



meeting Community Services Select Committee

date 18 July 2005

agenda item number 6

Report of Assistant Director, Regeneration Division

The Adult & Community Learning Service: Outcome of the Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection, April 2005

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Committee of the outcome of the recent Adult Learning Inspection of the Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) and the actions in response to it.

Information and Advice

Background

2. All adult and community learning services that receive funding from the Learning and Skills Council are subject to inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). ALI was established under the provisions of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to bring the inspection of adult learning and work based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The inspection assesses the quality of the teaching and learning provided by the service.
3. Inspections are carried out in accordance with Common Inspection Framework (CIF), by teams of full time and part time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work that they inspect. The CIF had recently been revised and ACLS was one of the first services to undergo inspection against the revised model. The revision to the CIF has meant that there are now only 4 grades to be assessed against whereas previously there were 5:
 - a. Grade 1 – outstanding
 - b. Grade 2 – good
 - c. Grade 3 – satisfactory
 - d. Grade 4 – inadequate

4. ACLS prepared an in-depth action plan in preparation for the inspection. This included the arrangement of meetings with the Assistant Director for Regeneration, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, senior colleagues from the Education Department and members of the ACLS Team.
5. ACLS was inspected during the week 25th – 29th April 2005. Eleven inspectors were hosted for 57 inspection days. The inspectors interviewed 320 learners, 60 staff, 48 subcontractors, 16 partners and visited 79 sites.
6. The inspection team looked at five areas of learning as well as “leadership and management”. These areas of learning were:
 - a. Information and communication technology
 - b. Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel
 - c. Visual and performing arts
 - d. Foundation Programmes
 - e. Family learning
7. The ACLS Manager was the service nominee for the inspection that is the link person between the service and the ALI Team, with the ability to participate in ALI team discussions on emerging findings.

Inspection Outcome

8. The overall effectiveness of the service was graded 4, with the provision deemed inadequate. Extracts from the full inspection report on the grades awarded are attached at **annex 1**. Provision is normally deemed inadequate where more than one third of the areas of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged inadequate.
9. Despite the disappointment of the overall grade awarded to ACLS, ALI had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self assessment process. It was felt that the process was particularly effective as it was built upon a wide range of consultations and the service had correctly identified its strengths and weaknesses.
10. Importantly ALI also commented that the service has “demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements. It has identified most of the weaknesses that the inspectors identified and has begun to carry out improvements.” Whilst ACLS has introduced a number of improvement strategies, the inspection team did not feel that these had been sufficiently embedded to have a positive impact on the experience of the learners.
11. ALI set the service 10 key challenges to address to improve the quality of its provision. Addressing these key challenges will be the focus of the service’s work over the coming months. The challenges are detailed below:

- Continue to create new opportunities for disadvantaged learners
- Build stronger communication between the ACLS and teaching delivery staff
- Develop a thorough approach to the assessment of non-accredited achievement
- Share good practice
- Improve the advice to learners about progress
- Develop the effective use of individual learning plans
- Improve curriculum-planning arrangements
- Implement strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- Give more emphasis and guidance on equality and anti-bullying and harassment practices
- Further develop quality improvement measures

Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)

12. As the service was assessed as level 4, it will be re-inspected in approximately a year's time, although no confirmation of this timetable has been received to date.
13. A PIAP is currently being prepared and needs to be completed within 8 weeks of the ALI report being published. A draft of this will be circulated to members prior to the committee meeting. The PIAP will steer and guide progress towards the re-inspection. The format of this document is not prescribed; the service has therefore chosen to organise its PIAP so that each key challenge is addressed.
14. The following actions have been undertaken to date:
 - a. Met with all our main providers to discuss the inspection outcome and to outline the areas which require detailed attention.
 - b. With reference to curriculum management we have collated information from other local authorities so that we may compare the range of provision on offer. We are continuing with the curriculum development groups that are already established; we do however need to move quickly to establish similar groups for all the other areas within our offer, e.g. foundation programmes, (courses for adults with learning difficulties, courses which deliver skills for life programmes).
 - c. The ALI team noted that ACLS has "a small management team", in order to respond to the key challenges for the service outlined by the inspection we will need to establish additional management and service capacity.
 - d. Discussions have been held with Next Step, the County's Information Advice and Guidance Service to agree how they can help us support both tutors and learners in becoming more aware of progression opportunities.
 - e. We have begun to address the equal opportunities issues raised through attendance at an Equal Opportunities Conference organised by Lancashire ACL who were awarded a Grade 1 for their equal opportunities work. We have also contacted neighbouring ACL services to obtain examples of their policies and practice.

