

# Lancashire Adult Learning

## First re-inspection monitoring visit report

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# **Monitoring Visit: Main Findings**

## **Context and focus of visit**

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to Lancashire Adult Learning (LAL) following publication of the inspection report on 11 December 2014, which found the provider to be inadequate overall. The main areas for improvement are the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; initial assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress; the rigour of quality assurance including self-assessment and the process for observations of teaching, learning and assessment; the use of data; and the challenge and scrutiny by governors.

## **Themes**

### **What progress has been made in ensuring that Lancashire Adult Learning has strong leadership and management and effective governance?**

The leader of the council is now fully informed of issues and progress about LAL through the direct involvement of the director of development and corporate services. In recognition that LAL lacked leadership, an interim Principal has been appointed from an outstanding college, initially for three months. The interim Principal has seconded an interim deputy principal to LAL who has implemented reviews of the overall structure of the provider, particularly in relation to quality improvement.

A full review of the structure and governance of LAL is in progress. Arrangements are in place to establish a new governing body to work with the interim Principal to drive improvement. Challenge and accountability within the council has been reviewed with plans for three elected members to provide local government scrutiny. The relative role of these two bodies is unclear and this may hinder the effectiveness of the proposed changes.

The current management information systems are out of date and not fit for purpose. Application of a more effective system has very effectively shown how data should be used to drive improvements. The council has recognised the need for significant investment in resources to improve data management and its use.

## **Priorities for improvement**

- Rapidly identify and establish the roles and responsibilities of the new and existing managers to enact swift improvements in performance and accountabilities.
- Clarify arrangements for governance of LAL, particularly in relation to the relative roles of the college's governing body and elected members.
- Rapidly deploy and fully utilise new data management resources.

## **What progress has been made to improve the quality of provision through accurate self-assessment informed by strong evidence, and thorough and frequent monitoring of challenging and measurable quality improvement plans, which contain clear targets and milestones**

A detailed post inspection action plan has been quickly produced which includes the key recommendations outlined in the inspection report. The plan identifies the headline areas for improvement with target dates for completion. A number of the dates are unrealistic, for example, all improvements in the quality and impact of initial assessment will be completed by the end of January 2015. Some actions are dependent on the good performance of areas identified as in need of improvement, for example, the effective use of data, with a target of mid-January, cannot be achieved until an effective and accurate management system is implemented. The plan lacks interim milestones to measure progress and does not have a system to identify the rate of progress.

A quality improvement manager, initially supported by an external consultant, will hold responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of a new quality improvement cycle, based on a proven model from an outstanding college. The model is based on an academic year in a further education college and does not take account of the diverse types and length of courses offered by the college. The extent of the responsibility and accountability of the quality improvement manager is not clear within the current structure.

A new approach to self-assessment is about to be implemented, which involves ensuring that the process is based on accurate data and a full understanding by all staff. Training for curriculum managers and staff is scheduled to improve consistency and accuracy of judgements, increase staff involvement and understanding of the process, and lead to the production of self-assessment reports at curriculum level to feed into the aggregated, service-wide self-assessment report. It is intended that self-assessment will be an integral part of the quality improvement cycle but this is not reflected accurately in the post inspection action plan. LAL recognises that the views of subcontractors and employers could be better used to inform self-assessment but has not yet formulated detailed plans on how this will be secured.

### **Priorities for improvement**

- Revisit the post inspection action plan to ensure it is underpinned by detailed action plans at curriculum level and includes suitable milestones. Robustly monitor and review the progress against all actions.
- Finalise and approve the quality cycle ensuring it reflects and is responsive to the needs of the dispersed and diverse nature of community learning.
- Ensure all staff are trained and confident in the revised quality improvement and self-assessment processes.

## **What progress has been made in improving the use of data and feedback as an effective tool to manage and improve the provision, to provide frequent measures of learners' achievements and, in particular, the wider impact of community learning**

At the time of the monitoring visit LAL were in the process of evaluating and purchasing proprietary data systems for the management of achievement data and the recording and monitoring of support interventions and their impact. Managers will be trained in the use of data and will have data available through a web-based portal.

Achievement data will be prioritised in curriculum performance monitoring panel meetings. Managers will have a pre-meeting with the data officer. Senior and curriculum managers will be expected to have a full understanding of the data for which they are responsible.

LAL has started to put measures in place to measure community impact. Community development officers meet with community organisations to agree programmes and their potential impact. A newly developed partnership feedback form will be used with each partner to record the impact of community programmes. More information will be collected from children's centres and schools to measure the impact of family learning programmes. Subcontractors have been made aware of the need to demonstrate the impact of the programmes on communities as well as individuals. LAL plans to use a subcontractor to rigorously collect destinations data from learners who have completed their programmes and learner destination surveys have been redeveloped. Results will be stored electronically for ease of analysis.

### **Priorities for improvement**

- Rapidly ensure that staff at all appropriate levels are trained and confident in the use of new data management systems.
- Ensure that data is used to its full potential and results in timely identification and action on curriculum areas and individual courses causing concern.
- Accelerate the collection and use of data to measure the impact of community learning programmes on individuals and wider communities.

### **To what extent has LAL improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the process for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) and the arrangements for learners to access high quality support?**

The process for the observation of teaching and learning is under review, recognising the need for greater consistency and links to continuing professional development and performance management. Training and development for observers has been scheduled and the number of observers has been significantly

reduced to improve consistency. The observation process will be an essential component of the quality improvement cycle. Ensuring close and effective links between observations, professional development and performance management is recognised as essential for a dynamic process and these are under review.

The current virtual learning environment (VLE) is not up to date and is underused. Early plans to promote better use and consistent practice depend upon rapid updating and wider accessibility of the VLE. Arrangements are being made for LAL tutors to visit Nelson and Colne College to view the content and use of the VLE in an outstanding college.

The staff practices for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) were found to be inconsistent during the inspection. Consequently, inspectors were unable to validate the high success rates quoted by LAL on those further education courses that do not lead to externally accredited awards or qualifications. LAL has produced guidance on minimum criteria for use in the RARPA process but it is too early in the implementation of these criteria to measure impact. Mandatory RARPA training introduced for all staff has started to be implemented through curriculum team meetings. Further support for staff in the application of RARPA is available through an education and training tutor. Schedules are in place for more frequent and thorough sampling of course files to ensure adherence to criterion and ensure that judgements are based on evidence. However, the sampling rate is yet to be decided or risk assessed.

Arrangements for the identification and support for learners who are deemed at risk of not achieving the programmes are being revised. Currently, LAL offers only two sites where learners can access support; Lancashire College and the adult college in Lancaster. All tutors hold intermediate qualifications in English and mathematics but plans to increase their level of qualification are currently on hold. LAL recognises that delays in the provision of support have been problematic in the past and a review of support arrangements with respect to staff ability to provide specialist support and the locations where learners can access support is planned to be complete by the end of January 2015.

### **Priorities for improvement**

- Accelerate plans for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment. Rapidly implement the new system for monitoring teaching, learning and assessment. Set challenging targets to achieve a high proportion of good or better teaching and learning quickly.
- Evaluate and review the RARPA process. Ensure all staff understand and apply the new RARPA criteria. Identify and share good practice to improve consistency in the setting of realistic yet challenging targets by staff and the monitoring of learners' progress, particularly on non-accredited programmes.
- Rapidly review support arrangements and ensure that all learners who require support can access timely and effective support at a suitable location.

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