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Planning and preparing for inspection

This booklet gives an overview of what happens from the first contact with your lead inspector to the start of the inspection.

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Planning and preparing for inspection

- A good inspection depends on good planning and communication.
- Your lead inspector will work with you to plan and prepare for the inspection.
- This process gives you an opportunity to build a strong working relationship with your lead inspector.

Introduction

This booklet is designed to help you to plan for your inspection. It covers the time from the first contact with your lead inspector to the start of the inspection.

You will find it helpful to look at the ***Overview of the inspection process*** wallchart in this section of the toolkit. This sets out the inspection process from beginning to end. It has been designed to help you in your preparation for the inspection, so that everyone will be aware of what is happening during the various stages of the inspection process.

Continue to use the wall planner in the ***What you need to do*** section of the toolkit.

Support

If you get stuck or would like to talk through any areas there is additional help and support:

- Once your lead inspector has been allocated, usually a month after notification, you will be able to contact them for advice.
- Opportunities to ask questions and discuss specific issues are available at the nominee conferences.
- If neither of the above sources is suitable then you can get advice by contacting our Inspection Planning Helpline on **02476 716640** where you can leave a message and the most appropriate person will return your call.

We recognise that being inspected can be stressful and that much can hang on the result. We want our inspections to be thorough, fair and effective and we want their results to lead to improvements that benefit both learners and providers. We have produced this booklet so that you can help us achieve this by preparing for your inspection effectively. We hope that it will help you to make best use of inspectors' time with you.

Contents

This booklet follows a question and answer format with lists of where you can find further information and checklists of what you need to do.

The key areas are:

The lead inspector

The planning meeting

Inspections and inspectors

Preparing for inspection

Further information

The lead inspector

What does the lead inspector do?

- Manages the inspection.
- Is your main contact with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

Your lead inspector will be one of our 140 full-time inspectors. He or she will manage the inspection from the early stages of its planning to reporting on your provision. The lead inspector will ensure that the inspection team carries out the inspection properly and that its judgements are accurate. In all but the largest inspections, the lead inspector is also likely to inspect some of the provision.

The relationship between you and your lead inspector is critical to the smooth running of the inspection. You and your lead inspector are the conduits for exchanging information between the inspection team and the provider. In the run-up to the inspection, you should contact each other regularly to raise any questions and resolve any concerns. During the inspection, you should stay in regular contact to provide any further information needed and to deal with any concerns on either side.

When will my lead inspector contact me?

- About a month after your notification.
- The contact will be made with the person who has been named as the nominee.

During the telephone call, your lead inspector will tell you the date of your inspection and ensure that you have each other's correct contact details. They will also gather some information about your organisation.

What information do I need to have ready for the first telephone call?

- What contracts you hold with either the Learning and Skill Council (LSC) or Jobcentre Plus.
- The areas and contributory areas of learning you provide training in.
- Confirmation of the numbers of learners you have in each of the different areas.

Your lead inspector will use the first telephone call to decide what the inspection should cover. This is called setting the scope of the inspection. Your lead inspector will select an inspection team with suitable expertise in the subjects or occupational areas being inspected.

You should be able to answer the following questions:

- What are your main sources of funding?
- How many learners do you have in each area of learning?
- How many learners do you think you will have at the time of the inspection?
- Where are learners based?
- How many sites do you have and where are they?
- What are the names of your employers or work-placement providers?
- What dates would be suitable for a meeting to plan the inspection?
- How can we get in touch with your contacts at the local Learning and Skills Council or Jobcentre Plus?
- Have you been to a training event for nominees?
- What is the date of your most recent self-assessment report?

You should also tell us about anything else that might affect the scope of the inspection or the selection of the inspection team. This might include other important sources of funding, subcontracting arrangements, evening or weekend provision, and problems with transport or access to premises.

Can I contact my lead inspector after the first telephone call?

→ Yes - contact your lead inspector with any questions or concerns.

Please do contact your lead inspector if you have any suggestions or any questions or concerns about your inspection. Inspections need good planning and good communication to run well, so any questions you have about the process are worth asking. Your lead inspector may not always be able to take calls straight away. If this happens, please leave a message and they will call you back as soon as possible. Your lead inspector may need to contact you to clarify various points.

Further information | Things to do

- ***Providing data*** booklets in the ***Data*** section of the toolkit
- **www.ali.gov.uk** in the News & Publications section - *Handbook for inspectors*
- ***Planning and preparing for inspection*** section on the CD-ROM in this toolkit

Further information | Things to do

- [ ] Start gathering together the information your lead inspector will need during the first telephone call.

