

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Halton Adult Learning Service**

**04 November 2005**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## **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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** 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.

### **Pre-inspection analysis**

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

## Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

## Grading

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

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

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Halton Adult Learning Service

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Halton Adult Learning Service	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	3
Key Findings	3
What learners like about Halton Adult Learning Service	8
What learners think Halton Adult Learning Service could improve	8

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	12
Equality of opportunity	13
Quality improvement	14
Information and communications technology	16
Arts, media and publishing	19
Languages, literature and culture	22
Preparation for life and work	24
Family learning	27

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Halton Adult Learning Service (HALS or the service) is a division of the children and young people directorate of Halton Borough Council (the council). It aims to provide education for the community in Halton and to work in partnership with Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Greater Merseyside to achieve local strategic objectives.

2. HALS offers about 90 per cent of its provision through its own staff. It subcontracts the rest to a local college in the borough and to the council's arts development team. Most of the provision does not lead to qualifications, although accreditation is offered for some of the family learning programmes and skills for life provision. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language.

3. HALS has a small management team, consisting of the adult learning team leader and four co-ordinators, of whom three are responsible for preparation for life and work programmes, family learning and the remaining curriculum areas. One co-ordinator takes responsibility for inclusive learning and quality assurance. There are also two administrators who provide learner information and carry out other administrative functions. The adult learning team leader reports to a divisional manager.

4. Halton is an urban industrial area. Its main businesses are in chemicals, food processing, clothing, metal products and furniture manufacturing. The main service sectors are retailing, financial service, and public and health administration. About 8 per cent of the population have learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities, 2 per cent are from minority ethnic groups, and 25 per cent are aged 60 and over. Halton also is experiencing a slight emigration of about 6 per cent since 1999. Halton is the 21st most deprived area in the country.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** All aspects of leadership and management are good, as is all HALS's provision except the preparation for life and work programme, which is satisfactory.

6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The service's self-assessment process is sound and thorough. It encourages a self-critical culture. The process uses information about learners' performance and regional best practice extensively to assess its quality. The self-assessment report matched a significant number of the findings of the inspection team, but underestimated the significance of some of the service's strengths. The self-assessment process involves all the service's staff, the senior council representatives and the views of the stakeholders and the learners. Some contributors to the process, however, are not fully aware of how their contribution is reflected in the self-assessment report.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** A

## HALTON ADULT LEARNING SERVICE

culture of quality improvement is a significant feature of HALS. HALS plans the development of the service well, setting clear priorities that take full account of its strategic direction. Well-considered action plans, which are based on the self-assessment report, are implemented systematically. The effectiveness of actions is monitored closely. The service has a good track record of systematically improving its working practices and its provision.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR HALTON ADULT LEARNING SERVICE:

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- continue to improve teaching and learning
- continue to widen the participation rates
- effectively identify and support literacy and numeracy needs of all learners

### GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		2

Information and communications technology			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i>			2
Adult and community learning	183		2

Arts, media and publishing			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Fine arts</i>			2
Adult and community learning	217		2

Languages, literature and culture			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i>			2
Adult and community learning	50		2

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		3
Adult and community learning	127	3

  

Family learning		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		2
Adult and community learning	343	2

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. Seven inspectors spent 35 days inspecting and grading five of the eight areas of learning which HALS offers. There were too few learners in health, public services and care, agriculture, horticulture and animal care, and retailing and commercial enterprise for this area to be separately inspected and graded. The inspection team also reported on all aspects of the leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	35
Number of learners interviewed	114
Number of staff interviewed	27
Number of subcontractors interviewed	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	41
Number of visits	1

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

9. **The retention rate of learners on information and communications technology (ICT) programmes is consistently good and improving.** The current rate is 91 per cent. Learners on ICT programmes develop good personal and computer skills. Their confidence is increased as they gain good skills which they can apply in their lives and work.

10. **The standard of learners' work in fine arts is good.** Learners show the increased confidence, self-esteem and thinking skills which the courses demand.

11. Most learners on languages, literature and culture programmes are very confident in expressing themselves on familiar topics.

12. **The confidence of learners on literacy and numeracy programmes improves significantly while they attend the programmes.** The achievement of small steps has encouraged learners to develop further and learn more.

13. **On family learning programmes, the retention and achievement rates are high.** A good number of learners gain externally accredited qualifications. **Learners develop good personal and learning skills.** Their confidence and self-esteem grows and they are more able to take part in community activities and to support their children.

### The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Information and communications technology	1	4	3	0	8
Arts, media and publishing	1	5	3	0	9
Languages, literature and culture	1	4	0	0	5
Preparation for life and work	0	4	4	1	9
Family learning	1	6	1	0	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>39</b>

14. **Most teaching and learning in ICT are good or better.** Courses are carefully planned and learning activities are timed well to create variety in lessons and to suit varied learning styles. Learners' support needs are not identified sufficiently.

15. **Teaching and learning in fine arts lessons are good.** Lessons and courses are planned effectively. Tutors set challenging objectives. They identify individual learning needs and meet these needs. The monitoring of fine arts learners' progress is good. Initial assessment is effective and the learner achievement record is used consistently and very effectively.

16. **Teaching and learning in modern foreign languages are consistently good and often very good.** Much consideration is put into the preparation of lessons. Lessons are organised logically so that learners gain ample practice in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Keen modern foreign languages learners appreciate the considerable effort and skills of their tutors. They express total satisfaction with their learning experience.

