

REINSPECTION REPORT

Rutland LEA Reinspection

24 March 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas. 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.*

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.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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.

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Rutland LEA Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Rutland Local Education Authority's (the LEA's) adult and community service provision is known as the Rutland Adult Learning Service (RALS). At the previous inspection, Rutland LEA provided adult and community learning through the education, youth and culture department of Rutland County Council (the county council). Currently, the LEA is in the process of a radical restructure of adult learning, which includes integration into the county council's new children and young people's directorate. This is planned to be completed in August 2006. Previously, the strategic management of RALS was the responsibility of the adult learning executive, which comprised of the director of education, youth and culture, the three community college principals, and two county councillors. When the county council created a children's and young people's directorate in March 2006, adult learning was incorporated into one of the three main teams, known as 'the learning team'. A senior manager for adult learning was appointed team leader for vocational training for 14-19 year-olds, adult learning and the youth service.

2. RALS offers accredited and non-accredited programmes for adult learners in science and mathematics, land-based programmes, construction, business administration management and professional, information and communications technology (ICT), retailing, customer services and transportation, hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, hairdressing and beauty therapy, health and social care, visual and performing arts, humanities, English and modern foreign languages, and foundation programmes including family learning. Inspectors did not grade some of the areas of learning at the previous inspection as there were not enough sessions taking place. Since September 2005, 1,488 learners have enrolled on adult and community learning courses, and approximately 40 per cent are on courses that lead to national qualifications. Much of RALS's adult and community learning takes place at the three community colleges in Casterton, Uppingham and Oakham, and considerable use is made of other community venues, such as schools and libraries.

3. In 1997, the county council was established as a unitary authority following local authority reorganisation in 1997. It had previously been a district within Leicestershire. Rutland is the smallest county in England, and its county council is the smallest mainland unitary authority. Unemployment in Rutland was at 0.6 per cent in February 2006, compared with the national average of 2.6 per cent. The 2001 census return shows that 1.9 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups, compared with the national average of 8.7 per cent.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

4. RALS currently provides 32 sports and fitness courses in keep fit, yoga, Pilates, archery,

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golf and badminton. The two courses in teaching swimming and pool lifeguard skills lead to national qualifications. Courses take place during the day and in the evening at the three community colleges, in schools and community halls. Most learners enrol each term on courses that last for an average of 25 weeks. Approximately 12.5 per cent of the learners are men. Many of the classes are attended by learners who are new to the subject, as well as those who have been attending for many years. Learning sessions last between one and three hours. Eleven part-time tutors work between one and 12 hours each week. A curriculum team leader for sports and leisure programmes was in post from August 2005 to January 2006. A senior manager now carries out the co-ordination of this subject area.

Foundation programmes

5. The foundation provision includes literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), family literacy and numeracy (FLLN), and wider family learning. Three community colleges serve as the venues for literacy, numeracy and language workshops, along with a military barracks and several outreach centres, such as schools and community centres. Courses are run in the daytime and evening. Most learners attend for two hours each week. RALS also provides intensive literacy and numeracy courses for Army personnel. In 2004-05, this represented approximately two-thirds of the foundation programmes. A small team of tutors provides an individual outreach service for learners unable to attend a learning centre. Currently, six tutors are teaching on seven courses in either literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Of the 90 learners who have enrolled on these programme since September 2005, 69 are on courses leading to national qualifications. Ninety learners have enrolled in family learning programmes during 2005-06. Currently, these mostly consist of short courses for children and adults together, to help encourage adults to enrol on other family and adult and community learning courses. FLLN courses, including those known as 'keeping up with the children' are planned to continue after the Easter school holidays. Two senior managers are currently responsible for co-ordinating the literacy and numeracy and family learning provision.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	18
Number of learners interviewed	116
Number of staff interviewed	38
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	13
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	7
Number of visits	1

