

INSPECTION REPORT

Open Door Adult Learning Centre

26 March 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
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

Open Door Adult Learning Centre

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Open Door Adult Learning Centre (ODALC) is an independent provider of adult and community learning within the voluntary sector. It is a registered charity. The Open Door organisation was established in 1985 as a drop-in centre. It has delivered part-time adult education courses since 1989. ODALC is located on a housing estate on the southeastern outskirts of Sheffield and occupies two neighbouring shop front premises. The programmes provided at the centre are in information and communications technology (ICT), clothing and related crafts, and numeracy. The numeracy provision is a recent development and there were too few learners on this programme for it to be inspected separately. Most of the courses are accredited. Learners can join the classes at any time during the programme. Since the start of the 2003-04 programme year, 429 learners have made 513 enrolments.

2. ODALC is managed by two full-time staff, a centre co-ordinator and an assistant co-ordinator. There is a part-time finance worker. The teaching staff team consists of seven part-time tutors and the centre co-ordinator. The management committee has 12 members, eight of whom are either current, or previous learners at ODALC. This committee has overall responsibility to monitor the strategic direction and performance of the centre.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

3. The 22 information technology (IT) learning sessions are provided in ODALC's main building. Thirty-four qualifications are available to learners, ranging from entry level to level 3 and cover a range of subjects, including text processing, digital imaging, spreadsheets, internet technologies and accounts. Occasional non-certificated courses are offered in response to learners' requests. Learners can enrol on a course at any time during the year. In the current academic year, 344 learners have made 420 enrolments. Almost 75 per cent of the learners are women. Learners study for a minimum of two hours each week for a planned duration of 30 weeks, split into three 10-week terms. A team of five part-time tutors support the learners. Classes are available during the day, evenings and at weekends. When no classes are taking place in the computer room, learners can use the facility as a drop-in centre.

Visual & performing arts & media

4. Clothing and related crafts classes are provided in ODALC's specialist craft room. Courses include pattern drafting, garment making, needlecrafts, soft furnishings, machine knitting, beginners' dressmaking and a themed craft session. A total of eight sessions, each of two hours duration, are held each week, with two sessions for machine knitting sessions. The provision is delivered by two part-time tutors. All the sessions are held in the daytime and are designed to cater for different levels of learners' experience. The average class size is seven learners. Most courses are of 30-weeks duration, over three terms. The courses are accredited by the open college network (OCN) and range from entry level to level 3. Learners can enrol on the courses at any time during the programme year. In the current programme year, 56 learners have made 64 enrolments. Ninety-eight per cent of learners are women.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learner interviews	46
Number of staff interviews	27
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of partner/external agency interviews	4

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, provision in ICT is outstanding and in clothing and crafts it is good. Leadership and management are outstanding, as is equality of opportunity. Quality assurance is good.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management	1
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	1
Quality assurance	2

Information & communications technology	1
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	1

Visual & performing arts & media	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Achievement is good.** Most learners work towards a qualification and some achieve more than one qualification in a year. In 2002-03, 307 learners followed a range of programmes in IT and clothing and crafts; a total of 310 qualifications were achieved of a possible 342. Including both programmes, at entry level the pass rate was 91 per cent, at level 1 it was 95 per cent, 85 per cent at level 2, and 80 per cent at level 3. Most learners complete their qualifications within the planned timescale.

7. **All learners make good progress and achieve well on their planned learning programmes. The overall pass rate for achievement of IT qualifications in 2002-03 was particularly good at 92 per cent.** The standard of learners' work in this area is very good. In clothing and crafts, achievement rates are consistently good, at above 85 per cent in the three years preceding inspection. In this programme area learners achieve very good standards of technical skills and skills development, particularly at level 3.

8. **Retention rates are particularly good for IT programmes at entry level and range from 93 to 100 per cent.** At other programme levels in IT, retention ranges from 70 to 80 per cent. Retention rates are good for clothing and crafts programmes at 89 per cent. Learners attend their classes regularly.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	7
Visual & performing arts & media	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Total	0	7	3	0	0	0	0	10

9. **The teaching on IT programmes is very good** and meets the needs of individual learners. All the tutors are qualified and experienced to teach an exceptionally wide range of subjects and levels in IT. Each qualification has a well-designed workbook, which clearly explains every aspect of the programme and provides learners with a series of exercises to test their knowledge. Tutors give good support, feedback and coaching to learners.

10. **Teaching of the clothing and craft courses is good.** The tutors have excellent

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technical knowledge and competence in their subject areas. They provide good demonstrations of techniques. Coaching is used effectively to support the mixed groups of beginners and more experienced learners. Tutors plan effectively to meet the needs of learners and deliver the different levels of the courses.