17. **HALS provides a wide range of very accessible provision in literacy and numeracy, which engages learners' interest.**

18. **Teaching on family learning programmes is good.** Tutors maintain learners' interest and motivation by using a variety of appropriate teaching methods and activities. The family learning curriculum is particularly effective in widening participation and meeting the needs of the learners. **HALS is very responsive to partners and local and national initiatives.** It provides a good range of programmes in accessible venues in the heart of the community.

19. **The provision in languages, literature and culture is narrow.** There is not enough choice for fine arts learners. There is less provision in the evening than during the day, which affects the participation rates of some learners.

20. **Support for the literacy and numeracy needs of those on family learning programmes is insufficient.** Assessment and planning of support for learners happen too



late. Many learners have significant literacy difficulties and tutors do not plan adequately to support and develop their literacy skills as part of their main programme of study.

## Leadership and management

21. **HALS has a very effective strategic direction and has progressed well in implementing it.** The direction reflects comprehensively the objectives of the local and regional skills strategy, and of national initiatives in adult learning. HALS uses a range of good communication methods to inform and engage its staff and tutors.
22. **Curriculum management in arts, media and publishing is very effective.** Lines of responsibility are fully understood within a clear management structure.
23. **HALS has established very effective partnerships to widen participation.** The service has consistently set and met challenging targets for recruiting learners from identified priority groups. Information and data about learners are used well to monitor the effectiveness of the provision in removing barriers to learning and to provide equality of progress for all. The service monitors and analyses systematically the enrolment, retention and achievement rates of different priority groups in different venues, different wards and on different courses.
24. **HALS has set up good systems to monitor the performance of its programmes.** A detailed framework for quality assurance sets a schedule for activities throughout the year. All the main learning processes are included in the schedule and are monitored by the team leader, the co-ordinators and the staff. A system for observation of teaching and learning is well established and has completed its second cycle. **HALS manages subcontractors effectively.** A detailed service level agreement describes the agreed subcontracted provision and the required quality standards. The range of performance indicators that the council uses is insufficient to fully scrutinise the performance of the service against the full range of objectives and targets included in its business and development plans.
25. **The service's self-assessment process is inclusive.** The main stakeholders contribute well to the review of the provision, even though some aspects of the review are informal.
26. In languages, literature and culture, there are no formal arrangements to provide suitable cover in any emergency or to facilitate access to the required learning materials.
27. **Some aspects of preparation for life and work programme are insufficiently planned.** The approach is not structured well enough to determine when a learner should be registered for a qualification at an appropriate level.
28. **The introduction of skills for life qualifications is slow.** The skills for life national curriculum has been offered, but too few learners have taken the national test or completed the entry-level assignments.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- highly effective strategic vision
- particularly effective communications
- very effective partnership working to widen participation
- good use of data to improve equality of opportunity
- good monitoring of the quality of the provision

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient monitoring of HALS's performance by the council

## **Information and communications technology**

### ***ICT for users***

***Grade 2***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- good development of personal and ICT skills
- good teaching

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient identification of learners' support needs

## **Arts, media and publishing**

### ***Fine arts***

***Grade 2***

#### *Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work
- good teaching
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective curriculum management

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient range of evening provision

## **Languages, literature and culture**

### ***Other languages, literature and culture***

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- very good development of oral skills
- consistently high standard of teaching
- exceptionally high levels of learner satisfaction

#### *Weaknesses*

- narrow range of courses

## **Preparation for life and work**

### ***Literacy and numeracy***

**Grade 3**

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' confidence
- wide range of accessible and appealing provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning of some aspects of the programmes
- slow introduction of skills for life qualifications

## **Family learning**

### ***Adult and community learning***

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- high retention and achievement rates
- good development of personal and learning skills
- good teaching and learning
- particularly effective curriculum development to widen participation

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient support for literacy and numeracy

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HALTON ADULT LEARNING SERVICE:**

- 'never thought I could do this, but I can and have'
- 'making friends'
- 'keeping the mind active'
- 'developing new skills and knowledge'
- 'supportive, knowledgeable and friendly tutors'
- 'the crèche facilities'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK HALTON ADULT LEARNING SERVICE COULD IMPROVE:**

- 'the range of courses and accredited courses'
- the car parking - 'there's not enough'

## 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
<b>Provider</b>	<b>Provider</b>	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.
<b>Learner</b>	<b>Learner</b>	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
<b>Teacher/Trainer</b>	<b>Tutor</b> <b>Mentor</b>	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them
<b>Learning goals</b>	<b>Main learning goals</b>  <b>Secondary</b>	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. These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	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 Community Learning	
<b>Unanticipated or unintended learning outcome</b>	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.
<b>Subject-based programme</b>	A programme organised around 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.
<b>Issue-based programme</b>	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.
<b>Outreach provision</b>	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.
<b>Neighbourhood-based work</b>	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.
<b>Community regeneration</b>	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.
<b>Community capacity building</b>	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 self managing, sustainable communities.

<b>Active citizenship</b>	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make 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.
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## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

#### Strengths

- highly effective strategic vision
- particularly effective communications
- very effective partnership working to widen participation
- good use of data to improve equality of opportunity
- good monitoring of the quality of the provision

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of HALS's performance by the council

29. HALS has a very clear and effective strategic direction and has progressed well in implementing it. The direction reflects thoroughly the objectives of the local and regional skills strategies and of national initiatives in adult learning. The objectives link clearly with those in wider council initiatives such as those for extended schools, arts development and day services for adults. The objectives are articulated well in a detailed three-year development plan that has clear targets and action plans. HALS has significantly altered its provision to reflect its strategic priorities and to focus on providing first- and next-step learning opportunities to enable progression towards level 2 qualifications. The service draws on a range of very effective partnerships to develop and run its provision. Staff make a good contribution and use their links well with voluntary and community organisations to improve the service's responsiveness to community needs.

