

INSPECTION REPORT

Sheffield LEA

28 January 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, **or**
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Sheffield LEA is part of Sheffield City Council (the council) and provides learning through its adult and community learning service (the service). Its stated objectives are to contribute to social inclusion and economic regeneration in Sheffield by securing lifelong learning and employment opportunities for young people and adults. The service has set itself several challenges. These are to include initiatives to engage the most hard-to-reach learners, provide flexible learning pathways, and to create a diverse and sustainable network of learning providers. The service is part of the regeneration and development section within the education directorate.

2. The service manager reports to the senior manager for regeneration and development. He in turn reports to the deputy director of education. The chief education officer reports to the portfolio holder responsible for lifelong learning. The service manager is supported by six area planning and development officers, a curriculum, quality and development manager, an operations manager, and information and communications technology (ICT), adult basic skills and family learning development officers. In total, 22.5 full-time equivalent staff are employed directly by the service. Learning facilities are provided at 100 community learning venues including schools, churches, community centres, libraries and learndirect centres. The service has a budget of approximately £1.5 million secured from a variety of sources including South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council. Approximately 12 per cent of the provision is accredited. The service delivers most of its learning through contracts with approximately 120 organisations.

3. Sheffield is the fourth largest city in England. It has a total population of 530,000 according to the census of 2001. The unemployment rate in the area is 2.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.1 per cent in December 2004. The percentage of learners achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above is 45 per cent, compared with that for England of 52 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up 8.8 per cent of the local population.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

4. The service has 423 learners on ICT programmes. Twenty-five per cent of these learners are men. A further 25 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. So far in the current academic year, 752 learners have enrolled on the ICT programmes. In 2003-04 there were 987 enrolments. The ICT provision is offered in collaboration with other partners. Ninety per cent of programmes take place during the daytime. ICT programmes account for 25 per cent of the total provision.

5. Forty-eight programmes are currently offered which range from entry level to level 2.

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Examples of programmes offered include introductory computer skills, desktop publishing, word-processing, internet and e-mail, digital imaging and computer art, and graphics. Non-accredited programmes are offered as a first step learning opportunity or where the Open College Network framework does not provide a suitable unit of study. Some courses are targeted for minority ethnic groups such as information technology (IT) for Asian men and women. The service provides courses which are appropriate for use in the home or daily life, rather than in business settings. A full-time development officer is assisted by 11 sessional teachers. Many programmes are funded through Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities projects which are taught by teachers contracted for the individual projects.

Foundation programmes

6. The service has 406 learners attending 47 first-rung courses. Sixteen of the courses are in arts and crafts, three concern health and care, and eight courses are in health and beauty therapy. There are four first-aid courses and 11 courses in languages, including Arabic and British Sign Language. Five courses provide English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) tuition. The provider is also offering a pilot communications course in e-learning. Currently, the service provides learning from 39 centres. All the courses are free. During the autumn term of 2004, 672 learners made 741 enrolments. Most classes take place during school hours. During 2003-04, 2,708 learners made 3,541 enrolments. Most sessions last two hours. Many of the two-hour courses are offered three times a year for 10 weeks, or once for 30 weeks of the year. All courses are established at the request of the community groups and are suitable for beginners, intermediate, or mixed-ability learners.

7. A full-time manager is supported by a full-time basic skills/ESOL development officer. Six planning and development officers identify the needs of learners and communities in the six most deprived areas of the city. Ninety-three per cent of the provision is delivered by 18 community organisations and a residential college for adults. Forty-three staff teach on programmes. Most of the courses are non-accredited.

Family learning

8. Sheffield LEA's family learning provision consists of courses in family language, literacy and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning (WFL).

9. At the time of the inspection, 321 learners were attending 37 FLLN and WFL courses. The FLLN offer includes 30-hour accredited courses in literacy, numeracy or helping children's learning through ICT. In addition, there are 10-hour non-accredited first-rung courses. All courses focus specifically on skills development in speaking and listening, reading and writing, literacy and numeracy, and family learning through ICT. The provision is offered at key stage 1 and foundation levels. Learners gain an internal family learning certificate for attending non-accredited courses. During inspection six WFL courses were offered, including a parental involvement programme called Share, family art, babies and toddlers and coping with children programmes.

10. The provision is offered in 55 schools, nine nurseries and Surestart venues, two libraries, a museum and nine community centres. Most provision is targeted at the most disadvantaged areas of the city. It is delivered through service level agreements with voluntary and community organisations, schools, and early years agencies. There is an increasing focus on WFL. The service uses a range of events and WFL to promote family learning. Approximately 20 per cent of the provision is accredited.

11. The family learning team comprises a full-time co-ordinator and two part-time development officers, three half-time tutors and eight sessional tutors.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	9
Number of inspection days	45
Number of learner interviews	288
Number of staff interviews	105
Number of subcontractor interviews	35
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	18
Number of partner/external agency interviews	35

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

12. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the leadership and management of the provider, including its approach to equality of opportunity, are good. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. The quality of learning is good in foundation and family learning programmes and satisfactory in ICT.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality assurance		3

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas - Adult and community learning	423	3

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Community learning - Adult and community learning	406	2

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	321	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

13. **In ICT, retention rates are good and are in excess of 90 per cent.** Achievement of individual objectives for learners on non-accredited programmes is satisfactory, at 85 per cent. Learners on accredited programmes also make satisfactory progress.

