Leading Local Authorities, as Providers of Adult and Community Learning and Work-Based Learning, Through Ofsted Multi-remit Inspection

Kate Watters
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)

“Don’t wait till you get the letter announcing the inspection - make contact with managers of other learning and skills provision in the local authority NOW.”

LA Manager - Case Study C
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Contact Details

Maureen Morrison
National Research Manager
Centre for Excellence in Leadership
Lancaster University Management School
CEL Research Office, Room B59
Gillow Avenue
Lancaster LA1 4YX
Tel: 01524 594364

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## Contents

**Executive Summary**  
2

**Introduction**  
3

**Research Framework**  
6

**Research Methods and Activities**  
8

**Research Findings**  
10

- The location of the different remits within the local authorities  
10

- Leadership Challenges in relation to planning and managing the inspection  
11

- The extent of collaboration between leaders and managers of different remits  
11

- The experience of nominees  
13

- Inspectors’ approach to strategic and operational leadership and management  
13

- Inspection outcomes of the case study inspections  
14

- Perceptions of the efficacy of multi-remit inspection processes  
15

- Changes arising from multi-remit inspection  
15

**Conclusions and Recommendations**  
16

**References**  
19

**Appendix A: Case Studies**  
20

**Further Information and Contact Details**  
37
Executive Summary

NIACE worked with a small group of local authority adult learning and skills providers to explore the leadership challenges arising from a change in inspection arrangements whereby all types of government funded provision, referred to as ‘remits’, are inspected simultaneously. This process is known as multi-remit inspection. A second objective was to identify from those who had experience of this process what leadership strategies might be useful to local authorities likely to be inspected on a multi-remit basis.

The research aimed to test the hypothesis that this change would be challenging to local authorities. Case studies were created through semi-structured interviews with staff who had experienced this form of inspection. These took the form of professional dialogues. Key findings were that multi-remit inspection presented a greater leadership challenge where remits were separately managed; that in all cases the process had been a catalyst for change, and a positive one; that being permitted only one nominee (first point of contact and liaison for inspectors) was problematic and created a very heavy workload. Participants suggested a number of useful leadership strategies, the most important being to establish productive working relationships between ‘remits’ at the earliest opportunity.
Introduction

NIACE worked with eight local authority (LA) providers, to identify the leadership and management challenges arising from recent changes to inspection processes. Prior to April 2007, different types of local authority adult provision were usually inspected separately. These types of provision were referred to as ‘remits’. Now, inspections of different types of LA adult provision normally take place concurrently and are undertaken by a single inspection team. This is known as a ‘multi-remit’ inspection.

Multi-remit inspection was introduced

“...In order to reduce the instances of providers being subject to a number of separate inspections and to ensure inspection resources are deployed efficiently, all government funded education and training which falls under the remit of the Learning and Skills Directorate [of Ofsted] will be inspected at the same time. In the case of local authorities, this might include the inspection of work-based learning alongside their provision in adult and community learning.” (Ofsted June 2007: 7)

Provision inspected includes that funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC); the Department of Work and Pension (DWP); the European Social Fund (ESF); and learmdirect and nextstep information and advice services. The only current exception is Workstep provision for adults with disabilities which continues to be inspected separately for the time being.

This change coincided with other significant changes:

- the merger of the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted);
- the introduction of ‘proportionate’ inspection, whereby inspection intensity is partly dependent on previous inspection performance;
- the reduction in inspection resources;
- an increased focus on ‘success’.

This project explored the particular challenges arising from the policy decision to inspect on a multi-remit basis, within this wider context.
The impetus for the project came from the researcher's familiarity with local authority adult community learning (ACL); knowledge of current structural arrangements for the leadership of different types of provision within LAs; and awareness of changing inspection requirements and processes.

The main research questions were:

1. What are the main leadership challenges for local authorities providing learning and skills provision under contract to LSC arising from the introduction of ‘multi-meat’ inspection?

2. What leadership approaches and strategies are most useful when preparing for inspection on this basis?

‘Multi-meat’ inspection was thought likely to present new leadership challenges for several reasons. Different aspects of provision may be, or have until recently been, led, managed and delivered separately. Government policy and priority levels for the remits differ. Apprenticeships and adult skills training (work-based learning or WBL) are regarded as essential for the economy. Within ACL, programmes in Skills for Life (basic skills) and for adults to gain ‘platform for employability’ qualifications, have higher priority than learning for personal interest.

Funding and contractual requirements vary, reflecting different priority levels and policy requirements, as do learners’ expectations and needs. The background and experience of leaders, managers and staff, and their working practices may differ. The relative ‘size’ of different strands of provision often differs significantly, with, among the providers inspected on this basis in 2007, up to 40,000 part time ACL learners and as few as 8 work-based learning participants. Nevertheless, inspection teams must make judgements about leadership effectiveness across this range of disparate provision.

The group of participating local authorities were:

- one LA inspected by exception on a multi meat basis in 2005;
- one LA involved in the pilot phase for the new style of inspection in 2006;
- four LAs inspected on this basis during the Autumn of 2007;
- one LA inspected on this basis in Spring 2008;
- one LA anticipating future inspection on this basis.
In 2005 multi-remit inspection of local authority provision applied to fewer than five per cent of LA providers during the first cycle of inspection (Case Study A). The 2006 inspection was one of three ALI pilot multi-remit inspections (Case Study B). During the 2007/8 inspection cycle it is estimated that between 12 and 15 LAs will have been inspected on this basis (not all reports are yet published).

Of the seven participating local authorities, six were unitary authorities and one a county council. In three, the various remits were led and managed separately; in the other four the remits are now merged, with a single management structure.

It should be noted that a number of other local authorities were inspected on a multi remit basis during 2007. Overall, two thirds of local authorities experiencing multi remit inspection in 2007 for which inspection reports have been published to date have been unitary authorities.
The research was empirical, seeking to test out an informed hypothesis, through dialogue with providers directly affected by this change. Almost all local authorities provide ACL, often working in partnership with further education colleges and community and voluntary organisations. Most have several sources of funding and around half have ACL provision that includes programmes designed to lead to qualifications as well as informal adult learning, however not all local authorities offer work-based learning (WBL). Hence the change to multi-remit inspections will apply to some but not all local authorities.

Undertaking action research to test this hypothesis required the active participation of providers. The researcher worked collaboratively with participants, exploring the research questions through an interactive interview process. Participants and the researcher were professionally acquainted and had a shared understanding of the policy context and environment. This enabled the interviews to take the form of a professional conversation.

The research is located within an interpretive research paradigm (Bassey 1999: 43) and is essentially qualitative, although some quantitative data are used in context-setting and when reporting on the published outcomes of inspection. The researcher was interested in the participants’ accounts of their experiences; reflections; and considered views as to what leadership approaches and strategies would be likely to be useful to other providers facing this type of inspection.

The qualitative data collected depended heavily on interpretation. Planning for inspection depends on interpretation of inspection handbooks and stated information requirements. During inspection, the nominee must interpret correctly the significance of inspectors’ comments and questions, both heard and as reported by colleagues. Inspection reports summarise the collective judgements of a team of inspectors, based on individuals’ analysis and interpretation. Participants’ perceptions of the efficacy of the processes and fairness of outcomes were informed by their understanding of inspection processes and interpretation of the criteria for judgement.
The planned outcomes of the action research were a small set of focused case studies, in effect a ‘collective case study’ (Stake 2003). The case studies were, in Bassey's terms, ‘theory-testing’. Their purpose was instrumental; the intention was to not only understand the particular case but also to provide insight into a wider question (Stake 2003: 137). Rather than claim any universal truths, the intention was to generate some ‘fuzzy generalisations’ (Bassey p 51) as a result of a thematic analysis of the cases explored.

