Lancashire Adult Learning

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the fourth and last follow up 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 areas for improvement were: success rates; 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 effectiveness of leadership, management and governance, particularly the challenge and scrutiny by governors. Visual arts and family learning were judged to require improvement, business management and employability training were good.

The first monitoring visit took place in January 2015. It identified a number of priorities for improvement and recommended that urgent action was needed on several issues. A new interim principal and an interim vice principal, both from an outstanding college, took up post just before the first monitoring visit, initially for three months. At the second visit in March 2015, inspectors found reasonable improvement for learners, especially in terms of improvements to teaching, learning and assessment; the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance; self-assessment and the use of data, although weaknesses remained in each of these areas. The third visit in June 2015 found further improvement. The effectiveness of leadership, management and governance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment had significantly improved. Self-assessment and the use of data continued to show reasonable improvement.

Themes

What progress has been made in improving success rates for learners in 2014–15 and 2015–16?　　　　**Reasonable progress**

College data show that overall success rates improved in 2014/15 after a period of decline over the past three years. The success rate and the proportion of learners achieving within expected timescales are now both significantly above the respective national rates. Success rates are very high on most courses but the success rates for the very few adults studying programmes in public services, agriculture, engineering and social sciences still require improvement. Significantly fewer learners left the college throughout the year without completing their course than in previous years. To date in 2015–16, college records indicate that the retention rate is good across all courses. Improved initial advice and guidance and enrolment procedures and much closer monitoring by managers have contributed to improved retention at the start of this year. Tutors are much more aware and more effective at following up learners' absence to encourage learners to continue with their studies. As a result, attendance

is good across all courses, much improved from the previous year. The overall success rates are now above the national rate for foundation level, intermediate level and advanced level courses.

LAL has few learners following GCSE English or mathematics courses, but success rates on these courses have also significantly increased, by more than double, and are now high. LAL no longer offers apprenticeships.

What progress has been made in ensuring that Lancashire Adult Learning (LAL) has strong leadership and management and effective governance?   **Reasonable progress**

The new governing body is now established and effective. The board is comprised of experienced leaders in education, business and the voluntary sector, as well as council members who provide a good breadth of experience and expertise. The board provides high levels of challenge to LAL and holds managers accountable for performance. The governing body continues to mount robust challenge and provide good support to managers in reshaping the provision and driving improvements within LAL. The board receives detailed information on all aspects of LAL's performance, including information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Members scrutinise the reports and probe more deeply the evidence underpinning them to check the impact of improvement measures taken by senior managers.

Since the last visit, the plans to appoint a new principal have been withdrawn. Instead, options were discussed by the LAL board and agreement reached that LAL would continue to receive management support from Nelson and Colne College. The current interim associate principal and interim principal will remain in post to ensure that progress in improving the quality of provision is maintained. The decision was approved by the LAL Board, Lancashire County Council and by the board of Nelson and Colne College. The imminent area review of provision across Lancashire will not affect the management relationship between LAL and Nelson and Colne College. The funding allocation from the Skills Funding Agency will be a devolved budget specifically for adult learning.

The management restructure within LAL is almost complete. New curriculum managers are almost all now in place with only very few vacancies remaining. Communications between the new management team are good. LAL will continue to be supported by Nelson and Colne College in the development of the online interactive environment and in marketing, public relations and communications.

LAL have now totally withdrawn from apprenticeships, and focus on increasing the direct provision of community learning in line with council priorities, to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities across Lancashire. Managers have carefully planned provision across the most disadvantaged areas and have rationalised administrative functions to reduce costs not directly associated with teaching, learning and assessment.

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?   **Reasonable progress**

The self-assessment process has been further improved. The overarching self-assessment report and action plan are underpinned by curriculum area self-assessment reports and associated action plans for each area. The overarching post-inspection action plan has clear targets and milestones, the curriculum quality improvement plans now contain milestones and examples of impact. The self-assessment reports and action plans now include summaries of the key characteristics of teaching, learning and assessment in each curriculum area to provide a good overview of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and how it needs to be improved. Curriculum self-assessment reports now make good reference to data when evaluating performance of courses and they clearly identify any courses causing concern. Self-assessment reports also contain judgements on the arrangements for personal development, behaviour and welfare for learners.