11. **Learners' achievements are particularly good on IT programmes.** Most learners have little or no previous experience of IT when they first enrol on a course at ODALC. They acquire skills, knowledge and experience to a level which exceeds their expectations. In clothing and related crafts, beginners and the more experienced learners develop a wide range of skills and produce good results in their practical work.

12. **In clothing and related crafts a range of innovative initiatives has been developed** to broaden the learning experience of current learners and to recruit new learners. The additional activities include themed open days with workshops and active involvement in national initiatives. Learners are provided with the opportunity to use the centre's IT facilities as a weekly drop-in session. This facility is well used.

13. The assessment of learners' work and progress is satisfactory. Tutors provide useful informal assessment support during the sessions. Weekly review sheets are used effectively to provide clear feedback to learners about their achievements and progress. The review sheets are completed regularly and systematically, but in clothing and crafts some of the feedback recorded does not give learners sufficient guidance about how to improve.

14. Resources are satisfactory in IT. There are enough up-to-date computers and an adequate range of printers, scanners and peripheral equipment. Software is to industry standard. The computer room is equipped with a digital projector linked to the tutors' computer. However, workspace for learners is restricted, particularly when classes are full.

15. In clothing and crafts, physical resources are satisfactory. Good-quality specialist equipment is used for needlecrafts and there are sufficient, well-maintained sewing machines. The space available is adequate for the sizes of groups. However, there is insufficient storage space. Resources are adequate for the machine-knitting classes, but space within the crafts room is restricted when these machines are set up.

16. Learners receive appropriate guidance and support. A thorough initial interview is carried out to determine learners' prior achievements, experience and goals. ODALC ensures that all learners are enrolled for an appropriate subject and level of qualification. The induction sessions are clear and informative.

17. All new learners complete an initial skills assessment, which effectively identifies any literacy, numeracy or language skills needs. Support for literacy, numeracy and language needs is provided by the training centre. Numeracy support is good and some learners have gained qualifications. Literacy support is satisfactory. Staff provide helpful feedback, advice and guidance to learners about how to improve their skills.

18. **IT learners are able to study for a particularly wide range of courses and learning opportunities.** This enables them to either specialise in one particular aspect of IT, or to study multiple subjects at each level. Learners make good progress. Many progress either to a higher level qualification or to a different topic at the same level. A comprehensive document has been developed to show learners clearly the full range of options available to them for progression.

Leadership and management

19. **Management of learning is excellent.** Managers respond quickly and effectively to learners' and staff needs. The overall retention and achievement rates are very good. Initial assessment is thorough and effectively linked to individual learning goals. Comprehensive and appropriate support is available to learners.

20. **ODALC's management of the IT programmes is excellent.** Managers have clear objectives in managing and expanding IT training to meet community needs. ODALC has productive working partnerships with a range of external agencies. It offers qualifications which contribute to the regional strategy for IT training and progression opportunities.

21. **The clothing and crafts programmes are particularly well managed.** There is a strong emphasis on arranging courses flexibly, to meet learners' needs. Learners and tutors are fully consulted about the development of new training provision.

22. **Communications within the organisation are very good.** Members of staff and the management committee share a sense of purpose, and managers are fully involved in the operational activities of the centre. Staff work effectively together. They actively seek opportunities to share information and good practice among the team. Staff and the management committee are fully informed about all aspects of the work of the training centre.

23. **ODALC has developed a particularly effective and comprehensive management information system.** Timely, reliable and accurate data about key performance indicators such as learners' attendance, retention and achievement rates are obtained from the system. Managers use the system extensively for monitoring purposes. It is easily accessible to all staff and management committee members through the centre's intranet.

24. **The management committee has a particularly active involvement in the training centre's development and performance.** The committee sets challenging targets for achievement and retention, which are effectively monitored at committee meetings. A clear action plan with specific objectives has been developed.

25. Staff appraisals and development are satisfactory. Staff development needs are identified by annual appraisals and at team meetings. The development and training of staff is well supported by ODALC. It is effectively linked to the organisation's skills needs and to the needs of the individual. The induction process is thorough and new members

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of staff are well supported by the team.

26. **The organisation has a very strong commitment to ensure access to learning** for all eligible people. It is particularly effective in prioritising equality of opportunity. Exceptional efforts are made by staff to ensure that each learner is able to fully participate in their learning programme. Learners can join the programme at any time.

27. **Support for learners and staff with disabilities is very good.** Learners' support needs are clearly identified by initial assessment. The weekly progress reviews are used effectively to monitor the effect of the support provided and identify any additional support required. An extensive range of resources is available to those with learning and/or physical disabilities.