The planning meeting

What is a planning meeting?

- A meeting with your lead inspector to plan the inspection.
- It will normally be held at your premises.
- It will normally last for about two hours.

A planning meeting is held before all inspections. Larger or more complex inspections may have two or more planning meetings.

What happens at the planning meeting?

- Discussion of the inspection plan.
- An opportunity to talk with your lead inspector.
- Review of the practical arrangements.
- Discussion about the inspection team.

Your lead inspector will discuss the inspection plan with you. This will include, for example, inspection start and final feedback times, team meeting times, the composition of the inspection team and other arrangements for the inspection.

We need you to help us to get the planning right. Although your lead inspector will present the inspection plan and give guidance on the inspection process, this meeting is also a real opportunity for discussion between you and the inspectorate. We hope you will draw our attention to work that you think is particularly interesting or particularly problematic. Although we reserve the right to inspect any aspect of your government-funded provision, with your help we can develop an inspection plan that matches not only your provision but also your priorities. It will also make best use of inspectors' time. This will maximise the report's value to you in your post-inspection action-planning.

Your lead inspector is likely to request some further help from you before the inspection, for example help with preparing draft schedules for meetings, visits to employers or lesson observations. They will also give you guidance on the selection and presentation of evidence for inspectors.

We will discuss practical arrangements for the inspection, so it is helpful if you can provide information about:

- car parking and transport arrangements
- a convenient hotel
- whether there are likely to be any health and safety or equal opportunities considerations affecting inspection activities
- options for a base room where inspectors will meet and work.

At the planning meeting, or shortly afterwards, your lead inspector will give you professional profiles for all inspection team members. This will enable you to check for any conflicts of interest, for example, where a provisional member of the team may previously have worked for you or for one of your competitors. If you identify any conflicts of interest, then you should discuss this with your lead inspector as soon as possible.

On occasions the scope of the inspection will change between the planning meeting and the actual inspection. This may be the result of significant changes in learner numbers or other unexpected circumstances. Your lead inspector will always discuss with you any proposed changes to the scope of the inspection, at the earliest opportunity.

Who attends the planning meeting?

- Your lead inspector.
- The senior manager of your organisation.
- The nominee.
- Representatives from your funding body.

The planning meeting is usually attended by your lead inspector, the senior manager of the organisation, the nominee and representatives from the funding body, who will have been invited by your lead inspector. It is not uncommon for other members of the senior management team to attend the planning meeting. In large and complex provision, you may also wish to invite representatives from significant partners or stakeholders. It is important, though, to keep the meeting small enough to be manageable. If you think that it would be of benefit to have a larger group in attendance, please discuss this with your lead inspector.

What happens after the planning meeting?

- You will receive a letter confirming the arrangements.
- Your lead inspector will start preparing for inspection.
- You need to start preparing for inspection.
- You and your lead inspector will have regular contact.

You will receive a letter from your lead inspector confirming the arrangements that were discussed at the planning meeting. Do contact your lead inspector if there is anything that is not clear or does not seem to reflect your discussion.

Further information

Things to do

- ***Typical agenda for the planning meeting*** (page 19)
- ***Nominee's checklist of things to do*** (page 14)
- ***What sort of room should we provide as a base room?*** (page 10)
- ***Planning and preparing for inspection*** section on the CD-ROM in this toolkit

Further information

Things to do

- ☐ Work through the ***Inspection Toolkit*** and make a list of questions that you want to ask your lead inspector.
- ☐ Decide who you would like to attend the planning meeting and discuss with your lead inspector.
- ☐ Identify any interesting or particularly problematic areas that you would like us to include in the inspection.
- ☐ Prepare any information that your lead inspector has requested.
- ☐ Identify a base room.
- ☐ Have information ready on the practical arrangements.

Inspections and inspectors

How long will the inspection last?

- This will depend on the size of your organisation.
- Most inspections last for four or five days.
- The lead inspector will determine the length of the inspection.

Most inspections last for four or five days. However, smaller ones may be completed in three days and large providers may take two or even three weeks to inspect. We aim to match the inspection to your provision. For example, inspections of adult and community learning may involve observation of classes at weekends.