Senior managers and the governing body monitor quality improvement plans regularly to ensure the good progress made to date is maintained and improved. Many of the areas for improvement identified within the draft self-assessment reports for 2015/16 are already starting to be addressed. For example, more effective use of information learning technology and the online interactive learning environment to develop independent learning and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. However, curriculum self-assessment reports do not recognise that improvement is still needed in the quality of written feedback, the setting of appropriate targets and the monitoring of learners' progress in a minority of courses.

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

Managers and staff are now confident in accessing and using the robust data available to monitor and interpret information on in-year performance. For example, during the visit, clear data were used to monitor attendance, retention, achievement in 2015–16 and compare this to performance in previous years.

Managers access 'real time' information frequently to monitor performance of courses and to discuss ongoing issues with tutors or to identify how things could be improved. Data feature prominently in team meetings and in performance reviews. Staff at all levels recognise the importance of data and achievement as indicators of the college's success and understand how they contribute to the performance of the organisation. As the availability of data increases, managers are refining how the data system is being used, for example the use of trend data to measure improvements. Data produced immediately prior to the re-inspection monitoring visit indicate that success rates improved in classroom-based learning across accredited and non-accredited provision in 2014–15 and that in-year retention has improved in 2015–16.

What progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in recognising and recording progress and achievement on non-accredited provision?	**Significant progress**

A substantial amount of staff development has taken place to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Few classes are timetabled on Wednesday afternoons and this time is used well to provide well-focused professional development and to share good practice through team meetings. All staff have received professional development in the setting of clear targets for learners to drive progress and in effective progress monitoring to ensure that all learners are achieving their individual potential.

The improved observations of teaching, learning and assessment result in detailed action plans addressing the key issues to improve the quality of tutors' teaching, Weak teaching practice has led to specific and appropriate performance management. Teachers who have not responded positively to the support and improved the quality of their delivery have now left the college. The percentage of classes observed by managers that are good or better has increased and is now high. Of 77 classroom observations carried out so far in 2015–16, the proportion of outstanding teaching observed by the college has increased substantially from October to December 2015. Very little teaching remains inadequate.

Inspectors carried out joint observations with managers during the visit and agreed on the key features. The observers focused well on learning and progress and clearly explained why the lessons differed in effectiveness. Learning is planned well to meet individual learners' needs and learners can clearly recognise and describe the progress they are making. Many learners could relate how they use their new skills and knowledge well in situations away from the classroom environment.

Managers have improved communication and the sharing of good practice through fortnightly team meetings where staff openly share and discuss stronger aspects of their teaching and how weaker aspects can be improved. LAL managers have upgraded the online interactive learning environment and have provided direct

support for staff from practitioners at Nelson and Colne College to populate and improve this resource. Most tutors have started to embrace its use and develop resources to improve learning opportunities for learners or aid learners to catch up with classwork and learning when they miss sessions; however learners' use of this resource is variable. Within LAL, a specific post has now been created to develop and promote the use of the online learning environment further and support teachers in their use of the facility.

Managers continue to review learning venues to assess their suitability and provide better online resources. LAL managers have purchased 20 'popup classrooms' to improve the accessibility to broadband facilities and provide laptops for use in community venues; these are starting to be used effectively. Learners and staff appreciate the flexibility and improvements these offer to community venues, particularly in language and genealogy classes.

The review of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has led to managers and teachers developing a new curriculum. The two key programmes which are now running focus on preparing learners with few skills or little workplace experience for employment and on independent living skills. The content of these courses is appropriate and clear. Initial assessment is thorough and ensures learners are placed on the right course. However, within travel training programmes, there is a need to develop a structure for the assessment of learners' starting points as well as to define the criteria for each of the stages for the development of independent travel. Staff have not yet gained the necessary skills to implement the travel training programme to maximise its effectiveness.

LAL has introduced an electronic individual learning plan and progress tracking system, which teachers and learners find easy to use and understand. It includes detailed learner profiles with information on previous experience, qualifications and skills. All learners have had an initial assessment of their behaviour, communication and English and mathematics skills to record starting points based on a highly visual 10 point scale. However, LAL has not yet defined the criteria for these assessments to ensure consistency. Targets in learners' individual learning plans are clear, specific and appropriate; however, they do not sufficiently promote independent learning and the completion of tasks which are not dependant on verbal prompts.