# INSPECTION REPORT

# Sefton Adult and Community Learning Service

**27 January 2006**

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
• **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.

**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

# Sefton Adult and Community Learning Service

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# INSPECTION REPORT

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1.  Sefton Adult and Community Learning Service (SACLS) is part of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council's children's service (the service) and offers non-accredited and accredited adult and community learning programmes.  All accredited programmes are at entry level, level 1 or level 2.  Sefton Families and Schools Together (FAST) offers a programme of family learning within the borough's primary schools.  Most of the provision is delivered by SACLS and FAST tutors.  Since September 2005, a small proportion of programmes have been taught using subcontracted tutors from a partner organisation.  The areas of learning covered by the remit of this inspection were information and communications technology (ICT), crafts, literacy and numeracy, and family learning.

2.  The main administrative and education and training centre is located at the south Sefton adult education centre in Seaforth.  Adult and community learning is also offered at a range of venues that include local schools, libraries, community and carer centres and sheltered housing accommodation.

3.  A family and community learning officer has strategic responsibility for the service offered by SACLS and FAST.  Operational management of SACLS is carried out by a community learning manager.  Programmes are managed by four full-time curriculum leaders and supported by a part-time equality and diversity and learner support co-ordinator.  All 54 tutors are part-time.  Administrative support is provided by a team of five administration assistants led by an administration manager with responsibility for management information.  FAST is managed by a lead co-ordinator supported by two outreach co-ordinators.  Moderation is carried out by two part-time members of staff working with the seven tutors.

4.  In 2004-05 there were 2,688 learners, of whom 2 per cent were from a minority ethnic group, 11 per cent declared a disability, 28 per cent were aged over 60 and 80 per cent were women.

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS                                    Grade 3

5.  **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.**  Leadership and management, and the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory.  The provision is good in ICT and family learning.  The training in arts, media and publishing and preparation for life and work is satisfactory.

6. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.**  Managers and staff are fully involved in the regular self-assessment process.  The views of learners and partners are collected and analysed and these are used in making judgements for the self-assessment report.  The report appropriately covered the key questions of the Common Inspection Framework.  Some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report matched those identified by inspectors but others were not included.  The report is broadly critical, but it places insufficient emphasis on the effect of identified strengths and weaknesses on learners.  Data is not used to support evaluative

statements.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** The service has identified some of the key weaknesses identified at inspection and has started to deal with them. New initiatives have already been introduced to deal with key quality improvement issues which affect the learners' experience. The review and implementation of enhanced processes to quality assure activities such as teaching and learning are well under way. External help has been gained to further introduce good practice across the service. Plans to introduce a more coherent skills for life strategy are currently being developed. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The service has started to deal appropriately with the need to further expand and increase the use of data.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR SEFTON ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE:

- continue to maintain the pace of improvement
- improve the use of data
- fully implement effective quality assurance arrangements
- develop and implement a skills for life strategy
- improve the effectiveness of information and advice

## GRADES

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

| Leadership and management | 3 |
|---|---|
| Contributory grades: | |
| Equality of opportunity | 3 |
| Quality improvement | 3 |

| Information and communications technology | | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *ICT for users* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 165 | 2 |

| Arts, media and publishing | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Crafts* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 109 | 3 |

| Preparation for life and work | | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Literacy and numeracy* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 341 | 3 |

| Family learning | | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| *Adult and community learning* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 182 | 2 |

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8.  The service was inspected over a five-day period during January 2006.  Four contributory areas of learning were inspected.

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of inspectors | 6 |
| Number of inspection days | 30 |
| Number of learners interviewed | 319 |
| Number of staff interviewed | 89 |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 28 |
| Number of partners/external agencies interviewed | 20 |
| Number of visits | 1 |

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

9.  **Learners' retention and achievement rates are good in ICT.**  Learners develop good skills and increase their confidence when using computers.  **Success and retention rates in family learning are good.**  Learners develop very good confidence and skills.  **In crafts and literacy and numeracy, learners develop good personal and social skills.**  Attendance rates are satisfactory or better on all courses.

## The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

| | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Information and communications technology | 1 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 12 |
| Arts, media and publishing | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 8 |
| Preparation for life and work | 0 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 10 |
| Family learning | 0 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| **Total** | **1** | **27** | **10** | **2** | **40** |

10.  **Teaching on ICT and family learning programmes is good.**  Sessions are well planned to meet the needs and interests of learners.  Learners are helped to work well independently and as part of a group.  However, some of the teaching sessions in crafts include an insufficient variety of teaching strategies.  Assessment is effective in all areas and is good in ICT.  The range of family learning and literacy and numeracy programmes is good.

11.  **The service provides flexible and responsive literacy and numeracy programmes to meet learners' needs.**  Skills for life programmes are offered at a wide range of community venues.

12.  **There is good personal support for literacy and numeracy learners.**  Teachers and other staff offer effective support for those with personal difficulties.  The provider has sound procedures in place to identify and support learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who may have dyslexia.  **Learning support for craft learners is particularly effective and is good for ICT learners.**

13.  The provision of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory overall.  However, structured advice and guidance for progression is not always sufficiently detailed in family learning.  **Crafts and literacy and numeracy learners do not have sufficient information and advice at the progression stage.  There is insufficient co-ordination of recruitment for ICT learners.**  Induction is satisfactory.

14.  **There is insufficient use of initial assessment in family learning.**  Systems to assess the literacy and numeracy needs of learners are inconsistent and are not sufficiently used to assess needs and plan support.

15.  **The literacy, numeracy and language content of some skills for life courses, which is integrated with other curriculum areas, is not sufficiently clear to learners.**

## Leadership and management

16.  **Partnerships are wide-ranging and productive.**  This helps the service to offer training at a good range of community venues across the borough.  Links with partners are strong and the service makes a good contribution through its rapid response to various initiatives.  Partners include those with an interest in improving the quality of neighbourhoods and priority groups.  **Partnership arrangements in family learning are very effective.**

17.  **Operational management and internal communications are good.**  Administration staff provide a good service to tutors.  Strategic and operational plans are closely

monitored.  Senior managers have a good understanding of performance in relation to targets.  Since the service reorganised in 2004, efforts to establish productive team working have been effective.

