

INSPECTION REPORT

Darlington LEA

06 February 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **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.

Overall judgement

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

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Darlington LEA

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Darlington local education authority (LEA) is part of Darlington Borough Council. Darlington Libraries and Community Learning Service (LCLS) was established in April 2001, initially with a staff of two. It is part of Darlington Borough Council's (the council's) education directorate and in 2003 was amalgamated with the library service to form the libraries and community learning service. Although it has grown over the two and a half years of its existence, LCLS remains a small provider, contracting out much of its provision to local schools. The service has also taken on the direct delivery of family learning, which is a significant part of the programme. Information and communication technology (ICT), visual and performing arts, and English, languages and communications, are included in this inspection. There were too few learners in land-based provision, hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and humanities for these areas to be inspected separately. In addition to the directly delivered family learning programme and the contracted-out provision in schools, LCLS operates a community learning chest which enables community groups and voluntary organisations to bid for limited funds to support training. One of these programmes was operative at the time of the inspection.

2. The staff includes a head of service, a community learning manager, a quality improvement co-ordinator, a family learning co-ordinator and a lifelong learning support officer. The service is managed by the head of libraries and community learning service, who is a member of the education department management team and reports to the assistant director (inclusion). The community learning manager and the quality improvement co-ordinator are very recent appointments, the former having been in post for under three months at the time of the inspection, and the latter for under two months. The service also appointed two administrative assistants who had taken up their posts a month before the inspection.

3. LCLS receives most of its funding through Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The post of the family learning co-ordinator is funded through the single regeneration budget. Darlington borough is situated in the northeast of England and covers Darlington and the rural area immediately surrounding it. The proportion of residents from minority ethnic groups is 2.8 per cent in the Tees Valley area, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally. There are problems with deprivation in Darlington, with three of the wards being in the 10 per cent highest indices of deprivation nationally.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

4. ICT is a major part of LCLS's provision. During 2002-03, it offered 38 courses in ICT to 294 learners. Since September 2003, 20 courses have been offered to 136 learners, of whom 7 per cent declared a disability, 36 per cent were men and none were from a

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minority ethnic group. At the time of the inspection, there were 38 learners enrolled on five courses. Courses are aimed at new learners and are mostly at introductory level. While some are run as short, taster courses, most are for one term. None of the courses are accredited. Courses are run at secondary schools and at an ICT provision in the central library. The provision is contracted out, mostly to the secondary schools. The contracts under which the provision is secured are about to be changed. Some ICT is taught in the family learning programme.

Visual & performing arts & media

5. The visual and performing arts courses in 2002-03 had a total of 255 learners. In 2003-04, 109 learners have enrolled to date: 44 of whom were on the programme at the time of the inspection. Ninety-two of these learners are women. Currently, none of the learners are from a minority ethnic group. There is a high proportion of older learners, with 48 of those enrolled so far this year being over 60. One learner has been identified as having learning difficulties or a disability. During the week of inspection eight courses took place, covering seven subjects. Three of the classes are twilight classes and the remaining courses are held in the evening. There is no daytime or weekend provision in this area. All of the courses are non-accredited. All of the tutors are part time and teach between two and four hours each week. Classes are for two hours and run between six and 12 weeks from beginners to intermediate level. Courses include a range of arts and crafts, and include drawing, watercolours, woodwork, card making, jewellery and pottery. There is no performing arts provision.

English, languages & communications

6. At the time of the inspection there were five modern foreign language classes running, all of which were at beginner level in Spanish, German and Italian. Four of the classes were located in comprehensive schools in priority wards, and one in a village hall. The two wards rank within the 10 most disadvantaged wards in Darlington, according to the Darlington social issues index. Two courses are at twilight, with the remainder in the evening. There is no daytime provision. Courses last for six or 10 weeks and all are non-accredited. Sessions vary in length between one and a quarter and two hours. All are designed to attract new learners. There are progression opportunities to the language programmes of other providers within the borough. One course is aimed specifically at families, to enable parents and children to work together. The community learning service also supports a monthly reading group for the visually impaired which is facilitated by library staff, and has recently enabled the Bangladeshi community to run a Bengali class for its young people. One French course was offered in Autumn 2003. There are 29 learners currently enrolled, and attendance is 74 per cent. In 2002-03, the retention rate for languages provision was 58 per cent.

Family learning

7. In 2002-03, 292 learners, 38 per cent of the those enrolled on LCLS's courses took part in family learning programmes. These include basic literacy and numeracy, drug awareness, computing, craftwork and helping in schools. The courses are accredited and provide the first step for parents returning to learning. All courses offer crèche facilities. At the time of inspection, 54 learners were in family learning courses, which generally take place in two-hourly sessions over 10 weeks. There are over 20 local venues, including nursery and primary schools. Courses include sessions for adults and children separately as well as providing opportunities for work together. In 2002-03, 10 per cent of learners were men, and 5 per cent were from a minority ethnic group. Retention in 2002-03 was 78 per cent with 84 per cent achievement of accreditation, some learners gaining more than one certificate simultaneously. A family learning co-ordinator has responsibility for the management and development of family learning across the borough and she is supported by one full-time and two part-time tutors. Attendance during inspection was 87 per cent.

A O T THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	38
Number of learner interviews	139
Number of staff interviews	29
Number of subcontractor interviews	14
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	21
Number of partner/external agency interviews	11

OVERALL DGE ENT

8. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, LCLS's leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity is good, but its quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. The quality of family learning provision is outstanding, and in visual and performing arts it is satisfactory. The quality of provision in ICT and in English, languages and communication is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

Information & communications technology	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

Visual & performing arts & media	
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

English, languages & communications	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

Family learning	
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	1

E FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. **In visual and performing arts, the learners' work is good.** Portfolios and three-dimensional work are good, and learners experiment with different media and techniques. Retention is good at 90 per cent, and attendance is also good.

10. **Achievement in family learning is outstanding.** Seventy-eight per cent of learners completed their programme in 2002-03, with 84 per cent achievement of accreditation. Some learners have completed more than one programme simultaneously. Learners achieve a wide range of personal goals and gain skills which help their children, their families, the schools and their communities. Learners increase their confidence and self-esteem. Over 21 per cent of learners have progressed to learning programmes with other providers.

11. In ICT, the learners' achievements are satisfactory. Beginners quickly gain confidence and are willing to experiment with software. In follow-on courses, they learn to use a wider range of software and more advanced features of word-processing. Retention over the programme area as a whole is 68 per cent. It is, however, erratic and unrelated to the length of the courses. It varies from 23 per cent to 100 per cent on 10-week courses.