30. HALS uses a range of good communication methods to keep its staff and tutors informed. Its approach to communication has been a significant factor in improving the provision. During well-organised and regular meetings, tutors discuss curriculum development and strategies to improve the performance of learners. These meetings are well attended. Agendas are clear. Well-prepared action plans are followed up effectively at subsequent meetings. Programme co-ordinators meet weekly to discuss operational matters and monthly with senior managers to discuss the performance of their programmes and strategies for further development. A high-quality newsletter is a very effective tool for distributing general news and information as well as promoting and celebrating success. All tutors receive this newsletter regularly by e-mail. Staff make particular efforts to meet and update tutors who are unable to attend meetings.

31. HALS manages its subcontractors effectively. A detailed service level agreement is in place, which follows a standard council contract format. Detailed appendices describe the agreed subcontracted provision and the required quality standards. Regular meetings take place. The agreement is reviewed in detail at regular meetings, as is the performance of the subcontractor in meeting its targets.

32. Staff appraisal is satisfactory. All staff are offered an annual development review and a six-monthly progress review. Individual targets and responsibilities are set and agreed. Staff development needs are discussed during the meetings and support arrangements are



agreed. All tutors have plenty of opportunities to attend relevant training and development.

33. HALS manages and uses resources satisfactorily. Most venues are thoughtfully selected to provide good access opportunities for learners. The main learning centre is a very good-quality venue, whose facilities include a crèche, ICT training rooms and a library, as well as meeting and teaching rooms. The centre is modern, well equipped and well maintained. Computing facilities are up to date. A good range of learners' work is displayed. Staff are vocationally qualified and about 90 per cent of them have teaching qualifications.

34. HALS manages and uses its information system satisfactorily. The information system provides a wide range of reports, indicating learner performance data, trends in learner participation and progress, and also progress towards meeting the enrolment targets agreed between the service and the local LSC. The reports are used well at co-ordinator and management meetings to review performance against targets and programme objectives. Corrective actions are taken if necessary.

35. The management of health and safety is satisfactory. HALS follows the council's health and safety procedures well to assess the potential risk to learners in different venues. Tutors carry out risk assessments of the curriculum activities to a satisfactory level. Incidents and accidents are reported and recorded systematically.

36. HALS provides satisfactory support for learners' additional learning needs. Learners who start a course that is not specifically aimed at improving their literacy, numeracy, English language or ICT skills are asked during enrolment if they need additional support to improve their skills in any of these areas. Effective arrangements are made for any learner who requests this support. A specialist tutor meets the learner within a specified number of days to discuss the learning need and set up suitable support. The support varies, from formal group teaching to individual support during subject-specific lessons. During 2004-05, of the 710 learners enrolled on programmes other than skills for life, 166 received additional support.

37. The range of performance indicators that the council uses is insufficient to monitor the service's performance. Only the indicators of learner numbers and their achievement rates are used to monitor the performance. These are insufficient to scrutinise fully the performance of the service against the full range of the objectives and targets included in business and development plans.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

38. HALS has established very effective partnership to widen participation. Partnership working between the service and local community groups, voluntary organisations, schools, museums, other learning providers and the sixth-form college is well developed. Partnerships with schools, and community and voluntary organisation are particularly effective in reaching priority learners such as older people, people with a disability, people who live in the most disadvantaged wards, and minority groups. HALS has consistently set and met challenging targets for recruiting learners from its priority groups. For example, enrolment from the top 10 most disadvantaged wards has increased from 46 per cent in 2004-05 to the current figure of about 56 per cent. The enrolment of people from minority ethnic groups has increased from 2.6 per cent during 2002-03 to about 9 per cent currently, which is significantly above the proportional representation of these groups in the

local community. The proportion of learners with a mobility or learning disability is also good, at 12 per cent. HALS promotes its provision well to priority groups. All the first-step courses are free, but the learners who are able to pay are expected to pay for follow-up courses.

39. HALS uses information about learners well to monitor how effectively it removes barriers to learning and provides equality of progress for all. The service monitors and analyses systematically the enrolment, retention and achievement rates of different priority groups in different venues, different wards and on different courses. If performance issues arise, HALS takes very effective action to make the benefits of the provision accessible to all learners. For example, when the retention rates for some groups of learners declined on beauty therapy courses, the programme was modified to make it more inclusive.

40. HALS provides effective equality of opportunity training during the induction period, although some of the terminology used may be difficult for some learners to understand. HALS's equality policy and procedures, which are reviewed annually, are up to date and reflect all the main legislation. Training of staff in diversity matters is adequate. Some tutors have attended training courses and others have been given information packs on equality and diversity.

41. Arrangements for monitoring the accessibility of all the main training venues for learners with mobility difficulties are effective. The arrangements are also satisfactory for a very significant number of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

42. HALS promotes equality of opportunity effectively. Learners from different age groups, who have varied life experiences and cultures, work and support each other well. For example, a learner who had recently arrived from another country was made to feel part of the community by other learners. In some lessons there are good discussions to promote diversity and explore issues of stereotyping. Even though HALS has provided training to improve tutors' attention to equality and diversity in teaching, this is not sufficiently consistent or well established.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 2**

43. HALS's approach to quality improvement is well developed to enhance the provision. The service's focus on promoting a culture of continuous improvement is consistent and very effective. It has established good systems to monitor the quality of its programmes. A detailed framework sets out a schedule of quality improvement activities for the year. All the main learning processes are included in the schedule and are monitored by the team leader, the co-ordinators and the staff. Systems and processes for quality improvement are clearly set out and tutors are supported very well in using them. Course files are audited to ensure that tutors adopt and use the systems well. If problems are identified, tutors are coached well to improve their work. This approach successfully encourages all tutors to feel confident in using the systems to improve aspects of their work.

