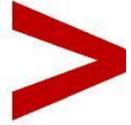




Learning+Skills Council

Key findings from inspections of adult and community learning providers that took place in the autumn term of 2002

Quality and Standards
Evaluation and Good Practice Team
April 2003



INTRODUCTION

Following a series of pilot inspections of adult and community learning between January and May 2002, the first 17 full inspections of adult and community learning providers took place between the beginning of October and the end of December 2002.

A report produced in January 2003 looked at the findings of the first four inspections. This report builds on the January report. It summarises the findings of all 17 inspections and identifies common issues.

A list of key strengths and weaknesses is attached at annex A.

The providers

The 17 providers inspected were in the local LSC areas of Berkshire, London Central, London East, Shropshire and the West of England. Thirteen of them were local education authorities (LEAs). The others were a community-based education and training centre, an adult education centre and two registered charities.

Delivery models

The 13 LEAs have adopted one of three models for the management and delivery of their provision: five manage their provision directly; three sub-contract all of it to a mix of further education colleges, schools and community organisations; five combine sub-contracted with directly managed provision. The other four deliver their own provision.

Overall judgements

For 10 providers, the overall quality of provision was adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. For six it was inadequate. One provider will undergo a partial reinspection.

SUMMARY OF GRADES

The table below shows the number of providers awarded each grade for areas of learning, and for leadership and management.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Construction			1		
Business administration, management and professional		1	1		
Information and communication technology		2	8	2	
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel		5	4	1	
Health, social care and public services		2			
Visual and performing arts and media		10	5		
Humanities				1	
English, languages and communications		1	4	2	
Foundation programmes		3	7	3	
Family learning		1	3		
Community learning/action		5	1		
Other adult and community learning		2		1	
Leadership and management	1		10	6	
Equal opportunities		5	9	2	1
Quality assurance		1	1	15	

Grades for leadership and management, and for areas of learning, range from grade 1 (outstanding) to grade 5 (very weak).

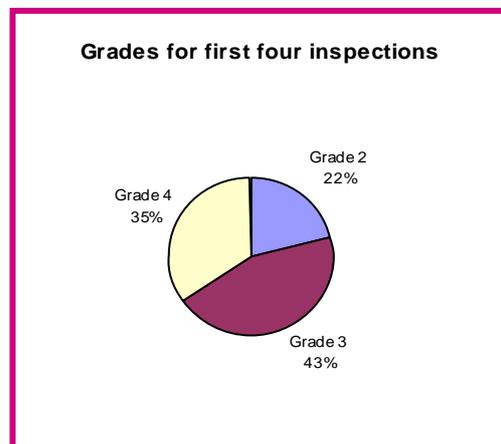
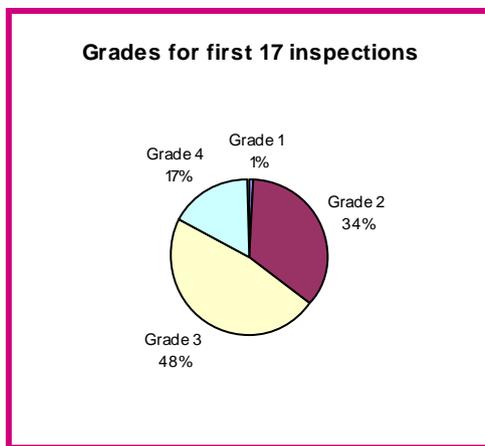
Quality assurance is an area of weakness. It is unsatisfactory in the case of 15 providers. It is good at one provider and satisfactory at another.

Visual and performing arts and media provision is strong across the 15 providers that offer it. It is good with 10 providers and satisfactory with five.

Provision in the following learning areas is satisfactory or better in the case of the providers that offer it:

- construction
- business administration, management and professional
- health, social care and public services
- visual and performing arts and media
- family learning
- community learning/action

The pie charts below show the percentage of grades awarded to areas of learning, and to leadership and management in the first 17 and first four inspections. The pie charts do not include the contributory grades for equality of opportunity and quality assurance.



The percentage of grades 2 is higher for the first 17 inspections than the first four inspections and the percentage of grades 4 is lower.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS

Leadership and management

Quality assurance procedures are generally ineffective. They do not lead to a cycle of continuous improvement. In the case of some providers, procedures do not cover all necessary areas. Other providers have developed quality assurance procedures but their procedures have not been in place long enough to have had an impact on provision. Only two of the 17 providers have quality assurance procedures that are satisfactory or better.

