

Islington Adult and Community Learning Service

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53133

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Type of provider: Local authority
Islington Adult and Community Learning Service

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Information about the provider

1. Islington Adult and Community Learning Service (ACL) is located within Islington Council's Strategic Planning and Regeneration Division. It is mainly funded through the Skills Funding Agency for adult safeguarded learning, although some external funding is secured through the Islington Strategic Partnership, EC1 New Deal and the Cripplegate Foundation. The priorities of ACL are to widen participation in learning, support learners to develop their employability skills and to move on to further training.
2. ACL offers courses in three main programme areas: First Steps Community Learning consisting of information and communication technology (ICT); Skills for Life which includes literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); and, Personal Development and Employability. Family Learning includes wider Family Learning, Family Language, Literacy and Numeracy and Family Learning Impact Funding. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider.
 - City and Islington College (Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities)
 - Parent House (Family Learning)
 - Arachne Greek Cypriot Women's Group (First Steps).
3. All ACL provision is free to learners and is delivered at over 50 venues. In 2009/10 72% of learners lived in deprived areas, 70% were from Black and minority ethnic communities and 25% declared a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD). This inspection graded learning for personal and social development.
4. Islington is a borough of sharp contrasts with a population of 191,800, just over a quarter of which are from minority ethnic communities. The unemployment rate is around 10%. Just over half of Islington's working age population are qualified to degree level, compared to 37% across London. In the 2007 English indices of Deprivation, Islington is ranked 8 out of 354 local authorities. According to the index of child well-being, 42.25% of children in the borough live in poverty, the fourth highest proportion nationally.

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2010
Adult and community learning	2,295 learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 1
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Learning for social and personal development	Grade
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	1
Literacy and numeracy	2
Family learning	2

Overall effectiveness

5. The overall effectiveness of provision is good. Learners achieve well and make good progress. They gain many personal and social benefits from attending lessons, developing valuable skills that are useful in their everyday lives and help them work towards employment or further learning. Many do take positive next steps on to further learning and employment, but these are not systematically captured by the service.
6. Teaching and learning overall are good and outstanding in ESOL. Learners enjoy their lessons. In the best lessons tutors are full of enthusiasm and this rubs off on learners. As a result, they make rapid progress and achieve high standards of work. In a minority of lessons the pace of teaching is slow and activities do not stimulate learners so well. This is reflected in the satisfactory progress that learners make in these instances. Poor attendance and punctuality restrict the progress of some learners.
7. The service has developed excellent partnerships with a range of agencies. These enable the service to deliver courses in areas that suit learners and

ensure that they get good support. Programmes are targeted very well to those who need them most. All courses are free. The service has been highly successful in attracting many new learners who are taking their first steps in, or back into, education.

8. There is a very good focus on improving the life chances of the borough's most disadvantaged residents. Managers and staff have successfully delivered the council's priorities through the courses on offer. They have secured significant improvements in many areas with no growth in funding. They review rigorously the quality of provision and have the needs of learners at the heart of their thinking and actions.

Main findings

- Learners achieve good outcomes. Most learners make good progress and gain skills, knowledge and confidence that help them in their daily lives, improving their basic skills, taking up volunteering opportunities and developing their parenting skills. Children benefit through improved engagement with their schools.
- Retention rates have been maintained at a good level, although there is some variation between courses. Success rates have improved while the range of learning opportunities has been expanded and the number of new and vulnerable learners has significantly increased.
- The quality of both teaching and learning is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Some teaching is now outstanding. There has been a very effective focus on improving the experience of learners in lessons. The observation of teaching and learning scheme is robust and is contributing well to the development of tutors' skills and the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Excellent targeting of provision mirrors well the strategic objectives of the council. The breadth of courses has increased in line with the council's ambitions and supports well the goal of preparing learners for employment and further learning. The number of ICT courses has been expanded. Learners are involved well in shaping provision.
- Partnership working is outstanding. It extends the range of provision and enables learners to access a greater range of support and help. Very effective planning with partners ensures duplication is avoided and that provision is closely tailored to the needs of the community.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good and are enhanced by the work of other agencies and council teams. There is particularly good support given by tutors in lessons. Good support ensures that learners succeed. They value the support and help they receive highly, although some report wanting more help in planning their next steps.
- Leadership and management are good. Service managers have very successfully created a 'can-do' culture. Clear strategic priorities are being achieved well and many improvements have been secured in recent years.