The case studies were created on the basis of telephone interviews with senior staff in the provider organisations with first hand experience of multi remit inspection. The interviews were semi-structured, neither ‘open-ended, ethnographic’ (Fontana A and Frey J H, 2003: 74), or ‘akin to a free-ranging conversation ‘(Easterby-Smith et al 1991: 72); nor ‘highly formalised’ (p 72) or so tightly structured that ‘nothing is left to chance’ (Fontana and Frey p 69). Rather, areas of interest were identified and shared with respondents before the interviews, to provide focus while allowing for a more discursive interaction. Although the areas of interest were common, each interview was understood to be a unique ‘interactional encounter’ within a context of ‘interaction and relation’, dependent as much on a social dynamic as on ‘accurate accounts and replies’ (p 64). The resultant text, while not negotiated in Fontana and Frey’s sense, was shared with the respondents and open to amendment for factual inaccuracies or if respondents felt that the record of the ‘discourse’ (p 91) had not properly captured their concerns.
Research Methods and Activities

Desk research was undertaken to confirm inspection requirements and guidance, and to read inspection reports of LA providers experiencing multi-remit inspection prior to September 2007. Further desk research was undertaken to read and draw on the inspection reports of the LAs interviewed, to inform the case studies and analysis, and to read other relevant inspection reports.

LA providers scheduled for inspection during the autumn of 2007, on a multi remit basis, were approached initially by telephone and email. Two providers who had by exception experienced a form of multi remit inspection in 2005 and 2006 were also contacted. This was to capture experiences and reflections when longer-term outcomes could be identified. Last, an LA provider known to have merged remits, for strategic reasons, was approached, to offer a forward-looking perspective. In all cases informed consent was obtained before the interviews took place.

Extended telephone interviews were conducted with senior managers from the ACL services inspected. In all cases the nominee for the inspection had been a member of the ACL service, as ACL learner numbers were larger. Several of the respondents had fulfilled the role of nominee themselves. In two cases subsequent interviews took place with senior staff responsible for local authority work-based learning services that had been included in the inspections.

The case studies are included, in full, in Appendix A of this report.

Questions provided covered the following areas:

- the range of ‘remits’ that were subject to inspection, and the relative ‘size’ of these;
- the leadership and management arrangements for the remits, including location within local authority directorates;
- the extent of contact between the remits prior to inspection;
- the choice of nominee, and selection process;
- the approach taken by the inspectors when evaluating strategic leadership, operational leadership of the various remits, and overall;
- the judgements reached by inspectors about leadership and management;
- any changes to structural arrangements, operational arrangements or working practices being considered or planned as a result of the inspection;
- the key leadership challenges arising from the decision to inspect on a multi-remit inspection, as perceived from the provider’s perspective.
For case study H the discussion covered the rationale for integrating different remits, the leadership and management arrangements, and future inspections.

Case studies were drafted on the basis of the detailed notes from the telephone interviews and informed by the inspection reports where published, and sent as drafts to the participating providers. Some minor amendments were made for accuracy, or clarification.
Research Findings

The location of the different remits within the local authority

This was not predictable. In three of the four cases where provision was merged the service as a whole was located in the directorate responsible for children’s and young people’s services; in some cases there was ‘dotted line’ reporting to another directorate. In the fourth case the service was located within the adult, culture and community directorate. In the three cases where provision was not merged, and currently continues to be separately managed, different remits were located within different directorates.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study</th>
<th>ACL Directorate</th>
<th>WBL Directorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 2005</td>
<td>Children, schools and families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Family learning elsewhere, at re-inspection moved to same directorate</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 2006</td>
<td>Learning, culture and children’s services</td>
<td>Economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 2007</td>
<td>Adult, health and community services</td>
<td>Environment and economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 2007</td>
<td>Children and young people</td>
<td>Corporate directorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 2007</td>
<td>Children’s services (‘dotted line’ to Culture for ‘Personal and Community Development Learning’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 2007</td>
<td>Adult, culture and community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(new - previously children and Young People’s Department)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 2008</td>
<td>Children’s services department (reporting links to Citywide Strategy groups for Adult Learning and Skills and PCDL and to groups relating to 14-19 planning)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of 6 other LAs undergoing multi remit inspection in 2007, all but one had located their range of provision in one department or directorate. 4 were in a department or directorate of Children's and Young People's Services or Education. One other was located in a Directorate of Adult and Community Services, and in another ACL was located in Adult, Community and Housing Services and WBL in the Directorate of Urban Environment.

**Leadership challenges in relation to planning and managing the inspection**

While inspections take place within a published framework, the detailed planning of each inspection is a matter for the Lead Inspector. A ‘scoping’ meeting takes place with the provider organisation a few weeks prior to the inspection, following consideration of information from previous inspection reports and the Learning and Skills Council, including information about the provision made by the local authority. The scoping meeting informs the selection of the team of inspectors needed to do justice to the range of provision to be inspected. The size of the team is also informed by previous inspection performance and other background information, in the context of a policy of risk-assessment and proportionate inspection. It may also be influenced by thematic work being undertaken by the inspectorate. Consequently no two multi-remit inspections will be the same in terms of specific processes or foci.

Initial uncertainty on the part of the LA about the range of provision that could potentially and was likely to be in scope, and/or inspectors’ knowledge of the local provision being based on incomplete information caused some confusion at the early stages of planning. Where remits are separately managed, it may be that the leader of neither major remit (ACL, WBL) is aware of the totality of LA government-funded provision. In one case several weeks went by before the ACL service (the largest remit) became aware that the local authority had been informed that an inspection was to take place and a postponement was agreed. ESF funded provision for example is inspected on a regional basis, however particular projects may be in scope when LA provision is inspected. The advice offered to leaders (see below) emphasises the importance of making sure that there is such an overview at a strategic level within the local authority.

**The extent of collaboration between leaders and managers of different remits**

Where provision was merged, the extent to which leadership and management structures enabled those leading on particular aspects of provision, such as quality improvement or leading a curriculum area, to work effectively across all remits depended on changes made at the time of merger, and how well these had bedded in. Where merger was recent, careful planning and a new structure (rather than one merely incorporating existing elements) helped ensure that leadership of the provision was fit for purpose in relation to the range of remits. In two cases structures were still evolving at the time of the inspection.
Where the remits were separately managed, there had been limited collaborative work, at either strategic or operational levels. The notification of inspection resulted in rapid sharing of information so that the nominee was as well informed as possible prior to the inspection.

The choice of nominee

When preparing for inspection, each provider is invited to nominate a senior member of staff to act as the nominee, in Ofsted’s terms the “provider’s main link with the inspection team”. In this capacity s/he provides information to inform planning; briefs inspectors; briefs all staff and others such as elected or board members about inspection arrangements; ensures that people are available for scheduled meetings; co-ordinates feedback arrangements from inspectors to the provider; and, crucially, attends all inspection team meetings. This includes those where grading is discussed, although s/he “may not contribute to discussions that are directly related to grading” (Ofsted 2007 p12). The nominee should be sufficiently senior to “ensure the cooperation of staff at all levels”; should “have authority to carry out the role with autonomy” and, importantly, “have a detailed understanding of the provider’s programmes and operations”.

For four of the ‘integrated’ providers (A, E, F and G) the nominee was a senior member of staff with a cross service/cross remit role, in three cases from the previous ACL service. In all cases the merger was relatively recent. In three, another colleague, the ‘lead’ for the WBL remit (A, E and G) was identified internally as, for practical purposes, a sub-nominee. In the fourth case (F) this was not considered necessary. Where provision was separately led and managed (B, C, D) the nominee was chosen from the ACL service, which had significantly larger numbers of learners. In two cases (C and D) a colleague from the other main remit was designated internally as a sub-nominee, and in one (B) the leader for WBL was involved in the inspection process although this term was not used. Ofsted do not officially recognise the role of sub-nominee – there can only be one nominee.

Only being allowed one nominee was considered to be problematic in six of the seven cases. The extent of this was linked to the flexibility of the lead inspector. In some cases the leader for the second main remit was permitted to attend all meetings s/he wished to, with the exception of the grading meeting. In other cases this was not permitted. The nominees interviewed acknowledged their anxiety as to whether they could ‘do justice’ to the remit/s with which they were less familiar, and concern that they might ‘let down’ other colleagues and the service as a whole. In two cases research interviews also took place with the WBL lead/sub-nominee. Both understood their nominee colleagues’ concerns and indeed had shared them to some extent prior to the inspection, but were confident that the nominee had in the event done a good job, and considered the outcomes fair.
The experience of nominees

Nominees interviewed appreciated the high levels of professional and personal support showed to them during the inspection, and subsequently, by the leads for other remits/sub-nominees. Nevertheless, where provision is separately led and managed, doubts remained as to whether one person can feel fully confident that they can always be sufficiently alert to the significance and implications of inspectors’ questions and comments, and the nuances of some of the latter, across the different remits, when their experience is derived from only one of these. Where provision was integrated the insistence of one nominee appeared to be less problematic, unless the merger had been very recent.