14. **The community learning provision has good achievement rates for learning goals and personal skills.** In 2003-04 the achievement rate was 84 per cent. Learners achieve short-course qualifications such as first aid and basic food hygiene. They develop greater confidence and self-esteem. Their aspirations are raised significantly. Many learners use their newly found skills and confidence well in their homes and in the community.

15. **In family learning learners develop very good parenting skills.** They discover the fun in learning, both for their children and themselves. Parents learn the art of motivation and the skills to talk and play with their own children. Attendance and retention rates are good, as are achievement rates for qualifications and individual objectives.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	3	5	7	0	1	0	16
Foundation programmes	0	3	5	6	1	0	0	15
Family learning	2	3	4	5	0	0	0	14
Total	2	9	14	18	1	1	0	45

16. **Tutors make good use of learning materials to promote learning in ICT.** Exercises are well structured and designed to extend and broaden learners' knowledge and skills. Learners use these skills for their local communities.

17. **Family learning tutors plan and prepare courses well.** They share comprehensive schemes of work, lesson plans, handouts and other resources very effectively with other tutors. They fully involve parents in devising learning outcomes for all sessions.

18. **The learning venues are well located and easily accessible,** particularly for ICT learners. The service outreach strategy has very effectively taken learning to many places where learners already meet.

19. **In community learning, a wide range of courses meets the needs of local communities and learners.** Some of these are developed in direct response to government initiatives. Some good, innovative courses have been designed such as the Cit-e-Network communications project. This course successfully attracts learners who would not normally attend literacy, numeracy or ESOL classes by integrating ICT, language, literacy and numeracy.

20. **The service provides good support for learners in all areas of learning.** Many learners get free childcare, free learning materials and free courses. A good number of well-qualified and experienced staff such as learning assistants, bilingual tutors, interpreters and support staff meet the individual needs of learners. Key documents are translated into languages spoken by the learners such as Arabic and Urdu.

21. **The initial assessment of additional learning needs is inadequate for many learners throughout the learning provision.** Initial assessment is based largely on the learners identifying their own needs, without guidance from the tutors. Much of initial assessment is informal. The tutors collect information, but do not collate and analyse it to help in planning learning. Literacy, numeracy and language needs are often not identified when learning goals are agreed with the learners.

22. **The accommodation in some outreach centres in ICT and family learning is inappropriate.** This includes some of the chairs and backless stools. In some centres the computers and printers are not maintained as a matter of routine. Some classrooms have inadequate heating and ventilation controls.

Leadership and management

23. **Operational leadership and management is clear and effective.** Operational managers work closely with local learning providers to offer a coherent and well-planned curriculum that meets the needs of the community and the local economy.

24. **The service has developed very effective lifelong learning partnerships** and co-operative arrangements with local community and voluntary organisations, including other learning providers, to promote adult learning. The provider has been very successful in taking learning to many hard-to-reach learners in local learning venues.

25. **Part-time tutors receive very good training and vocational development. This includes the subcontractors' staff.** All tutors receive regular briefings about service-wide issues and professional updating. Staff collaborate effectively and use networking to support learners in the learning process and in progressing into further learning or employment.

26. **The service has developed many successful initiatives to widen participation.** It works closely with providers and partners to identify gaps in the provision for adult learners and offers a good range of programmes to meet the needs of specific groups. Learning champions are effective in encouraging new learners and supporting their learning. The service has been very successful in recruiting new learners, particularly from deprived wards. In 2003-04, 86 per cent of learners were new learners. Eighty per cent of the learners were recruited from 10 per cent of the most deprived wards in the country or from wards where the council had identified localised pockets of deprivation. New learners include young male learners from minority ethnic groups, newly arrived refugees, Muslim women, and adults with learning difficulties and disabilities.

27. **Pastoral support for learners is good.** They particularly value the financial help and support they receive with free courses, learning materials and crèche facilities.

28. **The service has developed good initiatives for continuous improvement of its provision.** These initiatives include developing a good quality assurance policy and procedures, strengthening the observation of teaching and learning, development of the self-assessment report and developing the capacity of the subcontractors to improve their provision. A clear schedule states the order in which various aspects of the quality assurance framework are implemented and when. However, the framework has not been in place long enough for all actions in the cycle to be carried out. **Some aspects of the service's quality assurance arrangements such as initial assessment and curriculum review have not been fully implemented.** The service is aware of this and has worked hard to make improvements.

29. **Arrangements to identify and support learners' literacy and numeracy needs are ineffective.** The service has a procedure for ensuring that learners receive initial assessment, but this procedure is not always followed. Learners identify their own needs without any guidance from tutors. Not all learners who need support get it. The planning and monitoring of learning is not specific enough.