We want to see enough of your work to form fair judgements. The lead inspector will recommend an inspection plan taking into account the size of your provision, the amount of travelling involved and any other relevant issues. This will have to be approved by the lead inspector's inspection manager, who is responsible for assuring the quality of the inspection. The inspection manager will try to ensure that the total number of days all the inspectors spend at your organisation is similar to the total they would spend inspecting similar providers.

Who will be in our inspection team?

- Your lead inspector.
- An assisting lead inspector.
- Other full-time inspectors.
- Associate inspectors.

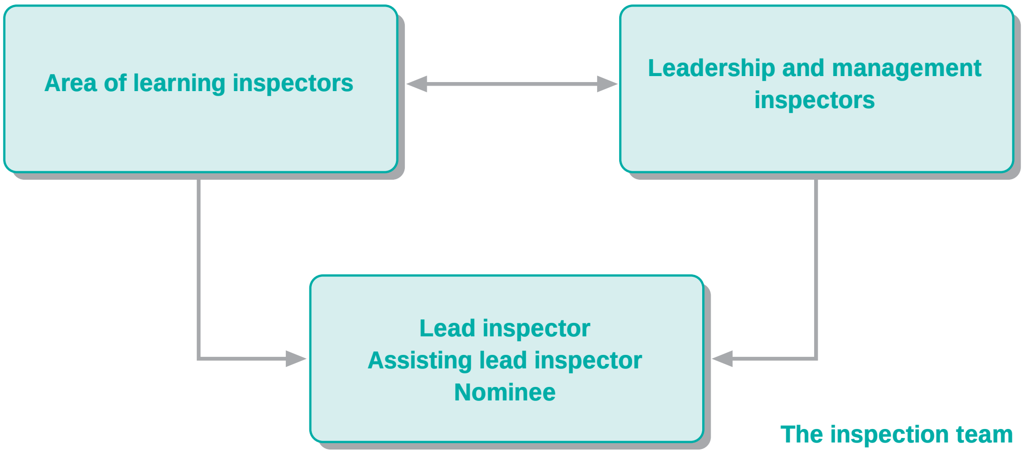
Each inspection team is led by a lead inspector, who is responsible for the inspection overall and who may inspect some of the provision.

Lead inspectors are helped by assisting lead inspectors. Like the lead inspectors, these are full-time inspectors. Assisting lead inspectors often inspect leadership and management but they sometimes inspect an area of learning. Assisting lead inspectors also work with the lead inspector to assure the quality of other inspectors' work. This will involve reviewing inspectors' notes and checking the judgements they are forming. It may also involve observing inspection activities.

The inspection team may contain other full-time inspectors. It will also contain inspectors who do not work for us full time. We call these associate inspectors.

All inspectors are experts in their subject or occupational area. They also have significant management experience from a range of organisations and have usually worked as senior managers. Many inspectors are also members of national committees and advisory bodies that contribute to the development of policy and practice in adult learning. Inspectors are appointed after a thorough selection process. After completing their training, they attend an inspection with a mentor, who is responsible for all decisions on grades. Only after a successful mentored inspection are they able to become full members of an inspection team with responsibility for grading provision.

We will select inspectors who have expertise in your areas of provision. Inspection teams can have as few as two or more than 20 members, depending on the size of the provider. Leadership and management and each of the areas of learning are inspected by either one inspector or a small team of inspectors.



The inspection team

Your inspection team may contain a trainee inspector. Trainee inspectors are associate inspectors who have completed their training and are on their first inspection. Trainee inspectors are supported by mentors. Mentors are experienced inspectors who accompany trainees on inspections and review their progress with them. Ideally the mentor will give the trainee increasing responsibility as the inspection progresses. However, the mentor will remain responsible for decisions on grades.

During the inspection, the inspection team works closely together to share and check judgements and to identify any findings that apply to the provider as a whole. Judgements about leadership and management are influenced by findings from the areas of learning. They reflect how successful managers are in improving standards and achievement rates.

Our inspection managers are responsible for assuring the quality of our inspections. An inspection manager may visit you during the inspection. If this happens, we will give you notice of the visit in advance. The inspection manager will not be a member of the inspection team, but will probably wish to sit in on various meetings and other activities and may wish to talk to the nominee and other staff or learners about their experience of the inspection.

Further information | Things to do

- **www.ali.gov.uk** in the News & Publications section - *Handbook for inspectors*
- ***Planning and preparing for inspection*** section on the CD-ROM in this toolkit

Further information | Things to do

- [ ] Check the professional profiles of the inspection team members. If you identify any conflicts of interest or have any queries, contact your lead inspector as soon as possible.