28. **The training centre makes good use of its links with the local community and providers to widen participation.** Regular meetings provide opportunities to plan and develop new courses that are responsive to community needs. The number of learners using the centre has steadily increased.

29. Promotion of equality of opportunity is effective. ODALC has comprehensive policies and procedures for equality of opportunity, harassment and complaints. All the learners and staff receive copies of these procedures during their induction. Learners know how to use the complaints procedures and the few complaints received have been effectively resolved.

30. **ODALC makes very good use of learner feedback to improve the provision.** The training centre obtains feedback from learners during their weekly progress reviews, and on a termly basis. This process is effective in identifying and resolving issues that affect the quality of provision.

31. The arrangements for internal verification at ODALC are satisfactory. The process is thorough, with sufficient sampling, and is well documented. Internal verification meetings are held with staff. However, internal verification is not used sufficiently in continuous improvement, for example, in the development of assessment practice.

32. Observations of teaching and learning are satisfactory; they are clearly recorded, in detail. The process is based on clear guidelines and a useful summary report is produced, however, links to performance management and staff appraisals are informal.

33. Monitoring of the quality of provision is carried out sufficiently well to identify and resolve weaknesses at an early stage. Some systems are in place, although much of the monitoring is informal. The self-assessment report is well developed, using learners' feedback and contributions from staff and the management committee.

34. **ODALC does not have an overall policy for quality assurance.** The organisation has a strong, but informal approach to quality assurance which relies mainly on individual staff members. The arrangements that are in place are treated as separate processes, they are not sufficiently integrated to be fully effective in the centre's strategy for

continuous improvement.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- excellent management of learning
- very good communications
- particularly effective and comprehensive management information system
- particular management committee involvement in target-setting and monitoring
- particularly strong commitment to access for all
- very good support for learners and staff with disabilities
- good use of community networks to widen participation
- very good use of learner feedback to improve provision

Weaknesses

- no overall policy for quality assurance arrangements

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- excellent programme management
- good retention and achievement rates
- very good teaching
- particularly good learner attainment
- good learner progression
- particularly wide range of courses and learning opportunities

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good teaching
- innovative initiatives to enhance learners' experience
- particularly well-managed programmes

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT OPEN DOOR ADULT LEARNING CENTRE:

- 'there is no pressure, I can learn at my own pace'
- 'the friendly atmosphere'
- 'the tutors always help and know everything'
- 'I've gained confidence and am amazed at how much I've learnt'
- diversity - 'I started with IT and have done dressmaking and mathematics as well'
- 'so many courses to do'
- class times which fit in with a busy life
- getting up-to-date skills and qualifications for eventual return to work
- the opportunity - 'I never would have believed that I could do this'
- up-to-date equipment
- 'its something for me'
- 'my children and grandchildren are really impressed by what I know'
- new skills - 'I'm amazed that I can now make clothes'
- 'the staff always listen and are really helpful'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK OPEN DOOR ADULT LEARNING CENTRE COULD IMPROVE:

- the space available for learning, especially for cutting out
- programme variety - 'different types of courses would be good'

KEY CHALLENGES FOR OPEN DOOR ADULT LEARNING CENTRE:

- continue to develop the range of learning opportunities
- maintain the support for retention and achievement
- further develop literacy, numeracy and language support
- identify additional resources as part of systematic long-term planning
- use internal verification as a tool for continuous improvement
- develop and implement a policy for quality assurance

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 work	The provider's staff have a long-term presence in a local community with a specific remit to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
Community regeneration	The process of improving the quality of life in communities by investing in their infrastructure and facilities, creating opportunities for training and employment and tackling poor health and educational under-achievement. Community regeneration requires the active participation of local residents in decision-making. Changes and improvements are often achieved either directly or indirectly as a result of the adult learning activities which arise from this.

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 1

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- excellent management of learning
- very good communications
- particularly effective and comprehensive management information system
- particular management committee involvement in target-setting and monitoring
- particularly strong commitment to access for all
- very good support for learners and staff with disabilities
- good use of community networks to widen participation
- very good use of learner feedback to improve provision

Weaknesses

- no overall policy for quality assurance arrangements

35. ODALC's management of learning is excellent. This was not fully recognised in the self-assessment report. The overall retention rates are very good, as is the achievement of qualifications. Initial assessment is thorough and effectively linked to individual learning goals. Comprehensive and appropriate support is available to learners. Learners' progress and achievements are monitored frequently and recorded effectively. Tutors are well supported by ODALC in their development of flexible skills and techniques to teach learners with different needs and abilities effectively. In most classes learners are on a variety of programmes at different levels, and with individual learning targets. For example, curtain making, pattern cutting and quilting all take place successfully within the same class, delivered by one tutor. Managers respond quickly and effectively to staff, learners' and potential learners' suggestions and requests for additional courses. For example, a request was made by a potential learner for an English language course. A tutor was identified and the learner has been provided with individual support. At the request of learners, a new course in belly dancing has been arranged and an initial course in upgrading computers is planned.