30. The service has produced three self-assessment reports to date. The most recent report is self-critical, thorough and inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified. The resulting development plan is monitored effectively, but some of the identified actions are not time constrained. Assessment practice and internal verification are satisfactory and meet the requirements of awarding bodies and external moderators.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction and operational management
- very effective partnerships to promote adult learning
- very good training and development of part-time tutors
- many successful initiatives to attract new learners from disadvantaged areas
- good initiatives for continuous improvement

Weaknesses

- ineffective implementation of literacy and numeracy support
- incomplete implementation of some aspects of quality assurance

Information & communications technology

Other contributory areas

Strengths

- good retention rates
- good use of learning materials to promote learning
- well-located and easily accessible learning venues
- good support to meet learners' individual needs

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of initial assessment and target-setting
- some inappropriate teaching accommodation

Foundation programmes

Community learning

Strengths

- good achievement of personal and learning goals
- wide range of courses to meet the needs of learners and communities
- good pastoral support for learners
- good support for tutors in community venues

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment for many learners

Family learning

Strengths

- very good development of parenting skills
- good planning of teaching and learning
- good pastoral support for learners
- very effective training of tutors and partners
- very effective teamworking and partnerships

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation at some venues
- inadequate assessment and support for literacy and numeracy needs

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SHEFFIELD LEA:

- they are made to feel welcome - 'I feel valued'
- 'the opportunity to learn at a venue near my home'
- 'it is lovely meeting other mothers and sharing experiences, I feel less lonely'
- the childcare facilities - 'it is wonderful having a crèche'
- the helpful and supportive tutors - 'I am treated with respect'
- they learn skills that are relevant to their lives - 'I can now speak some English and talk to my child's teacher'
- the learning environment - 'it is good to work with learners from many communities'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SHEFFIELD LEA COULD IMPROVE:

- information advice and guidance
- the maintenance of ICT equipment - 'printers do not always work'
- the access to internet connections
- the detailing of course content in publicity information and earlier advertising of what is available
- the range of courses that lead to a nationally recognised qualification
- classroom temperatures - 'the classrooms are often too cold'

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SHEFFIELD LEA:

- improve the quality of teaching
- develop and implement an effective procedure for initial assessment
- develop an effective procedure for monitoring learners' progress
- ensure that all teaching accommodation is appropriate for the learners
- continue to develop effective procedures for quality assurance

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

Terminology varies across the range of education and training settings covered by the *Common Inspection Framework*. The table below indicates the terms appropriate to Adult and Community Learning

Single term used in the framework	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Provider	Provider	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges
Learner	Learner	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
Teacher / trainer	Tutor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	Mentor	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	Main learning goals	Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, e.g. in the family, community, or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge.
	Secondary learning goals	These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
Personal and learning skills	Personal and learning skills	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome	Adults often experience unanticipated gains as a result of being involved in learning. These include improved self-esteem, greater self-confidence and a growing sense of belonging to a community. Gains of this kind should be acknowledged and recorded in any record of achievement.
Subject-based programme	A programme organised around a body of knowledge, e.g. the structure and usage of the French language or ceramic glazing techniques. Students could be expected to progress from one aspect of the subject to another, to grasp increasingly complex concepts or analyses or to develop greater levels of skill or to apply skills to a new area of work.
Issue-based programme	A programme that is based on the concerns, interests and aspirations of particular groups, for example members of a Sikh Gurdwara wanting to address inter-faith relations in their town, or parents worried about the incidence of drug abuse in their locality. Issue-based learning tends to be associated with geographically defined communities, but the increasing use of electronic means of communication means that this need no longer be the case. Progress is defined in terms of the group's increasing ability to analyse its situation, to access new information and skills which will help it resolve its difficulties and generate solutions and its growing confidence in dealing with others to implement those solutions.
Outreach provision	Provision established in a community setting in addition to provision made at an organisation's main site(s). Outreach programmes may be similar to courses at the main site(s) or be designed to meet the specific requirements of that community.
Neighbourhood-based work	The provider's staff have a long-term presence in a local community with a specific remit to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
Community regeneration	The process of improving the quality of life in communities by investing in their infrastructure and facilities, creating opportunities for training and employment and tackling poor health and educational under-achievement. Community regeneration requires the active participation of local residents in decision-making. Changes and improvements are often achieved either directly or indirectly as a result of the adult learning activities which arise from this.

Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Community capacity building	The process of enabling local people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to take advantage of opportunities for employment, training and further education and to become selfmanaging, sustainable communities.
Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make a conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- clear strategic direction and operational management
- very effective partnerships to promote adult learning
- very good training and development of part-time tutors
- many successful initiatives to attract new learners from disadvantaged areas
- good initiatives for continuous improvement

Weaknesses

- ineffective implementation of literacy and numeracy support
- incomplete implementation of some aspects of quality assurance

31. The service has clear and effective strategic and operational leadership and management. It has identified several key challenges for itself. These include initiatives to engage the most hard-to-reach learners, provide flexible learning pathways, and create a diverse and sustainable network of learning providers. This clear vision is shared with all staff and partners. The provider has made considerable progress in achieving most of these strategic objectives. Operational managers have a good understanding of the city-wide strategy for adult learning. They work closely with local learning providers to offer a coherent, well-planned curriculum that is responsive to the needs of the community and the local economy. For example, the service correctly identified a local demand for skills in construction, digital imaging, biomedical science and skills for life. It has been active in facilitating and meeting these demands appropriately.