12. The standard of achievement in English, languages and communications is satisfactory. Work is produced at the standard expected for the stage and level of the

course. In the initial stages of the courses, learners are able to carry out simple dialogues in the target language. They speak positively of the confidence they have gained through learning a language. Some new learners have been sufficiently enthused by the experience to continue further.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade	Grade 2	Grade	Grade 4	Grade	Grade 6	Grade	Total
Information & communications technology	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	5
Visual & performing arts & media	0	1	4	1	1	0	0	7
English, languages & communications	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
Family learning	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	7
Total	2		6			0	0	2

13. **In the best sessions, teaching is well planned.** Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods, taking account of learning needs, and challenge and inspire learners. Learners are motivated and engaged, and increase their confidence. Learners develop good skills.

14. **In poorer sessions, lesson planning is inconsistent,** with insufficient emphasis on learning outcomes. Some schemes of work are little more than lists of topics and some tasks are limited or inappropriate. In some ICT sessions, there is an over-reliance on printed hand-outs. In some language classes, teachers rely too heavily on the use of English, rather than the target language.

15. **In ICT, there are good specialist resources.** Hardware and software are up to date, networks are reliable, and learners have access to the internet. Interactive whiteboards are available at all centres. There is a set of laptop computers which allows learning to take place in community venues. Classrooms are large, well-furnished and accessible. There are adaptive technologies to support learners with a range of sensory or physical disabilities.

16. **The monitoring and recording of learners' progress in ICT is inadequate.** There is no formal initial assessment when learners start a course, and the individual learning plans that are completed do not include targets or records of what has been learned.

17. **In visual and performing arts, resources are good.** Classrooms are large, well lit and warm. Tools and equipment are modern and well maintained. There are large tables and easels for learners to work at. Most classrooms have large storage areas for learners' work. Some course materials are available to learners at no cost. The pottery class has good access to a kiln. Tutors are appropriately qualified and many are practising artists.

18. **There is some good teaching in visual and performing arts.** Seventy per cent of sessions observed were graded good or better. Lessons are planned effectively and tutors are enthusiastic about their subjects and inspire learners. Demonstrations are

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good. Learners are encouraged to share their work and ideas, and are supportive of each other. They make good progress in the practical sessions.

19. **Assessment practices in visual and performing arts are inadequate.** There is no initial assessment, and individual learning plans are not being used to plan and record learners' progress. Learners are not always able to identify what they need to do to improve.

20. **Programme planning in visual and performing arts is inadequate.** There are few opportunities for learners to progress to other courses, and learners repeat courses each year. Classes are restricted to twilight and evening, and all of the classes at the two main centres take place on the same evening. As yet, there is no collaboration between the centres on the courses being offered, on advertising, or on the sharing of good practice.

21. **The languages programme is well designed** to meet the needs of new learners and to widen participation. Holiday languages provide an attractive short introduction to the basic elements of the languages concerned, and there are opportunities for progression to other providers in the borough. Two of the three centres which operate the language provision are in disadvantaged wards. The informal atmosphere in the classes puts new learners at ease, and encourages them to continue their studies.

22. **Assessment practices in language provision are poor.** There is no systematic attempt to identify prior learning. No individual objectives are set for learners, and there is no formal mechanism for monitoring or recording their progress. Individual learning plans have been developed as a pilot but learners, teachers and administrative staff do not understand the need for them.

23. **Information, advice and guidance are unsatisfactory for foreign language learners.** There are few opportunities for guidance on the most suitable level of course, before enrolment. Language tutors are not involved in drawing up the leaflets about their courses. Leaflets about language courses are not generally available in the borough. Information on progression opportunities are not routinely built into languages courses.

24. **Resources for family learning are good.** A wide range of up-to-date learning materials and resources are available in all centres at no cost to learners. One group of learners are creating their own bank of resources. Crèche facilities are free. Furniture at all venues is suitable for adult learners. The staff ratio is appropriate and staff understand, and can meet, the needs of learners from a wide range of backgrounds.

25. **Assessment practices in family learning are good.** Tutors identify the initial skills and knowledge of learners and devise a learning plan that is suitable for each individual. Individual learning plans are used as working documents. Learners' achievements and progress are recorded and programmes are adapted to meet learners' needs. All assessment, verification and moderation procedures meet with regulatory body criteria. An end of programme review is carried out, which identifies appropriate progression opportunities.

Leadership and management

26. **LCLS has a clear strategy to provide educational opportunities for learners in the most deprived wards of the town.** Staff understand and are committed to the values of the service, and priority is given to adults with the greatest needs. Strategic priorities are clearly identified in service plans. Performance against key performance indicators is closely monitored. LCLS has made good progress in meeting some of its performance targets.

27. **LCLS has established effective links with a wide range of partners** to offer learning opportunities to adult learners. LCLS is a member of the Darlington learning partnership which includes representatives from public, private, voluntary and local community groups. It works with a local further education college to offer support for learners who have literacy, numeracy and language needs. LCLS has developed the community learning chest, through which it funds community projects for a wide range of priority groups. In 2001-02, 36 local organisations were supported.

28. **LCLS works very well with partners to widen participation and to support disadvantaged learners.** Groups in target wards benefit from the learning opportunities funded through the community learning chest. Provision is locally based. Family learning programmes involve effective partnerships with nursery and primary schools, most of which are in the wards with highest indices of deprivation. Adult and community learning is secured through subcontracting arrangements with schools. The service's provision is first step provision.

29. **The curriculum management of subcontracted provision is inadequate.** In some centres the range of provision is narrow and there are insufficient appropriate progression routes. Initial assessment is weak and individual learning plans and reviews are insufficiently developed. Planning of the curriculum is poor. There is no collaboration between centres as yet. Course planning is inconsistent. The marketing of courses is poor and information leaflets are not sufficiently detailed. There is no central effective monitoring of attendance.

30. **The management of subcontractors is poor.** New contracts have been devised, but have not been given out as yet. Some subcontractors have not had a contract for some time. Co-ordinators and tutors do not have contracts with LCLS, and this leads to some confusion about their role. Tutors' records are incomplete and details are not routinely checked by LCLS. When subcontractors subcontract provision, there is no formal agreement between LCLS and the second subcontractor.

31. **Quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision are inadequate.** There is no planned quality assurance cycle, and no established strategy of monitoring of the quality assurance of subcontracted provision. The quality assurance policy has not been updated since LCLS was established. There is insufficient guidance for tutors to ensure consistency of approach with initial advice and guidance, initial assessment, teaching and

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learning, or individual learning plans. End-of-programme feedback from learners is not acted upon. The observation of teaching is inconsistent.