Quality assurance is thorough. Leaders and managers know well the strengths and the areas for improvement of the service. Self-assessment is effective in improving provision and the outcomes for learners, although areas for development are not always analysed sufficiently in self-assessment reports.

- The management of the curriculum is good and outstanding in ESOL, where improvements since the last inspection have been stark. Curriculum management effectively translates the strategic ambitions of the council into effective programmes that deliver good outcomes.
- The safeguarding of learners is promoted well. Learners feel safe. Staff are aware of what to do should they have concerns about the safety and well-being of learners. Clear guidance is in place regarding safeguarding matters.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well. Strategies to widen participation have been highly successful. Courses are delivered at no cost to learners. A very high proportion of learners are from minority ethnic groups and live in the most disadvantaged areas of the borough. There is no discernable difference in the attainment of different groups of learners. However, data analysis is at high level and does not sufficiently analyse how well particular minority ethnic groups or those with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve.
- Value for money is outstanding. Financial management is good. Outcomes for learners have improved while funding has remained stable. High numbers of new learners have been recruited. The overall quality of provision is good and significant improvements have been secured particularly in the quality of teaching.

What does Islington Adult and Community Learning Service need to do to improve further?

- Further develop and implement strategies to improve the punctuality and attendance of learners to enhance their employability skills and improve retention and success rates further.
- Continue to develop arrangements to monitor systematically the progression of learners into employment, further learning and volunteering to demonstrate more fully the impact of the service.
- To understand further the performance of different groups of learners and develop strategies to respond to their needs so that all achieve well.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- gaining confidence, skills and practical help to improve their employability
- developing an interest in further learning and taking positive steps forward in their lives
- improving the skills they have to help their children learn and achieve well
- the positive and fun environment at centres and in lessons

- lessons that help them meet new people and develop new social networks
- good and patient teachers and helpful centre managers
- the extra help they receive to overcome barriers to learning.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more extensive crèche facilities
- more support in taking the next step after ACL.

Summary of the views of partners as confirmed by inspectors

What partners like:

- very good communication and regular meetings
- provision that is reviewed and planned together
- the very good breadth of courses and opportunities for learners
- the flexibility of ACL to quickly meet new needs
- the quality of learning centres
- the good quality teaching and support for learners.

What partners would like to see improved:

- the monitoring of the destinations of learners when they leave ACL provision.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

9. Over the last three years success rates have improved in both accredited and non-accredited provision. At the same time there has been a significant increase in the number of externally-accredited courses offered. The service has made excellent improvements in all the areas identified at the last inspection where ESOL was judged inadequate. It is now outstanding. Family learning was satisfactory at the last inspection and is now good. The overall effectiveness of provision was judged satisfactory and is now good. The proportion of good or better teaching has improved significantly in the last two years and is now good overall with some outstanding teaching.
10. Self-assessment accurately identifies key strengths and areas for improvement and managers make good use of data to monitor performance across the service at course, curriculum area and centre level. Senior leaders have established a clear role for the service in contributing to the borough's strategic objectives of reducing child poverty and increasing participation in work. Staff are very effectively focused on increasing opportunities for learners from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Over half of current learners are new to ACL. Curriculum and centre management is very good and managers demonstrate a strong and very successful commitment to continuous improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

11. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that outcomes for learners are good. The overall standard of learners' work is good. Through attending lessons they gain many benefits that help them on a day-to-day basis and in progressing towards their career goals. Over time, those who are taking their first steps into education make good progress in improving their basic skills. Many develop a wide range of skills that enable them to manage their lives better and participate more fully in their community. ESOL learners are able to communicate more effectively when using local transport and with public bodies such as schools and the council. Parents accessing family learning sessions benefit from increased confidence and skills in supporting and helping their children and having greater involvement with their children's schools. Their children benefit through improved attendance and engagement with school. Many learners contribute well to the community through volunteering, gaining work experience and building their employability skills. Many gain improved self-esteem and develop greater confidence in themselves.
12. Over time most learners make good progress from their starting points. They progress well in class and many achieve their learning goals and personal objectives. ACL acts as an effective gateway for learners to move on to different courses within the service and to other providers. The service recognises however that closer tracking of the next steps that learners take is needed to better evidence the longer-term outcomes for them. Learners have

fun in lessons, they enjoy learning and working with each other. They feel safe, and in lessons learners from different backgrounds work together harmoniously.

