

Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT)

Focused monitoring visit report

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT) is part of Croydon Council, located in south London. CALAT is mainly funded through the Skills Funding Agency to offer a wide range of courses for work-based learning, courses for adults that lead to qualifications and for informal adult learning provision that supports personal and social development. In 2009/10, CALAT delivered 1,462 part-time courses to over 8,300 learners. Courses are offered from pre-entry to advanced level, with most courses at foundation level. Courses are held in five full-time centres, an evening centre and over 23 community and outreach sites.

The most recent inspection report was published in June 2010. CALAT was graded as good in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, quality of provision and leadership and management. Outcomes for learners were graded as satisfactory. Two subject areas were inspected with health, care and public services graded as outstanding and preparation for life and work graded as satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in increasing the impact of self-assessment and quality improvement planning on those subject areas graded as satisfactory in the latest self-assessment report?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection, self-assessment was judged to be a key tool for driving through improvements. During the monitoring visit, inspectors found this to be case for the three areas graded as satisfactory in the latest self-assessment report. Significant progress has been made in quality planning. Very clear actions for improvement have made a demonstrable impact on provision. Communication is good at all levels and staff have a good understanding of the quality improvement plans, the challenging targets set and the progress being made towards them. Changes to, and improved monitoring of key aspects of, the learners' experience are good. For example, changes to initial assessment for learners applying for sports courses have resulted in a greater focus on literacy levels. Better arrangements for supporting learners to improve their ability to pass sports theory assessments are now in place. English and mathematics learners now benefit from enhanced arrangements for maintaining their on-programme progress. Success rates for accredited qualifications achieved in-year have risen significantly. Information on learners' progress to date indicates that learners in these subject areas have made sufficient progress to meet CALAT's strategic objectives.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving accredited success rates?

Reasonable progress

The previous inspection report stated that a key area for improvement was the continuing implementation of strategies to improve success rates. Since then, the overall success rate for 2009/10 has improved marginally. In the same year, long and short course success rates were 72% and 79% respectively, around two percentage points below the national average for similar providers. At the time of the monitoring visit overall retention rates had improved by four percentage points. The overall success rate for the large proportion of short courses run in 2010/11 is 80%. CALAT forecasts the final short course success rate to be 81%. The success rate for the small proportion of long courses completed in 2010/11 is 77%. CALAT forecasts the final long course success rate to be 76%. However, data comparing the same courses completed in-year with those run in 2009/10 indicate a steady improvement in success rates.

What progress has been made in monitoring and improving attendance?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, a key area for improvement was the development of more robust systems to monitor and improve learners' attendance. Since then, numerous strategies have been developed and implemented. Staff have a clear understanding of the procedures and operate them well. Tutors and centre staff systematically monitor learners' attendance and closely monitor their progress during regular team meetings. Communications, actions to improve learners' attendance and the focus on their achievement of the qualification aim are good. Attendance is monitored effectively; the in-year attendance rate is 80%. However, the availability and timeliness of attendance data are not yet sufficiently developed to inform managers accurately of improvement trends. CALAT is fully aware of this and has plans in place to pilot an electronic system at the start of the next academic year.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made across the provision to improve the effective use of individual learning plans?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, individual learning plans and workbooks were used effectively in many areas to record and measure the progress and achievement of learners. However, some learning plans, specifically for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), contained insufficient measurable and specific targets and did not rigorously record their progress. Considerable progress has been made to introduce a meaningful and appropriate individual learning plan for learners with LDD, called 'my learning journey'. This has a clear focus and appropriate framework which meets the needs of the learners well. The great majority of the staff are committed to the learning plan's success and learners value it. CALAT has also worked hard to introduce more effective learning plans across all its provision. However, it recognises that areas exist within the service which have yet to introduce

sufficiently robust systems and that inconsistencies remain within the planning of learning.

What progress has been made in improving the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance teaching and learning?

Significant progress

At the previous inspection, many staff made good use of information and learning technology resources in their classes and encouraged their learners to access a wide range of materials and resources on the virtual learning environment. However, this was not consistently applied across all subject areas and was insufficiently well developed. In some English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes, tutors relied too heavily on paper-based, photocopied resources. Managers of CALAT have given high priority to improving existing ILT resources and to maximising their use. The organisation of these facilities has much improved with a more coordinated approach to strategy development aligned to resource management and staff training. This has brought about a significant cultural shift leading to a greater desire among staff to use available technology. The use of ILT in classes is carefully monitored and promoted through a programme of effective training. ESOL tutors use technology well to promote learning. Most tutors are committed to the use of ILT, although in a few areas, current resources do not match the growing demand. However, CALAT's ambition and plans to extend its resources through innovation and more efficient use of existing technology, for example the virtual learning environment, are good.

Leadership and management

What improvements have been made in the recording and verification of the internal observation of teaching and learning process, particularly for sessions graded as outstanding?

Significant progress

At the previous inspection CALAT had, overall, a sound system for the observation of teaching and learning. Observers effectively checked the actions which tutors needed to complete following their last observation, then set further actions for improvement. However, observation reports for sessions awarded grade 1 did not always accurately describe the outstanding features observed and were often insufficiently judgemental. CALAT has further improved the management of the observation system and has developed enhanced procedures. For example, improvements have been made to the collation and analysis of observations, the criteria for grading sessions have been further developed and observers have received more training on how to be more judgemental and objective.

Tutors value the observation system and recognise the improvements to the quality of teaching resulting from the process. Observation records are detailed, thorough, accurately reflect the grade awarded and focus more sharply on the learners' experience than previously. CALAT directs the available support appropriately at the staff receiving lower grades. The observations currently show a good, and improving,

picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Managers are continuing to strengthen the moderation of grade 1 observations to ensure consistency across all areas.

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