36. Communication within the organisation is very good. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Members of staff and the management committee have a shared sense of purpose and managers are fully involved in the operational activities of the centre. Staff work effectively together. They actively seek opportunities to share information and good practice among teams. The organisation has effective procedures for staff to pass information and ideas to managers and members of the management committee. Part-time members of staff are supported financially to enable them to attend the monthly staff meetings. These meetings are well attended and provide a valuable and effective forum to share views and information. Staff and the management

committee are fully informed about all aspects of the work of the training centre.

37. ODALC has developed a particularly effective and comprehensive management information system. It is well maintained and provides valuable information. Timely, reliable and accurate data about key performance indicators, such as learners' attendance, retention and achievement are obtained from the system. Managers use the system extensively for monitoring purposes. It is easily accessible for all staff and management committee through the centre's intranet.

38. Resources at ODALC are managed efficiently to meet learners' needs. The training centre is well equipped and maintained. Classrooms have whiteboards and flipcharts, with sufficient space for well-presented displays of posters and notices. Many of the rooms are equipped with computers. Laptop computers are available for use in rooms where there are no desktop computers. The craft room provides good facilities for cutting and machining, but it is only used for 16 hours each week. All the members of the staff team are appropriately qualified and experienced. The centre actively seeks additional funding for resources and recent adaptations to the training centre were paid for by fund raising. The management committee closely monitors budgets and expenditure. Accounts are reviewed and reported on at every management committee meeting.

39. The management committee is particularly actively involved in the work of the centre. This group has overall responsibility for monitoring the strategic direction and performance of the centre. The committee sets challenging targets for achievement and retention; these are effectively monitored at committee meetings, and a clear action plan with specific objectives has been developed. The committee comprehensively reviews all of the training centre's policies annually. Seventy per cent of the committee's members are either current learners, or previous learners at the centre. Committee members frequently call in to the centre to have informal discussions with staff and learners to keep in touch with their views. One member of the committee attends staff meetings. Meetings of the management committee are well attended and detailed minutes of the meetings are recorded and actions are monitored.

40. Staff appraisals and development are satisfactory. Staff are positive about the appraisal process and the outcomes, which are well documented. Staff development needs are identified at annual appraisals and at team meetings. The development and training of staff is effectively linked to the organisation's skills needs and to the needs of the individual. Many staff have gained qualifications beyond the essential requirements of their post. The induction process is thorough and new staff are well supported by the team.

41. The training centre has clear procedures for health and safety which include individual staff responsibilities. It has a qualified first aider and staff are provided with training in first aid. ODALC has detailed policies for the safe use of IT.

42. The organisation has a clearly identified strategy in its strategic and action plans for literacy, numeracy and language support. All learners complete an initial assessment; the

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results of which are shared with the relevant tutors. A qualified member of staff provides numeracy support. All staff have sufficient skills to offer some literacy support, although one member of staff has the main responsibility for this area. The management committee has made arrangements to provide dedicated literacy support. Staff are in the process of working with the local skills for life facilitator to further develop the support available for learners at the training centre.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 1

43. ODALC has a very strong commitment to ensure access to learning for all eligible people. Many learners have not previously participated in adult learning. Some take several years, from showing their initial interest, to making their first visit. Staff at the centre have an excellent understanding of learners' concerns in returning to learning. They make learners welcome and put them at their ease. Learners can join the programme at any time. New learners usually have their initial assessments straight away. This is carried out thoroughly, as an informal interview. If learners have support needs these are clearly identified at this stage and appropriate arrangements are made. Any further learning needs that emerge are well supported. The management of the centre is particularly effective in prioritising the importance of access and equality of opportunity for all learners. Staff make exceptional efforts to ensure that learners are able to fully participate in their learning programmes, through the provision of adapted equipment, additional support, advice, guidance, the development of new learning opportunities and financial arrangements. ODALC has a carefully planned fees policy to support access and participation. Course fees are income related and free of charge to learners who are in receipt of benefits. The maximum annual fee includes enrolment on as many courses that the learner wishes to take during the year. Financial help is available for the payment of examination fees, travel to the centre and childcare.