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. At the previous inspection in February 2005, leadership and management were judged to be unsatisfactory. RALS's approach to equality of opportunity was satisfactory, whereas its arrangements for quality assurance were unsatisfactory. Provision was satisfactory in business administration, management and professional, ICT, visual and performing arts and media, and English, languages and communications. Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and foundation programmes were unsatisfactory. At the reinspection, inspectors gathered evidence from all the areas of learning offered to support judgements in the key findings section of the report. Inspectors judged that the quality of provision had been maintained in business administration, management and professional, ICT, visual and performing arts and media, and English, languages and communications. Arrangements for leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance are satisfactory. Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and foundation programmes are also satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality assurance		4

Business administration, management & professional		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Business administration - Adult and community learning	42	3
Management - Adult and community learning	3	3
Accounting and economics - Adult and community learning	90	3

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Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT - Adult and community learning	571	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation - Adult and community learning	195	4

Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Arts - Adult and community learning	121	3
Crafts - Adult and community learning	111	3

English, languages & communications		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
English - Adult and community learning	29	3
Languages - Adult and community learning	193	3

Foundation programmes		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy and numeracy - Adult and community learning	98	4
Independent living and leisure skills - Adult and community learning	10	4
Other contributory areas - Adult and community learning	13	4

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Leisure, sport and recreation - Adult and community learning	384	3	

Foundation programmes			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Other contributory areas - Adult and community learning	180	3	

KEY FINDINGS**Achievement and standards**

7. Retention and achievement rates are good on many programmes leading to national qualifications. All learners on the business and commerce courses successfully completed their course in 2004-05 and pass rates on some ICT courses were also high. Learners achieve well on the short foundation and specialist sports programmes leading to national certificates. A good proportion of learners complete ICT programmes and achieve their learning goals.

8. Learners continue to achieve good standards of work on craft, arts and modern foreign languages courses. Learners develop good standards of craftsmanship in jewellery and are confident in using a wide range of techniques. In ceramics, learners' skills involve accomplished coiling and modelling using a variety of decorating techniques. Many learners on modern foreign languages programmes have well-developed listening skills and can produce and manipulate language with a good degree of confidence.

9. The sports and foundation programmes are particularly effective in developing learners' skills and confidence. Many learners report that their health and levels of fitness have improved significantly since joining a sports and fitness programme. Many learners on foundation programmes significantly develop their skills and confidence in carrying

out everyday tasks that involve literacy and numeracy or supporting their children.

10. The proportion of learners completing modern foreign languages programmes and achieving the qualification has improved since the previous inspection, but it is still low at 44 per cent. Achievement rates on book keeping courses have declined since the previous inspection. Only 62 per cent of learners who started the programmes achieved the qualification in 2004-05. Achievement on national vocational qualifications (NVQ) courses in management and administration is slow.

Quality of education and training

11. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Of the learning sessions observed during the reinspection, 70 per cent were judged to be good or better and 5 per cent of the lessons were unsatisfactory. This compares well with the findings at the previous inspection, when 54 per cent of observed sessions were good or better, and 7 per cent were judged to be unsatisfactory.

12. Many tutors now use a good range of imaginative and interesting learning activities. They plan learning sessions well and some tutors adapt learning activities effectively according to the needs of individual learners. Learners receive particularly effective individual coaching on ICT and some foundation programmes.

13. Initial assessments have improved since the previous inspection. Most tutors now have a satisfactory understanding of learners' starting points when they join a programme. However, some tutors teaching modern foreign languages and business administration do not use this information sufficiently to meet learners' individual needs. RALS's arrangements for some learners to receive literacy and numeracy support are good, but this has not been developed sufficiently in all areas of learning.

14. RALS provides a satisfactory range of programmes in most areas of learning. Curriculum specialists worked well to rationalise and restructure the curriculum offer for 2005-06. The range of programmes is particularly good in business administration. RALS continues to provide ICT in a wide range of community venues and makes good arrangements to support learners on foundation programmes in rural communities.

15. Resources are satisfactory on most programmes. Most tutors have or are working towards appropriate qualifications in teaching and are competent in their specialist subjects. Learning resources are satisfactory on arts, craft, sports and fitness and foundation programmes. Some tutors teaching modern foreign languages do not make sufficient use of the good range of electronic equipment available in classrooms, such as interactive whiteboards, televisions and computers, including laptop computers. Conversely, some ICT tutors do not have adequate access to interactive whiteboards.