44. HALS has a well-established process for observations of teaching and learning. The second cycle of observations was completed in 2004-5, during which all the tutors were observed. Feedback to tutors is constructive and helps them to improve their teaching practices. A detailed tutor handbook and a CD-ROM provides details of the teaching and learning observation scheme as well as providing exemplar copies of schemes of work and lesson plans.

45. Feedback arrangements are used satisfactorily to gather feedback from learners and tutors. Tutor feedback is by way of a questionnaire to identify strengths and weaknesses and areas that can be improved. Learner feedback is through course evaluations as well as a postal survey that follows the LSC national survey model. This approach had a satisfactory return rate of 46 per cent during 2004-05. HALS uses feedback effectively as part of its monitoring of the provision and to contribute to improvements and further developments of its courses.

46. Internal verification is satisfactory. Most of the provision is non-accredited but the small amount of accredited provision is assessed and verified in a satisfactory way that meets the awarding body requirements.

47. HALS has an inclusive self-assessment process. The service's main stakeholders contribute well to reviews of the provision and their views are used effectively to develop the self-assessment report, even though some aspects of the reviews are informal. Feedback from the questionnaire of tutors is used, but some tutors do not recognise that this is their contribution to the self-assessment report. The questionnaire does not refer sufficiently to the Common Inspection Framework and prompts tutors to reflect on the main aspects of the framework. The self-assessment report matched a significant number of the findings of the inspection team, but underestimated the significance of some of the provision's strengths. The report is accompanied by a detailed development plan, many aspects of which are at an advanced stage of implementation.

48. A recently appointed member of staff has responsibility for further developing and managing HALS's quality assurance activities. Although current quality assurance arrangements have been effective in improving standards and practices, the current set of quality assurance procedures is not sufficiently detailed to ensure that processes are maintained consistently over time.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Information and communications technology

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i>		<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning	183	2

49. One hundred and eighty-three learners follow ICT courses at entry level or level 1, of whom 77 per cent are women and 3 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. About 75 per cent of courses run during the day and the rest as evening provision. Courses include computer first-step, digital-photo manipulation courses, computing for the terrified, introductory courses to the internet and desktop publishing. No courses are accredited. Attendance is for two hours each week over 12 weeks. Courses are offered at the two main learning centres, a sixth-form college, a community centre, a primary school and a children's centre. Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College is a subcontractor, currently providing two introductory courses. Five tutors are involved with the ICT programmes, which is managed by a co-ordinator who also has responsibility for other areas of learning.

#### *ICT for users*

Grade 2

##### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- good development of personal and ICT skills
- good teaching

##### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient identification of learners' support needs

### Achievement and standards

50. Retention rates are consistently good and improving. In 2002-03, the rate was 72 per cent, which increased to 91 per cent in 2003-04. Achievement rates over the same period are satisfactory. Current methods to measure individual achievement are reliable. They indicate good levels of learner achievement, but have been too recently introduced to make judgements on achievement over time.

51. Learners develop good personal and ICT skills. Learners are highly motivated. They often practise with computer software in their own time and achieve very good levels of competence. One learner who was studying desktop publishing produced a complex seasonal picture using auto-shapes, which further extended the skills gained in the classroom. Some learners become more confident about applying for employment. Learners' personal confidence is also increased by their acquisition of good skills and their attendance at ICT courses. Learner satisfaction is high, particularly as many of them gain skills that exceed their initial expectations. Learners confidently apply their learning in personal and work contexts. Many use their skills well by helping their children and

grandchildren. Some learners also find benefit in concentrating on learning during difficult personal times such as following bereavement. Learners progress at a satisfactory rate. Approximately 37 per cent of learners progress from first-step courses to next-steps courses. Attendance rates are satisfactory, at 81 per cent.

### **The quality of provision**

52. Most teaching and learning is good or better. In the best lessons, tutors demonstrate high levels of skill and professionalism. Courses are carefully planned to create variety in lessons and to suit different learning styles. Tutors make good use of interactive learning technology to explain complex features of computer software. Learners in digital-photo manipulation and desk top publishing lessons work well collaboratively. Learners write articles, for example, which they share to produce newsletters. Learners in digital-photo manipulation lessons take photographs, which the group uses to practise layering techniques in individual still-life compositions. The planning of lessons enables many learners to exceed their initial learning aims. Tutors provide a range of well-designed handouts that give clear instructions and a visual description of software commands and instructions. These handouts are highly valued by learners for use in independent study. The arrangements for monitoring learners' achievements are particularly comprehensive. Learners maintain weekly records of their learning and achievement towards their learning aims. Tutors also maintain up-to-date records on learners' performance in specific subjects.

53. Tutors are appropriately qualified. Some tutors have commercial experience and make highly relevant links to the uses of software in a working context. This enhances learning. Equipment and accommodation is of a high standard in the main learning centres.