44. Very good support is provided for all learners and staff with disabilities. Almost 25 per cent of the learners have a declared disability. Learners' support needs are clearly identified at initial assessment. The weekly progress reviews are used effectively to monitor the effect of the support provided and to identify any additional support required. An extensive range of support is available to those with learning and/or physical disabilities. An adapted computer, with a large-scale keyboard and mouse, and voice recognition software is permanently set up and frequently used. A portable hearing loop is provided for staff and learners with impaired hearing. Desks and tables of differing heights are provided to meet the needs of wheelchair users. The building, its rooms and other facilities are accessible for those with mobility difficulties. ODALC responds quickly to learners' support needs. For example, a learner expressed concerns that a disability would prevent her completing a word-processing course; it was quickly agreed to purchase voice-activated software to support her learning. Handouts and other literature have been effectively developed to ensure clarity of information. These documents are readily available in large print.

45. The learning centre makes good use of its well-established links with the local community, community groups and providers, to widen participation. Regular meetings and consultations with these groups provide valuable opportunities for ODALC to plan

and develop new courses which are responsive to community needs. The centre's network links are used to develop effective partnership initiatives; for example, to identify sources of additional funding, and to make joint applications to improve and develop provision for the learners. ODALC has very good links with local play schemes. Parents and their children are actively encouraged to use the centre during the school holidays. They are able to make good use of the facilities available to develop their own family learning sessions. In some families, three generations have used the centre. ODALC has an open access policy to make any unused space at the centre available for use by local community groups, without charge. These links are effective in raising the awareness of local people of the work of the centre and the learning opportunities available. The number of learners who use the centre has steadily increased. ODALC is particularly successful in the recruitment and retention of learners who are not traditionally involved in IT. Almost 80 per cent of learners are women and nearly 30 per cent of learners are aged 60 or over.

46. Staff and members of the management committee have received training in the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, 2001. A detailed action plan of adaptations needed to meet the requirements of these acts has been developed and is monitored, reviewed and reported on quarterly at the management committee meeting. ODALC systematically collects and analyses learner data about age, gender, ethnicity, disability and additional learning needs, to monitor participation and inform planning. The promotion of equality of opportunity is effective. ODALC has comprehensive policies and procedures for equality of opportunity, harassment and complaints. All staff and learners receive copies of these procedures during their induction. Learners and staff are given useful guidance notes on equality of opportunity in their training centre handbook. Learners have a fundamental understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity and understand their own roles and responsibilities. Learners know how to use the complaints procedures and the very few complaints received have been resolved effectively.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

47. ODALC makes very good use of learner feedback to improve provision. This was partly identified in the self-assessment report. The training centre has comprehensive and systematic arrangements to obtain feedback from learners on a regular and frequent basis. All learners complete a weekly record sheet with their own and their tutor's comments about progress, which is reviewed once each term. This process is effective in identifying and resolving issues which affect the quality of provision for the learner. For example, as the result of feedback from learners, one course manual was rewritten to make the contents clearer and more appropriate to the learners' needs. At the end of each term, learners complete a well-designed questionnaire about a wide range of aspects of the programme and the training centre. As part of this process learners are actively encouraged to grade their tutor, the administration, the cleaning and the centre. Evaluative comments are invited and recorded on the form. There is a high response rate to the questionnaires which are thoroughly analysed. If learners raise issues, these are dealt with promptly. The analysis of each term's survey is clearly communicated to staff and members of the management committee. The centre's co-ordinating staff

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maintain close contact with classes and learners on a daily basis. They make good use of these informal opportunities to gain feedback from learners.

48. The arrangements for internal verification at ODALC are satisfactory. The process is thorough, with sufficient sampling and is well documented. Issues are identified and dealt with promptly. Internal verification meetings are held with staff. However, internal verification is not used sufficiently for continuous improvement, for example in the development of assessment practice.

49. ODALC's arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Observations are carried out twice each year for each tutor by a trained member of staff. Observations are recorded clearly and in detail, and the outcomes are shared and discussed with the tutor. The process is based on clear guidelines and a useful summary report is produced; links to performance management and staff appraisals are informal.

50. Some quality assurance monitoring systems are established, although a lot of the monitoring is informal. However, the arrangements to monitor the quality of provision are carried out sufficiently well to identify and resolve issues at an early stage. Retention, achievement and attendance rates are used effectively as key indicators by ODALC. The management committee has an active role in monitoring these aspects of the centre's provision.

51. ODALC does not have an overall policy for quality assurance. This situation was not recognised in the self-assessment report. There is a strong, but informal approach to the centre's arrangements for quality assurance, which mainly relies on the actions of individual staff members. The arrangements which are established are carried out as separate processes; they are not integrated sufficiently to fully contribute to the centre's strategy for continuous improvement, as for example with course reviews.