All the nominees and several heads of service interviewed commented on the challenge of the unavoidable intense and sustained concentration required from the nominee, and the extremely heavy workload. S/he was likely to be attending inspection meetings at the beginning and end of every day for several days and also briefing and liaising with senior and operational manager colleagues on an ongoing basis. This could mean 14-hour days on site, for three or four days. The feedback meetings for subject/skill area inspections, attended in all cases by the nominee, took place over many hours, often consecutively, with further hours of meetings for leadership and management and overarching questions and grades in relation to the different remits and the service as a whole (see Case Study G in particular).

Inspectors’ approach to strategic and operational leadership and management

The CIF question is “How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?” The inspection handbook (Ofsted 2007) describes what this means for WBL and ACL (pages 54 and 73 respectively). For both, the definition includes: the strategic leadership of learning, including the effect of policies; the operational management of learning, including staff and resource deployment; quality improvement arrangements; the promotion of equality of opportunity; strategies to identify and meet learners’ learning support needs. For ACL, the strategic leadership of learning includes “work with local partnerships, and the clarity with which aims and objectives are communicated with all relevant parties” (p73).

Interviews by inspectors took place with senior officers of the local authority, in six cases. Inspectors were interested in how the service was linked with LA structures and mechanisms, such as committees or planning groups, and contributed to wider agendas and strategies, such as 14-19 strategies, local area agreements (LAAs), business strategies or development strategies. Where it was clear that dialogue concerning learning and skills provision was taking place across the council, and there was a coherent approach to planning, this was regarded positively and noted in reports. Inspectors expected the local authority to have a strategic overview of the provision, including all remits for which it was ultimately responsible. Consequently where this was perceived as absent, this was the subject of critical comment (see Case Study C). However, judging by the perceptions of participants and by the
published reports there appears to be no explicit expectation on the part of inspectors of a formal written local authority strategy for adult learning and skills at this time.

While inspectors expected to see oversight and support from local authority officers and elected members, the inspection itself necessarily focused on the leadership of the service/s and remits, as the latter, not the local authority as a whole, were being inspected. Consequently inspection of leadership and management largely concentrated on service/remit leaders and managers and the way in which their work ensured that all learners could achieve. Whether senior leaders were proactive in promoting their services within the local authority, how well they worked with other directorates and departments and a range of other partners including community and voluntary organisations and the extent to which they ensured that learning and skills provision contributed to wider aims, national and local objectives and targets, were all seen as aspects of their leadership role. Their main responsibility was to ensure that their decisions and the actions that ensued maximised the opportunities for local people to participate in learning successfully.

**Inspection outcomes of the case study inspections**

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study</th>
<th>Effectiveness of provision</th>
<th>Capacity to improve</th>
<th>Leadership and management</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 2005</td>
<td>N/a at time of inspection</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Report text suggests WBL judged to be less well performing than ACL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 2006</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not graded but described as ‘good’</td>
<td>2 (QI 2)</td>
<td>One set of grades for overarching aspects and subject areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 2007</td>
<td>3 overall ACL 3, WBL 2, ESF 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 overall ACL 3, WBL 2, ESF 3</td>
<td>ACL subject grades 3s WBL skills area grades 2s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 2007</td>
<td>4 overall ACL 4, WBL 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 overall ACL 4, WBL 2</td>
<td>Only ACL subject areas graded, all graded 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 2007</td>
<td>2 overall ACL 2, WBL 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 overall ACL 2, WBL 2</td>
<td>ACL subject areas graded 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 2007</td>
<td>4 overall ACL 4, WBL 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 overall ACL 4, WBL 3</td>
<td>2 ACL subject areas graded 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 2008</td>
<td>3 overall ACL, WBL, learntdirect all 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 overall ACL, WBL, learntdirect all 3</td>
<td>10 subject/skill areas graded, 2 graded 2 others graded 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n.b. Case study H not yet scheduled to be inspected)

Key: Inspection grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory
Note: of 6 other LAs inspected on a multi remit inspection in 2007, 2 were graded 2 for Effectiveness of Provision, Capacity to Improve and Leadership and Management, the other 4 were graded 3. Almost all curriculum/skill areas were graded 2 or 3.

**Perceptions of the efficacy of multi-remit inspection processes**

In most cases the inspection process and outcomes were felt to be generally fair. However, one nominee commented that, had the outcomes been less positive for one or both of the remits, perceptions might have been different. In two cases inspection grades for ACL, as the larger remit, resulted in overall grades lower than those awarded to the WBL provision. In both cases this was acknowledged by the nominee (from the ACL service) to be a fair outcome. The nominee in one case stated that she would have understood, had the lead for the other (higher graded) remit resented this, but had experienced only understanding and support during and after the inspection from that colleague.

**Changes arising from multi-remit inspection**

The decision to inspect on a multi remit inspection has been a catalyst for change, and in all cases explored a positive one. Where provision was already within a single leadership and management structure (A, E, H, and G), there had been recent changes prior to the inspection. In two cases no further major changes are planned; in one case (A) the structure has evolved since the original inspection and the subsequent re-inspection; in another (G) parts of the structure will now be reviewed. Where provision was led and managed separately (B, C, D) no definite plans are in place for merger. However, in two cases there has been greater sharing of information and practices, collaboration and joint activity. In the third case a LA review is planned; merger is one possible outcome. In one authority a small aspect of the provision that was separately managed was identified by inspectors as lacking cohesion with the wider provision (G). It is understood that this may result in a change of leadership arrangements for this strand of provision within that LA. The last case study (H) is based on a county council that took a strategic decision to merge of provision to position the LA service for the future to continue to be successful within its operating context, and better placed to respond to new inspection processes and the emerging further education sector performance management system, the LSC’s Framework for Excellence.
Conclusions and Recommendations

**Conclusions**

The first conclusion to be drawn from the case studies is that for local authorities, preparing for and leading a multi-remit inspection is likely to be particularly challenging where different remits that are to be inspected are led and managed separately. Second, even where major remits are merged, a wide range of programmes and activities may be in scope. Ensuring that inspectors have a clear and comprehensive picture of all the local authority’s provision at the outset, to inform scoping and planning, provides another challenge. Third, the practicalities of planning for a multi-remit inspection and leading and managing the process are demanding for the service and particularly for the nominee, creating a very heavy workload for this individual. Fourth, inspectors will expect there to be a strategic overview and understanding of the contribution made to local priorities and agendas by government-funded learning and skills provision at senior levels within the local authority. Fifth, given the current emphasis on peer review and development, seen as a main strategy for preparing providers for self-regulation, whether provision is separately managed or merged, inspectors will expect a clear rationale for different systems and processes and increasingly are likely to expect best practice that is transferable or that can be adapted to different contexts to be shared.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations below are based on exchanges during the interviews that formed the basis for the case studies. Leaders should adopt the following strategies:

- a) Before being notified of inspection

  Be proactive and ascertain the full range of contract between the local authority and the learning and skills council.

  Ensure that senior council officers understand the implications of multi-remit inspections and the range of provision potentially in scope to be inspected and understand the nature and purpose of the remits across the council; and explain how they may be involved in the inspection process, and why they should support leaders during the process to ensure a fair outcome.

  Raise the profile of the remits/service within the council. Identify and be assertive about how each/they together can contribute to the local authority’s agendas, as well as meeting the requirements of funding bodies.
Prepare summary information about all local authority contracts ready for the first planning conversation/meeting, to give inspectors a picture of the totality early in the process, to inform their more detailed planning decisions. It is in leaders’ interests to know about these as soon as possible.

Make immediate contact with and get to know those leading and managing different remits; build strategic and operational links; find out about their provision and how it operates. Look for opportunities to share information and practice; even if you decide not to adopt ways of working that are standard in another remit, considering alternative approaches is useful. Look for joint projects and initiatives to develop productive working relationships. Establish mechanisms to keep each other informed.

Share and compare quality assurance and monitoring systems, and processes for self-assessment and quality improvement. Aim for synergy and coherence; discuss what is similar and could be harmonised, and what is different and why. Where there are good reasons for systems and processes to operate differently, ensure there is a clear rationale, supported by evidence that anyone likely to be questioned about quality matters understands and can articulate.