54. The range of programmes is satisfactory. HALS has a clear vision of its curriculum offer. It focuses on re-engaging learners and developing learners' basic skills in ICT. The service does not offer accredited provision but works closely with other providers to develop progression routes to accreditation. For example, the subcontractor currently offers accredited provision in one learning centre as part of its own provision. The service has extended its provision this year to include ICT training at children's centres. Newly re-structured first-step and next-steps information technology (IT) courses have also increased learners' exposure to a wider range of computer software applications, but for shorter duration on each software package. This new approach reflects the content of a nationally recognised qualification and offers learners a good foundation, particularly for those who wish to progress to accredited courses. Previous courses did, however, offer learners longer training on individual software applications. Current procedures are such that learners cannot repeat an earlier course. In view of this, HALS is reviewing the demand for software-specific courses.

55. Advice and guidance arrangements are satisfactory. Learners receive detailed information about the content of courses. Tutors also give clear advice and offer information sheets that indicate clearly the range of progression options available within HALS and with other providers. Courses are advertised appropriately in a range of community venues and the local press. Learners can transfer to other courses during their induction period if their initial choice is found to be unsuitable.

56. HALS does not identify learners' support needs adequately. Learners can be referred for specialist support if they request it at enrolment or during their induction, but HALS does not assess learners' language, literacy and numeracy skills to diagnose their support

needs. There is also insufficient diagnosis of learners' requirements for specialist equipment such as chairs for learners with back problems. Tutors are sensitive to learners' needs when they are declared but the support provided is not always recorded sufficiently. Too little attention is given to developing literacy skills as part of ICT learning. The subcontractor formally assesses learners' literacy and numeracy skills but in one course this activity is planned too late for learners to benefit. HALS has recognised that staff need greater awareness in this area and has scheduled training for this purpose.

### **Leadership and management**

57. Curriculum and operational management are satisfactory. Communication is effective. Programme and course concerns and improvements are discussed at regular meetings. Tutors regularly attend continuous improvement workshops with staff from other areas of learning to share best practice. Internal observations accurately reflect the quality of teaching and learning. Data is used effectively at programme level to analyse participation by different groups of learners, as well as their retention and achievement rates. HALS meets regularly with the subcontractor to monitor the quality of its provision against a detailed service level agreement. There are few opportunities for IT tutors from the subcontractor to meet with HALS's tutors other than at general continuous improvement meetings.

58. Learners' knowledge of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The main learning centres promote diversity and equality well, with posters, policies and procedures displayed in training rooms. Learners have a good knowledge of the complaints procedures. HALS is very successful at widening participation of learners from disadvantaged wards and learners with disabilities. Its initiatives to increase participation by men have been less successful and their participation rate is slightly lower than last year.

59. Processes to monitor the quality of the learners' experience are applied consistently by tutors. Course files contain detailed information relating to learners, such as the learners' aspirations and any identified support needs. The self-assessment report was accurate.

**Arts, media and publishing****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Fine arts</i></b> Adult and community learning	217	<b>2</b> 2

60. HALS offers 20 courses in fine arts at 15 venues for 217 learners, of whom about 50 per cent are from the most disadvantaged wards of the borough. Learners from minority ethnic groups comprise 5 per cent of the learners and 15 per cent are men. Learners join to study art, watercolour painting, multimedia, sewing and costume design, calligraphy, pottery, crafts, digital photography and digital imaging. No courses are accredited. The courses are developed to offer first-step opportunities for returning learners and a further range of courses that help learners to build on their existing skills. Level 2 courses are provided through one of the subcontractors. Most courses last for 12 weeks. Some are of 10 weeks' duration. Eleven tutors provide the training, of whom five are from HALS and the rest are from partner organisations. The programme is co-ordinated by a full-time member of staff who is also responsible for other areas of learning. The service subcontracts some aspects of its provision to the council's arts development team and to Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College.

***Fine arts*****Grade 2***Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work
- good teaching
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective curriculum management

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient range of evening provision

**Achievement and standards**

61. The standard of learners' work is good. In a first-steps multimedia lesson, learners imported video-clips into a multimedia presentation on a subject of their choice. Their introductory scripts were well written, and the digital images were of high quality. In a pottery lesson, learners produced a community mosaic. Learners with additional learning needs made a full contribution to the mosaic's design processes and demonstrated very good levels of achievement. Several learners have had their artwork selected for an annual exhibition held at a well-established gallery. The standard of portfolios is high and learners take pride in putting them together. Learners increase their confidence and self-esteem and develop the thinking skills that the courses demand. Learners enjoy their programmes and surveys reveal high levels of satisfaction.

62. Retention and achievement rates have been consistently satisfactory. Attendance rates on some courses are good. Learners' achievements are celebrated through wall displays

and hangings at local galleries. The overall retention rates for this area, while still satisfactory, fell from 89 per cent in 2003-04 to 84 per cent in 2004-5. Progression from first-step to next-step courses is satisfactory at just over 50 per cent. A significant number of returning learners remain at the same level but move on to different subjects.

### **The quality of provision**

63. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons and courses are planned effectively. Challenging objectives are set and individual learning needs are identified and met. Tutors encourage the development of independent learning skills well, through research and homework. Tutors are very enthusiastic and knowledgeable. In the most successful classes, they use extended projects to inspire learners as well as to set more challenging tasks. For example, in a first-steps to art course, learners produced a Christmas colouring book for children. Another group of learners are making good costumes for the Christmas pantomime. The learners enjoy working to deadlines for these tasks and gain a very good insight into the professional working practices in garment production. The lessons also feature a variety of teaching methods. Demonstrations are balanced well with individual, paired and group activities to promote effective collaborative learning. In a minority of lessons, the pace is too slow and learners are not sufficiently challenged to develop consistently good skills.

64. Arrangements to provide support for literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Tutors are aware that they can request learning support for learners if needed. One learner who requested additional language support is also upgrading her ICT skills. Some learners feel too embarrassed to take advantage of this support.