52. ODALC's self-assessment report was developed effectively from learners' feedback and in consultation with staff and the management committee. Inspectors' findings matched most of the strengths detailed in the self-assessment report and identified some additional strengths.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 1

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	344	1

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- excellent programme management
- good retention and achievement rates
- very good teaching
- particularly good learner attainment
- good learner progression
- particularly wide range of courses and learning opportunities

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses

Achievement and standards

53. The learner retention and achievement rates are consistently good. In 2000-01, 227 learners on the programmes achieved 323 qualifications. In 2001-02, from 343 programme enrolments, a total of 331 qualifications were achieved. In 2002-03, 262 learners enrolled and a total of 275 qualifications were achieved, with a pass rate of 92 per cent. Achievement trends are monitored and benchmarked against national averages. Retention rates have remained good for all courses and levels of qualifications since 2000. For entry level programmes, retention is particularly good, ranging from 93 to 100 per cent. At programme levels 1 to 3, retention ranges from 70 to 80 per cent. The standard of learners' work is very good. They make good progress on their courses and most learners achieve their qualifications within planned timescales.

Quality of education and training

54. The teaching on IT programmes is very good and meets the needs of individual learners. All the tutors are able to teach an exceptionally wide range of subjects in IT. They are qualified and experienced in teaching from entry level to level 3 in the subjects on offer to learners. In most classes, learners are working towards a range of qualifications at different levels. Each programme has an accompanying workbook, written by the tutors, which clearly explains every aspect of the IT topic and provides learners with a series of exercises to test their knowledge. Tutors support learners as they complete the workbooks by giving prompt and effective answers to questions.

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Learners can choose to have their learning certified either by a formal examination, or by building a portfolio of evidence and being regularly assessed. Tutors ensure that learners have frequent opportunities to test their knowledge by completing past test and examination papers. Feedback to learners is prompt and helps them to understand their weak areas and to record achievements. Tutors regularly update their own knowledge and share information among themselves to ensure they are able to give up-to-date coaching to learners. Courses are well planned to encourage learners to achieve their targets within a realistic timescale. However, tutors are supportive of issues such as family commitments and health problems which may affect a learner's progress.

55. Learners attain skills, knowledge and experience to a level which often exceeds their expectations. Most learners have little or no previous experience when they first enrol. Learners value the relaxed and supportive learning environment and helpful staff at the centre. The social interaction among learners encourages them to support each other. One learner with no previous experience of IT passed four word-processing examinations in one year. Another learner with no formal qualifications completed 10 units of an IT qualification and level 1 and 2 in numeracy in a year.

56. Learners' progression rates are good. Their self-esteem and confidence grow as they learn new skills and gain qualifications. Many of the learners initially attend IT classes to enable them to keep up with the skills their children or grandchildren have developed in IT. However, on completion of a course of study, many learners progress either to a higher level qualification, or to a different topic at the same level. A comprehensive and clearly written document has been developed to show learners the full range of options available to them. They are able to develop a programme of progression that is designed for their needs and goals. As learners progress from entry level to higher level qualifications the work they produce becomes more complex, but the standard remains very good.

57. Learners at ODALC are able to study for a particularly wide range of qualifications. The organisation has worked closely with a group of local and national organisations to identify a range of IT units to meet the needs of learners and local organisations. A total of 34 IT courses is available at ODALC. Each of these courses leads to a recognised qualification. The range of courses enables learners to specialise in either one particular aspect of IT, such as word processing, spreadsheets or desktop publishing, or to study multiple subjects at each level. The learning centre has introduced courses in image manipulation, web page design and the internet to ensure that learners have the opportunity to keep up to date with the latest developments in IT. One learner who was offered employment on condition that they achieved a text processing qualification, was given additional tuition by ODALC's staff. The learner achieved an intermediate and an advanced qualification with distinction. The centre also offers existing learners and other members of the local community, opportunities to learn about related IT topics by arranging taster sessions for children and their families during the summer holidays.

58. ODALC has a thorough approach to the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress. Learners' previous experience and knowledge of IT are appropriately assessed on entry to the course. Learners' work and progress is regularly and thoroughly

assessed. Tutors provide clear verbal and written feedback. After each classroom session a note is made of what the learner has achieved and this is used as the basis to agree targets with the learner, to be reached at the next session. Progress reviews take place each week and at the end of each term. Learners' comments are incorporated into the reviews. Tutors effectively record the progress of all their learners towards completion of individual qualifications. The monitoring process clearly identifies those learners whose progress is slower than anticipated and their tutors provide helpful support.

59. Resources are satisfactory. ODALC has sufficient up-to-date computers and an adequate range of printers, scanners and peripheral equipment. Software is to industry standard. Workbooks to accompany each course allow learners to work at their own pace supported by coaching and mentoring from a member of staff. Workspace for learners is restricted, particularly when classes are full. Seven laptop computers with wireless technology are set up in a multi-function room to meet the demand for additional IT courses at various times during the week.