Consider joint training and development, for generic aspects, in shared subject/skill areas or for common underpinning processes. Both efficiency gains and the cross-fertilisation are important.

Ensure remit leaders and managers do not work and think in silos. Encourage a focus on shared opportunities and challenges, rather than operational differences. Encourage all staff to see themselves as part of a LA adult learning and skills service, and to understand their role within that and how their work contributes to wider agendas.

Where services are merged, look for as much consistency in structures, systems and processes as possible. Ensure that leaders have access to and make effective use of data and performance information for all remits and undertake internal benchmarking as far as possible, including process benchmarking.

Recognise that cultures, attitudes and expectations (including those of learners) as well as working practices are likely to be different in different remits. Culture change, whether sharing or merging, requires careful planning and sustained support.

Take the opportunity of exposure to other cultures and leadership styles which helps a leader to reflect on their own.

When seeking to harmonise, do not expect to adopt other systems or working practices wholesale; be ready to adapt to context. Staff may resist adopting practices seen to ‘belong’ to another remit. Lead necessary change processes firmly but sensitively.
Consider who will be the nominee and identify an understudy or two, from different aspects of provision against criteria appropriate to your context.

b) Planning for the inspection once notified

Free up and support the nominee and understudy at once. Set up effective communication arrangements between the lead inspector and the relevant senior leader and nominee, and between the nominee and remit leaders.

c) During the inspection

Agree liaison arrangements between the inspection team and nominee that allow time for internal liaison to obtain clarification or additional evidence in a timely manner. Ensure there are effective arrangements for the nominee to keep senior leaders and colleagues informed.

Try to ensure that a nominee ‘understudy’ or the leader managers of the various remits can attend as many inspection meetings where emerging judgements are being discussed as possible. Ofsted do not officially allow sub-nominees so this is a matter for negotiation.

When presenting data, make sure it is crystal clear which remits are included and which not, and explain why data is presented differently for good reason. Do not assume that all inspectors know the latest specific requirements of the funding council for different strands of provision, or the particularities relating to all funding streams, or are absolutely up to date with recently implemented required operational changes.

Monitor the nominee's workload and take what steps you can to provide practical and moral support at all times. The process is exhausting.
References


LSC (2007) Framework for Excellence: How the Framework will work Coventry:


Appendix A: Case Studies

Case study A

This inspection was in January 2005 and the report was published in April 2005. It took place during the first Cycle of ALI inspections of local authority adult and community learning provision, and pre-dates the decision that from April 2006 where a local authority also offered work-based learning this would be inspected at the same time as ACL provision. At the time of the inspection the local authority had brought together its ACL and WBL provision within a single management structure (with the exception of family learning) and a decision was made to undertake what was in practice a ‘multi-remit’ inspection across most of the provision.

A partial re-inspection in relation to some subject areas and quality assurance was undertaken in April 2006 and there was a Quality Monitoring visit in July 2007. The report of this visit notes as a positive feature that family learning provision (awarded a rare grade 1 – ‘outstanding’- in 2005) had, by this time, been brought under the direct control of the team managing all the other LSC funded provision.

At the time of the inspection, and currently, the provision sits within the directorate of Children, Schools and Families (see note concerning Family Learning, above). Inspectors saw provision for 200 young apprentices across 5 vocational areas, Entry to Employment with 66 learners, and ACL provision for 2300 learners across 9 subject areas. The integrated work-based and community learning service had been established shortly before the inspection through the merger of one work based learning provider and one ACL/FE provider, according to the inspection report, which states that this merger placed the local authority in a good position to offer a wide range of learning and skills opportunities to young people and adults. It is understood that at the time the local learning and skills council encouraged this merger and viewed their subsequent ability to issue a single contract for the whole range of provision positively.

Prior to the inspection, work was underway on a single self-assessment report, but there had been little joint activity apart from joint consultations with staff about the structure of the integrated service, and joint training for staff as part of the preparation for inspection. Since the inspection a joint self-assessment report is standard practice, there are cross service initiatives (for example using subject learning coaches, the Skills for Life strategy), training (for example to raise awareness of equality and diversity matters) and sharing of aspects of best practice from family learning across the provision, as well as separate training where appropriate. A whole service framework for equality and diversity is being developed and quality improvement groups enable a range of perspectives to be included when processes are being reviewed and improved.

The nominee chosen by senior officers was a manager with a cross-service role requiring oversight of the whole service, from the former ACL service. Only one nominee was allowed and in addition a note-taker. The person chosen was from the WBL area and so, although unable to speak during inspection team meetings, was
able to advise the nominee on the basis of a more detailed understanding of the WBL context. The nominee was obliged to ‘get up to speed’ very rapidly regarding the operational aspects of the WBL provision and the different LSC requirements and benefited greatly from the sustained support and patience of WBL colleagues who understood how challenging this was. She was also the nominee for the re-inspection.

The perception from the nominee was that the inspection team, despite being aware of the newness of the integrated structure, operated as if this was well established and had unrealistic expectations about the extent to which systems and processes should and could have been brought together into integrated frameworks. The process of inspecting on a multi-remit basis was not the norm for inspection teams at that time and the team included some inspectors familiar with one or other contexts but not both. The nominee and lead inspector worked together to ensure that by the end of the inspection there was an appropriately broad evidence-base.

At the time of the inspection it was not standard practice to report on overarching aspects in such a way that any differences in performance between ACL and WBL were visible, so there was an aggregated grade for leadership and management of grade 3, satisfactory. However the text reveals some important differences. Inspectors considered that there was a clear vision and strategic direction for the service, but that operational management of one main area of provision (WBL) was not fully effective. Ten curriculum area grades were awarded, however four of the five WBL vocational areas were graded as unsatisfactory and one of the nine ACL subject areas. Quality assurance was also deemed to be unsatisfactory.

The inspection team acknowledged that, at the time of the inspection, the senior management team had only recently been appointed, there was a significant vacancy within the team. Managers were grappling with matters arising from the provision having previously been separately managed, such as different management information systems and morale within the workforce. At re-inspection, 5 of the areas reported on showed improvement, and the quality monitoring visit records ‘reasonable’ or ‘significant’ progress in all areas reported on.

ADVICE TO MANAGERS FACING MULTI-REMIT INSPECTION

- If services are currently separate it is important to ensure that you work with the inspectorate to ensure there is clarity about the inspection scope and process, prior to the start of the inspection. There is a real challenge in getting the right balance of time and focus across all aspects of the provision.

- Be well prepared – think through together the possible outcomes of a multi-remit inspection, such as more or less favourable judgements/grades for different aspects of provision, and think about how you would deal with those.

- There are benefits in being an integrated service; the leadership and management challenges are similar for different aspects of provision even though the contexts are different. If delivery continues to be separate there does need to be a strategic overview, and as far as makes sense, integrated frameworks and common processes for quality assurance/quality improvement for example.
Much is to be gained from sharing ways of working – for example what works best when managing subcontractors, what quality systems are most effective.

Look for joint projects that enable people to work together to get to know and understand each other and each other’s contexts.

Only keep separate and different what needs to be separate and different – there should be a clear rationale. Celebrate difference where it means provision is better able to meet learners’ needs. Choose the best model from what is available and adopt it across provision where you can – it makes life simpler and easier.

Recognise that when integrating provision that has been managed separately and where the operating context has significant differences, you are seeking to merge different cultures and practices that are embedded, and perhaps attitudes, such as willingness to embrace change. This needs careful thought and tact in tackling the changes that are necessary.

**Case study B**

This case study is based on interviews with both the ACL manager (the nominee) and the manager responsible for WBL.

This inspection was part of the Adult Learning Inspectorate’s pilot project for multi-remit inspections, which took place during the first quarter of the 2006-7 inspection year. This was also the first year of Cycle 2 of ALI inspections of ACL provision. The inspection took place in November 2006. The report was published in January 2007. This case study is based on interviews with staff from both ACL and WBL services.

At the time of the inspection ACL provision was located within the council’s learning, culture and children’s services directorate, and this continues. WBL for young people was located in the council’s economic development department, which is part of the city council’s ‘City Strategy’ Department. There were approximately 1700 ACL learners and there were 60 WBL learners at that time. The funding received for ACL was approximately twice that received for WBL.