Preparing for inspection

How do inspectors prepare for inspection?

- They review all the information they have about your organisation.
- They identify themes and questions.

Before the inspection, the inspection team receives a briefing letter from your lead inspector, a copy of your self-assessment report and other information provided by your organisation, including data on retention and achievement. Before they arrive, the inspectors familiarise themselves with this material and identify themes and questions.

How does a nominee prepare for inspection?

- They plan what to do.
- They prioritise key tasks.
- They brief staff, learners, employers, subcontractors and partners.

This is a very busy time for the nominee. You will need to work closely with your lead inspector and with staff in your organisation to ensure that everyone is ready for the inspection.

What sort of room should we provide as a base room?

- It should be a suitable office for the inspectors during the inspection.
- It should be large enough for the daily team meetings.
- There should be adequate space with desks or tables and electric sockets for inspectors' computers and printers.
- It should be secure.
- There should be access to tea, coffee and water nearby.
- Access to a photocopier is useful.

The lead inspector will discuss possible places for the base room with you at the planning meeting. It is worth thinking about possible rooms in advance. If you do not have anywhere suitable, discuss this with your lead inspector. It is possible for us to hire a room nearby but it is much more convenient to be in your organisation.

Talk with your lead inspector about the evidence and examples of learners' work and whether the inspectors would like this in the base room or elsewhere.

Further information

Things to do

- ***Nominee's checklist of things to do*** (page 14)
- ***Examples of evidence you could provide for inspectors*** (page 16)
- ***Planning and preparing for inspection*** section on the CD-ROM in this toolkit

Further information

Things to do

- [ ] Work through the ***Inspection Toolkit*** and make a note of things you need to do.
- [ ] Use the wall planner in the ***What you need to do*** section of this toolkit.
- [ ] Clear your diary for the inspection.
- [ ] Make a plan to ensure that everything will be ready.
- [ ] Identify the evidence that you need to have available.
- [ ] Start putting together information you need to send to the inspectors before the inspection.
- [ ] Prepare any timetables and send them to your lead inspector.
- [ ] Plan how to ensure inspectors can find the sites and employers they are visiting. Prepare any maps and travel instructions.
- [ ] Prepare any short briefing notes you think will help the inspectors.
- [ ] Agree communication channels.
- [ ] Fully brief staff and involve them in the planning.
- [ ] Involve the LSC or Jobcentre Plus contract managers.
- [ ] Brief staff, partners, employers, subcontractors and learners about the inspection.
- [ ] Make sure staff are familiar with the *Common Inspection Framework*, your self-assessment report and relevant organisational documents.
- [ ] Decide who to invite to the feedback meeting at the end of the inspection.
- [ ] Contact your lead inspector if you need further guidance.
- [ ] Think about the personal support you will need as the nominee.

AND finally

Inspection is something we do with you, not to you. Our aim is not to pick faults or catch you out with trick questions, but to make accurate judgements about your organisation. We can only do this if you help us gather the evidence we need. You may not always agree with our judgements, but we will always explain to you the reasons for them and give you opportunities to present further evidence if you think we are wrong. Despite the inevitable stress of an inspection, we hope you will view inspectors as critical friends and the inspection as an opportunity to reflect on your organisation's performance.

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Further information

1. **Nominee's checklist of things to do**
2. **Examples of evidence you could provide for inspectors**
3. **Typical agenda for the planning meeting**

Introduction

The ***Further information*** boxes in this booklet signpost you to where you can find more detailed information to help you. One key place to look is on our website, **www.ali.gov.uk**. You will find additional information about the inspection process and useful guidelines to help you plan and prepare for inspection. You can also read published reports. Look in the following four sections:

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The ***Planning and preparing for inspection*** section of the CD-ROM in this toolkit has inspectors and nominees talking about the various stages of the inspection process. This material is also available on our website.