60. Guidance and support for learners is appropriate to meet their needs. An initial interview to determine learners' prior achievements, experience and current goals ensures that they are all enrolled for an appropriate subject and level of qualification. Support for literacy, numeracy and language skills is provided by the centre. Numeracy support is good and learners gain qualifications. Literacy support is provided in the IT classes and tutors give helpful feedback, advice and guidance to learners about how to improve their skills. There are no separate classes for literacy. None of the current IT learners has language support needs.

Leadership and management

61. ODALC's management of the IT programme is excellent. Managers have a clear understanding of how IT training should be managed and expanded to meet community needs. Working productively with partners, ODALC offers qualifications which link with the regional strategy for IT training and progression opportunities. Resources are very effectively managed to give learners access during the day, evenings and at weekends. Staff training is good and maintains staff knowledge and expertise at industry-standard levels. All staff have regular performance appraisals. Resources are well maintained. Investment in new hardware and software meets the needs of the learners and contributes the diverse range of courses available.

62. Access to IT training for all members of the community is good. Learners are recruited in a variety of ways. By word of mouth, leafleting in the local community and joint marketing activities with other community organisations. National targets and priorities in access to IT training are taken into account in course design. Particular emphasis is placed on ensuring access to IT for traditionally excluded groups, such as single parents, the socially isolated and those with disabilities. Access for learners with disabilities is good. Adjustable height working areas and chairs, wrist supports to reduce stress, specially adapted peripheral equipment such as large keyboards and mice are all available for learners with disabilities. A range of other equipment is available,

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including a hearing loop for learners with hearing impairments.

63. All the tutors have a good understanding of the self-assessment process and were fully involved in its development. The self-assessment report identified the same strength as those of the inspectors. Staff share good practice at regular team meetings to ensure standardisation of record-keeping, as with the monitoring of learners' progress, their progress reviews and the initial assessment of learning. Learners' and staff's views of the provision are actively encouraged by managers and lead to continuous improvements of the programme.

Visual & performing arts & media**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning	56	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good teaching
- innovative initiatives to enhance learners' experience
- particularly well-managed programmes

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses

Achievement and standards

64. Retention and achievement rates are good. Beginners and more experienced learners make good progress and achieve good results in their practical work. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners develop a wide range of skills and their achievement level is good. They achieve standards which make full use of their experience and abilities. All the courses are accredited, from entry level to level 3. Achievement rates are consistently good, at above 85 per cent in the previous three years. In the current academic year, 22 learners have achieved credits at entry level, 27 have achieved credits at level 1 and seven have achieved credits at level 2. Progression is good. The work in learners' portfolios shows a very good standard of technical skills and skills development, particularly at level 3. Many learners have successfully broadened their range of skills and achievement by learning additional craft activities during the sessions, such as quilting styles and decoupage. Retention is good at 89 per cent and learners attend regularly.

Quality of education and training

65. As identified in the self-assessment report, teaching of the clothing and craft courses is good. Tutors have a good understanding of each learner's ability. Additional learning needs are supported by the effective use of clear and specific handouts. The tutors are skilled at providing clear explanations. They give good demonstrations, with effective use of questioning to help learners grasp new techniques. Individual and small group coaching are particularly good in supporting individual learning. The tutors have an effective approach to the teaching of mixed groups of beginners and experienced learners whose ability levels range from entry level to level 3. Tutors are skilled at adapting a course to suit the needs of new learners. Sessions are managed well. Tutors

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show excellent technical knowledge and competence in the teaching of their subject areas. Learners are challenged and inspired by the content of their learning programmes. Learners keep detailed records of training through the photographs of items made and small-scale samples of work. The levels of challenge and learning goals set for learners are appropriate to their level of prior achievement. Most learners have developed the ability to work independently. Learners are effectively encouraged by their tutors to learn from, and to support, each other during practical sessions. They work well in small groups. Learners acquire useful evaluation skills by examining other learners' work as it is developed. Learners are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their courses. Learners develop their social and personal skills during the classes; they report that participation in the courses has a significant impact in the growth of their confidence and self-esteem.

66. ODALC has introduced a range of innovative initiatives to enhance the learners' experience at the training centre. The additional activities arranged include celebration of learners' achievements, workshops and involvement in national initiatives. These activities are carefully designed to expand the learning experience of current learners and to recruit new learners. For example, the centre has run a series of very successful open days with specific themes. These have included silk painting, 'Making your own knickers' and 'Design a T shirt.' Learners on the craft courses are encouraged to broaden their learning experiences by using the centre's IT facilities. The centre successfully involves learners in national initiatives. For example, learners are fully consulted about topics for adult learners' week and the bite-sized learning campaign. ODALC celebrates learners' achievements well and organises an annual event with the presentation of certificates. The shop window front of the crafts room is used effectively to display examples of learners' work.