32. **The management system for the collection and analysis of data is inadequate.** Data are not used systematically to establish trends or as a planning tool to make decisions on the curriculum. In some centres, poor satisfaction rates, poor recruitment, and poor retention and achievement are not being identified or acted on. There is no analysis of retention and achievement between centres, courses and learner groups, and no analysis of early leaver trends. Retention and achievement targets are set for the service as a whole, but not at centre or programme level. Reports often have to be completed manually.

33. **In family learning, the management of the curriculum is very effective** and responds to the needs of learners. An induction before the start of the programme allows learners to influence the courses. The range of accredited programmes is wide. Programmes provide learners with opportunities for personal development, and for working alongside their children. All learners have the opportunity to progress to further programmes.

34. **The management of the curriculum in ICT, visual and performing arts, and in languages is inadequate.** Data are unreliable and are not used for programme planning. There are no curriculum specialists who have an overview of, or responsibility for, the provision. Centre co-ordinators do not meet to jointly plan a coherent programme. There is no sharing of good practice. There are no systems for tutors to assess learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs, and tutors are not aware of referral arrangements.

35. The self-assessment report was updated for the inspection. It is self-critical and analytical, and identified many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. The grades given for leadership and management, quality assurance and visual and performing arts were the same as those given by inspectors. The grades given by inspectors for equality of opportunity and for family learning were higher than those in the self-assessment report, while those for ICT and languages were lower.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic management
- good partnership arrangements
- very good collaborative strategies to widen participation and support disadvantaged learners.

Weaknesses

- inadequate curriculum management of subcontracted provision
- poor management of subcontractors

- insufficient updating of policies relevant to equality of opportunity
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision
- inadequate system for the collection and analysis of data

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good specialist resources for ICT

Weaknesses

- poor curriculum management
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- good resources
- some good teaching

Weaknesses

- inadequate assessment practices
- inadequate programme planning
- poor management of the curriculum

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- good use of programme area to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate management of curriculum
- poor monitoring of progress and achievement
- insufficient information, advice and guidance

Family learning

Strengths

- outstanding achievements
- particularly effective teaching and learning
- wide range of good resources
- good assessment and monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective leadership and responsive management of the curriculum

Weaknesses

- inadequate class observations

HAT LEARNERS LI E A O T DARLINGTON LEA:

- empathic tutors who treat them as equals
- the convenience of classes in local schools
- the opportunity to take first steps back into learning
- the friendly atmosphere in the classes
- the enthusiasm of the tutor
- use of the target language by the tutor in language classes
- the range of languages on offer
- the support of classmates and tutor
- the confidence gained

HAT LEARNERS THIN DARLINGTON LEA CO LD I PRO VE:

- more leaflets through doors about local courses
- too many handouts from books
- the lack of opportunity to interact with other learners in class
- would have liked to receive a certificate on completion of the course
- more opportunities for progression at community locations

E CHALLENGES FOR DARLINGTON LEA:

- improve the management of subcontracted provision
- develop systems to monitor learners' progress
- improve the curriculum management of subcontracted provision
- develop systems to assure the quality of subcontracted provision
- ensure that good practice is shared across the service
- improve the system and process for observation of teaching
- establish effective procedures for the assessment and monitoring of learning in subcontracted provision

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 mentor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning. Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	main learning goals Secondary learning goals	Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, e.g. in the family, community, or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge. These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
Personal and learning skills	Personal and learning skills	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

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

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

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- clear strategic management
- good partnership arrangements
- very good collaborative strategies to widen participation and support disadvantaged learners.

Weaknesses

- inadequate curriculum management of subcontracted provision
- poor management of subcontractors
- insufficient updating of policies relevant to equality of opportunity
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision
- inadequate system for the collection and analysis of data

36. The community strategy and the education service plan identify clear strategic priorities, values and goals for adult and community learning. These are reflected in the adult learning plan and demonstrate how the key themes of widening participation and social inclusion are at the centre of LCLS's provision. The plan has clear links with other key themes in the community strategy, such as raising educational achievement, improving literacy and numeracy for adults, and neighbourhood renewal. The performance of the service against key performance indicators is closely monitored by the head of service, and by the director and assistant director of education. The cabinet spokesperson for education receives regular performance reports and the monitoring of the adult learning plan by the scrutiny committee is satisfactory. LCLS has made good progress in meeting some of its performance targets. For example, in 2001 there were 10 schools involved in the family learning project with 167 learners. This has expanded to 20 schools in 2004 with 211 learners. This currently represents 38 per cent of the total of LCLS's learners. The numeracy achievement of children has improved to 42 per cent and literacy to 60 per cent. Adult literacy, numeracy and language achievements have increased to 91 per cent.

37. LCLS has established effective links with a wide range of partners to offer learning opportunities to adults. This strength is identified in the service's self-assessment report. LCLS is a member of the Darlington learning partnership, which includes representatives from public, private, voluntary and local community groups to oversee the learning strategy. The partnership encourages collaborative working to improve the range of opportunities for adults in Darlington. LCLS makes an important contribution to shaping the partnership's approach to adult and community learning. The community learning head of service is an active member of the adult and community learning sub group.

LCLS works collaboratively with a local further education college to offer support for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs. LCLS has successfully developed the community learning chest through which it funds community projects for a wide range of priority groups. In 2001-02, 36 local organisations were supported. Other successful community partnerships established through regeneration funding have led to the development of adult and community learning centres and a range of community programmes. In one area, over 80 adults who were previously unemployed and were not trained have secured employment.

38. Financial management is satisfactory, although the service has been slow to introduce course cost analysis. There is close monitoring of accounts by the council corporate finance audit team and independent external auditors. There are no audit concerns. Course fees are set on a cost recovery basis, although a significant proportion of learners have fees remitted. LCLS has exceeded its target learner numbers in 2001-02 and 2002-03. No target has been set for 2003-04 due to a cut in funding. The projected funding for 2004-05 will remain static. In 2005-06 projected funding is to be reduced by 33 per cent, which will hinder the long-term expansion of adult and community programmes and affect the ability of the service to deliver the targets set out in the adult learning plan.

39. LCLS is committed to the skills for life strategy and supports the provision of literacy, numeracy and language opportunities. LCLS's head of service was central to the development of the Darlington skills for life strategy. The community learning service is not a direct provider of literacy and numeracy support; however, the arrangements to identify the needs of adults taking part in subcontracted provision are inadequate. Staff awareness of the skills for life strategy is weak. This was identified in the self-assessment report as an area for development. The service works closely with local partners to ensure provision is locally accessible, and if a literacy, numeracy or language need is identified, learners are referred. In family learning, a wide range of accredited courses are provided in literacy, numeracy and computing. Significant progress has been made in improving adults' literacy and numeracy skills through the family learning programme. Currently retention rates are 78 per cent, with 84 per cent achievement owing to some learners taking more than one qualification simultaneously. Progression routes are available for learners. Over 21 per cent of learners progressed to learning programmes provided by other organisations.