18.  **The service has carried out effective action to widen participation in learning.** Barriers to learning are effectively dealt with.  The service makes good use of networks and agencies to respond to the needs of priority groups.  The participation rates for targeted groups show an improving trend.  Effective use has been made of funds to provide resources that meet learners' needs.

19.  **Staff have been successfully engaged in new quality improvement initiatives.** Planning files bring together all information relating to courses.  When tutors are unavailable, others are able to make use of the course-planning information to maintain delivery to learners.  A staff handbook and diary have been produced.  Staff make good use of a CD-ROM which contains copies of all key documents and procedures.  A high level of consistency is achieved.

20.  **Resources for family learning are excellent.**  Overall management of resources is satisfactory.  There are appropriate arrangements to check the quality of learning centres. Most venues offer appropriate facilities for learning.  There is sufficient information technology (IT) equipment and it is to a satisfactory standard.  Technical staff maintain the equipment satisfactorily.

21.  **Curriculum management** is satisfactory all areas and **is good in family learning**.  There is good management of literacy and numeracy tutors.  Craft tutors are well supported.

22.  Staff recruitment, appraisal and performance management are satisfactory.  Staff appraisals have an appropriate emphasis on the core business of the service.  Staff development arrangements are satisfactory.  In-house training focuses on quality improvement.

23.  Information advice and guidance is satisfactory.  Administration staff have completed an in-house certificate at level 2 for adult learner support.  They provide satisfactory initial advice when potential learners request information.  However, the advice and guidance from tutors is often inadequate.  There is no system to check the adequacy and impartiality of the information, advice and guidance.

24.  The service's arrangements to promote and monitor equality of opportunity are satisfactory.  Staff and learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. However, some of the staff have not received recent training to raise their awareness and understanding of equality and diversity.  Most complaints are dealt with in a timely and effective way through informal processes.  Formal complaints are resolved in an appropriate manner.

25.  The use of display material featuring non-stereotypical imagery or text is generally satisfactory at all sites.  However, the system for monitoring the appropriateness of learning materials does not have detailed guidelines to ensure consistency.  The promotion of equality and diversity during teaching sessions varies.

26.  The service has satisfactory arrangements for checking compliance with relevant

legislation for the provision carried out at other venues. Most sites are accessible for those with restricted mobility. Where this is not the case, appropriate alternative arrangements are made available.

27. There is a satisfactory system for observing teaching and learning and it contributes to quality improvement. The process identifies areas for improvement. However, the observation system does not formally extend to other key learning processes and services provided by partners. The service has used good-practice models to improve observation arrangements. The observation grades given by inspectors for teaching and learning were generally lower than those given by the service.

28. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Staff have a good understanding of how they contribute to self-assessment. However, judgements often place insufficient emphasis on the effect of strengths and weaknesses on learners. Self-assessment appropriately uses the views of stakeholders and analyses performance. In ICT it does not effectively consider the quality of the provision and its effect on learners.

29. **Insufficient use is made of data.** The service collects reliable data on retention and achievement, but the analysis is not well developed. A few basic reports are now produced. A framework for reporting against key performance indicators and internal benchmarking has not yet been developed. Data is not yet fully used for routine course management. There is insufficient use of equality of opportunity data.

30. **The skills for life strategy is poorly developed.** The service has carried out a review of current provision and identified the need to develop a whole organisation approach.

31. **Quality assurance arrangements are insufficiently developed.** Some systems have only recently been included in the overall quality improvement framework and are incomplete in terms of their application. Quality assurance does not yet extend to all key processes.

## Leadership and management

### Strengths

- wide-ranging and productive partnerships
- good operational management
- successful engagement of staff in quality improvement initiatives
- effective actions to widen participation

### Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed quality assurance
- insufficient use of data
- poorly developed skills for life strategy

**Information and communications technology**

*ICT for users*                                                                                     *Grade 2*

*Strengths*

- good retention and achievement
- much good teaching and learning
- good learning support

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient co-ordination of learners' recruitment
- insufficient focus on learners in the self-assessment report

**Arts, media and publishing**

*Crafts*                                                                                             *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good development of personal and social skills
- particularly effective learning support
- well-supported tutors

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient variety of teaching strategies
- insufficient information and advice at progression

**Preparation for life and work**

*Literacy and numeracy*                                                                             *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good development of personal and social skills
- flexible and responsive programme to meet learners' needs
- good personal support for learners
- good  management of staff

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient integration of literacy, numeracy and language skills on some courses
- insufficient information and advice relating to progression
- slow progress in developing skills for life strategy

**Family learning**

*Adult and community learning*                                           *Grade 2*

*Strengths*

- very good development of learners' confidence and skills
- high success and retention rates
- excellent resources
- good range of programmes
- very effective partnership arrangements
- good curriculum management
- good teaching and learning

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of initial assessment
- incomplete quality assurance

## WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SEFTON ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE:

- the friendly and supportive teaching staff
- the relaxed atmosphere at learning centres
- the learning centres - 'they are accessible, local and comfortable'
- the opportunity to learn new things and improve themselves
- family learning - 'it helps me to learn how to help my children'
- making new friends and feeling less isolated
- the constructive criticism and helpful feedback from tutors

## WHAT LEARNERS THINK SEFTON ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE COULD IMPROVE:

- the excessive time spent on induction
- better crèche facilities
- more weekend courses
- better parking for learners with restricted mobility

## 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<br><br>Mentor | Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them |
| Learning goals | Main learning goals<br><br><br><br><br><br>Secondary | 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.<br>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 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 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. |
| **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 self managing, sustainable communities. |

| **Active citizenship** | 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. |
| --- | --- |

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT                                 Grade 3

**Strengths**

- wide-ranging and productive partnerships
- good operational management
- successful engagement of staff in quality improvement initiatives
- effective actions to widen participation

**Weaknesses**

- insufficiently developed quality assurance
- insufficient use of data
- poorly developed skills for life strategy

32.  The overall strategy of SACLS, which is part of the children's services directorate, is to deliver training to local communities and raise expectations and attainment, particularly where this will positively effect children and their parents.  Partnerships are carefully selected to fulfil these aims.  In most cases, the partnership brings funds to the service through joint objectives.  Partners include those with an interest in improving the quality of neighbourhoods, those helping the long-term unemployed, organisations that work with parents in local primary schools, the care sector, and local libraries and access points.  These help the service to offer training at a good range of community venues across the borough.  Links with partners are strong and the service makes a good contribution through its rapid response to various initiatives.  External communications are good and the service is well represented on a range of local strategic partnerships.