16. Target-setting is still weak on some foundation programmes. Some learning goals are not specific enough and they are not set in a context that is relevant to learners' priorities. Many learners on sports and leisure programmes do not receive sufficient

feedback on their progress in meeting identified learning goals throughout their programmes. The good skills that learners develop are not recorded sufficiently on many of these programmes.

Leadership and management

17. **The county council has carried out successful work to identify an appropriate strategic direction for adult and community learning.** The council now has a clear and well-designed strategy for RALS. This has been researched effectively and is linked very well to national and local priorities.
18. **RALS continues to manage its internal communication well.** The staff handbook, information pack and newsletters are well presented and are useful sources of updated information. Systems for consulting with staff are good and have improved since the previous inspection.
19. **RALS continues to implement effective strategies to attract non-traditional learners to its programmes.** In particular, the role of neighbourhood learning champions has been successfully developed further since the previous inspection. RALS works well with external partners, such as voluntary organisations, schools and libraries and it is particularly effective in setting up new provision in response to requests for provision to meet the needs of specific groups of learners.
20. **RALS has developed a well-designed process for collecting and using information to self-assess the quality of its provision.** The quality assurance arrangements are linked well to the self-assessment cycle. In particular, curriculum teams collaborate well to evaluate programmes in their areas of learning. Similarly, operational managers work well to identify strengths and weaknesses in leadership and management.
21. Many aspects of operational management that were judged to be inadequate at the previous inspection are now satisfactory. Curriculum management and planning has improved significantly in most areas of learning. Curriculum team leaders provide appropriate specialist advice on curriculum issues such as accreditation and resources. However, some aspects of the management of the curriculum for sports, recreation and leisure are still weak.
22. RALS now has satisfactory management information systems. Senior managers have carried out considerable work to standardise the data used throughout the service. Managers manage information better and they have a better awareness of the RALS's overall performance in each area of learning. However, they do not currently set targets for retention, achievement and attendance for each programme.
23. The equal opportunities policy for the RALS is now satisfactory. It is particularly well designed with a very good focus on all aspects of the learning cycle, covering topics such as the learning environment, enrolment, the curriculum and assessment. However, it is too early to tell the impact of this new policy. Plans for preparing staff to implement and monitor the policy are not sufficiently detailed.

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24. The arrangements for quality assurance are now satisfactory. The RALS continues to collect learners' views systematically and managers use this information well to improve provision. The internal and external verification processes for accredited programmes remain satisfactory. Observations of teaching and learning are now effective in providing staff with appropriately detailed follow-up actions for improvement in most areas of learning.

25. Risk assessments are satisfactory in most areas of learning. However, staff do not pay sufficient attention to monitoring safe working practices at all venues and on all programmes. Two rooms used for the administration of adult learning at one community college are inappropriate. These offices open directly onto the toilet cubicles and wash basins used by school students. The working environment for office staff is unpleasant and the offices do not offer a welcoming atmosphere for adult learners.

26. **The recruitment onto adult and community learning is low and has declined significantly since September 2003.** RALS is not meeting the targets agreed for this current academic year. Although it is successfully attracting new learners to family learning and short courses specifically arranged to widen participation, the marketing strategy is weak.

27. **The monitoring of systems and paperwork is not sufficiently thorough throughout RALS.** Some managers focus excessively on auditing, and do not monitor the quality of information of some of the forms sufficiently. Similarly, some procedures are not followed through properly.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic planning
- good communications
- good planning to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- declining recruitment of learners
- insufficient attention to safe working practices and appropriate working environments
- insufficient monitoring of the quality of some programmes

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates on programmes leading to a national qualification
- good development of skills

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment of learners' progress
- insufficient specialist support for tutors

Foundation programmes

Other contributory areas

Strengths

- good development of learners' everyday skills and confidence
- good achievement on intensive literacy and numeracy courses
- good support for learners in rural communities

Weaknesses

- inadequate target-setting for some learners
- slow development in meeting some targets in the skills for life strategy

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.