40. The council operates a satisfactory system for appraisal, development and review. LCLS's full-time staff are well supported. Each member of staff has an individual training and development plan. Professional development reviews take place every six months. The council has recently introduced a competency-based framework. When concerns are raised regarding competency to carry out job roles, training is provided. In addition to job-related training, staff are encouraged to attend a wide range of staff development programmes. Staff development activities are fully evaluated and results are used to improve and develop new courses. Opportunities for the part-time staff of subcontractors are made available, but take up is extremely poor. The council staff development procedures are not applied to part-time staff.

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41. The curriculum management of subcontracted provision is inadequate. This represents 62 per cent of LCLS's learners, covering programmes subcontracted to schools, and that subcontracted through the community chest. LCLS has recently appointed a community learning manager to work closely with community co-ordinators in the school-based centres. In some centres, the range of provision is narrow and there are insufficient appropriate progression routes. All centre co-ordinators and tutors have received a comprehensive staff handbook from LCLS, yet the guidelines are not consistently followed. Procedures for initial assessment are weak and there is insufficient attention given to the development of individual learning plans. Some learners start programmes without a health and safety or course induction. Reviews are infrequent, and in some centres they don't take place at all. Planning of the curriculum is poor. There is no collaboration between centres, which limits the development of a coherent and appropriate curriculum. There is no consistency in the planning of course content, or duration of programmes. The marketing of courses is poor. The information leaflets provide insufficient detail about the course content and intended outcomes. There is no effective central monitoring of attendance. Registers are returned to LCLS at the end of the course, and this makes it difficult for staff to respond to early leavers.

42. The management of subcontractors is poor. The contract has recently been reviewed to include a detailed service level agreement that clearly identifies the service's and the subcontractor's responsibilities and the service standard expected. The new contracts have yet to be issued. Some centres have not had a contract for some time. Co-ordinators and tutors do not have contracts with LCLS, which leads to confusion about their role and accountability. There are no systematic recruitment and selection arrangements for part-time tutors. They are often referred by word of mouth. Tutors' records are incomplete and LCLS does not routinely authenticate the details provided. There are a number of subcontracting chains, where subcontractors further subcontract to other providers. There is no formal arrangement or agreement between LCLS and these subcontractors.

E quality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

43. LCLS works very well with partners to widen participation and to support disadvantaged learners. This is appropriate to the strategic aim of the service, and with the priorities set by the borough council. The service works with a considerable number of voluntary and community organisations and groups. It helps to facilitate community action in the wards identified as the most deprived within Darlington. The skills of service staff enable organisations to access funding and residents to identify and access appropriate training. The successful bid for learndirect was put together by a member of LCLS's team, and partnership with the local college has resulted in the college staffing nine of the UK online facilities, which are again based in identified areas of deprivation. The community learning chest is used effectively to support voluntary and community groups by funding learning and training, and the groups supported in this way meet the needs of the service's target groups. Although the amounts available to individual groups are limited, there has been imaginative use of the funds to initiate learning opportunities for the elderly, for minority ethnic groups, for women at risk of violence, for the recovering mentally ill, and for learners with a disability. Learners are clear about

the benefits of the community learning chest programmes they have attended and have used the learning and skills gained, in their lives and their communities. The fund has also been accessed for staff training within voluntary organisations. Applicants to the fund appreciate the low level of bureaucracy involved in applying, but, there is insufficient quality control of the subcontracted provision. Use of the community learning chest helps to ensure that provision is locally based, as does the service's partnerships with the schools.

44. Family learning programmes which are directly delivered by the service, are based at nursery and primary schools across the borough, and learners on these programmes use the skills gained with their children and families, and to the benefit of the schools and their communities. The subcontracted adult and community learning provision takes place at a number of the secondary schools. This provision is first step provision and discussion with learners indicated their appreciation of its local and non-threatening nature. However, there is no formal checking of promotion and understanding of equality and diversity with regard to the subcontracted programmes. Plans have been agreed and funding secured for an extended school in one of the most deprived wards of the borough. The project will involve the first purpose-built adult learning centre in Darlington, as well as the primary and junior schools, nursery and Sure Start.

45. Equality of opportunity is satisfactorily managed. The recently appointed community learning manager now has a brief to manage equality of opportunity, although that role was carried out previously by the head of service. A priority for the service has been the development and effective implementation of strategies to widen participation and to deal with disadvantage. Some research has been commissioned by the service into the needs of the black minority ethnic group in Darlington, and an exercise to match family learning has been commissioned. Both of these reports are comprehensive. The research to the needs of black minority ethnic residents has helped develop council strategy and has been used by the racial equality council to support applications for funding and training developments. The targeting decisions of LCLS have been based on demographic information and ward data. However, the gathering and analysis of service data relevant to equality of opportunity, and its systematic use to contribute to planning is insufficiently developed. The service is operating within a limited budget, and provision is therefore necessarily restricted. However, the community learning chest has proved an effective strategy in supporting target organisations at minimal cost. The service's contracting out policy for adult and community learning means that the provision based in schools is subject to the host school's decisions as to when accommodation can be accessed by the service. However, the use of the schools is cost-effective, as it is at no cost to the service. Although the subcontracting process limits the timing of provision, efforts are being made with other post-16 providers in the town to work towards complementary provision.

46. Recruitment and selection procedures for core staff are appropriate and in accordance with the borough council procedures. However, the recruitment of subcontracted staff is customarily by invitation rather than by open recruitment.

47. Equality of opportunity training for core staff is satisfactory. There is corporate

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training for borough council staff, differentiated according to role. There is also corporate race equality training to cover the Race Relations Act 2000. The employee information pack directs new employees to the relevant policies, including equality of opportunity, racial equality, anti-harassment and bullying, and grievance. The level and updating of equality of opportunity training for subcontracted staff is not checked, nor is the promotion of equality of opportunity to learners attending subcontracted provision checked. The service has purchased disability equality training from Darlington association on disability to further reinforce partnership working. This training has been attended by some members of the core staff.

48. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory in relation to equality of opportunity. An audit of council property has been carried out to ensure accessibility for those with restricted mobility, and ramps have been installed where necessary. The service's disability statement includes moving classes should access cause further problems within buildings. The library, where some provision is based, has been awarded 'access for all' status. Learners on ICT programmes can be supported with resources for sensory impairment, and those attending art courses for the first time can use materials at no cost.