33.  There is good operational management.  Leaders and managers are accessible.  Internal communications are good.  There are good annual plans for in-house meetings, self-assessment activities and training events.  Administration staff provide a good service to tutors to ensure they are equipped with the correct paperwork.  They effectively check that all key processes are completed in a timely manner.  The flow of information on attendance, withdrawals and achievements is good.  Strategic and operational plans are closely monitored.  Senior managers have a good understanding of performance in relation to targets.  Since the service reorganised in 2004, efforts to establish productive team working have been effective.

34.  The service uses Sefton Borough Council's personnel systems for staff recruitment, appraisal and performance management.  These have been appropriately modified for part-time tutors.  Staff appraisals take place every six months and have an appropriate emphasis on the core business of the service.  Job descriptions suitably define roles and responsibilities.  Staff development arrangements are satisfactory.  In-house training focuses on quality improvement, much of which takes place at six-monthly staff meetings.  There are good records of attendance and staff evaluations.  Staff are encouraged to identify and attend external training courses for technical updating.  The service offers one free internal course a year to staff who use these to improve their IT and administration skills as well as learning new leisure activities.

35.  The management of resources is satisfactory.  There are appropriate arrangements to check the quality of learning centres.  Most venues offer appropriate facilities, are well lit and well decorated.  In a few cases, venues have limited space, and seating arrangements are inappropriate for adults.  IT equipment is sufficient and to a satisfactory standard.  Technical staff maintain the equipment effectively and quickly respond to difficulties.  Where learning venues have no IT equipment, the service provides mobile computers.

36.  Overall, information, advice and guidance is satisfactory.  Courses are promoted through newspaper advertisements, local libraries, and, for family learning, through direct intervention by agencies that work with parents.  Many learners are recommended by their friends.  For each course, an information sheet states relevant key information.  Administration staff have completed an in-house certificate at level 2 in adult learner support.  They provide satisfactory initial advice when potential learners request information.  When learners are ready to progress, learners rely on tutors for advice and guidance, but this is often inadequate.  There is no system to check the adequacy and impartiality of the information, advice and guidance.  Tutors are insufficiently equipped with the information to help learners.  The service is aware of this difficulty and recently started to implement a plan of improvements.

37.  There is insufficient use of data.  The service has put considerable recent efforts into collecting reliable data on retention and achievement, but its analysis is not well developed.  A few basic reports are now produced and the service is starting to use these at management meetings and for self-assessment.  Administration staff collect data and are receiving training to help them produce management information reports.  A framework for reporting against key performance indicators and internal benchmarking has not yet been developed.  Data is not yet fully used for routine course management.

38.  The service delivers a significant number of literacy, numeracy and language courses.  It has set targets for increasing the quantity offered.  However, there is a poorly developed skills for life strategy.  The service has carried out a review of current provision and has identified the need to develop a whole organisation approach to improve the quality of skills for life provision.  It also recognises a specific need to train more staff to higher levels to support delivery in this area.  In contrast, the service has a satisfactorily developed strategy for the development of information and learning technologies.

## Equality of opportunity                                    **Contributory grade 3**

39.  The service has carried out effective action to widen participation in learning.  Good use of networks, that include a wide range of agencies, has allowed the service to engage hard-to-reach groups.  The service has worked well with agencies and has responded to the needs of priority groups, including residents with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, the unemployed and asylum seekers.

40.  The participation rates for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and from minority ethnic groups show an improving trend.  The staff profile broadly reflects that of the local community.  Learners benefit from attending classes in familiar and local venues such as schools, libraries, and community and carers centres.  Learners report that they value the contribution that learning opportunities make towards improving self-confidence and independence.  Barriers to learning are effectively dealt with.  Courses are free to priority groups, with fee remission for the current year of approximately 90 per cent of all

enrolments.  The service has made effective use of funds to provide appropriate resources.  For example, the service has successfully secured external funding for mobile computers.  This has been used to provide housebound learners with individual computer training.  A suitable range of adaptive aids is available and used by learners.  However, some of the learners who are on family learning programmes have not had appropriate access to crèche facilities.

41.  The arrangements to promote and monitor equality of opportunity are satisfactory.  A part-time equality and diversity co-ordinator has recently been appointed.  The service's policies on equality and diversity are adequate, and most have been adapted from Sefton Borough Council's own policies.  The service does not have an equal opportunities action plan.  However, the most relevant strategies and action plans are included in a range of service processes and documents.

42.  Staff and learners have a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities.  Learners and staff inductions include a short briefing to raise awareness of equality of opportunity.  Learners know how to raise concerns.  Most complaints are dealt with in a timely and effective way through informal processes.  In the very few cases where learners have used the formal complaints process, the problems have been resolved in an appropriate manner.  Learners are confident that when concerns are raised directly with a tutor, they will be dealt with in a confidential and sensitive manner.  The informal personal support received by learners is satisfactory or better.  However, some of the staff have not received recent training to raise their awareness and understanding of equality and diversity.

43.  The service's promotional material is available in large print, audio tape and Braille.  Staff have satisfactory access to an interpretation service.  However, there are no marketing and training materials in community languages.  The use of display material that features non-stereotypical imagery or text is generally satisfactory at all sites.  Learning resources for family learning effectively use non-stereotypical imagery.  There is a system for monitoring the appropriateness of learning materials.  However, there are no suitably detailed guidelines to ensure consistency of the monitoring.  The effective promotion of equality and diversity during teaching sessions varies.  Currently, it is not part of a sustained approach to ensure that all learners experience adequate awareness-raising opportunities.