Prior to the inspection both work-based learning and community learning had been reorganised, successfully according to the inspection report. There had been some contact between ACL and WBL, prompted by the LSC, at one point a joint three year development plan had been requested and had been provided, and there had been a sharing of self-assessment reports (SARs), however the LSC had not followed this through and SARs continued to be separate. Other than within SARs, data was not routinely shared and there was no joint training, and this continues to be the case.

During the pilot multi remit inspection, the inspection team treated the two services as separate. Inspectors interviewed both directors and met with leaders and managers from both services separately and did not appear to expect or look for joint working at operational level or for a strategic overview.
The nominee for the inspection was the quality manager for the ACL service. This was decided by the director who received the notification. The manager for WBL was a sub-nominee, but was not permitted to attend all the meetings with inspectors, unlike the nominee. These limitations, arising from the insistence of the inspectorate that there can only be one nominee, were experienced as unhelpful. The inspection team tried to be inclusive as far as their processes allowed but the restriction did little to convey a concept of equal respect and value for both aspects of provision; this could potentially have been divisive. The nominee was aware of having a limited understanding of the WBL service's work, and understood the WBL manager's frustrations at not being able to participate fully. The WBL manager was aware that being the nominee for another service, which you did not manage and with which you were not fully familiar, would be stressful. Both managers understood the difficulties of the situation and worked hard to provide mutual support and maintain good relationships during the inspection and they continue to have a very positive working relationship, seeing the inspection as a catalyst for greater co-operation that has proved mutually beneficial.

The outcomes for both services were good, with overarching grades for overall effectiveness, leadership and management and quality improvement and all subject/skill areas being judged 'good' (Grade 2) with the exception of Family Learning (ACL) which was, exceptionally, graded 1 (outstanding). Both services felt they had acquitted themselves well and that the nominee had represented the whole service effectively.

However, since the inspection the two services have been working together more and for example now have regular joint management team meetings and operational meetings about aspects of provision such as NVQs in Health and Social Care, Early Years and Adult Care. This year a joint SAR for this area of learning will be produced as a ‘dry run’ for undertaking a joint SAR across all areas for the 2007-8 year. During the autumn of 2007 managers have operated as ‘critical friends’ and have been involved in validating aspects of each other’s self assessment for leadership and management and for some areas of learning. There are some shared quality assurance activities and both the ACL and WBL services are currently involved in a ‘peer review and development’ project as part of a QIA sponsored national quality improvement programme.

The ACL service’s awareness of employers’ needs and interests and involvement in vocational training has grown since the inspection, and the two services co-operate to access funding and in the interests of attracting new and additional funding from the LSC for the council. The WBL manager is now more involved in the city’s 14-19 agenda and working more closely with schools and with the education department in relation to Every Child Matters and the implications of the Children’s Plan. Both services see closer working as inevitable, and as desirable, adopting a pragmatic approach and preferring evolution to radical change.
ADVICE TO MANAGERS FACING MULTI-REMIT INSPECTION

- Get to know your ‘opposite number’ as well as possible so that you both/all have a good overview of the local authority’s learning and skills provision.

- Build bridges and establish good working relationships. Look for joint projects and opportunities for co-operation and collaboration, these can provide a focus for getting to know and understand each other and each others’ services and how they operate and why.

- Share information about your processes and working practices even if you don’t want to adopt these, considering other ways of doing things is beneficial even if you do not use them.

- Recognise that there may be cultural differences in the way that different services operate, different approaches for example to self-assessment, different strengths and weaknesses, different levels of resource and awareness of national initiatives. Work with these differences sensitively.

- Share best practice and help each other with weaker aspects of provision – to do this you need to share information about strengths and areas for development and be honest and open.

- Establish good communication and proactive sharing of information, ensure you keep up to date with each other’s developments so that when the notification comes, you are ready and can plan the inspection together.

- When considering merging processes, for example self-assessment, make sure that the process and outcome continue to be useful to all users and stakeholders – avoid the blandness that can come from aggregation.

- Make sure that if provision is in different directorates, both/all directors understand the need for a coherent strategic overview.

Case study C

The inspection took place in October 2007 and the report was published in November 2007. In 2006, according to the inspection report, the county council undertook a major re-organisation of services and organisational structures. Adult and Community Learning (ACL) and work-based learning (WBL) are located in different directories of the local authority. The ACL provision is managed by the adult and community learning service, and located in the adult, health and community services directorate of the county council. The WBL provision is managed by the skills delivery group unit, located in the environment and economy directorate.

At the time of inspection, at the beginning of the academic year, there were approximately 1000 ACL learners, a third of whom were accessing provision in each of three curriculum areas (ICT, Family learning, Preparation for life and work) and 100 WBL learners (young apprentices, NVQ programmes/Train to Gain for adult employees, and European Social Fund-supported provision for adults who are out of work or threatened with redundancy). The WBL provision is mainly in health and social care and child care with some business administration.
Prior to the inspection there had been very little contact between the two learning and skills services, apart from occasional meetings at the senior management level. There was no sharing of data or information, and no shared training and development – essentially the two services operated separately. They had begun to co-operate on the ESF project, over individual learners’ pattern of accessing provision when this was constrained by personal circumstances, to enable them to follow an appropriate learning programme - described as a ‘small beginning’.

The nominee for the inspection was the Head of Service for ACL. A ‘sub-nominee’, the quality manager for WBL, was identified from the skills development group. This was decided at a level above both service managers. While the lead inspector did her best to be flexible, Ofsted do not officially recognise the role of sub-nominee, so she was not able to attend all inspection team meetings. This was seen as a potential disadvantage for the WBL service. It added a layer of complexity in the communication between managers and the inspectorate team, and was thought to have made misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the significance of inspectors’ comments more likely.

When evaluating the strategic and operational leadership and management (L and M) of the provision, the inspector for L and M undertook interviews at a number of levels, including both directors, and elected members who were portfolio holders, as well as managers of the areas of provision. The team of inspectors were perceived to have operated to some extent in sub teams, concentrating on the two separate aspects of provision. At the operational level inspectors appeared unconcerned by the separate-ness of the two services. They understood the reasons for there being two services, different processes and documentation. However they were concerned about a lack of connection or overview at a strategic level.

Inspectors judged that operational leadership was satisfactory for ACL and for WBL. However they were more critical of the management of the newer ESF project. Managers for ACL, WBL and ESF provision were also judged to demonstrate a clear vision of the contribution of lifelong learning to the council's strategic objectives. Inspectors were critical of the overall strategic direction of the adult learning provision provided by the council (ACL, WBL and ESF) which was described as ‘insufficiently clear at corporate and directorate level’. This, inspectors acknowledged, was recognised at senior management levels.

The outcomes from the multi-remit inspection as recorded in the inspection report were broadly satisfactory. There were no grades below the ‘satisfactory’ level. Grade 3 (satisfactory) was awarded for all overarching aspects and sub-grades of these, apart from Equality of Opportunity, which was graded 2 (good). However the overarching grades are arrived at on the basis of separate grades for the different aspects of provision – in this case ACL, WBL and ESF. In all cases WBL was graded 2 (good) with ACL and ESF graded 3. As for subject areas two were graded 2 (good), one in ACL and one WBL. The two subject areas which were mainly ACL with some ESF learners were graded 3.

There was the potential for WBL managers to consider that had they been inspected separately, the outcomes might have been better for WBL. However the ACL manager considered that within subject areas that included both ACL and ESF
learners, ACL provision had been judged better than the eventual grade suggested. The reason for this was understood to be that inspectors do not award subject grades that are higher than the overall grades given for overarching aspects. Leadership and Management was graded 3 overall. The perceived possibility of having been denied better grades by others’ poorer performance, as judged, ‘still rankles’.

Since the inspection, a strategic review of learning and skills provision has been announced. The multi-remit inspection raised questions about the location of different aspects of learning and skills provision being located in different directorates as well as the lack of a strategic overview and understanding of the range of provision. Managers of the two services are currently ‘in limbo’. Possibilities include a merger between services, co-location in one directorate, or greater co-ordination and collaboration while remaining in two directorates. Those leading and managing the operation of the services can now see the benefits of closer collaboration, but individuals are nervous about the implications of the review and feel that everything is ‘up in the air’. There is some concern about a potential reduction in autonomy for the separate services.