32. In order to promote adult learning, the service has developed very effective partnerships with local community and voluntary organisations, including other learning providers. The provider is able to deliver learning programmes to many hard-to-reach learners in local learning venues. The service's staff chair meetings of the local learning partnerships in the city and contribute very effectively towards developing a curriculum which is responsive to the needs of disadvantaged groups and communities. Potential courses are identified and discussed with learning providers and effective steps are taken to avoid unnecessary competition and duplication of provision. The service has raised the quality of the provision in the area by specifying common, but rigorous, quality improvement criteria which all learning providers must satisfy before a learning programme is approved.

33. Part-time tutors benefit from good training and development opportunities. Most of the provider's teaching staff are part time. Relevant staff training is given to all staff, including the subcontractors' staff. All tutors attend regular briefings about service-wide issues and updating of all events, which are well attended. Tutors are paid for attending

these events. The training of family learning tutors is particularly good. Part-time staff are integrated well into the service. Arrangements for staff induction are satisfactory. The council has recently been recredited as an Investor in People, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

34. The service is fully integrated within the council structures. The service is placed within the regeneration and development section of the council together with other training provision. Roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear. Internal communications are satisfactory. The management team, the planning team and the whole service, have regular meetings, which are well attended. Minutes of meetings are carefully recorded and actions clearly identified, with timescales and named responsibilities. All staff are fully involved in action-planning and target-setting. Challenging targets are set for recruitment, retention and achievement. Management of the subcontractors is satisfactory. The development officers support the subcontractors well to ensure that targets are met to agreed quality thresholds. Service level agreements are detailed, they list respective duties and responsibilities clearly. Monitoring arrangements are satisfactory.

35. The service has a comprehensive staff development policy and a well-established appraisal procedure. A staff development plan is produced every year to meet the service priorities. The plan is fully resourced. Staff performance is appropriately monitored and evaluated. All staff are appraised annually by their line manager, with interim progress reviews every six months. Training needs arising out of the appraisals are matched with the corporate and individual training objectives. Relevant staff development opportunities are provided. Feedback from staff training is analysed and appropriate action taken where necessary.

36. Tutors are well qualified and most have a teaching qualification. The provider plans for all its workforce to be professionally qualified in the medium to long term. The tutors who do not have a teaching qualification are required to enrol on an appropriate teacher training course within 12 months of beginning their employment.

37. The service collects and analyses a wide range of management data about recruitment and retention of learners and their achievements. This data is correlated with learner profiles regarding ethnic background and gender. Managers use this information well to plan the provision. However, the data is not used consistently to analyse the effectiveness of each course. Course-level self-assessment does not make sufficient use of trend data to produce judgments about performance.

38. Arrangements to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are ineffective. The service has a detailed procedure for ensuring that learners receive initial assessment, but this procedure is not always followed. Most tutors conduct informal initial assessments. Appropriate additional support is offered, but no records are kept of this and implementation is inconsistent among learning providers and individual tutors. Inspectors found initial assessment weak in all of the areas of learning inspected. Some learners are on inappropriate programmes and others have additional learning needs which have not been diagnosed.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

39. In conjunction with partners and subcontractors the service has developed many successful initiatives to widen participation. These focus on developing new provision, developing the capacity of voluntary sector providers and providing support to learners to remove barriers to learning.

40. The service works with providers and partners to identify gaps in provision for adult learners and offers a range of programmes to meet the needs of specific groups. For example, the service funds a black and minority ethnic community group which successfully attracts male learners. Specific programmes are provided for Muslim women and for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. One project, which meets the needs of newly arrived refugees, provides a range of support, including initial home visits for women. In partnership with an adult residential college it provides learning opportunities to encourage learners from deprived areas to work to improve their communities and to make personal progress. Some learners have progressed from non-accredited programmes to university courses. The service has a newly developed, successful e-learning programme which encourages learners throughout the city to work together to develop and reinforce their literacy, numeracy, language and IT skills.

41. The service makes good use of a range of funding to reduce barriers for learners. For example, crèche provision is free for most learners. The service provides free materials in some programmes. Learning champions are funded to work in communities to encourage new learners and support their learning. All learning programmes, including residential programmes, are free of charge. External funding has been used to improve access to buildings, and the availability of special equipment, to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Most premises are now accessible for learners with restricted mobility. The service has been very successful in recruiting new learners, particularly from deprived wards within the city. In 2003-04, 86 per cent of learners were new learners. Eighty per cent were recruited from 10 per cent of the most deprived wards in the country or from wards where the council had identified localised pockets of deprivation.