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Further information

1 Nominee’s checklist of things to do

Things to do

- ❑ **Work through the *Inspection Toolkit.***
  Make a note of things you need to do.
- ❑ **Continue to use the wall planner in the *What you need to do* section of this toolkit.**
  Enter any critical dates on to the wall planner.
- ❑ **Clear your diary for the inspection.**
  Try to keep as much clear space as possible in the run-up to the inspection. This will allow you to prepare for the inspection and give you time to help other members of your organisation prepare for it.
- ❑ **Make a plan to ensure that everything will be ready.**
  Decide what needs to happen by which dates and who will be responsible for ensuring that it happens.
- ❑ **Identify the evidence that you need to have available**.
  Start thinking about how you will index and reference the evidence. (Much of this should be familiar to you from producing your self-assessment report.) Remember that inspectors are interested in actions that are bringing about improvements. Our judgements will be about the quality of your provision at the time of the inspection. You will find further guidance on the types of evidence you should provide in ***Examples of evidence you could provide for inspectors*** on page 16.
- ❑ **Start putting together information you need to send to the inspectors before the inspection.**
  This should be information that will enable inspectors to prepare properly for the inspection. Discuss what would be useful with your lead inspector.
- ❑ **Prepare any timetables and send them to your lead inspector.**
  Send them by the date you have agreed with your lead inspector. If you have been asked to send them to our national administration centre in Coventry, the address is on the back of this booklet.
- ❑ **Plan how to ensure inspectors can find the sites and employers they are visiting.**
  It will be very helpful if you can provide staff to guide inspectors to work placements and other locations. If this is not possible, provide clear directions with maps, route details, parking information and contact names and numbers to make it easy for inspectors to find the sites they need to visit.
- ❑ **Prepare any short briefing notes you think will help the inspectors.**
  We want our inspections to involve as little bureaucracy as possible. We therefore discourage you from preparing extra documents purely for the inspection. It is important, however, that inspectors understand your organisation. It may be helpful to prepare short briefing notes to explain structures, relationships and how things work, particularly if your organisation is large, complex, unusual or particularly innovative. Remember to make these brief, clear and simple. Diagrams may be useful. Your lead inspector can send these documents to the rest of the inspection team before the inspection.

Things to do - continued

- **Start to prepare draft timetables for observations of teaching and learning, meetings with staff, learners, employers and partners and visits to work-placement providers and other locations where learning takes place**.
  Your lead inspector will give you guidance about this. Make sure you are clear about which people inspectors wish to meet. Meetings will normally last about 45 minutes. Book these meetings as far in advance as you can, especially if they involve people from other organisations. Also, warn people who are meeting the inspectors that the inspectors may change their timetable at short notice, although they will always give as much notice as they can.
- **Agree communication channels**.
  Plan how you will communicate with other people in your organisation. This will enable you to respond quickly to inspectors' requests for information. It will also make it easy for you to give feedback to other staff on judgements that are being formed during the inspection and to get feedback from them. Make sure that staff know which people in your organisation they can talk to about the inspection and how to express their concerns and get support. It is helpful if staff are encouraged to view inspectors as critical friends. Reassure staff that inspectors will treat them professionally. We do not ask trick questions or seek to compromise staff with off-the-record questions.
- **Involve your local Learning and Skills Council or Jobcentre Plus contract managers**.
  They can support you in planning for the inspection. Take up any help that they offer.
- **Brief staff, partners, employers and subcontractors about the inspection**.
  When briefing staff, try to make them less anxious. We may not meet all staff in person, but all staff will contribute to the inspection in some way. For example, they may be observed carrying out their work. Make sure that partners and employers understand that it is your organisation that is being inspected, not themselves.
- **Make sure that learners are aware that inspectors will be visiting the organisation**.
  Explain that the inspectors will want to talk to them and observe their work. Make sure that learners understand that it is the organisation that is being inspected, not themselves.
- **Make sure that your staff are familiar with the *Common Inspection Framework*, your self-assessment report and relevant organisational documents**.
  Inspectors need well-briefed and prepared staff.
- **Decide who to invite to the feedback meeting at the end of the inspection.**
  Your lead inspector will invite representatives from your funding body.
- **Contact your lead inspector at any time if you need further guidance.**

AND finally

→ **Think about the personal support you will need as nominee**.
You will listen to everyone's hopes, fears and anxieties, and because of your contact with the inspectors, many people will consider you responsible for the results of the inspection. Try to find ways of managing your time and keeping a cool head so that you can defuse difficult moments.

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Further information

2 Examples of evidence you could provide for inspectors

This section lists evidence that could be available either before or at the start of the inspection. We do not expect all providers to produce all of this evidence.

- Talk with your lead inspector about what evidence you can produce and what they will find useful.
- Focus on the evidence that is relevant to your organisation.
- Consider other important sources of evidence that are not listed here. Remember that inspectors will not have time to read every document about your organisation. We will want to see material that will show us how you are managing your provision to improve learners' experiences with you.
- Remember that all the information you give us should be accurate and up-to-date.