49. Publicity and information for the service and its provision does not routinely carry an equal opportunities statement. However, adaptations have been made which resolve some equal opportunities concerns. The learners' information pack is written in black on yellow paper to meet guidelines for those with a sight impairment. The pack contains a range of general information on equality and an appropriate learners' charter. However, not all sections of the document are written in appropriately accessible language. The service's disability statement is similarly written in black on yellow paper, and is appropriately straightforward. Promotional material for family learning contains a range of appropriate images, and an information leaflet has been produced in Bengali to meet the needs of the largest minority ethnic community in the town. The council advertises that literature is available in formats to meet language and sensory needs. There is currently no use by the service of the council's website for promotional purposes.

50. The service operates within the policies and procedures of Darlington Borough Council for equality of opportunity. These policies are comprehensive, and cover equality of opportunity and racial equality. However, the policies have not been reviewed recently and do not include a reference to the most recent relevant legislation.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

51. LCLS produced its second self-assessment report in December 2003. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The report is thorough and includes accredited and non-accredited programmes. The process fully involved stakeholders, learners, tutors, centre co-ordinators and full-time community learning staff. Strengths and weaknesses were considered against the requirements of the 'Common Inspection Framework'. The final report was accurate and self-critical. Weaknesses which were identified in the self-assessment report have been incorporated into a development plan which is regularly reviewed by staff. The judgements in the self-assessment report were consistent with

those of inspectors.

52. Quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision are inadequate. This has been recognised in the self-assessment report and a quality assurance co-ordinator was recently appointed to resolve the problems with the quality assurance arrangements. There is no planned quality assurance cycle, and no clearly established strategy or quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted adult and community learning provision. The quality assurance policy has not been updated since LCLS was established, and the current arrangements are inappropriate for the provision now being offered. There is no monitoring of the quality of service provided by subcontractors. There is insufficient guidance for tutors to ensure consistency of approach with initial advice and guidance, initial assessment, teaching and learning or the development of individual learning plans. Part-time tutors are not very well supported. Some staff are unfamiliar with quality assurance arrangements. Guidance for induction and learner reviews is included in the staff handbook, but it is not followed by tutors. There are inadequate monitoring arrangements to identify this problem. Learners' surveys are carried out at the end of each programme. The feedback is collected and some analysis of themes is completed, but no further action is taken to deal with the weaknesses identified. The tutor observation process is not consistently applied. Not all curriculum areas have been observed and the quality of some feedback in subcontracted provision following observations is poor. Similar comments are used for several tutors, and statements are bland and unhelpful. One of the community centres is using a different system altogether. A number of feedback forms have not been signed by the observer or tutor, they are not dated and action plans are not followed up. Some observers do not have specialist qualifications in the curriculum area they are observing. There is no evidence to suggest that the observation process is leading to improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.

53. The management information system used for the collection and analysis of data is inadequate. Management information is not used effectively and the data are unreliable. The current system is cumbersome and is mainly used for contract compliance. Data are not used systematically to establish trends, or as a planning tool for decisions on the curriculum. In some centres poor satisfaction rates, poor recruitment, and poor retention and achievement, are not being identified nor is any action taken. There is no analysis of retention or achievement between centres, courses or specific groups of learners. There is no analysis of early leaver trends. Retention and achievement targets are set for the service as a whole, but not for individual centres or learning programmes. Specific reports often have to be completed manually and simple queries take excessive amounts of time to complete. The service is trying to develop the management information system, but limited funds are hindering progress.

54. Quality assurance arrangements for family learning are good. Although the subcontracted arrangements to provide external observations of teaching and learning are not proving effective, there is a thorough self-assessment. The family learning co-ordinator observes sessions as well as tutors' peers to appraise performance. This enables staff to identify future training needs. New tutors are well supported through a mentoring scheme. Internal moderation is satisfactory. Staff regularly share good

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practice which is contributing to the quality of family learning programmes.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	38	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good specialist resources for ICT

Weaknesses

- poor curriculum management
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress

Achievement and standards

55. Retention over the programme area as a whole is satisfactory at 68 per cent. However, it is erratic and varies from 23 per cent to 100 per cent on 10-week courses. There is no system for following up learners' absences. The LCLS does not collect or see registers until the courses are complete.

56. Achievement is not formally measured and it is not recorded. In many cases, retention and achievement are seen as being the same thing. The quality of learners' achievement is satisfactory. In beginners courses, they learn how to safely switch on a computer and to use the keyboard and mouse. Learners quickly gain confidence and are willing to experiment with features of software. In follow-on courses, they learn to use a wider range of software and more advanced features of word-processing. While most achievement is at the standard expected, some learners achieve well and continue to use the skills developed after the course. For example, an older learner regularly uses library computers to keep in e-mail contact with family members.

Quality of education and training

57. There are good specialist resources. The computers are up to date, the software is modern and it is consistently configured on all computers at each site. The networks are stable and reliable, and work more quickly than required to support learners on these courses. They also have speedy access to the internet. Interactive whiteboards are available in all centres. LCLS has a set of modern laptop computers to enable learning to take place in community venues. Partnerships with primary schools and UK-online centres increase the number of venues where training can be delivered. Information Technology (IT) classrooms are large, well ventilated and are readily accessible. Many are furnished with specialist chairs and most have adequate desk space around the

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computers. Adaptive technologies for people with a physical disability are widely available. These include software to enlarge the screen image for the partially sighted, and tracker balls and large mice for those with limited manual dexterity.

58. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in 80 per cent of sessions. Twenty per cent of sessions are good or better. In all sessions, learners gain new skills at a level which is appropriate to their needs and their course. Beginners learn to switch on the computer safely and to use a keyboard and mouse to control the machine. They learn the basic features of a word processor and often can access the internet. They quickly gain confidence in using a computer and experiment with the features of the software. Learners on follow-on courses learn to use other software packages and more advanced features of the word processor. Tutors use their technical expertise effectively to enable learners to make progress, and offer good support while learners are working on practical tasks. However, in some cases, tutors are too quick to take control of the learner's computer. Lesson planning is inconsistent, with insufficient emphasis on learning outcomes. Plans do not always match the lesson taught. In some sessions, the learners' progress is hindered by the use of inappropriate exercises such as too much copy typing. In one case, the software being used was not the most appropriate and learners' progress again was hindered. Some tutors use a limited range of strategies to assist learning: the most common being an over-reliance on printed worksheets with tutor support.

59. Within budgetary limitations, the range of programmes offered is satisfactory. Having identified the lack of progression as a weakness in the self-assessment report, the provider has worked to improve it. Programme planning is not coherent across the provision. There is a good range of progression opportunities available with other providers in the locality, but many learners express the wish to continue their learning in the community environments in which they feel comfortable. Programmes are not varied or tailored to the needs of the learners.