65. Resources are generally adequate and some are good. Many tutors have wide experience of teaching to a diverse range of learners and have a good command of their subject. Many draw on their good professional experience when planning lessons. Facilities in the two main learning centres and the sixth-form college are very good. Most studios are spacious, but the room used for pottery lessons is too small and prevents learners from using a wheel or a kiln.

66. HALS monitors learners' progress well. Initial assessment is effective, and consistent use of the learners' achievement record enables tutors to monitor accurately the weekly progress of learners towards their objectives. Tutors make very good use of this information to provide individualised training or support. For example, one tutor has adapted the record for use on a course in which the learners are working on different projects and developing different competences.

67. The range of courses is satisfactory. Courses are targeted particularly at learners who live in the most deprived wards of the borough. Only 15 per cent of the programme is offered in the evenings and some learners find this prevents them attending. There are also too few opportunities for learners who wish to progress to accredited courses. Learners from one of the deprived wards have set up an arts co-operative. This innovative and successful venture has provided them with a significant progression and continuity opportunity. HALS has responded well to this initiative and plans to support occasional workshops for the group.



### **Leadership and management**

68. Curriculum management is very effective. Lines of responsibility are fully understood within a clear management structure. Communication is very good and productive. Regular meetings are well attended. HALS uses e-mail and a regular newsletter to keep in touch with staff. The tutors appreciate the regular contact and support they receive. Course paperwork is monitored rigorously, usually before the start of a course. Equality of opportunity is promoted successfully. Targets for gender, disability and ethnicity are met and in some cases exceeded. In a pottery lesson, for example, half the learners have significant additional needs and are supported by a care assistant from their daycare centre.

69. A process for observations of teaching and learning is well established. In 2004-05, every tutor was observed. The observations are not, however, carried out by subject specialists. The self-assessment report is accurate in its portrayal of weaknesses but understated the strengths of the provision.

**Languages, literature and culture****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Other languages, literature and culture</i></b> Adult and community learning	50	2 2

70. Fifty learners are studying on five Spanish courses and one French course, in a variety of venues. None of the courses are accredited. Courses are taught at absolute beginner and intermediate levels. In addition, 45 learners are taking elementary Spanish on family learning programmes at four different primary school venues. Courses are offered during the day or evenings. Two part-time tutors teach the courses, but the vast majority of the work is done by one tutor. Learners from minority ethnic groups comprise 1.5 per cent of the learners and 20 per cent of learners are men.

***Other languages, literature and culture*****Grade 2***Strengths*

- very good development of oral skills
- consistently high standard of teaching
- exceptionally high levels of learner satisfaction

*Weaknesses*

- narrow range of courses

**Achievement and standards**

71. Learners develop listening and speaking skills quickly and to a very good standard. Most learners are very confident in expressing themselves on familiar topics. One learner claimed to have become more comfortable in Spanish after 11 weeks with HALS than after four years of study at school. Learners are not only keen to answer questions on basic topics in the foreign language but they have acquired the more difficult skill, unusually early, of framing questions. The learners on family learning programmes develop good language skills.

72. Rates of retention and attendance are generally satisfactory and some are good. Some of the retention and achievement rates are, however, based on one-day courses. Learners make sound and consistent progress in lessons. Most are able to remember their recent learning well.

**The quality of provision**

73. Teaching and learning in modern foreign languages are consistently good and often very good. Much consideration is put into the preparation of lessons. Lessons are organised logically so that learners gain ample practice in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Tutors share the aims and objectives of lessons with learners, who take responsibility for making progress towards the objectives. A quick but thorough revision of key points from the previous lesson enables good progression in the new lesson.

Lessons are often rounded off with a useful summary which helps learners to develop a clear understanding of what they have just learnt. The teaching makes good use of a wide range of tasks and activities to sustain the pace of the lesson. Paired work features frequently. This allows learners to practise their speaking skills while the tutor monitors and supports individuals. Learners are actively encouraged not to be totally reliant on the tutor. They gain dictionary and computing skills when using the classroom computer to discover the meaning and usage of words. The foreign language is used extensively in the classroom. Occasionally, some unnecessary English is spoken.

74. Keen learners appreciate the considerable effort and skills of their dedicated and hard-working tutor. They take every opportunity to express total satisfaction with their learning experience. Learners taking language lessons as part of their family learning programme find the blend of good humour and serious learning hugely enjoyable.

75. Learners receive satisfactory literacy and numeracy support. Tutors initiate whatever support is necessary, whether pastoral or subject based. If a tutor feels unable or unqualified to provide the appropriate assistance, the learner is referred to specialist help within HALS.

76. The range of languages on offer is narrow. Nine out of 10 classes each week are in Spanish, with just one French class. There is no provision within HALS for classes beyond level 1, although this development would be welcomed by learners. The evening provision is smaller than the daytime, which effects the participation rates for some of the learners.

### **Leadership and management**

77. The management of this area is satisfactory. The course paperwork is good. It is suitably detailed and consistently updated. Resources are good as is the accommodation at the main learning centres. The space and furniture layouts are not always ideal in the primary schools that host language learning for families.

78. The tutor who teaches over 90 per cent of the lessons is well qualified and experienced. There are no formal arrangements to provide suitable cover in any emergency or to facilitate access to the required learning materials. The recently introduced lesson observation programme is effective. The findings and grades from this programme match closely those recorded during the inspection. The self-assessment report does not consider sufficiently all aspects of the learning process. It is, however, very self-critical and underestimated the strength of the programme.