**ADVICE FOR MANAGERS FACING MULTI-REMIT INSPECTION**

- Do not wait till you get the letter announcing the inspection – make contact with managers of other learning and skills provision in the local authority NOW. Seek to ensure that within the council strategic links are put in place and a strategic overview of post-compulsory learning and skills provision is developed.

- Ensure you and others including those at the senior officer level and elected members know and understand how each service operates and why this is different.

- Raise the profile of the services, identify and be assertive about how each contributes to the local authority’s agenda, as well as meeting the requirements of funding bodies.

- Think carefully about how you present data, ensure that it is accurate and presents a clear picture of performance. Look at it from the perspective of an inspector and make sure it tells the story it should.

**Case study D**

This case study is based on interviews with both the ACL manager (the nominee) and the manager responsible for WBL

The inspection took place in October 2007, the report was published in December 2007. Adult, family and community learning (ACL) provision is located in the children and young people’s directorate and the head of ACL reports to the director of education standards. WBL is delivered by the organisational development and culture department, the head of organisational development reports to the corporate director of human resources and organisational development. A human resources business
consultant is responsible for WBL. At the time of the inspection there were over 500 ACL learners (there were over 1800 in total in the previous year); there were almost 100 WBL young adults including employees of the council.

Prior to the inspection there was little formal contact between ACL and WBL. Some years earlier the LSC had requested a joint self-assessment report (SAR) and action plan and attempts had been made to produce this, not without difficulty. However the different aspects of provision were dealt with by different LSC staff and it had subsequently decided that separate SARs and action plans would be more convenient for LSC. There had been no formal data sharing or joint training. Since that time SARs have been separate but shared for information between the two services. Once the notice of inspection was received, the two managers spent as much time together as they could to share information and develop understanding of each other’s provision and to support each other during the preparation process.

The nominee for the inspection was the head of service for ACL, who volunteered as it was assumed (rightly) that the inspection would focus on ACL as this provision had not been inspected since 2003-4 whereas WBL was inspected in 2005 and a monitoring visit was carried out in 2006. The WBL manager became a sub-nominee. She was not able to attend all the meetings with inspectors that she would have wished, as the role of sub-nominee is not officially recognised. However she was present at the final feedback meetings for WBL and for ACL/the provision as a whole. Both the nominee and the sub-nominee found the restrictions on the sub-nominee’s attendance at meetings to be unhelpful. The nominee was less familiar with the WBL provision and although arrangements were made for frequent liaison and for evidence to be provided if issues had arisen during inspection meetings, both managers were aware that the nominee was not in a position to be able to ‘hear’ the implications of what inspectors were saying or challenge as might be necessary.

In the event, the inspection of WBL took place over three days and was perceived to be a matter of checking that provision continued to improve since the re-inspection and a subsequent monitoring visit. The inspector who made the monitoring visit was the lead inspector for the WBL aspects of the 2007 inspection; this provided some continuity of familiarity with the service.

When evaluating the strategic and operational leadership and management of the provision made by the council, inspectors interviewed the director of education and standards (line manager of the head of the ACL service) and the director of corporate development, senior council officers responsible for WCL and WBL, several other officers responsible at strategic level for different aspects of provision, and an elected member who had previously been the portfolio holder for ACL. Although the inspection team was located at the ACL service, inspectors visited the WBL manager in situ.

The outcomes of the inspection were unsatisfactory overall. Three of the four grades given for overarching aspects and one of the two contributory grades for overarching aspects were graded 4 (unsatisfactory); the remaining overarching grade and contributory grade were awarded grade 3 (satisfactory). Within the overarching aspects, separate grades were given for ACL and WBL. Of the four grades for ACL, three were grade 4 and one was grade 3. All four grades for WBL were grade 2 (good). All four subject areas that were graded were ACL provision and all four were graded 4 (unsatisfactory).
Since the inspection, despite the potential for difficulty arising from this, both managers continue to maintain a positive relationship and to consider opportunities to work together more closely. Yet, different policy requirements, funding arrangements, client groups and organisational structures do not make this easy. Both managers can see the benefit in gaining a wider understanding of the different aspects of provision and both are keen to improve the provision for which they are responsible. The council is receiving support from the QIA Improvement Advisor Service to assist them in putting in place the necessary improvements and for the WBL service this provides the opportunity to access some support in further improving their provision (this was graded 3 by ALI in 2005 and graded 2 in the recent Ofsted inspection with capacity to improve noted as ‘outstanding’).

At the present time there are no proposals for merging the two services; however the management and staffing structures for ACL are being reviewed.

**ADVICE FOR MANAGERS FACING MULTI-REMIT INSPECTION**

- Make sure that senior council officers understand the implications of a multi-remit inspection and that they have an appropriate understanding of the provision across the council and why they need to provide the necessary support during the preparation and inspection itself, and subsequently.

- If there are different aspects of provision do not wait till you receive notification of inspection, as that will be too late. Start talking now and put in place a two way process to develop a sound understanding of each other’s work, almost like an induction. Then look for opportunities to share information and processes and to build strong links.

- Where it makes sense to do things differently, then be clear about the rationale for this and ready to articulate this.

- Put the work in now to be in a position to ensure that the inspection team, when it comes, can understand the overall range of provision, how each aspect of provision operates and why the differences are necessary, where you have been able to use systems across the provision sensibly and to good effect.

- Make sure you have mechanisms for feeding in evidence that is asked for quickly, that it is ready and to hand.

- Be willing to recognise that you can learn a great deal from colleagues in other areas of provision even if these are very different operationally. Do not expect though to adopt other people’s systems or practices and ways of working wholesale, you will need to adapt these to your circumstances and personal style.

- Exposure to other cultures and management styles helps you to reflect on your own – take the opportunity. Attending training with people from other teams can be developmental.

- Borrow good ideas and adapt them, look for good practice and demonstrate your own, so that whoever is the nominee, whichever aspect of the council’s provision they are most directly concerned with, they have a good understanding of the good work wherever that is located.
Case Study E

The inspection took place in December 2007. The report was published in January 2008. The adult learning and skills provision, which includes adult and community learning (1,200 adults annually) and work-based learning (70 young adults), is managed by the Libraries and Community Learning Service, operating within the children’s services directorate of the local council. At the time of inspection over 400 adult learners had been enrolled and over 200 were currently learning. There were 55 WBL learners. As a result of a restructuring concluded in 2007, managers are now responsible for aspects such as quality and performance or operational management of provision across ACL and WBL. Subject areas such as skills for life/key skills are managed across the full range of provision.

Prior to the restructuring, a process of integration had begun and joint systems were being developed from 2005 onwards, including a joint quality framework and process for self-assessment report and action planning. Data and information was shared and there had been joint training for example on lesson observation and grading systems and equalities matters. Prior to this work-based learning sat within the corporate Human Resources area.

The location of the provision within the children’s services directorate is considered by the head of service to be advantageous in the context of the 14-19 learning and skills agenda and the provision of Family Learning. The Every child Matters (ECM) agenda can be addressed more effectively across provision. For some aspects of provision, personal and community development learning (PCDL) and for learning provision in libraries, managers report to the culture directorate as well.

The head of service identified a number of benefits arising from the integration of ACL and WBL and council restructuring. The service was stronger with the constituent elements being mutually supportive; the contribution of the service to the Local Area Agreement had a higher profile within the council; there were better opportunities for joint work between the youth service in relation to the 14-19 agenda; family learning had been broadened; WBL was being made more available to adults; a broader curriculum offer could now be made; the LSC were interested in funding a wider range of provision including Train to Gain and Skills for Jobs, with the result that new sources of funding were available.

The nominee for the inspection was the quality and performance manager for the service, whose role covers ACL and WBL. He is an experienced nominee.

The manager for the WBL provision was identified as a sub-nominee, and was able to attend all meetings she wished to, including the daily morning meetings with the inspection team and meetings between the inspectors and the head of service.

When evaluating the effectiveness of leadership and management the inspectors regarded the head of service as the strategic lead. However, they interviewed the director, the assistant director to whom the head of service reports, and a cabinet member of the council/member of the scrutiny committee. They expected officers and elected members to be aware of the service’s activities and to be concerned with how these related to Local Area Agreements. They did not appear to expect there to be a formal overarching learning and skills strategy for the council, but were understood to have recognised that there was a high level of dialogue across the
council. In the inspection report strategic management and curriculum planning is described as “very effective...focused on community, learning and skills council (LSC) and council priorities”. Senior managers’ good management of change, during the restructuring and subsequently, is judged to have made “a very significant contribution to the performance of the service”.

