skills.
- The council has good systems for managing its numeracy provision. Staff monitor effectively the work of the providers subcontracted to provide off-the-job training, including numeracy, to apprentices. The adult and community learning team uses visits to the community provision and family numeracy programmes well to check that tutors and learners make good use of the systems and resources designed to support learning.
- The council has appropriate objectives for developing its numeracy provision in its Skills for Life strategy. However, the self-assessment report does not evaluate numeracy well enough as a separate subject. It fails to identify the need for a sharper focus on developing the expertise of the tutors in teaching numeracy. Similarly, the process for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning does not provide tutors with sufficient feedback on how well they help their learners to understand mathematical concepts and transfer the numeracy skills they are learning to a wider range of contexts.
- The council has satisfactory expertise in supporting apprentices' numeracy skills at work. Similarly, the qualifications and experience of the tutors teaching adult numeracy are satisfactory. However, the council currently has a shortage of numeracy tutors. It has experienced difficulties in recruiting well-qualified numeracy tutors and in arranging training courses to help their current staff gain specialist teaching qualifications in numeracy at level 5.
- The teaching and learning sessions for adult learners, observed during the visit, were satisfactory. The positive aspects included a good range of interesting resources and learning activities, and effective use of groupwork to promote peer support and collaborative learning. However, tutors did not assess learners' understanding of the numerical process they were using to help them to continue their learning in their own time. Not all the tutors managed the learning activities effectively to ensure that they were at the appropriate level to meet the needs of all the learners, particularly in the classes where learners had very different numeracy development needs.
- Family learning focuses well on helping learners to support their children's development in numeracy. However, tutors do not set learning activities aimed to support learners' own development in numeracy well enough into

practical contexts that are relevant to learners to help them reinforce their learning at home.

- Achievement of the apprenticeship framework is very good. Apprentices interviewed were pleased with the numeracy-related tasks they can carry out at work. Success rates in the certificate in adult numeracy are satisfactory overall, and they are good at level 2, particularly for learners attending family numeracy programmes. However, success rates were low at level 1.
- The adult learners interviewed said they had increased their confidence in working on numeracy with their children and they enjoyed the opportunities to practise numeracy in class. However, most of these learners found it difficult to understand the reasons behind some of the calculations they were doing.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- continuing to develop and implement the skills audit to identify the training needs, including in numeracy, of all the council's staff
- increasing the range of options to improve the take-up of numeracy provision by adult learners on vocational programmes, including the development of teaching and learning in numeracy as an integral part of the NVQ programmes
- developing the expertise of the numeracy tutors to ensure that teaching and learning help learners to gain the understanding they need to practise and build on their learning in their daily lives, especially when they are unable to attend classes.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy at Luton Borough Council

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your the Skills Funding Agency and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your organisation. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Karen Adriaanse**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**