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	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 REINSPECTION FINDING

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good strategic planning
- good communications
- good planning to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- declining recruitment of learners
- insufficient attention to safe working practices and appropriate working environments
- insufficient monitoring of the quality of some programmes

28. The county council has carried out successful work to identify an appropriate strategic direction for adult and community learning. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when the vision and plans for the development of RALS were weak. The county council now has a clear and well-designed strategy for the provision. This has been well researched and is linked very well to national and local priorities. The targets RALS has identified to meet these priorities are clear, relevant and challenging. Senior managers and the director for children's services and young people are realistic about the challenges they face in implementing the strategy and the managing the transition arrangements. This process is well planned and well managed. The initial stages of setting up a new structure for RALS and integrating many of the systems with those of the new directorate for children and young people are well underway, and will continue until August 2006. They include restructuring the curriculum offer to focus more on widening participation in adult learning and to contribute towards the national skills for work strategy.

29. Communications are still good. RALS continues to manage its internal communication well. All teaching staff and operational managers are employed part time and the systems for providing them with information are good. The staff handbook, information pack and newsletters are well presented and are useful sources of updated information. RALS is currently developing an intranet system for all staff. This was launched in March 2006. Systems for consulting with staff are good and have also improved since the previous inspection. Meetings for managers are well managed and well attended, and many part-time tutors now meet as a team with the curriculum team leaders. RALS has very good communication links with a wide range of local community networks, including a childcare partnership, the library service and local Army and Royal Air Force bases.

30. Many aspects of operational management that were judged to be inadequate at the previous inspection are now satisfactory. Curriculum management and planning have

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improved significantly in most areas of learning. Managers have effectively rationalised the provision that was previously segmented and planned by each of the three community colleges separately. Levels and titles of courses are now consistent across the county and the service now offers a coherent programme in each area of learning. The management of the curriculum is also now satisfactory in most areas of learning. Curriculum team leaders provide appropriate specialist advice on curriculum issues such as accreditation and resources. Most tutors work well in county curriculum teams to share good practice and agree and standardise systems and documents. For example, arrangements for accreditation of book-keeping programmes are now well co-ordinated across the county. Similarly, RALS has reorganised the modern foreign language programmes and learners have a greater choice of programmes, according to whether they prefer to work towards a qualification or not. However, some aspects of the management of the curriculum for sports, recreation and leisure are still weak.

31. Staff development is satisfactory. RALS continues to prioritise professional development in teaching adults, particularly for staff working on discrete literacy and numeracy programmes. Events for teaching and part-time staff provide useful training in relevant subjects, such as providing additional literacy and numeracy support, the use of ICT and approaches for planning learning. Managers use tutors' development needs identified during observed learning sessions and at the follow-up appraisals well to plan training for all staff, as well as for individual tutors. Gaps in the training programme include specific training in aspects of health and safety, such as manual handling. RALS has adopted a consultative approach to designing systems to implement the national strategy for recording and recognising learning and achievement. It has already tried out some good ideas for assessing learners' achievement and progress on programmes not leading to national qualifications. However, RALS has not adequately identified plans to prepare tutors to use these systems from September 2006, and the current designs for the scheme do not focus sufficiently on using the systems to measure achievement.

32. RALS now has satisfactory management information systems. During the previous inspection, data for 2002-03 and 2003-04 was inconsistent and inaccurate. Senior managers have carried out considerable work to standardise the data used throughout RALS. Ensuring that data is accurate and used well is now a high priority. Managers already manage information better and they have a better awareness of RALS's overall performance in each area of learning. RALS has clear plans on how it intends to use data systematically and to evaluate and improve the quality of the programmes. However, managers do not currently set targets for retention, achievement and attendance for each programme.