The outcomes from the inspection as recorded in the inspection report are good, overall. Grade 2 (good) was awarded for three of the four overarching grades and one of the overarching sub-grades – quality of provision and capacity to improve was graded 3 (satisfactory). Four of the five graded subject areas were also graded 2 (good), the fifth being graded 3 (satisfactory). Although the service is integrated there were separate grades recorded for the overarching grades for ACL and WBL. Of eight such grades, ACL was awarded two ‘good’ grades and one ‘satisfactory’; WBL was awarded two ‘good’ and two ‘satisfactory’ grades.

**ADVICE TO MANAGERS FACING MULTI REMIT INSPECTION**

- Get into dialogue with managers of other aspects of provision, in particular around Every Child Matters – if the council offers WBL for young people and/or family learning that will be considered in Ofsted Joint Area Reviews.

- While inspectors will not expect processes and documentation to be identical when aspects of provision are separately managed for sound operational reasons, they will expect to see synergy. They will be interested in how stakeholders including community groups see the whole service offered by the council, and what difference this makes to their lives. There should be a holistic approach to the contribution of the service to the community agenda.

- Cultivate your LSC colleagues at local team and regional levels and ensure that they understand and support your council’s vision and strategy.

**Case study F**

The inspection took place in December 2007 and the report was published in January 2008. The adult learning service is located within the business unit of the newly formed Adult Culture and Community Directorate of the local council. Until January 2007 the service was within the children and young people’s directorate. The adult learning service maintains its contact with this directorate though its family learning provision, its work with extended schools and its pre-employment work-based learning programme for young adults and frequent network meetings.

At the time of the inspection there were approximately 860 learners, 700 of whom were on adult and community learning programmes including over 200 on ESOL programmes and over 180 in family learning. There were 12 young adults on pre-employment training, and 25 employed young apprentices and adult employees in work-based learning, some council employees.
The senior management team is small and is supported by a wider operational management team. Prior to the inspection the structure had been evolving; cross service working was being strengthened; the work-based learning manager was a member of the service's extended management team, and another senior manager was responsible for ‘business success’ across the range of provision offered. At operational level the meetings arrangements were being developed so that, for example, data was monitored across provision. There was staff training and development on cross organisational matters such as self-assessment and on generic aspects of practice to which all staff were invited, and there were whole staff briefings on key aspects of the service’s work.

The nominee was the Head of Service, as the majority of the provision is adult and community learning this was the obvious choice. It was not seen as necessary to identify a sub-nominee for the small work-based learning provision, given the small size of the service; this was not felt to have been an issue during the inspection. Small numbers of learners in some areas of provision led to late changes in decisions as to which curriculum areas would be graded during inspection; in some aspects of provision learners and tutors were thought by the service to have received more specialist inspector attention than might have been the case had the service been larger.

When evaluating the strategic and operational leadership and management of the provision, inspectors spoke with the Director of the directorate in which the provision is now located and the Assistant Director who directly manages the Head of Service. It was not possible for inspectors to meet with relevant portfolio holder who was unavailable. A main focus for the inspectors was how and the extent to which the service contributed to the borough’s ‘business strategies’, that is, income generation requirements. Although information was provided about how the service contributed to the local authorities’ priorities as stated in their local area agreement, this was perceived by the nominee to have received less attention, and does not feature in the report. Inspectors met with a wide range of ‘partners’, including council employees, children’s centre and extended school staff, and were concerned to understand how partnerships supported learners’ progression. There was no apparent focus on whether the borough had an overarching strategy for learning and skills, although inspectors were aware that the borough had recently put in place a ‘learning and development board’, initially focusing on council staff training across the borough.

Inspectors judged the leadership and management of the service overall to be inadequate, giving a grade 4 (inadequate) for overall effectiveness, that capacity to improve, and leadership and management. Cross service achievements and the quality of provision were judged to be satisfactory, as was equality of opportunity. The very small work-based learning provision was deemed to be satisfactorily managed. The service’s budget management however is described as good and the marketing strategy, ‘successful’. The inspection report comments on the service’s success in increasing enrolments and exceeding income projections against a background of reduced funds and efficiency savings. The recently rationalised management structure and the new directorate structure were also judged to have been beneficial. Of the 6 subject or skill areas graded, one was grade 2 (good), three were grade 3 (satisfactory), and two were graded 4 (inadequate).
Since the inspection a decision has been made to review parts of the management structure and to overhaul the service’s systems and processes to formalise practices and ensure greater accountability through closer monitoring of performance and outcomes. Improvement strategies are being put in place for curriculum areas that are to be re-inspected and to address cross service issues. The process and outcomes of the inspection, which were perceived as very challenging, have had some positive outcomes for the service. The need for a greater focus on and more support for the adult learning service, as improvements are taken forward, has been recognised within the directorate. External support will be given by the quality improvement adviser service.

**ADVICE FOR MANAGERS FACING MULTI-REMIT INSPECTIONS**

- Ensure that the same degree of rigour is adopted in relation to monitoring performance, learner achievement and success is in place for adult and community learning as for work-based learning.

- Expect as much achievement and success from ACL learners as from WBL learners. Inspectors want to see evidence that all learners achieve, in all contexts. For example, for Teaching and Learning observations, inspectors expect to see evidence in Tutor’s files that assessment being incorporated into the planning of teaching and learning, that clear differentiation is shown and that tutors monitor and record learner progress in a meaningful way, against set targets.

- Recognise that focusing on evaluating learning and supporting learners’ achievement and success will be a cultural change for many staff in ACL.

- Require all tutors and managers to be equally self-critical, habitually.

- Make sure that systems for monitoring and measuring learners’ achievements on non-accredited provision, and for referring learners on for progression within the range of provision offered by the service and external signposting work, in practice, and can be shown to do so.

- Evidence of how the Learner’s Voice is incorporated into review and planning processes is now very important.

- Make sure that all leadership and management decisions, for example about changes to delivery arrangements, and processes, are formally recorded, however small your service. Verbal agreements are not visible to inspectors.

**Case study G**

The inspection took place in early February 2008, having initially been scheduled for the autumn on 2007. The re-scheduling was agreed as the process of communication about the impending inspection, between the inspectorate and the local authority, and within the local authority, had rendered an autumn inspection impractical. All of the borough’s adult learning and skills provision, with the exception of learrndirect and UK on line, but including neighbourhood learning in deprived...
communities, is led and managed by the Head of the Adult Learning Service/Principal of the College of Adult Education. The Service/College has contracts for adult and community learning, further education funded provision and work-based learning, including apprenticeships and pre-employment training (Entry to Employment), and is involved in an LSC-funded ‘engagement’ project with school students.

The adult learning and skills provision is located within the borough’s Children’s Services Department. The Head of Service/Principal reports directly to the college’s governing body and ‘dotted line’ reporting to the Assistant Director, learning and standards is in place. Both the Assistant Director and the principal report to the city’s Adult Learning and Skills Strategy Group; The Head of Service/Principal chairs the Personal and Community Development Strategy Group which reports into the Strategy Group. Both Groups, contributing to the borough’s Adult Citywide Strategy. The principal also reports to the borough’s 14-19 Planning group and, for family learning, to the Birth to 13 Strategic Group.

Prior to the inspection, all aspects of the provision were led and managed by the college principal and senior management team. ACL and WBL were inspected separately and at different times previously despite this. In retrospect the principal would have preferred the work-based learning provision and the Entry to Employment (E2E) to have continued to be inspected separately, as the range of provision inspected simultaneously created a very large workload for the nominee.

A whole organisation approach was already in place for leadership, management and quality assurance and improvement, with the exception of the lerndirect provision, which at the time of the inspection was managed from within another City Council Directorate. The college has a quality group that meets regularly and includes senior managers, a governor with specific responsibility for quality, and the college quality co-ordinator. There are a number of other whole organisation groups for example for e-learning and work undertaken by subject learning coaches as part of the nation teaching and learning change programme. Regular ‘best practice sharing days’ take place and whole organisational issues such as health and safety and equalities matters were included in the induction of all staff.