Most providers that sub-contract provision fail to manage it effectively. There is inadequate monitoring of the quality of the provision. The targets set for learners are often not specific enough or do not contribute directly to their learning plans.

Nine providers have productive partnership arrangements. For example, they work with further education colleges, schools, disability groups, and community groups and are members of formal partnerships such as lifelong learning partnerships. In the most productive cases, partners contribute to the development of the provision, avoiding duplication of effort and resources.

Eight providers fail to plan and manage the curriculum effectively to meet the needs of learners. Some providers have been offering the same courses for a long time and there are no procedures in place to check that their programmes continue to meet community needs. Some providers react to demand and fail to take a long term view of curriculum development.

The quality of strategic planning is varied. In the case of six providers who have clear strategies to develop adult and community learning, such planning is a strength. The strategic planning of five providers, however, is weak.

The majority of providers are concerned to reach groups that are traditionally under-represented in education and have developed effective strategies to do this. For example, one provider carried out a 'participation analysis' to enable it to measure the impact of adult and community learning in areas identified as relatively deprived. The information gained was then used to influence decisions on project work. Another provider has a wide range of projects aimed at under-represented groups. The target groups include unemployed adults, those on low incomes, mental health service users, carers, older learners, and adults recovering from drug and alcohol dependency.

The promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities are carried out with varying degrees of effectiveness. In one example of good practice, the provider has an equality assurance committee which meets every term to monitor progress towards targets set for the recruitment of learners, and to discuss a wide range of equal

opportunities issues. One provider has very weak provision for equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity arrangements are not formalised or monitored, and learners are not fully aware of the arrangements.

Areas of learning

Only 17 inspections of adult and community learning providers have been carried out so far. The individual strengths and weaknesses in areas of learning are identified in each of the 17 published reports. Only those highlighted regularly in reports are discussed here. A full picture will emerge as more inspection reports are published.

At the majority of providers, the quality of teaching is good on some or all courses. Most teachers are appropriately experienced. One provider has particularly knowledgeable visual and performing arts tutors.

Nine providers have high achievement rates on some or all courses. At one provider in particular, learners recognise their achievements and talk confidently about the progress they are making.

In many cases, initial assessment is weak and the progress of learners is not planned and monitored effectively. In two cases, providers do not have formal systems for monitoring the progress of learners.

Six providers need to improve their mechanisms for sharing good practice. For example, two providers do not have standardised schemes of work. Individual tutors produce their own schemes of work even when the subject is taught at the same level for different sessions. In the case of some providers, where the quality of teaching varies significantly, this sharing of good practice should help improve the overall quality of teaching.

KEY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS

INSPECTION REPORTS

This summary has been compiled from the findings of the following reports. Copies of the full reports can be found at <http://www.ali.gov.uk/>.

- Bath and North East Somerset LEA
- Bracknell Forest LEA
- Bristol LEA
- Camden LEA
- Elfrida Rathbone (Camden)
- Islington LEA
- Mary Ward Centre
- North Somerset LEA
- Reading LEA
- Shalom Employment Action Centre
- Shropshire LEA
- Slough LEA
- Telford and Wrekin LEA
- The Elfrida Society
- West Berkshire LEA
- Windsor and Maidenhead LEA
- Wokingham LEA

This report will be updated when the reports of inspections to take place in the spring term of 2003 are published.

ANNEX A - KEY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

This report summarises 17 published inspection reports of adult and community learning providers. They are the first inspections to take place. It is difficult to identify trends. Strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement initially identified are listed below.

Strengths

- In the case of eleven providers there is good teaching on some courses
- Eleven providers have good strategies to widen participation
- Nine providers have productive partnership arrangements
- Eight providers have high achievement rates on some courses
- Six providers have effective strategic planning in some areas.

Weaknesses

- Twelve providers have inadequate quality assurance procedures
- Nine providers fail to monitor the progress of learners effectively
- Eight providers fail to plan and manage some areas of the curriculum effectively
- Seven providers do not have effective initial assessment systems
- Six providers fail to manage their subcontractors effectively

Other improvements needed

- Six providers need to share good practice more effectively