60. The support for learners is satisfactory. Most tutors have effective working relationships with learners and the learners value their support. The learners discuss their concerns and anxieties openly and freely with tutors. Learners also support one another. In some courses, learners receive a talk from a representative of the local college to explain possible progression routes, but this is not consistently carried out.

61. There is inadequate monitoring of learners' progress. Assessment is insufficiently focused on the progress learners are making in developing their IT skills. Learners' work is commented on verbally but only in order to correct it, rather than to give an indication of progress. Learners leave courses unaware of their skill levels. There is no formal initial assessment of learners' skills when they join a course. Individual learning plans, when completed, do not contain any learning outcomes or intermediate targets. There is inadequate formal recording of the learners' progress. Output from exercises is usually the only record of achievement. There is inadequate use of questioning by tutors to check understanding.

Leadership and management

62. The curriculum management is poor in ICT. There is no overview of the programme offered. Courses are added by centre co-ordinators as a result of informal market research. However, learners do not fill the courses as the marketing indicates and some courses are run with very small numbers. Others have had to be re-scheduled at a more convenient time to attract sufficient learners to be viable. Tutors do not have targets for retention or achievement.

63. Contract arrangements with subcontractors are inadequate. There is no subject expertise in the management team, nor is it sought by the team. Schemes of work are required to be submitted, but they are not subject to a management approval process. There are inappropriate teaching and learning methods planned in some courses. Publicity materials show that the subject matter is not understood, particularly relating to prior knowledge requirements. They do not describe courses adequately. Courses have been run at the same centre with same name but for different lengths of time. Most tutors have been observed, but the action plans resulting from these observations are not time-bound and have not been implemented. Tutors do not share good practice.

64. There are no systems or guidelines for tutors to make an assessment of learners' additional support needs. Tutors are unaware of support mechanisms for learners who need support with literacy, numeracy or language.

Visual & performing arts & media**Grade**

Program es inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	44	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- good resources
- some good teaching

Weaknesses

- inadequate assessment practices
- inadequate programme planning
- poor management of the curriculum

Achievement and standards

65. Learners progress well in this area of learning and produce good work to a high standard. This is displayed in portfolios of work and exhibitions of three dimensional work across all classes. In art classes, learners are encouraged to explore perspective, composition and colour. They also experiment with drawing and painting techniques and a wide variety of media such as pastels, oil paint and acrylics. Some learners in the card-making class have achieved a professional and commercial standard of work. Most learners produce gifts for their friends and family. One class visits local art galleries as a group and plan to try outdoor sketching in the lighter evenings. In the pottery class, learners produce a wide variety of work from the sculptural to traditional ceramics, experimenting with all types of glazes and slips. All the learners are very aware of the new skills they are acquiring. They talk enthusiastically of the progress they have made and the increase in their confidence. Learners work at their own pace and often continue or finish work at home. Retention is good at 90 per cent and the attendance in all classes is good. However, some classes run with low numbers. While all staff monitor the learners' progress well and offer advice and guidance where appropriate, there are no formal assessments in any of the classes.

Quality of education and training

66. There are good resources in this area of learning. Classrooms are large for the practical nature of the work. They are very suitable for learners with restricted mobility, well lit and warm with informative and stimulating displays on the walls. Tools and equipment are modern and well maintained. Where appropriate, there are large tables and easels provided for learners to work comfortably. Most classrooms have large

storage areas for learners' work. In the pottery class, learners have good access to a kiln and all materials are provided. In other art and craft classes some materials are available for learners to experiment with, before purchasing their own. Life models are occasionally provided in the drawing class. A wide range of different types of drawing and craft paper is available. The correct tools and inks to execute lino cuts are provided free. Other reference material such as books and photographs are readily available for the learners to use. Some tutors have reference books to purchase which enable the learners to carry out work at home. Tutors are appropriately qualified, and many are practising artists.

67. The grade profile shows that 70 per cent of the teaching is good or better. Many of the tutors run their own businesses and are able to offer an in-depth understanding of up-to-date methods and materials. Tutors plan their lessons effectively. All tutors demonstrate enthusiasm for their subject and inspire learners to develop high standards of work. Good demonstrations, supported by imaginative handouts, set standards to which learners can aspire. Learners are encouraged to share their work and ideas. In all cases, tutors and learners enjoy a good working relationship which supports and encourages learners to explore new ways of working. Some learners are set homework which is discussed as a group and feedback is given by tutors the following week. Learners are very supportive of each other and discuss their work with confidence. They make good progress in the practical sessions. However, there is no formal initial assessment of learners' starting point, and individual learning plans are inadequate. In one session observed, a new learner was not given an induction covering health and safety.

68. Learners with restricted mobility receive appropriate support in the classes and buildings have good access. However, there is little course information for the learner to make an informed choice about programmes and no information on material costs. The publicity materials do not explain the course in depth and they are not prepared by the tutor delivering the class. One of the leaflets contains incorrect information and the course has an inappropriate title. There is no routine induction on health and safety and this has serious implications in some programmes. There is no formal procedure to identify learners who have literacy, numeracy and language needs. Support for literacy, numeracy and language is not an integral part of the programmes in this area of learning.

69. Assessment practices are inadequate. There is no initial assessment and insufficient information is gathered. Learners' starting points are not identified, and previous experience is not taken into consideration. Goal setting is poor for many learners and learners are not always able to identify what they need to do to improve. Individual learning plans are not being used to plan and record learners' progress. Thirty-four of the individual learning plans observed contained only the learner's name and address. The format is inappropriate and does not adequately identify and record the learner's progress. While tutors give good verbal feedback on work, little is recorded and learners have no supporting evidence of the progress they have made.

70. The programme planning is inadequate. All the courses in visual and performing arts are non-accredited. There are limited progression opportunities and learners repeat

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courses each year. Some advice on progression is given, but this is limited. Learners are reluctant to move to other centres. As accommodation is not readily available, classes are restricted to twilight and evening only. All the art and craft classes in the two main centres are held on the same evening and this restricts the learners' access to one centre each term. There is no collaboration as yet between the centres on courses being run, advertising or sharing of good practice. There is no provision for ICT in visual arts. This area of learning does not include performing arts, which is catered for by other providers in the borough. Due to budget restrictions, LCLS provides a narrow range of non-accredited courses with a commitment to first step provision.