General information

- ❑ your organisation's three-year development plan
- ❑ your organisation's adult learning plan (if appropriate)
- ❑ your self-assessment report, including any important updates
- ❑ organisational charts
- ❑ information about the number of staff and their status (full time, part time or paid by the hour)
- ❑ details of staff qualifications
- ❑ information about your fees and the percentage of learners or enrolments made by people entitled to concessionary fees
- ❑ important policy documents
- ❑ maps showing how to find your sites

Data

- ❑ an up-to-date version of the ALI's learner numbers spreadsheet, giving an analysis of learners and/or enrolments by gender, ethnicity and additional learning and social needs
- ❑ an up-to-date version of the ALI's learner progression and achievement spreadsheet or other information previously provided if you are an adult and community learning provider
- ❑ any available data on learners' destinations
- ❑ data on performance and an analysis of trends
- ❑ an analysis of learners' qualifications on entry
- ❑ an analysis of the number of hours learners are participating in learning each week for each area of learning
- ❑ information about participation by under-represented groups
- ❑ information about the percentage of advertised programmes that are cancelled (if appropriate)

Information for area of learning inspectors

Background information:

- ❑ the number of learners on each course and where and when learning takes place for each area of learning inspected
- ❑ the number, range, length and location of courses offered - do they take place at your main site, at work placements or at community venues?
- ❑ an analysis of learners or enrolments on each course by gender, ethnicity, age, disability and entitlement to concessionary fees if appropriate
- ❑ if appropriate, information about how many weeks of the year the provision is offered
- ❑ if appropriate, information about when provision is offered - is it offered during the week or at weekends or both, and is it offered in the daytime, late in the afternoon or in the evening?
- ❑ information about whether it is possible to progress to higher levels within the area of learning
- ❑ the number of staff, the managers they report to, and whether they are full or part time - if you have part-time staff, how many hours does each of them work each week?
- ❑ information about who is responsible for managing the budget, managing the area of learning and assuring quality

Evidence:

- ❑ course timetables and class or group lists
- ❑ individual learning plans
- ❑ schemes of work and lesson plans
- ❑ induction materials
- ❑ learners' work
- ❑ learners' portfolios
- ❑ assessment plans and records of assessment
- ❑ records of learners' progress and progress reviews
- ❑ minutes of meetings for the areas of learning
- ❑ paperwork for course reviews

Inspectors will want to meet learners, trainers, tutors, teachers, employers and managers. They will also want to observe teaching and learning.

Information for inspectors of leadership and management

- staff and learner handbooks
- minutes of staff and team meetings
- policy documents
- reports to managers, directors or trustees
- staff development plans and reports
- records of staff appraisals or performance reviews
- newsletters
- marketing and publicity documents

Inspectors will want to meet with a representative sample of staff, middle managers, senior managers, elected members (if appropriate), learners and partners.

Information for inspectors of equality of opportunity

- policy documents and procedures
- minutes of staff meetings
- reports to managers, directors or trustees
- publicity material
- induction programme and materials
- data analysis including:
  - participation rates among different groups
  - participation, retention and achievement of different groups of learners across the provision as a whole and in each area of learning

Inspectors will want to meet with the person responsible for equal opportunities and a representative sample of staff, middle managers and learners.

Information for inspectors of quality assurance

- policy documents and procedures
- complaints and compliments file
- reports to managers, directors or trustees
- results of surveys of students and staff
- minutes of staff meetings
- internal and external verification documents
- records of observations of teaching and learning

Inspectors will want to meet with the person responsible for quality assurance, the person responsible for self-assessment and middle managers.

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Further information

3 Typical agenda for the planning meeting

Adult Learning Inspectorate
Planning meeting agenda
(Name of provider)

Date and time of meeting:

Location:

1. Introductions
2. The basis for inspection
3. Proposed inspection team
4. Name of the nominee and his or her role
5. Scope of the inspection
6. Opportunities for observation
7. Sample selection
8. Agreement of an outline inspection schedule
9. Inspection timetable including start times
10. Data
11. Documentation requirements
12. Base room, parking, hotel and domestic arrangements
13. Health and safety of inspectors
14. Feedback arrangements
15. The inspection report
16. Evaluation and complaints procedure

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Through Excalibur, the Adult Learning Inspectorate aims to build a national quality community for everyone in the Learning & Skills sector.

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