44.  The service has taken appropriate action at its main centre to meet the demands of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.  There are satisfactory arrangements for checking compliance with relevant legislation for provision carried out at other venues.  Most sites are accessible for those with restricted mobility.  Where this is not the case, appropriate alternative arrangements are available.  The service has made a suitable response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

45.  The service collects a range of appropriate data related to equality of opportunity.  Most data is satisfactorily analysed.  Data has been used to influence recruitment processes.  For example, the service has identified the need to recruit more men.  However, there is insufficient use of equal opportunities data for monitoring purposes.  Data is not routinely analysed and evaluated to make decisions on the retention and achievement of particular groups to inform planning for improvement.  There is insufficient use of data to compare the performance of different groups or identify trends over time.  There is inadequate use of data to set appropriate targets for the monitoring of progress towards service objectives.

The provider recognises this weakness and has introduced some new strategies to improve its use of data.  However, it is too early to make a judgement on the effectiveness of proposed strategies.

## Quality improvement
**Contributory grade 3**

46.  Senior managers have successfully engaged staff in new quality improvement initiatives and established a culture of continuous improvement.  Planning files bring together all information relating to courses such as lesson plans, management information and assessment details.  When tutors are unavailable, others are able to make use of the course-planning information to maintain delivery to learners.  A useful staff handbook and diary have been produced, which include copies of all key documents such as lesson plans, records of achievement, lesson observations, self-assessment and annual planners showing set dates for staff meetings.  Staff make good use of a CD-ROM which contains copies of all key documents and procedures.  Administration staff collect information on learners' attendance and check that all key documents are in place.  A high level of consistency is achieved.  Tutors find these revised arrangements helpful.

47.  There is a satisfactory system for observing teaching and learning that contributes to quality improvement.  For new staff this takes place within their first three months of employment.  However, for established staff, observations are infrequent.  Staff find the process useful in identifying areas for improvement.  Managers use the overall outcome of teaching and learning observations to plan staff development.  The observation system does not formally extend to other key learning processes and services provided by partners. Every six months, senior managers moderate the grades given for teaching and learning sessions during the preceding six months.  The service has used good-practice models to improve observation arrangements and grading criteria.  The observation grades given by inspectors for teaching and learning were generally lower than those given by the service.

48.  Learners are able to make comments about their experiences by completing questionnaires.  These arrangements give a satisfactory range of information on matters such as recruitment and learners' views on the quality of teaching and resources.  This information is analysed and a report of the main findings is produced to plan further actions.  The provider is currently reviewing how learners' views are gathered.  Recently, the service has started to make use of learner focus groups at the various learning centres. If learners and partners make complaints, these are dealt with promptly.  Comments from learners feed into programme management at various stages.

49.  The self-assessment process is satisfactory.  The service has been carrying out self-assessment since 2002.  It uses the views of stakeholders, the results of teaching and learning observations, and managers' analysis of performance.  The service does not include an annual course review as part of self-assessment.  Staff consider strengths and weaknesses at a staff meeting before managers moderate the findings and agree self-assessment grades.  Staff have a good understanding of how they contribute to self-assessment.  However, judgements often place insufficient emphasis on the effect of strengths and weaknesses on learners.  The development plan includes actions to deal with weaknesses as well as those to maintain and improve strengths.  This plan is not yet fully linked to strategic and operational plans.

50.  The service has recently introduced a quality improvement framework.  It collates in a format accessible to staff, the various quality assurance procedures.  It has been designed

as a reference tool for staff to make clear where their involvement is required.  However, quality assurance arrangements are insufficiently developed.  Some systems such as lesson observations and learner feedback are well established, but others are recent and are incomplete in terms of their application.  Quality assurance does not yet extend to all key process such as information, advice and guidance, and induction.  Annual course reviews have not yet been fully established.  Data is not yet fully included in quality improvement initiatives.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Information and communications technology                    Grade 2

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| **ICT for users** | | **2** |
| Adult and community learning | 165 | 2 |

51.  Currently, 165 learners are on ICT programmes, of whom 101 are women, five are from a minority ethnic group and 27 have declared a disability.  Sixty-eight per cent of learners are aged over 60.  There were 20 courses running in 17 venues at the time of inspection.  ICT programmes are provided at the service's main centre and partner premises that include schools and community venues across the borough.  Drop-in facilities are also provided in some locations for learners to carry out additional practice.  The length of courses ranges from two hours for taster sessions to 10 weeks for the introductory programmes.  Short taster sessions provide introductions to a range of longer courses at levels 1 and 2.  The courses include an introduction to ICT and the internet as well as more advanced courses in web design, digital photography and effective computer management.  There is specific provision for older learners and under-represented groups.  ICT programmes are also provided as part of the family learning and skills for life programmes.  None of the courses are accredited.

### *ICT for users*                                                                 *Grade 2*

*Strengths*

- good retention and achievement
- much good teaching and learning
- good learning support

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient co-ordination of learners' recruitment
- insufficient focus on learners in the self-assessment report

### Achievement and standards

52.  Learners' achievement is good.  They develop self-confidence and skills in using computers.  Learners overcome their anxieties about using computers and readily attempt new activities.  They enjoy their classes and regularly take additional work home or attend the drop-in sessions provided.  Some learners are confident enough to demonstrate skills to, and provide support for, other learners.  For example, in one lesson a learner demonstrated an internet search to the whole group.  In another session a learner showed others how to enter data in a genealogy internet site.  Learners use their new skills to change their personal and working lives through changing jobs and contributing to the activities of families and local communities.  A group of older learners are researching their family histories and discovering important aspects of their lives, including unknown relatives.  Learners progress quickly and develop a good range of computer skills.

Computer terminology is used appropriately in sessions and is well understood. Many of the learners have developed sufficient skills to work independently and to apply their knowledge and experience to other software applications. For example, learners in a digital photography class can download pictures and e-mail them to friends. Learners' work is celebrated and displayed prominently in most centres. Learners have a good awareness of health and safety and observe safe working practices. Retention rates are good. In the classes observed during inspection, over 95 per cent of learners had been retained.