**Preparation for life and work**

**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Literacy and numeracy</b> Adult and community learning	127	<b>3</b> 3

79. Since September 2005, HALS has offered programmes in literacy, numeracy, language, citizenship and employability to 217 learners through 37 courses. Currently, there are 127 learners attending courses at entry level to level 2. Learners have the opportunity to gain accreditation or to study on non-accredited courses. Programmes are provided in the service’s own learning centres or in community venues such as churches and libraries. Courses typically last for 12 weeks and learners attend for two hours each week. Some shorter courses are also available. Courses are provided during the day and evenings. Learners can join the programme at any time and may be interviewed before starting a course or at their first lesson. The programmes are managed by a co-ordinator who is responsible for a team of six staff, two of whom are employed on a full-time basis.

**Literacy and numeracy**

**Grade 3**

*Strengths*

- good development of learners’ confidence
- wide range of accessible and appealing provision

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning of some aspects of the programmes
- slow introduction of skills for life qualifications

**Achievement and standards**

80. Learners’ confidence improves significantly while they attend the programmes. The achievement of small steps has encouraged learners to develop further and learn more. Learners are greatly motivated by the frequent praise that tutors give on their performance. Tutors encourage learners to work with each other to develop good communication skills and share learning experiences. Many learners have not studied since leaving school and some did not have positive school experiences. Staff work sensitively to settle learners quickly into their learning programmes. Some courses are short, lasting only four to six weeks, and learners are motivated by completing learning in a short period of time and moving on to the next course.

81. The average retention rate for literacy and numeracy courses is satisfactory, at 84 per cent. Retention rates on citizenship courses are also satisfactory, at 83 per cent. The retention rates are adequate on employability programmes, at 53 per cent and on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes, at 42 per cent. Achievement rates on all courses are satisfactory. The average achievement rate for all courses in 2004-05 is 50 per cent. More specifically, achievement rates on literacy courses and numeracy courses are satisfactory at 46 per cent and 44 per cent respectively. Achievement rates on ESOL

courses are low at 32 per cent, but it is improving.

82. Most learners develop a satisfactory range of literacy, numeracy, and language skills while attending the programmes. For example, in one literacy class on spelling strategies, learners made satisfactory progress in identifying the letter missing from a series of words. Pronunciation skills were also developed by the learner saying the words out loud. In an ESOL lesson, learners developed effective speaking and listening skills by hearing a recorded telephone discussion and answering questions about it. As the learners' skills developed during the lesson, the tutor made the questions more complicated.

### **The quality of provision**

83. HALS provides a wide range of very accessible provision which engages learners' interest. Thirty-seven courses are provided in 15 different locations. Courses of different levels are offered at different times of the day and evening to suit learners' circumstances. One ESOL course is conveniently provided at the learners' place of work. Many courses take place in venues ideally situated near learners' homes and are easily accessible by foot or public transport. Venues are well decorated, welcoming and familiar to learners. Crèche facilities are available at some sites.

84. Teaching and learning are mostly satisfactory. Some of the teaching is good. In the better lessons, tutors use a variety of teaching methods to meet individual learning needs. Learners are actively involved in lessons and develop a range of skills at an appropriate pace. Some lessons are unimaginative and while basic knowledge is taught satisfactorily, there is little or no attempt to link the topic to the learners' interest, life and work. Some aspects of the teaching are not sufficiently challenging for all learners. Literacy and numeracy are not always linked adequately to other topics.

85. Learning resources are satisfactory. HALS has a suitable range of paper-based resources, textbooks and audio equipment for ESOL learners. There is, however, an over-reliance on the use of handouts. There is little use of information learning technology or other resources for learners with low levels of literacy. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. Most tutors have teaching qualifications. Many tutors have also achieved a national vocational qualification at level 4 for teachers of adult literacy or numeracy and several tutors are currently working towards these specialist qualifications.

86. Tutors provide effective support for learners in lessons. They frequently check that the learners are not experiencing any difficulties. Group sizes are small and tutors can give individual support throughout the lesson. Additional staff work with the group if there are learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

87. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of important induction topics, such as course content, health and safety and the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. The induction literature is not, however, suitable for learners with significant literacy development needs. HALS has recently developed a good induction pack for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. It uses a range of appropriate pictures, symbols and key phrases to support learning.

88. The initial assessment process comprises an initial screening of literacy and numeracy skills and further diagnosis of development needs. Information from this process is not used sufficiently to plan detailed learning programmes for individuals, especially for those

who would benefit from more challenging tasks. Most learners develop skills appropriate to their ability but there is insufficient formal planning to ensure that learners progress at an appropriate pace.

### **Leadership and management**

89. All staff contribute to the self-assessment process through answering a questionnaire and taking part in informal and formal discussions. The self-assessment report identifies accurately most of the strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection. Staff and learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. HALS provides regular training on equality and diversity to staff. Some policies relating to equality are difficult for learners with low levels of literacy to understand.

90. The introduction of skills for life qualifications is slow. The skills for life national curriculum has been offered to learners since September 2004, but too few learners have taken the national tests or completed the entry-level assignments. None of the ESOL learners have attempted the national test. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report.

91. Some aspects of the learning programme are insufficiently planned. Literacy and numeracy are insufficiently linked to courses such as astrology, which is introduced as a means of developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Courses are planned to be short and for learners to progress from one to another, but there is not a sufficiently structured approach to determine when a learner should be registered for a qualification at an appropriate level. It is not always clear what criteria are used to register a learner for a qualification. There is often an over-emphasis on learners' confidence rather than their ability. On some 12-week courses, after diagnostic assessment and individual learning plans are completed, it is often week five or six of the programme and little time is left for learners to develop skills.