13. Retention rates have been maintained at a good level and success rates have improved, while the range of accredited learning opportunities has been expanded and the number of new and vulnerable learners has significantly increased. Overall retention rates were 88% and success rates 83% in 2009/10. Success rates have risen since 2007/8. The good success rates overall do mask some inconsistencies between different courses. ACL analyses well the reasons for these variations. While there is no noticeable difference between the achievement of different groups of learners overall, the analysis of this is at a strategic level and does not detail sufficiently how well, for example, those with specific disabilities achieve. The service has identified this as an area for development.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

14. Most teaching and learning is good or better. Outstanding lessons are characterised by very detailed planning. Teachers use their wide-ranging subject knowledge to enthuse and motivate learners who are keen to apply their new knowledge and skills with their children, families and in their communities. In good lessons, teachers and learners use resources, including information learning technology (ILT), effectively. Equality, diversity, and safeguarding are promoted well and learners develop supportive and respectful relationships with their peers and teachers. They enjoy their classes. While progress is made and learning takes place in satisfactory lessons, they lack challenge and pace. In some lessons, while many learners are eager to achieve their learning aims, poor punctuality and attendance impede their progress, a recognised area for development in the self-assessment report.
15. The observation of teaching and learning scheme has been successful in improving teaching and learning. In 2009/10 just over 80% of lessons were graded as good or outstanding. This shows a significant improvement from previous years. Joint lesson observations, undertaken with inspectors during the inspection, confirmed the accuracy of the judgements made by the service's observers.
16. The assessment of learners' work is good. The assessment of their progress and achievement has improved in most areas and individual learning plans now more routinely identify clear, measurable targets. These help learners and teachers to identify the sometimes small steps made and enable the effective monitoring of learners' progress. There is still some work to do to ensure that all targets set for all learners are specific and measurable.
17. Provision reflects the council's key objectives very well. Careful targeting ensures that local needs are very well met. The service has doubled the proportion of externally-accredited courses so that learners' achievements are formally recognised to support learners in preparing for, and seeking, employment. Strategies to widen participation further have been very successful. Since September 2010 over 800 new learners have been enrolled

from the most disadvantaged areas including many who have multiple and complex needs.

18. The service makes good use of feedback from learners to review and improve the provision. ICT courses have been expanded to meet community needs for the significant proportion of learners without access to digital technologies. Learners benefit from enrichment activities, for example by practising their language and communication skills outside the classroom during planned visits to local libraries and museums.
19. A very wide range of strategic partnerships are highly effective in enabling the service to meet the council's objectives. Close liaison between partners ensures that provision is coherently planned. Community needs are met very well. Partner organisations are very clear about their individual roles and responsibilities. Two-way referral systems ensure that learners are able to access courses at the right level and to progress to further courses within and outside the service. Partnership arrangements enable learners to engage in a range of volunteering. These support progression to employment well.
20. Care, guidance and support are delivered successfully through a wide range of partners from within and outside of the council. A good range of support is available including for those with dyslexia. Tutors and centre managers know learners well and provide good individual support and direct learners to relevant services and courses where appropriate. Weekly drop-in sessions are held at each learning centre for those seeking employment. Study support sessions are offered and focus well on the individual needs of learners. Tutors provide good support in the classroom which is highly valued by learners. Learners surveyed as a part of the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the help they receive before and during courses. They were less positive, however, about the guidance they receive on taking their next steps.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

