

Wandsworth London Borough Council

Follow up re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second re-inspection monitoring visit to Wandsworth London Borough Council following publication of the inspection report on 19 January 2015, which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Themes

What progress is the council making to improve safeguarding arrangements to ensure that young people and vulnerable adults are safe?

Managers have taken swift and comprehensive action to tackle the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Safeguarding records are now held centrally and this ensures that managers have a good oversight of safeguarding matters across the provision.

Managers have strengthened procedures for checking of the suitability of staff to work with vulnerable adults and young people. The council now ensures that all staff, including those employed by subcontractors who deliver provision on behalf of the council, have disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks. The council facilitates these checks and all records are held centrally. All learning venues and activities have been assessed for their risks to learners. Managers have worked effectively with the council's health and safety team to ensure that all premises used as learning venues have up-to-date risk assessments in place. Detailed reports and action plans on venues assist managers and subcontracted providers in identifying and managing any risks to learners that have been identified.

Managers now monitor safeguarding arrangements thoroughly through regular meetings with subcontracted providers. Records of meetings show that the managers identify what improvements are needed effectively, and check that these have taken place. As a result, subcontractors are improving their own practice, for example by developing clearer policies on what to do should learners report a safeguarding concern. Mandatory training for all staff, including those in subcontracted providers, in safeguarding and on preventing extremism and radicalisation has resulted in over 220 staff being trained in the last six months. The vast majority of staff have been trained. Managers have commissioned on-line training packages to ensure the full participation of a few staff who are employed on small part-time contracts.

Significant improvement for learners

What progress is the council making to improve the scrutiny and monitoring of the performance of subcontracting providers?

Managers have taken effective action to improve arrangements to monitor the performance of subcontracted providers. They have significantly increased the level of monitoring, with monthly and termly reviews for all subcontractors. Reviews are thorough, well recorded and ensure that safeguarding arrangements, teaching, learning and assessment and the outcomes for learners are routinely evaluated. Reviews enable managers to identify any underperformance in a timely way and take appropriate action. For example the council has ceased to work with two subcontractors that have been unable to show sufficient capacity to improve the quality of their provision.

Managers have set clear standards that are expected of subcontracted providers through the development of a provider handbook, and a quality assurance and compliance framework. These, and more frequent reviews of performance, provide managers and subcontractors with clear criteria for evaluating performance, identifying areas for improvement and planning actions to improve the provision. Managers are using these new arrangements effectively to better identify the support individual subcontractors might need.

Significant improvement for learners

What progress is the council making to improve the proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programmes within the planned time?

More apprentices now complete their qualification within the planned time. Assessors have been given support and training to improve the quality and frequency of feedback that they give to apprentices and to ensure that feedback is accurate and thorough. As a result of improved scrutiny by managers, subcontractors are improving the quality of the initial advice and guidance that they give to apprentices, so that apprentices are much better prepared and have realistic expectations of the training they are going to undertake. Managers are aware that more work needs to be done to ensure that the quality of the training provided by all of the subcontractors is of a consistently high standard.

Managers have carried out a thorough review of the training needs of both their own assessors and of staff at the subcontractors. As a result, they have implemented a well-considered training plan to cover all the areas identified as requiring improvement. Good arrangements are in place to ensure that the success of these training sessions is evaluated through, for example, observations of reviews, scrutiny of review documentation and feedback from apprentices about the quality of their training.

Managers are supporting employers well to help apprentices to develop their skills while they are training. They are now providing regular updates to employers when specific concerns are identified about individual apprentices, so that employers can

intervene swiftly and offer appropriate support. Employers are developing a far better understanding of their role in ensuring that apprentices make good progress.

Managers have taken action to ensure that the vast majority of apprentices they identified as making slow progress following the last inspection are now likely to achieve their qualification within the planned time.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the council making to the proportion of learners who achieve qualifications in English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)?

Too many apprentices do not complete their training, or do not complete it within the planned time, because they do not achieve the appropriate level in English and/or mathematics functional skills. Since the last inspection, apprentices are developing their English and mathematics skills more effectively. Managers have introduced a monthly review of the progress apprentices are making in developing their English and mathematics skills and are starting to identify those apprentices that need extra support more quickly. Managers now ensure that employers identify opportunities for apprentices to develop their English and mathematics and include these in their training programmes. Assessors have benefited from good quality training that ensures they are able to better support learners to improve their skills.