Leadership and management

71. Curriculum management is poor. There is no specific leadership in visual and performing arts. There is no forum to discuss concerns such as curriculum innovation, or the integration of ICT into the arts curriculum. Liaison between centre co-ordinators is not yet developed and arts programmes are running on the same evening in the two largest centres. Tutors are recruited by word of mouth and are employed by the curriculum centre managers. There are inadequate cover arrangements for staff. One tutor teaches three subjects, two of which are on visual and performing arts. There are no contingency cover plans should this tutor be unable to work. Advertised classes are sometimes cancelled if tutors are too busy in other employment. Tutor observation is inconsistent, with some tutors reviewed every six months and others who have not been observed at all. Completed observation forms show little understanding of the community learning programme or the curriculum area. The resulting action plans are not signed and dated. There is some staff development and tutors are happy with the support they receive. The marketing is limited and does not always give clear information on what classes are available, or of the costs involved for materials. One course, which was planned to run in the autumn term, was not advertised at all. Learner numbers in some classes are low. One class had an inappropriate title and this led to confusion over the subject being taught. Only one learner in this area was identified as having additional needs or restricted mobility. The learner was well supported by the staff. There are no procedures to check that appropriate health and safety practices are being followed. In a woodwork class, a new learner was not given any induction on health and safety before being allowed to use potentially dangerous tools.

English, languages & communications**Grade 4**

Program es inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	29	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good use of programme area to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate management of curriculum
- poor monitoring of progress and achievement
- insufficient information, advice and guidance

Achievement and standards

72. The learners' achievements are satisfactory. In the initial stages of the courses, they are able to carry out simple dialogues in the target language. Some can read material which is put before them, and can follow recorded dialogues. In some lessons however, they are given insufficient time to practise their speaking and listening skills, and spend too much time listening to the tutor speaking in English. They value the opportunity to practise their skills in foreign countries. They speak positively of the confidence they have gained through learning a language. Some learners have enjoyed the experience of learning a language and have then moved on to learn other languages. Some new learners have been sufficiently enthused by the experience to continue further.

Quality of education and training

73. The languages programme is well designed to meet the needs of new learners. Holiday languages provide a short introduction to the basic elements of the languages concerned, and there are opportunities for progression to other providers in the borough. Questionnaires are sent out to parents through schoolchildren, and the responses are used to help plan new provision. Although there is some evidence that this approach is working, the system is in its infancy, and learners are not yet coming through in great numbers. There are instances of staff failing to tailor courses to learners' needs. Learners then find the courses too difficult, and ask tutors to repeat them later in the year. Two of the three centres running language provision are in disadvantaged wards. One centre recruits children and adult learners from the school's catchment area, and the courses are contributing to the efforts to widen participation. There is evidence that some learners value the interaction with their children or grand-children in language classes. The informal atmosphere in the classes puts new learners at ease, and encourages them to continue their studies.

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74. Teaching is satisfactory. In the best lessons, tutors have detailed schemes of work and lesson plans which indicate the intended learning outcomes for the class. Some schemes of work however, are little more than a list of topics, with no indication of the language functions to be taught. Some tutors encourage students to converse, but others do not have the skills to set up and manage classroom interaction. In the smaller classes, there are limited opportunities for interaction to take place. In one class, students read out long lists of vocabulary without having the opportunity to practise them in conversation. In some classes, tutors rely too heavily on the use of English, rather than the target language. Some tutors produce their own materials, which are dull and unimaginative, and contain errors. In those classes, the learners find the volume of such materials daunting. In the best classes, teaching methods are well suited to learners' needs. In one class, a group of elderly learners who were new to language study were being taken through basic vocabulary for food at a pace which suited them and held their attention. Where parents and children work alongside each other, both parties participate well in classroom activities.

75. Resources are satisfactory. Classes take place in comfortable rooms which are well lit and attractive, and where there is no extraneous noise to intrude on lessons. Some tutors have access to up-to-date books and equipment, and make good use of them to encourage and sustain the learners' interest. There are, however, too many examples of dull and uninspiring materials which are generally produced when tutors do not have access to specialised curriculum support and professional development. Not all tutors are sufficiently well-qualified or experienced, and in such cases, this has an adverse impact on learning.

76. Assessment practices are poor. There is no systematic attempt made to determine the learners' prior learning. For example, an experienced language learner joined a beginners' course for a new language, but was obliged to progress at the pace of those with no previous language experience. No individual objectives are set for learners, and there is no formal mechanism for monitoring or recording the progress which they are making. Individual learning plans are being piloted, but the need for these is not understood by learners, tutors or administrative staff. Some staff can describe in general terms the progress being made by learners, but this knowledge is not used for course planning or lesson preparation.

77. Information, advice and guidance for foreign language learners are unsatisfactory. There are few opportunities for detailed guidance for learners, on the most suitable level of course to join before enrolment. Learners' prior experience of learning languages is not always explored. Course leaflets contain no information on the resources required, and details on the topics to be covered are insufficient. In addition, leaflets are not generally available in the borough and language teachers are not involved in drawing up the leaflets about their courses. There is no system of diagnostic assessment to ascertain learners' additional learning needs, nor is there a system for the deployment of additional learning support. There is a suggested induction programme for new learners, but there is no way of knowing whether this takes place, or how well it is carried out. The learners' information pack is in a language which is not accessible to all learners, and not all tutors have seen it. There is no evidence that the tutors' handbook is valued by them. The

community learning service has links with the Darlington information, advice and guidance service, but these are too new to have made a significant impact on learners. Information on progression opportunities are not routinely built into the courses.

Leadership and management

78. The management of the languages curriculum is inadequate. Data are unreliable and are not used for programme planning or to promote equality of opportunity. There is no curriculum specialist who has an overview of, or responsibility for, the provision. There is no programme of quality improvement, and only one lesson observation has been carried out to date. There is insufficient participation of teaching staff in the self-assessment process. Five questionnaires were distributed to staff as part of the process, but none were returned. Although targets are set for retention, there are no meaningful targets set for achievement, as this is defined by the number of learners attending the final session of a course. There is no programme of professional development for tutors. Staff are expected to ask if they need their language teaching skills updated. Centre co-ordinators are primarily administrative posts and do not currently play a role in quality assurance. Centre co-ordinators do not meet to jointly plan a coherent languages programme.

79. There is no evidence that equality of opportunity is being effectively promoted to learners. It is included in the learners' information pack, but there is no mechanism for ensuring that it is delivered as part of the induction. New languages staff are not briefed on equality of opportunity, and are not always given guidance on what is expected of them as tutors. The section on equality of opportunity does not explain to staff what the implications of this information are for learners. Some part-time tutors feel that they are unsupported in their role.