21. Service leaders and managers very effectively demonstrate their strong commitment to developing the service to meet the needs of the most socially and economically disadvantaged residents in the borough. A new personal development and employability curriculum has been introduced to better meet the needs of local residents. Provision is tightly aligned to the council's overall priorities. Service managers have very successfully established a culture of high standards and expectations of staff. Curriculum management is good and outstanding in ESOL.
22. The decision to increase the number of externally-accredited courses has had a positive impact on improving outcomes for learners. Managers at centre and curriculum level can demonstrate how this has enabled learners to move on to further study or employment. However, this is not systematically tracked at service level. Senior managers acknowledge the need to develop a comprehensive, borough-wide approach to tracking how well learners progress over time so that they can evaluate fully how well the provision meets strategic objectives.

23. The council supports fully the work of the service. Councillors and departmental staff monitor the work of the service regularly and agree challenging targets for service improvement and its contribution to overall objectives.
24. The service ensures that learners' safety is prioritised through its rigorous recruitment and selection processes. Appropriate pre-employment checks are undertaken and Criminal Records Bureau re-checking on all staff is undertaken every three years. Managers have had training in safer recruitment and selection practices. Staff receive regular training and updates and clear safeguarding guidelines enable them to be confident in dealing appropriately with any issues that arise. The service routinely monitors safeguarding practice in its sub-contracted provision and carries out routine health and safety checks of its premises. Learners feel safe in the different learning centres. They receive information about safeguarding and health and safety when they join a course. Tutors ensure that learners know how to use the internet safely, and inspectors noted some good examples of safeguarding issues being embedded in the curriculum.
25. The strong strategic focus on addressing inequality and disadvantage is reflected well in the programmes and courses on offer. The curriculum is flexible and responsive to community needs. Managers monitor the performance of different groups by gender, ethnicity and disability, but performance data are not broken down sufficiently to evaluate the performance of specific minority ethnic groups or learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of male learners remains relatively low. Tutors make good use of group profiles to tailor learning and support to meet individual needs in lessons. Teaching materials often reflect a variety of different cultures and help develop learners' awareness and understanding of different groups within the community.
26. Thorough evaluation has been instrumental in securing improvements since the last inspection. The service monitors the quality of provision well, including the quality of sub-contracted provision. The relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching has significantly increased the proportion of good or better lessons in the last two years. This has been achieved through a combination of rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, sharing good practice through peer observation, good staff development and performance management. Judgements on the quality of teaching and learning are robust. While managers accurately identify less successful aspects of provision, these are not always analysed sufficiently in self-assessment reports. Quality improvement plans do not always have sufficiently specific and measurable outcomes to enable managers to identify the extent of progress and the impact of actions taken.
27. The service plans and monitors expenditure carefully to ensure that it can achieve maximum benefit for its targeted learners. It is successfully increasing the numbers of learners who use the service, within its existing budget. Significant investment in well-planned staff training and development has ensured that tutors are very well qualified and teaching and learning have

improved significantly. Outstanding partnership working has enabled the service to provide good resources and learning environments within local communities. The service provides outstanding value for money.

Learning for social and personal development

Other social and personal development learning provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded: *Information and communication technology*

English for speakers of other languages

Grade 1

Context

28. The ESOL curriculum is part of the Skills for Life programme area. ESOL programmes offer accredited learning to 232 learners. Of these, 17% are male and 12% are learners with a learning difficulty and/or a disability. Provision ranges from pre-entry to entry level 3 and is delivered in a wide range of locations throughout the borough.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners are highly motivated and enjoy learning. They rapidly develop and maintain good social skills and improve greatly their confidence and self-esteem. In lessons they are keen to practise speaking and writing with each other as a result. They transfer what they learn very effectively into their daily lives and are better able to communicate with others, for example doctors, schools and their community. Retention on all courses is high and success rates are good, a very significant improvement since the last inspection.
- Learners progress very well in all four aspects of the ESOL qualification and from lower to higher level courses. In lessons they develop their reading, writing and oral skills rapidly. Some move on to higher level courses at the local college. However, the tracking of this is underdeveloped.
- The standard of learners' work is very high. The clear marking of work, constructive feedback from tutors and excellent target setting very effectively support the excellent progress that learners make.
- Learners feel safe and have a good understanding of bullying and whom to turn to should they need help. A very extensive range of enrichment activities enables learners to contribute well to the wider community. Learners' attendance is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding, resulting in exceptional progress. Learners learn quickly and enjoy the purposeful learning environment. Highly effective questioning is used by tutors to elicit how well learners' understanding and knowledge are developing. Lessons are lively with particularly challenging tasks. Lessons are extremely well planned, taking into account the individual needs of learners. A wide range of resources stimulates learners highly. Learners become confident in using ILT which is well integrated into lessons.
- Initial and diagnostic assessment is thorough and the progress that learners make is monitored very well. Tutors devise detailed and comprehensive individual learning plans. Targets are in language that learners understand and