The nominee was chosen on the basis of her cross college role and good understanding of the range of the college’s work, and relevant experience for example in leading the college’s response to a recent inspectorate quality monitoring visit. There was no official sub-nominee, however the College designated one unofficially, in an attempt to mitigate the very heavy burden of responsibility that rested on the one person, the nominee.

The nominee was first point of contact for the lead inspector for the whole range of provision. She attended all inspection team daily morning briefings, end of day feedback meetings and other key leadership and management inspection meetings, and led internal communication meetings with operational managers, so that where required emerging issues could be discussed and additional evidence provided. Moderation and grading meetings for ten subject/skill areas took five consecutive intensive hours, followed by extended meetings for the grading of whole college aspects the following morning. This requirement for sustained concentration and
need for total attention to detail while retaining a sense of proportion is potentially exhausting. It was perceived that the dependence on only one nominee in a multi remit inspection where there is a wide range of provision could also be problematic for inspectors, perhaps limiting the extent to which the lead inspector could delegate to inspectors for leadership and management aspects, for example.

Inspectors judged this provider to be performing satisfactorily across a wide range of provision, awarding grade 3 for Effectiveness of Provision, Capacity to Improve and Leadership and Management. Ten curriculum/skill areas were graded. 8 were awarded grade 3 and two (one of which was the Entry to Employment WBL provision for young adults) were graded 2 (good).

Inspectors considered that the structural changes that had taken place since the previous inspection had been well managed and had helped to develop a cohesive strategy and shared vision for adult learning. The involvement of senior staff in key local authority strategic groups and in particular the lead role being taken by the principal/head of service on the city’s adult learning and skills strategy group were noted in the report. Leaders are judged to be highly successful in encouraging community cohesion and good relationships have been formed with WBL providers across the region.

**ADVICE TO MANAGERS FACING MULTI-REMIT INSPECTION**

- Find out the totality of separate contracts between the LSC and the local authority, as there may be small projects that are not widely known about, particularly where the local authority is one partner in consortium-lead projects. Someone in the local authority needs to be aware of all of these.

- Ensure that leaders/managers responsible for different types of provision or aspects of provision are not working or thinking in silos – get people to focus more on what they have in common by way of leadership challenges, and less on what is, at the operational level, different.

- Encourage all staff to see themselves as part of the college/local authority service, and to understand their role in relation to that.

- Welcome multi-remit inspection if it helps to get the message across that there is a great contribution to be made by adult learning to an overarching strategy within the local authority.

- Work out detailed communication channels and briefing meetings well in advance of inspection i.e. forming your own internal ‘inspection team’.

- Carry out your own rigorous internal inspection/audit across all provision, annually.
Case study H

This local authority's adult learning and skills service has not previously yet been inspected by Ofsted on a multi-remit basis, but is expecting to be so when next inspected. The ACL provision was last inspected in 2005, and the county's training provision in 2006, both by the Adult Learning Inspectorate. The leadership and management grade was 2 (Good) in both cases, and of the 14 subject/skills areas graded, 7 were deemed to be 'good' and 7 'satisfactory' across the two remits.

Rather than the specific decision that inspections would be multi-remit, it was the recognition of the benefits of merging aspects of learning and skills provision in the current policy context, as exemplified by for example the development of the Framework for Excellence for the whole ‘FE system’, that provided the motivation for the merger of the local authority's adult and community learning service with the LA's work-based learning provision. This decision however addresses positively the issue of leadership and management across the range of 'remits'.

The initial merger of work-based learning and ACL was prompted by the realisation that different local authority departments might be competing for LSC funding for Train to Gain provision. Merging was seen as a means of ‘future-proofing’ a wider adult learning and skills service, by positioning the merged organisation to be in a strong position to tender for funding for Train to Gain, for Apprenticeships, for services to the NEET group (young people not in education employment or training), and also to further develop the working relationship with the Children and Young People Directorate, responsible for 14-19 provision, and to extend the training provided for other council departments’ staff, and over time become the provider of choice for other local authority departments when commissioning internal workforce training. Furthermore there were opportunities to attract funding from the Department of Work and Pensions, through Jobcentre Plus. It also put the merged service in a strong position to influence the local authority's learning and skills-related strategies and other aspects of local and national social policy implementation and to contribute to the design and implementation of the Local Area Agreement agenda.

The head of the former adult and community learning service, who now heads up the merged adult learning and skills service, sees a key element of his leadership role as scanning the operating environment and positioning the organisation so that it builds on its strengths, extends its capacity and capability, secures a wider range of public funding and other income, and is sustainable as a high performing public sector provider. Adopting a long term strategic vision is a pre-requisite for achieving these objectives. The service is currently located within the Community Directorate, however the possibility of transfer to the county's central Corporate Directorate is under active consideration. Strong links are in place with the county’s Sustainable Community Strategy (led by the county’s Local Strategic Partnership) and with Local Area Agreement structures and mechanisms. The county does not currently have a separate adult learning and skills overarching strategy, however the priorities and objectives of the county's Service Plan are reflected in the service's Self-Assessment Report and development plan.

When the service was merged the work-based learning arm was not simply ‘bolted on’, the leadership and management structures and arrangements were designed to be ‘fit’ for the new, wider, purpose. Provision across the remits was grouped into
three broad areas, each overseen by a senior manager who has oversight of the quality of the provision, and quality improvement, across the remits relating to adult skills (further education funded provision and vocational training, employer engagement and training for employers, apprenticeships), another overseeing ‘foundation’ learning (Skills for Life, Family Learning, First Steps, Entry to Employment, and Jobcentre Plus programmes) and a third overseeing the personal and community development learning including leisure and recreational learning pursued by adults for a range of purposes. Curriculum managers operate across remits and tutors are expected to deliver their specialisms in a range of contexts.

**BENEFITS ANTICIPATED WHEN INSPECTION NEXT TAKES PLACE**

The range of LSC funded contracts and other publicly funded contracts held by the local authority, or by partnerships including the local authority, is known and understood. There is a holistic and strategic view of the role of adult learning and skills in relation to national and local policy priorities, and learning and skills and wider policy agendas implemented by the county council through partnership arrangements. The leadership of the service across all remits is consistent and coherent. Quality assurance and improvement arrangements operate across all remits, as do the arrangements for quality monitoring and for staff training and development, and the leadership team’s decisions and plans are informed by management information across all aspects of provision. Curriculum leaders operate across all remits, so that best practice can be shared and built on. A lead inspector for Skills for Life or ICT will liaise with one leader for that skills area in relation to all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework across the learning contexts and programmes.

**ISSUES THAT ARE ANTICIPATED WHEN INSPECTION IS NOTIFIED**

The range of provision is broad and substantial. The service attracts other public funding than Learning and Skills Council funding, sometimes working in partnership with other organisations or local authority departments, and also generates income from non-public sources. The scoping of the inspection, both in terms of what could and should be included and as regards what will be inspected in detail and graded, will be challenging for the inspectorate, given the breadth of the range of provision, and for the service, in trying to ensure that inspectors can grasp the complexity of the provision quickly so as to enable good planning decisions to be made.

The role of the nominee will be enormous, and selecting that person will involve consideration of sheer stamina as well as understanding of the whole set of remits, which should not be problematic given the new structures and arrangements.

Organising the inspection itself, ensuring that inspectors can see a representative sample of provision and have access to the necessary data and other forms of evidence will be very challenging, for inspectors and for the service, given the various remits, the range of provision, and the rural nature of the county.
Further Information and Contact Details

This is one of a series of research reports carried out for the Centre for Excellence in Leadership. If you have any enquiries regarding this report, please contact:

Ms Kate Watters  
Development Officer Quality Improvement  
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)  
21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester  
LE1 7GE  
Email: Kate.watters@niace.org.uk

We recognise that there are many innovative and effective leaders and leadership practices in the Sector that warrant investigation, analysis and wider dissemination of best practice. We would like to engage with existing networks within the Sector and develop a wider practice-led research community contributing to current debates on leadership and other related issues.

If you would like to receive further information on the Research Programme, please contact:

Maureen Morrison  
National Research Manager  
Centre for Excellence in Leadership  
Lancaster University Management School  
CEL Research Office, Room B59  
Lancaster  
LA1 4YX  
Tel: 01524 594364  
Email: m.morrison@lancaster.ac.uk

Further information is also available at:  
http://www.centreforexcellence.org.uk  
http://www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/leadership/cel/