33. Risk assessments are satisfactory in most areas of learning. Most tutors carry out appropriate checks on the learning environment for their learning programme. However, managers have not received sufficient training to help them monitor these assessments effectively. They do not pay sufficient attention to monitoring safe working practices at all venues and on all programmes. For example, one room used for ceramics is not maintained adequately and was very dusty during the inspection visit with silica dust, which is a potentially hazardous substance. Tutors on sports and craft programmes do not routinely provide learners with sufficient guidance on safe working

practices. Learners on pottery programmes do not always wear masks when sanding dry pottery. Learners on some fitness and exercise programmes are not reminded enough to wear appropriate footwear to help prevent them from slipping during exercises. Refurbishment has recently been carried out at one of the community colleges. Two rooms used for the administration of adult learning are now inappropriate. These offices open directly onto the toilet cubicles and wash basins used by school students. The working environment for office staff is unpleasant and the offices do not offer a welcoming atmosphere for adult learners.

34. The recruitment onto adult and community learning is low and has declined significantly since September 2003. RALS is not meeting the targets agreed for this current academic year. For example, recruitment onto modern foreign languages and business administration programmes so far this year is 59 per cent and 32 per cent below the respective agreed targets. Although RALS is successfully attracting new learners to family learning and short courses specifically arranged to widen participation, the marketing strategy is weak. RALS has identified this weakness and is still working towards achievement of a corporate image for county-wide provision. It has arranged for an external organisation to carry out a needs analysis between April and July 2006 to help identify the priority areas and target groups for adult and community learning.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

35. RALS continues to implement effective strategies to attract non-traditional learners to its programmes. In particular, the role of neighbourhood learning champions has been successfully developed further since the previous inspection. Currently, two neighbourhood learning champions are employed to work in specific geographical areas. They have been successful in encouraging local people who have previously been reluctant to attend adult and community provision to join a good range of short courses or 'taster' sessions and use local learning facilities or libraries. They continue to work effectively with people who have been referred by health professionals, parents of young children, or potential learners who feel vulnerable or who lack confidence. RALS's widening participation strategy includes good plans to select different neighbourhoods for the learning champions to work in after six to 12 months. This work is closely linked to the successful development of family learning in the county. RALS works well with external partners, such as voluntary organisations, schools and libraries and is particularly effective in setting up new provision in response to requests for provision to meet the needs of specific groups of learners.

36. RALS provides satisfactory support for learners with diverse needs. This aspect of work is more consistent throughout the county and is managed more effectively. Arrangements for additional tutors to work with learners on an individual basis are good. Managers respond promptly when a specific need for individual support has been identified. Recent examples include providing support for learners with dyslexia or language difficulties. Some tutors have a better understanding of the use of additional equipment to support learners, such as hearing loops and adapted computer equipment. RALS continues to provide appropriate transport and childcare to help potential learners attend courses. Access to facilities in all venues is appropriate for

wheelchair users and people with restricted mobility.

37. The equal opportunities policy for RALS is now satisfactory. The county-wide policy for adult learning was approved in February 2006. It is particularly well designed, with a very good focus on all aspects of the learning cycle, covering topics such as the learning environment, enrolment, the curriculum and assessment. However, it is too early to assess the effect of this new policy. Plans for preparing staff to implement and monitor the policy are not sufficiently detailed. However, RALS has increased its use of equal opportunities monitoring data significantly and it is meeting the targets agreed with the Learning and Skills Council. Managers systematically collect data on achievement and retention according to the learners' age and ethnic origin, and they use this information well when evaluating programmes. RALS has prioritised the need to improve systems for collecting information on how many learners have a disability and this is now effective in most centres.

38. Training for staff in equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The staff handbook contains some particularly detailed guidance on working with people with disabilities. Managers use the staff bulletin well to raise awareness of good practice in communications. A recent issue included relevant guidance on improving the readability of learning materials. Further training in this aspect of RALS's work is planned for the forthcoming annual staff conference. Although some managers monitor the promotion of equal opportunities when observing learning sessions and reviewing course documents, this is not routine. RALS's learner charter provides clear guidance on what learners' can expect from it, as well as their responsibilities as learners. However, RALS does not systematically discuss this document with learners and does not monitor its implementation.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

39. The arrangements for quality assurance are now satisfactory. RALS continues to collect learners' views systematically and managers use this information well to improve provision. Most tutors contribute well to the annual process of evaluating individual courses and identifying areas for improvement. Senior managers support this process well and are particularly self-critical in their approach to reviewing and improving the systems and forms used.