focus very effectively on their needs and aspirations in both the short and long term. Reviews of learning take place routinely and targets are adapted well to reflect the new ambitions the learners have.

- Advice and guidance are good. Highly experienced and qualified staff identify well the need for additional support at interview and good arrangements are made for those needing additional help in lessons. Dyslexia support is offered to those who need it. A good range of specialist equipment is available. Tutors know and understand their learners very well, are sensitive to their individual needs and tailor support accordingly.
- Excellent partnerships enable courses to be delivered at a wide range of venues throughout the borough, improving access for learners. Widening participation officers have helped ensure that classes are located in areas where adults traditionally have not been engaged in learning.
- Curriculum management is excellent and has led to significant improvements in standards of teaching and outcomes for learners. Data are effectively analysed and routinely disseminated to enable centre managers and tutors to monitor and adapt provision. Staff are highly qualified and skilled and hold specialist qualifications. Professional development opportunities enhance the skills of tutors very well. Teaching and learning observations are used well to improve practice.
- The safety of learners is effectively promoted. All learners and staff are aware of whom to contact to raise issues both in centres and in the community. Learners feel safe and protected.
- Equality and diversity are successfully promoted. Learners develop their potential very well. Learning activities promote cultural awareness effectively. Tutors use and share a wide range of high-quality multicultural resources across the curriculum.
- The self-assessment report is accurate and mostly identifies the areas for improvement found at the inspection. Self-assessment has made a very good contribution to improving provision. While managers know well the strengths and areas for development, these are not always sharply identified in the report.

What does Islington Adult and Community Learning Service need to do to improve further?

- Improve the tracking of learners' progression to better demonstrate longer term outcomes for them.
- Ensure that self-assessment more fully analyses the strengths and areas for development of provision to maintain the very high standards achieved.

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 2

Context

29. The literacy and numeracy curriculum is part of the Skills for Life programme area. Of the 102 literacy learners, 28% are male, 64% are of a Black minority heritage and over a quarter have declared a disability. One fifth of the 101 numeracy learners are male, with 19% declaring a disability and 67% from a minority ethnic group. A range of part-time courses in community settings are available across the borough, ranging in level from pre-entry to intermediate level.

Key findings

- Learners enjoy their work and make significant gains in confidence and develop their self-esteem. Attainment of literacy and numeracy skills is good with learners making good progress in lessons. They apply their skills and knowledge in many areas of their lives and feel confident to make significant positive changes for themselves, for example through volunteering, writing minutes for meetings, looking for work, applying for jobs and helping their children in school.
- Learners who complete their programmes achieve well, with high pass rates in numeracy. In literacy there are high pass rates at entry levels 1 and 3. However, pass rates on entry level 2 literacy programmes are low. This has been identified by the service and actions are in place to address this.
- Success and retention rates on non-accredited courses are good and improving, with success and retention rates on numeracy programmes being particularly high. Success rates on all accredited numeracy and most accredited literacy programmes show significant upward trends. Overall success rates in numeracy have improved significantly to 77% in 2009/10. Over the same period, literacy success rates at entry level have improved to 77%. Success rates on foundation level courses are now satisfactory. However, on the national test at foundation level, success rates have declined.
- Retention rates have improved significantly on most entry level accredited literacy programmes, increasing to 69% in 2009/10. Overall retention on literacy courses is satisfactory, remaining at 77% over two consecutive years.
- The standard of learners' work is good. It is well presented and clearly demonstrates how learners are making progress. Work in learners' files is organised well. Although tutors challenge learners who arrive late to class appropriately, punctuality in too many lessons remains poor.
- Teaching and assessment are good, particularly in numeracy. Initial assessment is thorough and is used particularly well to write clear learning and personal targets which are easily understood by learners. Tutors use this information well to plan and deliver their lessons. High-quality resources are interestingly presented by enthusiastic and encouraging tutors. An extensive range of

practical activities reinforces learners' understanding, with further activities used to challenge more advanced learners.