67. Physical resources are satisfactory. Good-quality specialist equipment is used in the specialist needlecraft room. There are two large purpose-built tables for the dressmaking and curtain-making courses. Learners use well-maintained sewing machines. In needlecraft classes, a good range of resources is available for learners with disabilities, such as a low table for wheelchair users and an adapted, foot-operated sewing machine. The space available is adequate for the group sizes. However, there is insufficient storage space and some equipment is stacked in the corners of the room. ODALC has recently introduced an accredited machine-knitting course. Resources for this course are adequate. Each learner has access to a knitting machine, but not all the tables used for the machines are of an appropriate height. When the machines are set up there is insufficient space for the tutor to move easily around the room to work with individual learners.

68. Assessment practices are also satisfactory. Initial assessment is thorough. All new learners at ODALC are interviewed when they arrive at the centre. An appropriate programme is identified for the learners' needs, based on their prior experience, achievements and goals. Any support needs are carefully identified and suitable arrangements are made. Weekly progress review sheets are used effectively to provide feedback to learners about their achievements and progress. The review sheets are completed regularly and systematically. However, some of the feedback on the review

sheets does not give learners sufficient guidance in how to improve. Tutors provide a significant amount of useful informal assessment support during the sessions. Most learners have a clear understanding of their progress towards their qualification.

69. The guidance and support available to learners is appropriate. Some is provided by supported access to a range of useful websites or in some cases, the use of external agencies. Induction is a clear and informative presentation. Learners find the induction helpful and memorable. All new learners complete an initial skills assessment, which effectively identifies any literacy, numeracy or language support needs. Learners with an identified need are encouraged to take up the centre's support for literacy and/or numeracy skills. If learners choose not to access the additional support available, their progress is monitored and, where appropriate, they are further encouraged to make use of additional support. The numeracy provision has been used by three learners on the needlecraft courses and this has had a positive effect on their ability to complete their courses. There is sufficient literacy support available and this is provided to learners within the context of their classes.

70. The range of accredited courses is sufficient for the needs of the learners at the centre. The courses are managed flexibly to respond to individual learning needs and learners' goals. Some learners choose not to follow an accredited course. Effective management of the curriculum ensures a suitable and coherent programme of courses. Progression from entry level to level 3 is available in most programmes. The main enrolment period is in September, although learners can enrol at any point during the year. At the time of the inspection there were no waiting lists for courses. Currently, courses are held for a total of 16 hours during weekdays and there are no evening classes. The timetable of courses is carefully planned to ensure that learners can access their learning programmes at a convenient time. For example, sessions start and finish at times that are suitable for parents with children at school.

Leadership and management

71. The programmes are particularly well managed. ODALC places a clear emphasis on arranging courses to meet learners' needs, this is applied to all aspects of the management and planning of programmes. Learners and tutors are fully consulted about the development of new training provision. ODALC has good links within the local community, and through the management committee. Residents are canvassed effectively for their views about which courses the centre should offer. In response to recent requests, ODALC has arranged to provide a belly-dancing class. Although classes are not regularly arranged for weekends, occasional, themed open days are held on Saturdays. These successfully promote the centre to potential learners. Resources are managed efficiently. Tutors' requests for necessary resources are met promptly, including the range of small items needed for craft work. Larger equipment is well maintained and upgraded as necessary. Communications are very good and staff actively share information. Regular team meetings are held at which ideas and good practice are discussed, and courses are reviewed. Tutors' contributions to these meetings are encouraged and valued. Staff training and development activities are well supported by ODALC.

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72. ODALC provides very effective support for learners with disabilities. A good range of suitable, adapted equipment is available. The centre is very responsive to learners' needs and where additional equipment or adaptations are required, these are provided. The craft room is on the ground floor with a ramp at the main entrance and appropriate toilet facilities for users with disabilities. However, the rear exit is not accessible for wheelchair users. Learners have good access to general resources, such as use of the photocopier and IT facilities. The equal opportunities policy is made available to all learners in the training centre handbook. The centre's policies, procedures and mission statement are clearly displayed on the walls of the craft room. Learners and tutors find the centre very welcoming and supportive.

73. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process. ODALC has an effective programme of classroom observations. Weekly progress reviews and end-of-term questionnaires are completed by all learners. These are thoroughly analysed and the information is used to improve the courses and the facilities at the centre. All staff have access to the results on the centre's comprehensive management information system. Internal verification procedures are thorough and staff have a good understanding of the process.