42. The council has clear, comprehensive and up-to-date policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity. It fulfils its responsibilities under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and has produced a good practice guide to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The service uses these and other national guidelines to support managers. An equality and diversity action plan complements the key objectives in the city's development plans. The service regularly monitors the plan's objectives and many have been achieved. Managers within the service have clearly structured responsibilities to ensure that equality of opportunity, diversity, and related objectives are included in their annual appraisals. The service's performance in the development of equality and diversity is monitored as part of the annual self-assessment cycle. The service requires subcontractors to have an appropriate range of equality and diversity policies and procedures, and to ensure equality of access to their programmes.

43. The service promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. All staff directly

employed by the service attend equality and diversity training. This training is also offered to staff employed by subcontractors. The staff handbook includes a clear statement on equality. Learners receive a leaflet promoting equality and diversity within the service, which includes appropriate images. The service publishes this leaflet in a number of community languages and in large print. Many local leaflets are also produced in a range of welcoming formats. However, they do not include sufficient images of learners and have no equality statement. The service has produced a good range of case studies of learners' achievements, but has not published these. Well-made videos and DVDs are used to promote family and community learning.

44. The service makes satisfactory use of data to analyse staff profiles and learners' performances. The profile of directly employed staff regarding ethnic background and/or disability matches that of the profile of the city's population. The service also monitors the profile of subcontractors' staff. The service sets challenging recruitment targets for minority ethnic learners and has exceeded them. Targets for the recruitment of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, men and older learners have also been met. The service compares achievements by learners in different postcode areas, but has no system to monitor learners' destinations.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

45. The provider has implemented good initiatives for continuous improvement of its learning programmes. These initiatives focus on standardisation of the quality assurance procedures and documents, observation of teaching and learning, the development of the self-assessment report, and the development of the subcontractors.

46. The service has made good use of external consultants to provide support in developing the service-wide strategy for quality assurance. A range of new documents and processes has been introduced to ensure consistency and improvements in how courses are planned and managed. All tutors receive an informative handbook. The handbook includes a guide to the course administration process, standard documents and useful guidance on their completion. All staff, including the tutors and the managers of subcontracted provision, have been trained in the use of the handbook and fully understand its role in quality improvement.

47. The service has used an adult residential college very effectively to improve its existing system for the observation of teaching and learning. The most recent observation grades given by the provider to its staff are comparable with those given by the inspection team. An adequate number of staff are fully trained in classroom observation methodology. A team of observers has been trained to use appropriate assessment documents that include detailed references to the relevant key questions of the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Observers provide tutors with detailed comments about the key strengths and weaknesses of lessons observed. Identified action points are detailed. The lesson observation grades are moderated and the outcome is appropriately recorded. However, tutors do not record their comments about the observation process and outcomes. The service has a good plan of action to deal with less than satisfactory teaching. The service has set itself appropriate targets for the number of tutors to be

observed. Some targets to observe new tutors in the first term have not been met.

48. The service has made good progress in developing the capacity of the subcontractors in the voluntary and community sector. It has successfully supported its subcontractors in the development of self-assessment reports. They now clearly understand self-assessment and value the contribution it makes to the improvement of their service to learners. Each larger subcontractor has produced a self-critical self-assessment report for its provision. These have been successfully integrated with the main report to give an overall view of the provision.

49. The service uses an appropriate range of methods to collect feedback from learners, including mid-term reviews, course reviews and end-of-course evaluation. The results are used effectively in the development of the self-assessment report.

50. The provider has so far produced three self-assessment reports. The quality of the reports has improved. The current report is carefully structured around the key questions of the 'Common Inspection Framework'. The most recent self-assessment report was self-critical and thorough. It identified most of the key strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. The inspectors gave higher grades to one area of learning, and leadership and management than provided by the provider.

51. The self-assessment development plan is monitored effectively. Actions to improve the provision generally progress satisfactorily, but some actions are not time constrained.

52. Assessment practice and the sharing of good practice are satisfactory. Internal verification meets the requirements of the awarding bodies and external moderators. The monitoring of subcontractors' service level agreement is also satisfactory.

53. Some aspects of the service's quality assurance arrangements have not been fully implemented. The service is aware of this and has worked hard to make improvements. A schedule clearly states the order in which the various aspects of the quality assurance framework are implemented and when. However, the framework has not been in place long enough for all actions in the cycle to have been carried out. Quality assurance procedures have not been fully implemented for some processes, such as initial assessments and curriculum reviews. There is no quality assurance of pre-course advice and guidance.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas - Adult and community learning	423	3

Other contributory areas

Strengths

- good retention rates
- good use of learning materials to promote learning
- well-located and easily accessible learning venues
- good support to meet learners' individual needs

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of initial assessment and target-setting
- some inappropriate teaching accommodation

Achievement and standards

54. Retention rates are good. Ninety per cent of the learners who enrol on programmes complete them.

55. Achievement rates are satisfactory. In the previous academic year and in the autumn term of 2004-05, 85 per cent of learners on non-accredited programmes achieved their learning goals. In the same year, nearly 50 per cent of learners who started an entry level accredited programme achieved the qualification. Seventy-five per cent of learners who started level 1 and level 2 accredited programmes achieved their qualifications. Some learners on accredited programmes choose not to attempt the qualification.