- In some literacy lessons, tutors do not provide learners with enough opportunities to take an active part in the lesson. Too often, materials used to develop skills are generic and do not always relate well to learners' experience and their reasons for attending.
- The range of provision is good in meeting the needs of diverse groups of learners. Programmes take place at times to suit individuals and particular groups of learners in familiar and local community venues close to where people live. Well-structured programmes provide clear opportunities for learners to progress from entry to higher level courses.
- Good partnership arrangements with an extensive range of statutory and voluntary agencies help promote social cohesion as well as helping to recruit learners. Partnership arrangements with the local college and other agencies are particularly good and provide progression routes for learners as well as helping them to further develop employability skills.
- Support for learners is good. Additional study support is available to learners wishing to develop their job-seeking and ICT skills. There is easy access to information, advice and guidance services. Learners benefit from free courses, accreditation and childcare, although crèche facilities are only available at one centre. Dyslexic learners benefit from specialist classes. Partnership arrangements enable learners to benefit from support available from specialist agencies.
- Staff are well qualified and are closely monitored and supported through frequent team meetings and individual supervision. Good practice is shared very effectively through a variety of meetings and through the intranet. Data are used well to monitor performance. However, systems to monitor and track learners' progression are underdeveloped, making it difficult to identify accurately whether the employability focus of much of the service is being successful.
- Safeguarding is good. Centre managers give learners good information on safeguarding at induction. All staff are aware of safeguarding and how to respond to concerns. Learners feel safe in their centres, understand the need to treat others with respect and know whom to contact should they feel bullied, treated unfairly or harassed. Not all learners are sufficiently clear who to contact if they wish to raise concerns with someone outside the centre.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Excellent strategies are used by tutors to explain idioms and vocabulary to learners with English as an additional language, enabling them to participate fully. Cultural awareness is promoted well in some lessons, although there are missed opportunities to extend this work further. It is not fully reflected on schemes of work and lesson plans.
- The focus on continuous improvement is good. Observations of teaching and learning are rigorous, detailed and broadly accurate in their grading. Self-assessment reporting is satisfactory and all staff are included in the process.

Quality improvement planning accurately identifies the majority of areas for development.

What does Islington Adult and Community Learning Service need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve retention rates and poor punctuality by continuing to reinforce the strategies already in place and adapting them for individual learners.
- Improve literacy teaching by helping tutors to develop and use a range of active learning tasks and methods to ensure learners are participating fully in lessons, as well as ensuring learning materials used to develop skills are set in a context which is relevant and meaningful to learners.

Family Learning

Grade 2

Context

30. Family learning takes place in 19 primary schools, 6 children's centres and other community venues. Currently 16% of learners are men and 10% of learners declare a disability. At the time of the inspection, 148 learners were on programme, 32 on wider family learning courses, 12 on family learning impact funded courses and 104 taking family language, literacy and numeracy courses.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The development of social and personal skills and confidence is good and contributes to improving parenting skills and learners' ability to communicate more effectively. The content of many family learning courses emphasises good health and well-being, for example the value of healthy eating and physical exercise in the growth and development of children.
- Success rates on wider family learning courses are high at 89%. Success rates in family language, literacy and numeracy courses are good at 80%. Success rates on the small number of family learning impact funded courses are lower at 65%. However, the service has developed more accredited courses and has an appropriate focus on harder-to-reach learners. Retention rates declined from 90% in 2007/08 to 86% in 2009/10. Attendance and punctuality are poor on some courses, an area for improvement identified in the self-assessment report.
- The standard of learners' work, for example products made in lessons such as puppets on the story sack course, is good. Many learners gain transferable skills that they use with their children at home.
- Many make good progress in their lessons, enthusiastically contributing to discussions and confidently demonstrating their developing skills. On family learning impact funding courses, learners successfully progress into employment, volunteering roles and to higher-level courses. As recognised in the self-assessment report, the destinations of learners on other family learning courses are not routinely followed up, but there are plans to do so.
- Learners make a good contribution to the community. They improve their understanding of the school curriculum and successfully support their child's learning at school. Learners on the introduction to working with children course progress into volunteering roles and are able to contribute to their children's school life and activities in their local community.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and organised. Learners are keen to contribute to discussions, work collaboratively and are supportive of each other. Records of learners' progress and achievement are broadly good however in some, clear and measurable learning targets are not evident. Good resources are available and used well to support learning, including information learning technology, including digital cameras and computers.