40. Moderation of assessments has improved in book keeping and arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. The internal and external verification processes for accredited programmes remain satisfactory. External verifiers' reports are acted on as necessary. Standardisation meetings for accredited training programmes provide an effective forum for sharing practice.

41. Observations of teaching and learning are now effective in providing staff with appropriately detailed follow-up actions for improvement in most areas of learning. Most tutors are observed by relevant subject specialists and they receive more judgements on how well their teaching facilitates learning, although observers still do not routinely consider learners' attainment against identified learning objectives. Grades awarded for

observed learning sessions are now realistic. However, this process is still not used adequately to identify and share good practice.

42. Quality assurance arrangements are linked well to the self-assessment cycle. RALS has developed a well-designed process for collecting and using information to self-assess the quality of its provision. This has improved since the previous inspection. In particular, curriculum teams collaborate well to evaluate programmes in their areas of learning. Similarly, operational managers work well to identify strengths and weaknesses in leadership and management. However, these procedures do not include considering the grade or evaluating the effectiveness of quality assurance or equality of opportunity. These are primarily carried out by senior managers. The post-inspection action plan was very detailed and managers used the document well to monitor progress towards meeting agreed targets for improvement.

43. The monitoring of systems and paperwork is good on many courses. Some managers routinely provide detailed feedback to tutors on their implementation of agreed procedures and documents. However, this monitoring of systems and paperwork is not sufficiently thorough throughout RALS. Some managers focus excessively on auditing and do not monitor the quality of information of some of the forms sufficiently. Similarly, some procedures are not followed through properly. For example, some managers do not explore adequately the reasons for gaps in completing paperwork or for some comments on evaluation forms.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> - Adult and community learning	384	3

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates on programmes leading to a national qualification
- good development of skills

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment of learners' progress
- insufficient specialist support for tutors

Achievement and standards

44. Retention and achievement rates on the two courses leading to national qualifications are particularly good and have improved since the previous inspection. In 2004-05, 10 of the 11 learners who started the course completed the certificate for pool lifeguards. All six learners successfully completed their course leading to a certificate in teaching swimming. These good retention and achievement rates have been maintained so far in 2005-06. These programmes recruit relatively small numbers of predominantly young people, and provide them with good opportunities to gain a certificate that is particularly relevant for people wishing to pursue careers in the leisure industry.

45. Learners develop a good range of skills that supports their health and well being. Many learners report that their health and levels of fitness have improved significantly since joining a programme. They gain a good understanding of how specific movements benefit their metabolism and mobility, and they can describe well the skills they have learnt.

46. Retention rates on programmes not leading to a qualification are satisfactory. In 2004-05, all learners remained on 14 of the 38 programmes, but retention rates on seven programmes were between 46 and 69 per cent. Retention rates overall have increased in 2005-06 and they are good on most programmes. Many learners repeat courses throughout the year and some learners have been attending for up to 20 years.

Quality of education and training

47. Teaching has significantly improved since the previous inspection and it is now at least satisfactory. Many tutors now use a good range of teaching methods. They promote the health and social benefits of regular exercise well to learners. Many learning sessions are planned well. Most tutors select an appropriate range of activities and movements to meet learners' individual needs. Some tutors skilfully adapt activities sensitively for learners with specific health issues. Tutors use a good range of techniques for demonstrations and explanations, and focus well on encouraging learners to extend and develop their performance. Some of the handouts describing exercises and techniques are well designed and provide useful information for learners. However, some tutors do not sufficiently check that learners are able to understand the technical terms and follow the instructions so that they can use these handouts independently.

48. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners attending sport and exercise classes complete health questionnaires at the beginning of the programme. This has been introduced since the previous inspection. The content of the questionnaire is satisfactory and provides tutors with appropriate information on the general health and wellbeing of the learner. Tutors use this information appropriately for planning their schemes of work and learning sessions.