## The quality of provision

53. Teaching and learning are good. In most lessons, learners are challenged and inspired by a wide range of learning methods. Learners who complete tasks before others in their group are given further, more demanding work. There is good use of individualised learning outcomes in the classes to meet learners' different needs. Homework is regularly given to encourage independent working and promote further development of skills. Many learners bring examples of work from home to the lessons to show their tutors and other learners. The pace of the lessons is well managed. Well-planned activities enable learners to increase their skills and knowledge in every session. Learners are encouraged to work independently as well as contributing to group activities through discussion or helping others.

54. Assessment practice is good. Initial assessment of learners' prior skills and progress is consistent. In all lessons, learners' skills and progress are monitored well. Learners are involved in reviewing their own progress in each lesson and reflecting on their changing needs. Progress reviews identify areas for further development and include discussions on work completed. Tutors use particularly varied assessment activities and materials to evaluate and record understanding, skill development, knowledge of concepts and progress. Tutors make good use of research tasks, self-assessment, peer assessment and games to enable learners to identify their progress and achievement.

55. Tutors have adopted an effective collaborative approach to the development of learning materials and planning. They contribute to, and use, shared resources in facilities provided by the service. Learning materials are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they provide a range of alternative resources for similar activities.

56. Learning support is good. Tutors quickly identify learners' needs for adaptive or assistive technology. A learner who has arthritis needed a specialised wrist support and this was quickly supplied. Tutors are sensitive to learners' literacy, numeracy and language development needs. They provide unobtrusive help to support learners. There is very good collaboration between technical, administrative and tutorial staff to meet learners' needs. Many tutors provide individual support for learners by arriving before the start of lessons and staying after the end of sessions to provide feedback or additional guidance.

57. Most teaching rooms are clean, well lit and comfortable. The computer equipment is up to date with current software, colour printers and scanners. However, some venues do not have adequate display facilities or equipment to project images on a screen. In these venues the tutors have to give verbal instructions or demonstrate from a single computer. This sometimes impedes the teaching. Technical support effectively ensures the reliable operation of equipment in all venues.

58. There is insufficient co-ordination of learners' recruitment. Learners report that their

principal sources of information on courses are the local press or personal recommendation.  Little use is made of the provider's information service for advice on options.  Prospective learners are not aware of the support to help them locate programmes at venues that may be more appropriate to their needs.  In a number of centres during inspection, prospective learners arrived at the venue expecting to be able to enrol directly.  This required tutor time during the lessons to respond to their needs and diverted the tutor's attention from existing learners.

## Leadership and management

59.  Curriculum management is satisfactory.  There is consistent planning of courses and individual lessons using standard documents in course files.  Observation of teaching and learning is systematic and the judgements match those given by inspectors.  However, only a small number of observations have been carried out in the current year.  Development and training needs of staff are identified through a suitable review process.  All tutors are able to access training on request.  There are regular tutor meetings where quality improvement issues are satisfactorily identified.  For example, the team has ensured that learning outcomes are shared with learners and progress is measured accurately.  Examples of best practice are starting to be shared among tutors.

60.  The service's information and learning technology strategy is carefully presented and well integrated within national and local priorities such as 'Every Child Matters'.  The implementation plan makes effective use of staff resources in ICT to provide training and mentoring for staff in other areas.  Managers have obtained additional funding from national bodies for their staff development and curriculum proposals that will be of direct benefit to learners.

61.  The management of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.  Diversity and equality are promoted through displays in classes and learning centres.  Tutors are generally aware of the provider's strategies to widen participation and inclusion and their practice is inclusive.  While there is some promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom, this is not part of a service-wide approach to raising learners' awareness.  There is insufficient use of data to evaluate equality and diversity initiatives.

62.  Staff have been fully involved in the self-assessment process.  However, strengths identified by this process are not always appropriate.  The report identifies new developments as strengths.  There is insufficient focus on learners in the self-assessment report.  It does not effectively consider the quality of the provision or its effect on learners.  The report does not prioritise the strengths and weaknesses.  The role of staff in contributing to the quality of the provision is insufficiently considered.  The consequences of the strengths and weaknesses that are identified in the self-assessment report and their effect on learners is not explored.  The provider's self-assessment grade matched that given by inspectors.

## Arts, media and publishing                    Grade 3

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *Crafts* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 109 | 3 |

63. In 2004-05, 448 learners enrolled on 49 different classes. These included courses in a range of crafts such as embroidery, quilting, patchwork and sewing. This academic year, 224 learners enrolled in September 2005. A further 109 joined 11 courses in January 2006 and are still in learning. Half the learners are aged 60 or over. Classes are provided throughout the weekday and evening. One course is offered during the daytime on one Saturday every month, to allow access for those with work commitments. Internal certification is available. Courses are carried out at the main centre and at 21 community venues across the borough, including community centres and schools.

64. The programme area is managed by a full-time family and community learning officer and a community learning manager. A temporary part-time art and craft curriculum leader is currently in place, supported by nine part-time tutors.

### *Crafts*                                      *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good development of personal and social skills
- particularly effective learning support
- well-supported tutors

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient variety of teaching strategies
- insufficient information and advice at progression

## Achievement and standards

65. Learners develop good personal and social skills. They derive positive therapeutic value from attending classes. Many learners are retired or live on their own and classes are an opportunity for them to meet new people with similar interests. They find enjoyment and social interaction in learning with their peers, who provide encouragement and support during classes. Others have found a focus to their lives through the use of their practical skills during periods of long term ill health. Some make items for charity. For example, in crochet, learners make coats for premature babies at a local hospital. Learners improve their confidence and self-esteem. They are able to discuss their work confidently and raise questions during classes. Some learners use their new skills to demonstrate techniques in community activities. Learners are highly committed and contribute positively to the group. They ask questions and share information. The standard of learners' work varies, but is usually at least satisfactory. Attendance rates are good. Retention rates are satisfactory.