56. Some learners are actively involved in their communities and use their computing skills to produce posters and newsletters. Some of these learners live in close-knit communities and support each other with their computing skills outside classes. One learner plans to use his skills to write a history book about his community.

Quality of education and training

57. Tutors make good use of learning materials to promote learning. Exercises are well structured and designed to extend and broaden learners' knowledge and skills. Learners produce good work for the local community including posters and newsletters. Teachers develop exercises that will interest the learners. In some practical work, teachers use topical and relevant examples to reinforce learning. For example, the use of an interactive computer mouse tutorial helps new learners to develop good mouse control skills. Some of the assignments are made attractive for the learners. Examples are colourful and well-designed posters, Christmas cards and advertisements. Teachers encourage individuals to work at a brisk pace. They give them additional, challenging work and often extend the assignments to comply with learners' interests. Learners are interested and fully engaged in their work. Some of them produce good work to promote their hobbies through illustrated posters and flyers and computer-generated presentations.

58. The learning venues are well located and easily accessible. The service's outreach strategy has very effectively provided learning opportunities in places where learners already meet. Many of the learners are unable to attend the more traditional learning classes. All venues are easily accessible by public transport, are familiar to the learners and promote local learning. Learners feel safe in the familiar surroundings. They use the nursery and crèche facilities provided. The planning team effectively identifies any needs for programmes in certain localities and suitable venues. The programme are successful in meeting the needs of the learners and their communities. Examples of the programmes include an introduction to computers, text processing, desktop publishing and website design. However, there are insufficient internet-related activities in some of the provision.

59. Learners are well supported. They do not have to pay fees for the first three terms of their education. When they experience difficulties, teachers divide the work and the exercises into small manageable tasks to ensure that all learners understand and make progress. Learners do not have formal, initial assessments to identify literacy, numeracy or language support needs, but when these are identified, appropriate support is provided. Learners with mental health problems are taught individually and receive particularly effective support from the teachers and learning assistants. Teachers write equipment operating instructions and class notes in a variety of languages, including Urdu and Arabic. In many classes interpreters and additional classroom assistants are provided as standard. There is sufficient up-to-date hardware to ensure that learners with learning disabilities and difficulties are able to use the equipment. The staff to learner ratio is good. Many volunteers also teach in the classes and provide sensitive help to the needs of the learners. The learners make good use of the free childcare facilities and value this resource. Teachers give sensitive help and encouragement to disabled or elderly learners. Progression to other programmes is good and learners are encouraged to join other providers for more advanced computer courses. Some of the neighbourhood areas do not have sufficient information about programmes offered.

60. Teaching is satisfactory. The better lessons have good lesson plans and schemes of work. These are in a standard format, are detailed and clearly identify different teaching and learning methods. They are cross-referenced to the awarding body standards. In poorer lessons, there is not enough planning for differentiation, or variety in teaching styles, and there is an over-reliance on learners working through work packs with insufficient direct teaching. Some exercises given to learners in these lessons are inappropriate and require learners to have skills and knowledge which they have not yet acquired. Learners make effective use of good-quality workbooks and handouts. Teachers routinely explain technical language in simple terms and encourage learners to think in these terms. Learners are given good advice on presentation, file storage and management. In some classes learners develop good skills and are able to demonstrate activities and tasks to their peers, such as retrieving files from one storage media to another. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced.

61. Assessments are satisfactory and meet examination body requirements. Moderation meetings for accredited programmes take place regularly and check the standard of learners' work for improvement. Resulting action points are followed up satisfactorily. Learners' attainment is recorded in most classes. Learners regularly record their progress and store it in folders on the computers. All teachers are able to access these records and use the information to plan future training and assessment opportunities. Teachers give satisfactory verbal and written feedback about learners' work to help them improve their standards. All learners are fully aware of the assessment process.

62. Initial assessment is not applied consistently throughout the provision. Target-setting is not always precise. Literacy, numeracy and language needs are often not identified when agreeing learning goals with the learners. A range of ICT initial assessment documents is available, but these are not used consistently by teachers. Information collected during the initial assessments is not always used to identify the most appropriate programmes for the learners or to identify realistic goals and targets. Learners' previously acquired skills and knowledge are not formally assessed sufficiently.

63. Accommodation is inappropriate in some outreach centres. Some rooms are poorly decorated. Some learners must use inappropriate chairs and backless stools. There are no footrests or wrist rests. Housekeeping is poor and in some cases cables are allowed to trail on the floor. Some classrooms are too small for the number of learners. In some centres printers and computers are not routinely maintained. Some classrooms have inadequate heating and ventilation controls.

Leadership and management

64. The service has a clear strategy for widening participation with plans for specific learner groups targeted by the senior management team. Meetings are held regularly, but the minutes are not always sufficiently detailed. Identified actions are not always given completion dates. Communications are good and include e-mails between teachers and learning support staff. Teachers are well supported with appropriate teaching resources such as a CD that includes workbooks and exercises, the mouse tutorial package, and other standard materials. Managers observe teachers regularly.