Managers do not ensure that all learners are on ESOL or functional skills courses that are challenging enough to improve their skills rapidly. Teachers, assessors and employers do not use data relating to what learners could or could not do at the start of their course well enough to put in place learning that will develop the particular English and mathematics skills that each individual learner needs.

Managers do not have an accurate picture of the key areas for improvement in the teaching of English, mathematics and ESOL, or in the development of learners' functional skills. Managers do not have a clear understanding of how effective the ESOL, English and mathematics provision is because they do not systematically collect data relating to what learners progress to on completion of their courses or how well training meets the needs of employers.

The advice and guidance given to learners completing ESOL programmes are not consistently good enough. In particular, managers and teachers have insufficient clarity about when learners should progress from ESOL to English courses and what level of English qualification they should study. As a result, a minority of learners are on courses that do not fully meet their needs.

Insufficient improvement for learners

What progress is the council making to improve how managers and subcontractors gain an accurate picture of the progress and achievement of learners on courses that do not lead to qualifications?

Managers have improved the quality of the planning of individual learning. Teachers now record learners' aspirations and progress more effectively and ensure that learners participate fully in setting their own targets and are clear about what they want to achieve. However, the actions that underpin how targets will be achieved are too vague to give learners a good enough understanding of how they will achieve their targets. Where courses do not have a final assessment, teachers do not have a good enough understanding of how they might measure learners' achievements and the progress that they have made.

Managers have an expectation that subcontractors adhere to the high standards they have set for recording of progress and achievement and they are checking this thoroughly with managers in the subcontracted providers. However, where practice requires improvement managers do not always intervene quickly enough or check that improvement has taken place.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the council making in collecting information about learners' destinations on completion of their course?

Since the last inspection, managers have increased the amount of data they collect on learners' next steps once they have completed their course. They have collected data from about half of all learners who completed courses in the 2013/14 academic year. This is giving managers a better understanding of how well learners progress into employment or further education or training. Procedures are now in place that will ensure that the proportion of learners included in the figures for 2014/15 will be much higher and give a far more accurate picture. However, managers are not yet ensuring that the data they receive from the subcontracted provision are complete.

Managers provide clear reports to leaders and elected members that are straightforward to interpret. As a result, senior staff are better able to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning programmes. However, there is still insufficient analysis of how well learners' aspirations at the beginning of their learning or training are met on completion of their courses or qualification.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the council making to improve the effectiveness of oversight provided by elected members on the performance of the service?

Elected members are now more actively involved in the scrutiny and development of the service and there are plans to engage them further. Some of these arrangements are at the early stages of development and it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

The education and children's services overview and scrutiny committee have received two reports on the progress of the service since the inspection. The lead member for children's services has a good understanding of the performance of the service and which areas require further improvement. Elected members have helped develop a suite of key performance indicators to help them evaluate the performance of the service better. These are to be further developed to include the performance of different subcontractors as well as the service overall. The council have agreed that the education standards group, a sub group of the overview and scrutiny committee, will oversee the performance of the service through regular meetings. It is newly constituted and has not yet met to carry out this function.

Reasonable improvement for learners

What progress is the council making to improve the monitoring of the performance of teachers?

Since the last inspection, managers have increased the number of observations of teaching, learning and assessment, including observations of teachers in subcontracted provision. As a result, nearly all teachers have been observed during 2014/15. Managers have redesigned observation recording forms so that they now prompt observers to clearly identify the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. This helps managers better identify where individual teachers need training and additional support. Furthermore, the better recording system will enable managers to identify themes for improving teaching across the service and put into place training and development activities that address areas for improvement. Managers have begun to identify themes and arrange training and a small number of teachers have benefited from training sessions. English and mathematics teachers are not yet receiving appropriate training to help them improve their teaching. Teachers value the introduction of peer review groups where they can review and share best practice. These developments are in the early stages of implementation and the service is not yet able to provide evidence of any significant impact on learners.

Reasonable improvement for learners

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