49. Learning resources are satisfactory. Staff have appropriate qualifications and experience in their specialist subjects. Teaching areas are safe and comfortable and arrangements for risk assessments of venues used for sports and fitness programmes are satisfactory. Although the tutors carry out appropriate risk assessments of learning activities, some tutors do not reinforce sufficiently the need to wear appropriate footwear at some venues. Most of the equipment is adequate, but much of it is still supplied by learners or tutors. Learners attending archery courses have the use of good specialist equipment.

50. The range of the provision is satisfactory in meeting existing learners' needs. A few courses have been successful in attracting new learners from specific groups to widen participation. These include keep fit for the over 50s and yoga for men. However, many courses are not linked to progression routes and many learners remain in the same class for many years. Planning of the provision does not adequately meet the needs of some learners. The duration of the courses is often linked to school terms and the long gaps between courses can disrupt continuity in personal fitness and eliminate the health and wellbeing benefits to the individual.

51. RALS provides satisfactory initial guidance and support. Tutors have developed useful fact sheets that give learners appropriate background information about the subject, as well as details about the content of the course. Learners receive a satisfactory induction at the beginning of their first lesson. Tutors also provide appropriate individual support. However, learners do not receive sufficient information or guidance on other courses to which they may progress.

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52. Many tutors do not assess learners' progress sufficiently. Most tutors use the system of providing learners with generic learning outcomes at the start of their programme well and some learners use these appropriately to select their personal goals. Some tutors make appropriate use of specifically designed assessment plans. However, many learners do not receive sufficient feedback on their progress in meeting identified learning goals throughout their programmes. The good skills that learners develop are not recorded sufficiently on many programmes.

Leadership and management

53. Many aspects of leadership and management of the sports and leisure programmes are now satisfactory. RALS has made good progress in reviewing the curriculum it offers and has developed an appropriate strategy for this area of learning in response to national and local priorities. This includes identifying programmes that will become part of the provision of learning for personal development, as well as developing new programmes which will provide a first step to further learning for people new to adult learning. Implementation plans for this strategy include a needs analysis among the local community to help determine the new curriculum offer. Managers use meetings, e-mail and staff briefings well to keep tutors informed of the developments.

54. A curriculum team leader was in employment for six months from August 2005 to January 2006. During that time, progress was made in the development of this curriculum area. However, tutors currently do not receive sufficient specialist support. Some tutors do not receive sufficient guidance on how the systems and documents for planning and recording learning relate to their specialist subjects. Similarly, many tutors have attended training events that RALS offers, but these are primarily on generic professional teaching skills, and the tutors do not receive sufficient support in transferring the skills to their specialist areas. Arrangements for monitoring some aspects of the quality of the provision are still unsatisfactory. Only half of the tutors have been observed by a specialist in sports and fitness, and these tutors have received insufficient specialist support since January 2006 on how to improve their practice. Arrangements for the observation of the other tutors are unclear. Tutors' files are audited but some tutors do not receive sufficiently specific feedback on the quality of the information on many documents.

55. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Most tutors have a good understanding of how course reviews contribute to the evaluation of the curriculum and they receive copies of the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report for 2004-05 identifies many of the weaknesses identified during the reinspection but fails to recognise the good development of skills that the learners acquire.

Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas - Adult and community learning	180	3

Other contributory areas

Strengths

- good development of learners' everyday skills and confidence
- good achievement on intensive literacy and numeracy courses
- good support for learners in rural communities

Weaknesses

- inadequate target-setting for some learners
- slow development in meeting some targets in the skills for life strategy

Achievement and standards

56. Many learners significantly develop their skills and confidence in carrying out everyday tasks that involve literacy and numeracy. For example, some learners are now able to write letters competently, read instructions effectively, and calculate bills and check bank statements accurately. They gain a better understanding of the skills and knowledge required to complete these tasks and become more confident in tackling them independently. Similarly, learners attending family learning are more confident in reading to their children or discussing their homework with them, and some have developed stimulating and interesting games to play with their children.