**The quality of provision**

66.  There is particularly effective learning support for learners.  Tutors fully understand learners' individual support needs.  Tutors have an inclusive attitude towards learners.  They know their learners well and are sensitive to their needs.  A responsive support structure for learners with additional needs has a quick response time.  A three-week monitoring of support arrangements works effectively.  Tutors devise good practical ways of supporting learners with disabilities and enable them to fully engage in classes.  For example, in a card class, the tutor taped work to the table so that a learner could work with one hand.  In another case a tutor established a discreet strategy with one learner so that if they needed additional help they could signal this by putting work on the chair by their side.  Tutors satisfactorily identify learners with literacy, numeracy or language needs.  They quickly arrange suitable further diagnosis and support where necessary.

67.  Overall teaching is satisfactory.  In the better sessions, teaching is well planned and activities are clearly structured.  Tutors effectively demonstrate practical tasks and explain the components of the activity stage by stage.  The demonstration process is well managed with all learners able to effectively interact with the tutor.  Activities are fully supported by good handouts that help to consolidate learning.  When learners work on their individual tasks, tutors check their progress and give timely feedback.  Learners work well together and the lessons have a sense of purpose as well as a sociable atmosphere.  However, in some teaching sessions there is insufficient variety of teaching strategies.  Some tutors employ a narrow range of delivery methods and this restricts the learning experience and does not encourage creativity.  Sessions do not always take account of individual learning styles.  Learners work on individual projects or pieces of work and little group learning takes place.  There is an over-emphasis on the completion of class activity rather than on the standard of work produced.  All lessons have a satisfactory pace and additional help is given to those who need it.  Drawings from the art class are displayed in the art room, but there is insufficient use of more stimulating visual displays in teaching rooms.  There is insufficient use of good visual aids such as examples from books, illustrations on handouts, video, or using ICT to access exhibition information.

68.  Assessment of work is satisfactorily recorded in logbooks.  Some tutors devise their own concise assessment methods which are shared with the learners.  In some cases, initial assessment is used to plan schemes of work.  In better classes, group critique is used effectively to develop self-analysis of attainment.

69.  The curriculum is responsive to learners' requests at entry level.  Many of the classes are instigated by demand, particularly in centres away from the main site.  Partner organisations commend the responsive attitude to requests for new courses and effective communication with the service.  They value the publicity materials the provider generates.  Learners can participate in an appropriate range of craft classes that develop a broad range of craft skills and allow progression.

70.  There is insufficient information and advice at the progression stage.  Classes have course descriptor leaflets which include progression information.  However, this only includes a course title which means little to many learners.  Learners who progress to higher levels within arts and crafts find the information confusing.  Class viability means that classes are often cancelled at short notice and alternatives are not always clear.  The centre makes efforts to telephone individuals to redirect them, but learners prefer to study locally.  Many

learners value the ease of access and are wary of certification, seeing it as not relevant to their needs. Information from other providers about progression is not always readily available to learners.

## Leadership and management

71. Tutors are well supported. There is good communication between staff at strategic and operational level. Staff at all levels contribute to the service's positive ethos for improvement. There is a strong commitment to teamwork at all levels of the service. An effective induction for new tutors includes a mentor for their support. Tutors attend an appropriate range of internal and external staff development activities to support their teaching. Staff value the new tutor diaries, which provide details of staff development. A CD-ROM in the staff diary has examples of all the forms needed by tutors and information about procedures and support. All teaching staff have planning folders that contain examples of completed documents. Tutors share good practice by accessing resource sheets which are available on the intranet. A new 'buddy' system for internal moderation enables standardisation and sharing of good practice. ICT support is good with extended loans of laptop computers for tutors. Laptop computers and printers are set up by support staff and are easily accessible in classes.

72. Equality and diversity training is well attended by tutors. Promotion and monitoring of equality are satisfactory. Relevant information is easily available for learners and they have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. They know how to raise concerns and what to do if they are not content with the response from such action. All centres visited by inspectors offered suitable access for those with restricted mobility.

73. Quality improvement is satisfactory. Classroom observations of teaching and learning take place and there is a monitored action plan for problems which may arise. New monitoring forms allow for more analytical observation comments. However, currently there are insufficient observations carried out. The grades given by the provider for observations are higher than those given during inspection. Staff and learners were suitably involved in the self-assessment process. However, some of the findings in the report do not fully reflect the strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection. There is insufficient use of data to monitor the progress of quality improvement initiatives.

74. Accommodation is generally satisfactory. It is mostly spacious and well lit. Some craft classes are set up specifically in community venues and many courses attract learners who are new to adult learning. The quality and amount of furniture and equipment are satisfactory. A satisfactory range of materials is provided for the entry-level classes so that learners can try new materials and techniques. Staff know how to access funding for consumables for demonstrations and use this facility effectively.

## Preparation for life and work                                    Grade 3

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *Literacy and numeracy* | | *3* |
| Adult and community learning | 341 | 3 |

75.  The service provides literacy, numeracy, preparation for work and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses for learners from pre-entry level to level 2.  Some courses are linked to other subjects such as card craft and cookery.  At the time of inspection, 341 learners have enrolled on 59 courses.  Of these 12 per cent declared a learning difficulty or disability, 11 per cent are from minority ethnic groups, 11 per cent are aged under 19, 17 per cent are aged over 60 and 61 per cent are women.  There were 470 learners on courses during 2004-05.  Courses are mainly for five to 10 weeks and take place during the daytime and twilight from Monday to Friday.  Most courses are of two hours' duration.  They take place in 17 venues, including a health centre, libraries, schools and other community venues.  Some learners take entry level qualifications or national tests at levels 1 and 2.  There are two part-time curriculum leaders for skills for life programmes and 15 part-time tutors.  The service subcontracts a small amount of literacy and numeracy provision to a partner organisation.