**Family learning****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning	343	2

92. Enrolments on family learning programmes for the autumn term of 2005-06 stand at 343, across 25 venues on 42 courses or workshops. In 2004-05, 826 learners enrolled on programmes across 40 venues. HALS offers a mixture of accredited and non-accredited programmes including family literacy and numeracy, keeping up with the children, early start, healthy share, IT, playing guitars and family Spanish. Learners on the accredited programmes work towards Open College Network qualifications and have the opportunity to take national tests in literacy and numeracy. In 2004-05, HALS offered 105 courses with partners in community venues across the borough. Venues included schools, children's centres, adult education centres and community centres, in the daytime, evening and at weekends. Enrolment takes place at the beginning of the autumn, spring and summer terms. Courses last for eight, 10 or 12 weeks. HALS offers one-day introductory workshops to attract new learners and provides a small summer holiday programme. The programme is managed by a full-time co-ordinator and taught by two full-time and seven part-time tutors. Most of the tutors work at more than one location.

***Adult and community learning*****Grade 2***Strengths*

- high retention and achievement rates
- good development of personal and learning skills
- good teaching and learning
- particularly effective curriculum development to widen participation

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient support for literacy and numeracy

**Achievement and standards**

93. Learners develop good personal and learning skills. They improve their confidence and self-esteem and are more able to take part in community activities and support their children. Where learning takes place in schools, head teachers report greater participation in the life of the school by the parents. Learners work well together in lessons and make good progress. In an early start lesson, learners developed a good understanding of child development and health and safety. They felt more confident in bringing up their children or applying for work or training. Learners are particularly satisfied with their programmes and the progress they make.

94. Rates of retention and achievement are high. A good number of learners gain externally accredited qualifications. In 2004-05, 87 per cent of learners who started a programme stayed until the end and 86 per cent achieved their learning targets.

One-quarter of the learners also achieved an externally accredited qualification.

### **The quality of provision**

95. Teaching is good. Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of groups and of individuals. There are clear aims and objectives for lessons, which tutors explain to learners at the start of each lesson. In the good lessons, tutors maintain learners' interest and motivation by using a variety of appropriate teaching methods and activities such as games and quizzes. They draw on learners' interest in their children to promote and reinforce learning. Tutors frequently check learners' understanding and their work. Tutors promote independent learning and encourage learners to work in small groups and in paired work. Learners are coached and supported effectively by their tutors to create well-structured portfolios. In one lesson, teaching was outstanding. Dads and their children developed excellent guitar skills in a group lesson. Their skills and confidence were inspired by playing along with the musically talented tutor.

96. Curriculum development is particularly effective in widening participation and meeting the needs of learners. HALS responds exceptionally well to partners and to local and national initiatives to provide a good range of programmes in locally accessible venues in the heart of the community. It works closely with other departments and services of the council, such as local schools, Sure Start, the Pre-School Learning Alliance, libraries, and psychological and behavioural services to identify learners' needs and to plan and promote suitable programmes. Programmes for particular groups, such as parents of pre-school children and fathers, have been developed to engage hard-to-reach learners. The local venues enable programmes to be offered at times and in places that are convenient and familiar to learners. Programmes are primarily located in the targeted wards of deprivation in the borough. In 2004-05, 71 per cent of the total programme offered and 55 per cent of enrolments were in the 10 most deprived wards. In the current term, 63 per cent of learners are from the most deprived wards. HALS offers learners good opportunities for progression. In 2004-05, 134 learners progressed to other family learning courses and 23 learners progressed to skills for life programmes. A partnership with a local museum led to a well-attended summer programme based on the Second World War and its impact on the people of Halton. A good display of work from this inter-generational programme is in the museum.

97. There is insufficient support for learners who have literacy and numeracy needs. Tutors are sensitive to learners' fear of tests and do not assess their literacy and numeracy at the start of the programme. For many learners, however, assessment of their needs comes too late in their short programme. Many of the learners have significant literacy needs and tutors do not plan adequately to support and develop their literacy skills alongside their main programme of study. The provision of additional support or assessments for dyslexia is slow. HALS gives satisfactory information and guidance to learners at the start of their courses. Towards the end of courses, tutors encourage learners to think about further learning opportunities. Personal and pastoral support for learners is satisfactory.

98. Accommodation and facilities are satisfactory and, in some cases, good. There are good displays of learners' work and celebrations of their achievements in wall and room displays. Some school venues have unsuitable infant-sized tables and chairs available for the classes. The computer equipment is very good for ICT lessons, but there are no variable-height chairs available for learners. All the resources that tutors produce are very good.



**Leadership and management**

99. There is good communication between managers, tutors and support staff, through formal and informal meetings and e-mail. The co-ordinator and the tutors have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Staff development is satisfactory and has focused on supporting and developing appropriate staff skills.

100. Tutors treat learners with respect and encourage them to treat each other respectfully and fairly. There are good visual displays that celebrate learners' work and diversity in some centres. In some lessons, equality of opportunity is reinforced well. For example, in the early start programme parents examined children's literature and toys to consider images that promote gender stereotyping and other potential discrimination. In 2004-05, 2 per cent of enrolments were from minority ethnic groups against a target of 1 per cent, and 12 per cent of learners were men against a target of 16 per cent.

101. HALS uses observations of teaching and learning effectively to identify staff development needs. There is particularly effective monitoring of paperwork such as lesson plans and schemes of work. Internal verification for accredited and non-accredited programmes is satisfactory. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Staff are involved in the process and HALS seeks the views of learners and partners.