57. Achievement is good on intensive literacy and numeracy courses for military personnel. Learners enrol on weeklong courses at a nearby military base and work towards the national certificates in literacy and/or numeracy at levels 1 or 2. They make good progress in developing the skills they need for their military career, such as writing military reports and using numeracy for technical activities. In 2004-05, 89 per cent of the 254 learners successfully completed this course. In 2005-06, the regiment's overseas commitments have increased and only 32 learners have enrolled on this course so far. The success rates are 75 per cent.

58. Achievement rates on other foundation courses are satisfactory overall, although they were particularly low on some courses in 2004-05. Most of the learners who joined the programme since 2005-06 are still attending and are making satisfactory progress.

Quality of education and training

59. RALS has continued to make good arrangements to support learners in rural communities. Tutors are allocated to individual learners who are unable to attend college for practical or personal reasons. This support is well planned. Learners work at home or in a neutral venue with the tutors and at a time to fit in with their personal circumstances. Project workers are skilled at identifying learners' individual aims and learning needs during a confidential interview. Tutors work for up to 20 hours with each learner, and aim to help the learner join another learning programme. Since September 2005, nine learners have received this individual support and four are booked on one of RALS's pre-general certificate of secondary education course starting in April 2006. RALS still runs a similar project in conjunction with a local volunteer bureau. This agency reports outstanding improvements in the learners' skills and confidence.

60. Teaching and learning remain satisfactory. Most learning sessions are well planned and organised. Particularly in family learning, tutors select a good range of learning activities to help learners develop skills in stimulating their young children. These include story telling and the use of inexpensive or homemade games. Some tutors also use a good range of learning resources in well-planned literacy and numeracy sessions. However, some tutors do not provide learners with sufficient opportunities to practise their skills during the learning sessions. Similarly, some learners do not receive sufficient feedback on the quality of their work during learning sessions.

61. RALS provides satisfactory learning resources and accommodation. Most tutors use a good range of learning resources and some tutors are particularly inventive in creating well-designed learning materials for individual learners. More tutors now have increased their confidence in using laptop computers to supplement learning activities.

62. Arrangements for supporting learners on foundation programmes are satisfactory. RALS provides appropriate help with childcare, and has effective transport arrangements to help learners from outlying rural areas attend courses. Tutors provide good personal support and appropriate guidance on general issues. However, some learners do not receive sufficient advice on possible progression routes once they have completed their programmes.

63. Target-setting is still weak on some courses. RALS is currently establishing good systems to identify appropriate individual targets and review learners' progress. Some tutors have begun to implement these well. However, some targets on learning plans are still not specific enough. Some targets are still too closely linked to the national curriculum or a qualification and they are not set in a context that is relevant to learners' priorities. On some courses, tutors still too reliant on learners' self-assessment of their own work and they do not adequately record their assessment of learners' progress.

Leadership and management

64. Since the previous inspection, RALS has made good progress in developing its family learning provision. This is now satisfactory. The implementation of the strategy for

family learning is managed well. RALS has worked well with local schools and partners to set up a good range of interesting and relevant short programmes. Many of these programmes have attracted learners well and RALS has successfully raised the profile of family learning. The provision is particularly well evaluated, with good consultation with learners, tutors, outreach workers and members of partnership organisations. RALS has identified the need to recruit more specialist tutors to help extend this work.

65. RALS has provided good support to help its literacy and numeracy tutors gain appropriate teaching qualifications. Three out of five staff members are currently attending specialist level 4 qualifications in either literacy or numeracy. RALS has also recently recruited additional staff with appropriate qualifications in teaching literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Many other aspects of operational management of foundation programmes are satisfactory. Tutors receive appropriate specialist individual support and share good practice effectively at team meetings. Managers use observation of learning sessions appropriately to monitor the quality of teaching. However, records of these observations do not include sufficient comments on assessment practices or learners' achievements.

66. RALS has developed a satisfactory strategy for skills for life, the government's strategy on training in literacy and numeracy. However, implementation of this strategy is slow. RALS has not met its targets in recruiting learners to literacy and numeracy programmes and its plan to increase the number of discrete courses has failed. Some of the planned actions to widen the contexts of learning programmes and increase learning resources are very recent and it is too early to evaluate the effect of this work.