## *Literacy and numeracy*                                          *Grade 3*

*Strengths*

- good development of personal and social skills
- flexible and responsive programme to meet learners' needs
- good personal support for learners
- good  management of staff

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient integration of literacy, numeracy and language skills on some courses
- insufficient information and advice relating to progression
- slow progress in developing skills for life strategy

## Achievement and standards

76.  Learners develop good personal and social skills.  Many of the learners on the skills for life programmes develop good personal confidence and self-esteem.  Learners are often able to use their new skills to carry out roles that were previously closed to them.  For example, one learner has become chair of a parents' council.  Some learners feel they are better able to support their children's learning.  Others have developed skills they need to prepare for work, such as time-keeping or interview skills.  Retention rates are good at 87.9 per cent.  Learners on accredited courses develop the skills they need to gain nationally recognised qualifications in literacy, numeracy and English language.  Achievement is satisfactory.  However, some of the learners on literacy, numeracy or language courses which are linked to other areas of the curriculum, are not making sufficient progress.

**The quality of provision**

77.  The service provides a flexible and responsive programme to meet learners' needs. Skills for life programmes are offered in a wide range of community venues.  The provider has set up courses in response to learner and community requests, for example ICT programmes linked to the development of literacy skills.  The service has also developed and extended its ESOL programme in response to an increased demand from learners.  The service works well with partners, such as local advice and guidance centres, social services and a healthy living centre, in an attempt to widen participation.  The provider offers a good variety of programmes which are intended to attract learners who might otherwise be reluctant to improve their literacy, numeracy or language skills.  These include courses where learners develop these skills through other curriculum areas such as home security, internet shopping and card making.  However, not all promotional material clearly outlines the literacy, numeracy and language content of these courses.

78.  There is good personal support for learners.  Tutors and other staff offer effective support for those with personal difficulties.  This is particularly effective where learners are anxious or are experiencing difficulties in preparing for employment.  For example, one tutor helped a learner prepare for an interview after the class had finished.  Others have helped learners gain work placements.  Tutors voluntarily accompany learners on a wide variety of visits and events in their own time.  The provider has sound procedures in place to identify and support those learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who may be dyslexic.  Some tutors have learnt British Sign Language to better deal with learners with impaired hearing.

79.  Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.  In the better sessions, learners benefit from a wide range of teaching strategies and resources, including ICT.  Learners participate in class discussions and respond well to questioning.  Tutors plan and manage group and individual learning well.  The checking and reinforcing of learning is satisfactory.  Learners work towards challenging targets and receive regular updates on their progress.  However, in some poorer sessions, tutors do not pay sufficient attention to the individual needs of learners.  Teaching on some courses relies too heavily on preparation for taking qualifications rather than on developing skills that learners need for life or work.

80.  The literacy, numeracy and language content of some courses that are integrated with other curriculum areas is not sufficiently clear to learners.  Some learners are not aware that they are working towards literacy, numeracy or language targets.  Tutors do not carry out an initial assessment for these skills with all learners.  Assessment does not always lead to development of literacy, numeracy or language targets.

81.  The provision of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory overall.  Managers, tutors and administrative staff ensure learners receive suitable advice before starting their programme.  The service provides a good range of written and verbal information on learners' rights and available qualifications.  Many of the learners who attend programmes offered at centres managed by partners that specialise in advice and guidance, receive appropriate advice and guidance.  The service also arranges for one such partner to visit classes to talk to learners.  However, learners in other centres are not always aware of other opportunities available to them.  Many learners do not receive information and advice on other vocational or leisure options, whether offered by the service or elsewhere.  Some learners who attend short courses that are intended to attract learners back into provision,

are not aware of opportunities to progress to courses that have substantial literacy, numeracy or language content.

## Leadership and management

82.  The curriculum leaders provide good staff management.  They support staff well.  Staff comment on a 'culture of openness'.  There are good internal and external communications at all levels.  Staff frequently share good practice and resources by attending an extensive programme of staff development opportunities.  Regular meetings are particularly effective in providing opportunities for staff to reflect on aspects of practice, for example pre-entry assessment.

83.  Quality improvement is satisfactory.  As part of the quality improvement process, managers encourage tutors to reflect on their practice.  They carry out thorough and regular personal development reviews.  The curriculum managers have developed a thorough internal verification system.  There is a sound system to moderate the setting of primary learning goals.  Observation of teaching and learning takes place regularly and is accompanied by an action plan that is subject to review.  However, observations did not highlight some weaknesses in teaching and learning that were identified during inspection.  All tutors contributed to the most recent self-assessment report.  Managers have recently been able to review reliable data from the management information system.  However, there is inadequate monitoring and analysis of trends in achievement, retention and progression.

84.  Management of resources is satisfactory.  Many learners attend classes in conveniently located, spacious and comfortable centres.  They have access to appropriate ICT facilities.  There is a well-equipped resource bank at the provider's main centre.  While many tutors make good use of this, a small number do not.  The standard of worksheets varies.  Some are well designed and suitable for learners' needs, while others are poorly photocopied or presented.  A few are not at an appropriate literacy level for the learners for whom they are intended.

85.  The management of equal opportunities is satisfactory.  Staff receive satisfactory training in equality and diversity.  The service promotes equality and diversity through displaying positive images of learners in its publicity and in learning venues.  Most venues have satisfactory access for learners with restricted mobility.  There is slow progress in developing a skills for life strategy.  Managers are currently developing a strategy, but this is not yet complete.  Managers have some understanding of the direction in which they wish to lead the service, but this is not as yet based on the results of analysis of community and learners' needs.  The service is aware of the need to widen participation, but has not yet fully developed a strategy that identifies how to target hard-to-reach learners, while offering them the opportunity to substantially develop their literacy, numeracy and language skills.  Teaching staff are not sufficiently aware of the strategic direction of the service.  The service has not fully developed its understanding of how to integrate literacy, numeracy and language skills with teaching and learning in other subjects.