- The provision meets the interests of learners particularly well. The content of lessons successfully engages their interests. The range of family learning courses has been extended, and course timetabling fits well with the core school day. The number of accredited courses has increased significantly. Crèche facilities are available at most venues and all courses are provided at no cost.
- The use of partnerships to enhance the learning offer and widen family learning opportunities is outstanding. Staff maintain close contact with schools, children's centres and voluntary organisations, such as the Parent House, which offers access to substantial additional help for parents. Family learning provision developed with primary schools targets children not achieving at school and benefits both parents and children.
- Support for learners is good. Tutors use a range of initial assessment activities to identify barriers to learning and wider social and practical support needs. They signpost learners to specialist services when needed. Learners value timely, well-organised and effective information, advice and guidance. A routine visit by information, advice and guidance staff to each course is effective in focusing learners on the next steps in their learning, employment or volunteering.
- The management of provision is good. Managers and tutors work together very effectively, and collaboration and communication within the team and with partners are good. Staff development is wide ranging, enabling opportunities to share good practice, develop subject knowledge and meet the authority's priorities. The analysis and use of data to inform management decisions are particularly good and link well to performance management.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Learners feel safe and safeguarding procedures are made clear at the beginning of courses. In some lessons, safeguarding is well integrated into the content of lessons. Posters displayed in learning centres help raise awareness and reinforce the service's expectations of staff and learners and their responsibilities. Good attention is paid to health and safety when using specialist equipment and materials in lessons.
- Initiatives to widen participation from minority ethnic groups are very effective and have led to a significant increase in participation rates. The content of lessons reflects the wide cultural diversity of learners particularly well. The service continues to develop provision to engage more fathers and more recently has developed activities targeting teenagers.
- There is a strong focus on quality assurance and quality improvement. The observation of teaching and learning scheme is rigorous and grading aligns with grades awarded on inspection. Outcomes from observations of teaching and learning feed into staff development and appraisals well. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. The views of learners are gathered through focus groups, surveys and lesson evaluations. These inform self-assessment well.
- Resources are used well. Additional funding for crèche facilities has been secured and partnerships forged to provide crèches free of charge. Family learning venues are good with a wide range of learning materials and

equipment available. The family learning manager maintains careful budget control and close monitoring of course performance to maximise resources.

What does Islington Adult and Community Learning Service need to do to improve further?

- Develop strategies to improve the punctuality and attendance of learners to increase their chances of achieving their qualifications and learning goals.
- Continue to develop arrangements to monitor systematically the progression of learners into employment, further learning and volunteering, to illustrate the contribution family learning makes to improving economic well-being.
- Build on the improvements made in setting targets and recording the progress and achievement of learners to reflect accurately their developing skills and knowledge.

Information about the inspection

31. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by ACL's quality and curriculum manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, Framework for Excellence indicators, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
32. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners had completed on behalf of the ACL. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Islington Adult and Community Learning Service

Learning types: 14-16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships. **Social and personal development:** all adult safeguarded provision

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	2,295	2,295
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	1	
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2	
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
A3. Do learners feel safe?	2	
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a	
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2	
B. Quality of provision	2	2
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
C. Leadership and management	2	2
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2	
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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