- f. Held a County wide event to share good practice amongst our Community Operations Groups (COGs).

Overview

15. The preparation for inspection and the inspection itself benefited from a 100% contribution from the ACLS Team. Whilst there was disappointment over the overall judgement, the service is working hard to address those areas of weakness found by the inspectors, whilst continuing to work to their normal high standards to ensure the strengths are maintained.
16. Formal comment has not been received from the Nottinghamshire LSC. As the main funder of the ACLS the LSC will look carefully at ACLS's progress against the key challenges and also the outcome of the reinspection to inform their decision making about the future allocation of adult and community learning funds. This intent was made clear in the LSC's ACL Strategic Area Review launched earlier this year. It is imperative therefore that the service achieves at least an overall Grade 3 at the re-inspection.

LSC Revised Funding and Planning Proposals

17. In the earlier report to this Committee reference was made to the LSC's revised funding and planning proposals. Whilst the final details of these are still awaited, the LSC is looking for a reduction in the amount of funding spent on "personal development" courses e.g. art, yoga, sugar craft. The Service will inevitably need to respond to this change in direction but this will not be without consequence. The role of learning in overall quality of life is now an undisputed fact; this change in emphasis will have a detrimental impact on our provision as it is unlikely we will be able to maintain the same number of classes as before. As a service that has set out to bring learning to local communities and help engender a positive learning culture in the more socially and economically deprived areas of the county, this development is bound to have a negative impact. Whilst the national and local priorities of the LSC are clear and understandable and their economic imperative laudable, the detrimental impact for many of Nottinghamshire's learners, and potential learners, is regrettable.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Members' attention is however drawn to the following:

Personnel Implications

19. The staffing establishment for ACLS is currently funded by the Regeneration Portfolio, the LSC and European Social Fund. Additional staff time will be required to meet the key challenges outlined by ALI.

Financial Implications

20. The funds are managed by ACLS with clear audit trails being maintained for each separate funding stream as required by the external funders. Resources will need to be identified to meet the additional staff costs associated with addressing the Key Challenges.

Equal Opportunities

21. All activity will comply with Nottinghamshire County Council's equal opportunities policies. The funding agreement with providers has been drawn up by Legal Services to ensure providers agree to comply with this standard. As required by ALI, more in-depth work is required around harassment and bullying policies and procedures.

Implications for Service Users

22. As progress is made towards each of the key challenges, whilst also maintaining the strengths, the quality of the learner experience will improve.

Recommendation

23. That Community Services Select Committee note the contents of this report.

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Director of Resources' Financial Comments(C.C)(P.B)

As indicated in paragraph 20 there will be a need to identify additional resources to meet the key challenges. This will need to be addressed as part of the 2006/2007 Budget Process.

Legal Services' Comments

This report is for noting only and no decision is required (JA 07.07.05)

Background Papers Available for Inspection

The Inspection Report Nottinghamshire County Council Adult and Community Learning Service, 29 April 2005

Electoral Division(s) Affected

ACLS targets its provision on areas of greatest economic and social deprivation; whilst all electoral wards may be affected there will be a greater impact in wards in Ashfield, Mansfield, Newark and Bassetlaw.

Nottinghamshire County Council – Adult and Community Learning Services

ALI Inspection Grades

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4
Information & communications technology		4
Contributory areas:	Numbers of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i>		4
Adult and community learning	342	4
Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel		3
Contributory areas:	Numbers of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		3
Adult and community learning	773	3
Visual and performing arts and media		4
Contributory areas:	Numbers of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		4
Adult and community learning	1,121	4
Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Numbers of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		
Adult and community learning	97	3
Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Numbers of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i>		
Adult and community learning	273	3