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Observation records are detailed and, where relevant, appropriate staff development is provided. The initial assessment process is not managed consistently. In some cases learners do not receive enough information to make an informed choice. The self-assessment report was critical and analytical. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report.

Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Community learning - Adult and community learning	406	2

Community learning

Strengths

- good achievement of personal and learning goals
- wide range of courses to meet the needs of learners and communities
- good pastoral support for learners
- good support for tutors in community venues

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment for many learners

Achievement and standards

65. Achievements of personal and learning goals are good. In the academic year 2003-04 the achievement rate for learning goals was 84 per cent. In the previous term of the current academic year the achievement rate was 88 per cent. Learners achieve short-course qualifications in subjects such as first aid and basic food hygiene. Group and personal goals are negotiated with the learners fully at the start of each course. Learners keep a detailed log of their achievements on a weekly basis. They identify and accurately record the skills they already have and build on their previous knowledge or acquire new skills in their chosen subject. They develop greater confidence and self-esteem. Their aspirations are raised significantly. Learners who start with a short taster course often join further courses.

66. Many learners use their newly acquired skills and confidence in their homes and in the community. For example, some learners are more confident in using first aid at home and at work to benefit their children or colleagues. Other learners have adapted their diets for a healthier lifestyle at home. A grandmother is able to talk to her grandchildren in English after attending ESOL classes.

Quality of education and training

67. A wide range of courses meets the needs of local communities and learners. Some of these are developed in direct response to government initiatives. For example, there are courses in healthy lifestyles, family learning, and skills for life. Some innovative courses have been designed such as the Cit-e-Network communications project. This

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course attracts many learners who have poor literacy, ESOL or numeracy skills, but would not go to standard classes. The unit works closely with community groups and local adult forums. Effective city-wide partnerships involve community and statutory organisations and other providers. In a very successful local initiative, learning champions go into the community and talk to groups and individuals to encourage them to take part in learning. Courses are carefully researched and designed to meet learners' interests. They are often adapted after discussions with the learners at the first session. Courses are delivered in carefully chosen local venues that are convenient for learners. Many new learners attend short courses until they are happy to progress.

68. Pastoral support is good. Many learners make good use of free crèche facilities. All courses are free. Tutors encourage learners to progress to further learning and show them the routes they can take. At one school venue the tutor has developed a diagram showing how parents can progress from ESOL and parenting skills to accredited qualifications in childcare. The planning and development team work very effectively with partners and training providers to identify progression routes towards accredited courses. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory.

69. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Of the 15 lessons observed, 53 per cent were good or better, 40 per cent satisfactory and 7 per cent less than satisfactory. Learners are very enthusiastic and well motivated. The tutors are supportive and encouraging. The better sessions are well structured, with clear aims and objectives. Tutors use a variety of effective teaching and learning strategies, giving skilful demonstrations and explaining points very clearly. They give effective guidance to learners and check learning thoroughly. In the less than satisfactory sessions, objectives are not explained clearly, there is too much teacher-led activity and insufficient checking of learning. The quality of planning in scheme, work and session plans is variable.

70. Resources are satisfactory. Staff are sensitive to learners' needs. Tutors are well qualified and experienced and all either have a teaching qualification or are working towards one. Practical resources, such as art and craft materials and cooking ingredients, are satisfactory. Handouts are satisfactory. Some laptop computers are available in the learning venues. Accommodation is sometimes very good, but not always ideal, with cramped space and poor heating. All venues are checked appropriately for health and safety purposes.

71. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory. Tutors give learners feedback about their progress on a regular basis. Learners are fully involved in reviewing their own progress. A mid-course review is carried out by the tutor with each learner and recorded on the individual learning plan. However, it does not record the learners' personal development effectively, for example in developing confidence and social skills.

72. Initial assessment of additional learning needs is inadequate for many learners. It relies mainly on learners identifying their own needs without any help from the tutors. Tutors do receive some guidance on carrying out initial assessments but many do not use it effectively. However, initial assessment is good for ESOL and ICT learners. For many

learners, assessment is informal and not systematically recorded.

Leadership and management

73. The tutors working in community venues, whether directly employed by the service or subcontractors, are very well supported. The planning and development workers carry out supportive visits in the first few weeks of a new course to make sure that accommodation is satisfactory, paperwork is in order and learners are happy with the course. They are well known and respected, and they make themselves easily available to tutors and the organisations the tutors work for, should problems arise. Communication and the sharing of good practice are effective. Tutors attend regular staff meetings and the wide range of professional development events organised by the service. Training in supporting literacy and numeracy is currently being offered to all tutors. The planning and development officers monitor the quality of the provision effectively. They receive detailed end-of-course reviews from all tutors and follow up any contentious issues. The service has a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Good practice is shared well among the providers. The service has successfully developed a culture of inclusion and continuous improvement.