## Family learning                                                    Grade 2

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|---|---|
| *Adult and community learning* | | *2* |
| Adult and community learning | 182 | 2 |

86.  Family learning programmes are delivered jointly through FAST and the adult and community learning service.  Wider family learning is managed by a curriculum leader and includes courses in ICT, puppet making, story telling and healthy living.  In the current year, 182 learners account for 198 enrolments on 32 family learning courses at 23 venues.  Twelve per cent of learners have a learning difficulty or disability, 92 per cent are women and 2 per cent are from minority ethnic groups.  In 2004-05, 954 learners accounted for 1,342 enrolments on 169 courses in 26 venues.  The service offers a mix of accredited and non-accredited programmes.  Learners on the accredited programmes work towards nationally recognised qualifications and have the opportunity to take the national tests in literacy and numeracy.  Courses are offered in partnership and are sited in community venues across the borough, including schools, children's centres, adult education centres and community centres.  Courses are offered during the daytime, evening and at weekends and are of five, eight, 10 or 12 weeks' duration.  One-day introductory workshops are offered to attract new learners.  In addition, a small summer holiday programme is provided.  Courses are taught by part-time tutors, outreach workers and school teachers.

### *Adult and community learning*                                    *Grade 2*

*Strengths*

- very good development of learners' confidence and skills
- high success and retention rates
- excellent resources
- good range of programmes
- very effective partnership arrangements
- good curriculum management
- good teaching and learning

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient use of initial assessment
- incomplete quality assurance

## Achievement and standards

87.  Learners develop self-confidence and good skills.  They increase their knowledge and skills in how their children learn and how they can help them as parent educators.  Where learning takes place in schools, head teachers report greater participation by parents in the life of the school.  Learners develop good skills to allow them to take part in the wider community and support their child's learning.  The standard of learners' work is good and learners work well together in sessions and make good progress.  Many learners go on to

further family learning or other courses and a large number gain employment, some as assistants in schools. One learner who previously had low confidence, progressed on to other further and higher education and is now an early years teacher. Another learner is currently on a foundation degree course. On one programme, learners produced children's storybooks. Learners are very satisfied with their programmes and progress is very good.

88. Rates of retention and achievement are good and many of the learners gain externally accredited qualifications. In 2004-05, 97 per cent of learners were retained and 93 per cent of those who were working towards a qualification were successful. Recruitment and attendance are good.

## The quality of provision

89. Teaching is good with well-planned sessions to meet the needs and interests of learners. There are clear aims and objectives that are explained to learners at the start of sessions. Tutors maintain learners' interest and motivation by using a good variety of teaching methods and activities such as games and quizzes to promote and reinforce learning. There is frequent checking of the learners' understanding and work. Tutors promote independent learning and encourage learners to practise in small groups and in pairs. Learners are effectively coached and supported by their tutors to develop knowledge, skills and well-structured portfolios. In one session, parents developed a good understanding of the language associated with early years numeracy through making play dough. Parents gain skills through playing with their children.

90. The range of programmes is good. The service is very responsive to partners and local and national initiatives and provides a good range of programmes in locally accessible venues. The service is well noted by partners for its positive approach. Programmes for particular groups such as parents of pre-school children and fathers have been developed to engage hard-to-reach learners. Programmes are delivered at times and in places that are convenient and familiar to learners. Short special interest courses such as story telling, puppet making, mosaics and digital photography are successful in recruiting large numbers of first-step learners. Programmes are primarily located in the targeted wards of deprivation in the borough. The service offers good progression opportunities.

91. Partnerships arrangements are very effective. The service works closely with other departments and services such as schools, health visitors, Sure Start, libraries, psychology and behavioural services and the extended schools service to identify learners' needs and to support learners. Personal and pastoral support for learners is good. The four curriculum home visits by outreach workers for early years parents are very effective in engaging and supporting parents. The education and health of children are enhanced through early identification of need and referral to other agencies such as paediatricians, speech therapists and autism professionals. The service and its partners are playing a significant role in responding to the five principles of 'Every Child Matters'.

92. There is insufficient use of initial assessment. Systems to assess the literacy and numeracy needs of learners are inconsistent and are not sufficiently used to assess need and plan support. Tutors are sensitive to the learners' fear of tests and do not formally assess literacy and numeracy at the start of the programme. Some tutors ask learners to complete a piece of writing about themselves. However, this is not then always analysed to identify needs and plan individual support. Many of the learners have significant literacy

or numeracy needs, and some tutors do not adequately plan to support and develop these skills alongside the main programme of study. Other information gained at initial assessment is not used sufficiently to set individual targets. The recently introduced log books are not effectively used to plan and monitor individual learning. The information and guidance given to learners at the start of their courses is satisfactory. Learners are encouraged by their tutors to consider further learning opportunities towards the end of their course. There is a structured approach to induction for all programmes. However, structured advice and guidance for progression is not always sufficiently detailed.

## Leadership and management

93. Curriculum management is good. Communication between managers, tutors and partners through formal and informal meetings is good. There is a very strong team spirit among staff and managers. Roles and responsibilities for the managers, co-ordinators, outreach workers and tutors are clearly defined. Staff diaries serve as a useful handbook for staff with key information such as lesson plans. Staff development is well focused on supporting and developing skills and course delivery. There is particularly effective training and support for tutors who deliver family learning in schools. A very detailed course file and resources are supplied for each tutor following obligatory training. A year-long mentoring programme very effectively supports new outreach workers. Internal verification for accredited and non-accredited programmes is good. Robust systems ensure that staff and learners understand the standards required for particular levels of achievement. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Staff and learners' views were suitably used in the production of the most recent report.

94. Resources for learning are excellent. The service has developed an extensive resource bank at the FAST centre with a large library of text and storybooks. An extensive range of large and small toys, games and story sacks supports each programme. Learners and schools can borrow the resources. Accommodation is good. Resources which are produced by tutors are very good.

95. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Tutors treat learners with respect and encourage them to treat each other respectfully and fairly. In some centres there are good visual displays celebrating learners' work and diversity. Tutors use a good range of textbooks that are multi-cultural or challenge gender stereotyping. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

96. Quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. Most of the tutors in family learning have been observed, but there are no arrangements to observe tutors in schools. Tutors who teach family literacy and numeracy have not yet been observed under the service's observation scheme. Information gained from learner surveys are not sufficiently analysed to identify improvements to the service. Although targets are set and monitored for recruitment, progression data is not sufficiently collated or analysed.