Family learning**Grade**

Program mes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	54	1

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- outstanding achievements
- particularly effective teaching and learning
- wide range of good resources
- good assessment and monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective leadership and responsive management of the curriculum

Weaknesses

- inadequate class observations

Achievement and standards

80. The learners' achievements are outstanding. Learners have a wide range of learning goals, including personal improvement and acquiring skills which make a difference to their lives and benefit their local communities. Parents develop a good understanding of the way their children are taught at school. For example, some learners have achieved the 'helping in schools' accreditation and are now using their learning skills in classroom activities. Head teachers are committed to the programme and fully understand the benefits to the children and parents. The children's abilities have increased in numeracy by 42 per cent, in literacy by 60 per cent and in improved behaviour by 48 per cent. Learners increase their personal confidence and self-esteem so that they progress significantly from their starting point and meet the challenges of their programmes of study. Their learning is often greater than they anticipate at the start of the course. In one craft course, a learner was able to talk knowledgeably about the craft skills she had learned in making a glove puppet, and had taken an active part in sharing the skills with her grandchildren in story telling and role-play. Learning goals are meaningful for individual learners. For instance, parents chose to complete a beginners' computing course in order to help their children with literacy by writing poems and making cards at home. Over 21 per cent of learners progressed to learning programmes provided by other organisations, out of which, 2.2 per cent went on to Darlington college. Many learners progress to other training and education and employment. Some have used the knowledge and skills they have learnt to attain teaching and teaching assistants' qualifications. Learners are able to organise their own independent learning and to transfer their skills to working with their families. All learners have the option of attaining accreditation and 99 per cent of those completing the course have done so. Seventy-eight per cent of learners completed their programme in 2002-03, with 84 per cent achievement of accreditation, some learners having completed more than one

qualification simultaneously.

uality of education and training

81. Particularly effective teaching and learning ensures that lesson plans are thorough and flexible, with good aims and objectives. Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods and take account of group and individual learning needs. Good use is made of individual tuition. For example, in a beginners computing class, a demonstration of a useful technique was practised with one another to reinforce the learning so they could then share the knowledge with their children. Learners are allowed to progress steadily at their own pace and are challenged to reach their potential. Learners are motivated and engaged by well-prepared, lively group discussions which are widely used to introduce new topics. For instance, in a substance training education class, the tutor introduced the potential misuse of alcohol with a fun, interactive game before turning the learners' minds very subtly to the serious consequences of misuse and how it affects families. Tutors plan with sensitivity and work well to create a climate in which learners are happy to share in and enrich the group learning experience. In a 'let's talk' literacy group, the tutor and other learners encouraged a nervous learner who was able to add to an anecdote about family life. This was a big step for her and a success for the whole class. Learners receive clear, constructive ongoing feedback so they know where they stand and are then capable of planning their own schedule of project work. Peer group learning gives self-esteem to some and confidence to others in diverse groups of parents with differing backgrounds and interests. They are then able to help their children in the same positive way.

82. There is a wide range of good resources. The tutor/learner ratio is appropriate at one tutor for eight learners and staff understand and are able to meet the needs of learners of all abilities and from a wide range of backgrounds. Staff development is available for all staff, including part-time tutors. Suitable, up-to-date learning materials and equipment are provided at no cost in all local venues. Some classes are building up their own bank of useful resources so they are never short of ideas and the means to put them into practice. Accommodation is appropriate for adults, with full-sized chairs and tables in all primary and nursery schools. Crèche facilities are provided free for all courses. The library service is fully available for all courses for independent learning. For example, learners on a beginners' computer class are using their skills to carry out a detailed history of the school where they are working and which their children attend. The research for this will be carried out using library facilities and will be of great interest to the community.

83. Good assessment practice is applied thoroughly and sensitively. Tutors are successful in identifying the skills and knowledge learners possess initially and devise a learning plan that is suitable to each individual. Learners' achievements and progress are recorded and programmes are flexibly planned to change or develop according to learners' ongoing needs and goals. All assessment, verification and moderation procedures meet with regulatory body criteria. Individual learning plans are used as working documents and support learners' aims. A final review and evaluation of learning

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leads to appropriate progression to other courses or employment.

84. Programmes and courses meet the needs of the learners. Courses operate during the school day at times to suit learners. Learners can progress to other courses in the same programme or to the local college. They are made fully aware of these options. Learners have been able to take part in local activities during family learning weekend and in neighbourhood schools and nurseries.

85. Learners are given sensitive guidance and support. Leaflets, posters and the press are used to advertise family learning courses. Potential learners have the opportunity to discuss their requirements and receive information about learning programmes at informal coffee mornings in their own neighbourhoods. Impartial advice is given on learning opportunities in the area. For instance, if a course is running at a different school to that attended by a learner's child, arrangements can easily be made for attendance. All learners are given support to help them attend and complete their courses.

Leadership and management

86. Leadership and management of the curriculum in family learning is very effective and responsive to learners' needs. A wide range of accredited courses is provided in literacy, numeracy, computing, story-telling, drugs education and craftwork. These programmes allow learners and their children the opportunity to work together, while others, such as 'helping in schools', are aimed at parents' own personal development. Progression routes are made available for all learners and some have enrolled on teaching assistant and certificate in education courses at the local college.

87. Courses are promoted through leaflets and letters from local primary schools and nurseries where sessions take place. Induction days are held before the start of the programme and the curriculum is flexible enough for learners to have an input. For instance, a school was offering a literacy course, but learners requested a beginners computing course which would help with their children's future learning needs.

88. Quality assurance arrangements for family learning are good. The family learning team, consisting of the co-ordinator and tutors, meet on a regular basis to monitor and evaluate course content and outcomes and to share good practice. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and a range of staff development such as literacy, numeracy, drugs misuse, computing and health and safety is planned and attended by family learning tutors. Demanding targets for retention at 78 per cent, and progression and achievement, at 84 per cent, are met. Thorough self-assessment takes place on an ongoing basis and the team, as well as learners, have had a substantial input into the self-assessment report. Internal moderation is satisfactory.

89. All courses are consistently good. Good use is made of schemes of work and well-organised lesson plans which are standard throughout the area. New tutors shadow more experienced colleagues and are mentored for as long as needed to ensure confidence and a high level of teaching. Class observations are unsatisfactory. While the

family learning co-ordinator observes sessions as well as tutors' peers, some observations are carried out by a subcontractor. These observations are documented and action plans are designed, but they are not appropriate to the area of learning, nor to community learning in particular.

90. Equality of opportunity is promoted through all aspects of the family learning programme. All programmes are delivered free of charge, including the provision of free materials. The provision is taken into local communities and takes place in familiar, non-threatening situations. Some of the many successful learners on the courses would never have taken a first step back into learning without the equal opportunities code of practice being implemented.

91. Learners on the family learning programmes have diverse learning needs and thorough initial assessment is used to guide learners onto an appropriate course. This helps to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills with sensitive, supporting tutors and peers.