Family learning

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
- Adult and community learning	321	2

Strengths

- very good development of parenting skills
- good planning of teaching and learning
- good pastoral support for learners
- very effective training of tutors and partners
- very effective teamworking and partnerships

Weaknesses

- unsuitable accommodation at some venues
- inadequate assessment and support for literacy and numeracy needs

Achievement and standards

74. Learners develop good parenting skills. They also demonstrate significant achievements in creative skills. Tutors help to improve learners' self-esteem and confidence. This improves parents' and children's aspirations. Learners are fully enabled to overcome their previously poor experiences of learning.

75. Learners discover the fun in learning, both for their children and themselves. Broad-ranging activities encourage learners to discover things for themselves and recognise how children learn and how they are taught in schools. For example, in speaking and listening classes, learners make felt puppets to promote language skills. Learning is fun and enjoyable. The parents learn the art of motivation and the skills to talk and play with their own children. They apply their own learning at home and take pride in producing toys and games for their children. Parents notice marked improvements in their children's concentration, behaviour, social skills, reading, matching and communication skills. Some parents use their experience on the courses to become learning assistants in schools, and a few have progressed to university. Attendance and retention rates in lessons are very good at 85 per cent. Ninety-five per cent of learners achieve their learning goals or gain accreditation.

Quality of education and training

76. Tutors plan and prepare courses well. They share comprehensive schemes of work, lesson plans, handouts and other resources very effectively. They involve parents in planning learning outcomes for all sessions. Tutors provide very clear explanations of the national curriculum and learning methods in schools, for example the new methods of teaching at foundation and key stage 1. Most lessons use active learning well. In one very good lesson, tutors made very good use of cut, paste and create activities to stimulate musical interests, singing and memory. All teaching is satisfactory. Inspectors observed outstanding and very good lessons where the range of activities, and the pace and excitement of learning was very high. Children are encouraged to memorise, develop concepts, senses and use of language very effectively.

77. Learners receive good pastoral support. Tutors, learning mentors and other partners are supportive of learners and sensitive to their needs. The crèche provision is good and widely available in many locations. Very responsive language support by some tutors and learning centre staff enables speakers of additional languages to participate more fully in courses. Many staff, including learning mentors and school development workers speak a wide range of community languages. Support is readily available from an interpreting service. Staff and tutors from the provider and its partner organisations support learners in attending and staying on the courses. Supportive home visits are provided in some instances and sometimes learners are referred to other sources of help. Parents are given free materials to use at home. All learners practise ideas gained from their classes. They develop games and learning aids with their own children.

78. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Staff are trained in referring learners to a range of progression routes, including paid employment. Pre-course advice and information from partners is readily available, but they do not give written information and guidance about the levels of courses, or the resources available to support them.

79. The range of courses offered is satisfactory in meeting learners' needs and aspirations. Most two-hour classes are offered in the mornings, but there is no weekend or evening provision. Occasionally special events and taster programmes are offered to encourage parents into learning. One course is outstanding in meeting the needs of parents whose children have behavioural problems. The course gives them insights into the main issues, boosts their confidence and self-esteem, and gives them skills to cope with the children.

80. The accommodation at some venues is unsuitable. The provider has conducted risk assessments of venues and activities and has identified unsuitable and uncomfortable children's furniture. No action has been taken. The noise levels in some learning centres are unacceptable and often the designated space is used as a thoroughfare or canteen. In some learning centres, rooms are cluttered and have insufficient space for activities. The better accommodation has dedicated community rooms with appropriate furniture, space and equipment. Some schools have adapted classrooms to meet the needs of

adult learners.

81. Initial assessment of learners on most FLLN courses is inadequate in identifying their literacy, numeracy and language needs. Much of the practice is informal. The tutors collect information, but do not collate and analyse it to plan learning. Inspectors observed several instances of learners making spelling mistakes in their work, but the learners were not supported appropriately. A learner with severe literacy needs was assigned another learner to act as scribe. There was no strategy to develop the individual's reading and writing skills. Some effective use of learning diaries takes place, but these are not used consistently and learners' progress in non-accredited courses is not recorded sufficiently.

Leadership and management

82. Tutors and partners are trained very effectively. The service provides accredited and non-accredited training very well for tutors. It also provides awareness-raising sessions about family learning for schools, community groups and strategic partners. Most partners' staff take part in the training. Staff development courses cover a wide range of topics such as curriculum development, literacy, numeracy and language awareness, and health and safety review meetings. Tutors value these events at which they can share good practice, develop their lesson plans and produce delivery materials. The team is well managed and motivated.

83. The family learning provision includes very effective teamworking and partnerships. The service makes an effective contribution in identifying needs and strategies to develop and extend family learning in the city and the region. Very effective partnerships exist to increase parental involvement in learning. All stakeholders, including schools, greatly value the family learning programme. Staff collaborate effectively and use networks to encourage and support learners to return to and progress in learning. One example of this is a family learning class that has established links with Surestart pre-school and parent skills advice provision, together with a welfare rights information and advocacy service.

84. The self-assessment report was comprehensive and thorough. The provider canvassed a wide range of viewpoints, including tutors and partners. The report was self-critical and judgemental. The provider has produced a good practice guide, which is widely used by all tutors and subcontracted staff.