

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: London Borough of Richmond
upon Thames
Date of visit: 30 October 2007

Context

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRT) is funded by London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide the family learning elements of adult and community learning (ACL) in the borough. The assistant director of community and young people's services is responsible for the provision and is supported by a community education officer and a community learning and training manager.

The delivery of family learning is subcontracted to Richmond Adult Community College (the college) and to schools and community organisations in the borough. In 2006/07 and 2007/08 the provision of personal and community development learning (PCDL) is funded directly with the college by the Learning and Skills Council under a pilot scheme. PCDL provision was not included in this monitoring visit.

The family learning provision of LBRT was last inspected in May 2006. Family learning and all aspects of leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving retention and the outcomes for learners?	Reasonable progress
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LBRT now adequately records the extent to which individual and group learning goals are met. In both cases the achievement rate for 2006/07 is high at some 96%. Learner progression to further study, employment or accredited provision has increased from 1.5% in 2005/06 to 11.6% in 2006/07. LBRT has identified that better recording of learner progression in 2006/07 has contributed to this improvement.

In 2006/07, retention data was accurately collected for the first time. Retention in 2006/07 varied from some 78% on family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) programmes, to over 91% in wider family learning. Surveys show that all learners who completed questionnaires enjoyed their activities and felt the programmes had helped them to understand new things.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA)?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection LBRT had no system to measure the progress and achievement of learners. However, plans were in place to introduce RARPA in 2006/07 and reasonable progress has been made. LBRT managers have received useful training and introduced for 2006/07 a suitable range of documentation to record and accredit learners' outcomes. All family learning providers receive appropriate training in RARPA and good practice is shared with Richmond Adult Community College and across the provider network. Monitoring by LBRT managers of the use of initial and summative assessment tools and revised individual learning plans is satisfactory.

Reasonable progress has been made in effectively measuring learners' outcomes. Appropriate arrangements are in place to record group and individual learning goals. Some groups have negotiated the content of their programme in light of their previous experience, for instance in the case of a young parents group. Tutors note a significant increase in learner self-confidence and commitment in these cases.

Individual learning plans show appropriate and satisfactory use of initial assessment to plan learning. End of programme evaluations by learners and tutors are fit for purpose.

LBRT has effectively revised its RARPA documentation for 2007/08 to make it more appropriate for learners. A useful information guide has been produced to support tutors. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of the revised RARPA arrangements.

What progress has been made in planning a curriculum that meets learners' needs and local priorities?	Significant progress
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At the last inspection, curriculum planning was inadequate with no clear overview of the family learning curriculum or of progression routes. Cancelled courses were not monitored to identify why they did not recruit. Significant progress has been made in improving curriculum planning. A thorough review of the family learning provision has been carried out with appropriate planning of the provision to meet strategic objectives.

Appropriate action has been taken to fill identified gaps in the provision, particularly in relation to teaching English as an additional language (EAL). The review identified areas of over subscribed or ineffectively located provision, particularly in the arts. Decisive action has been taken to deliver arts provision through the borough's arts service which is well established at targeting priority groups and incorporating EAL with the arts. Good progress has been made in the proactive commissioning of family

learning programmes. The London Wildlife Trust, for example, has successfully developed an EAL programme linked to its work.

The monitoring of recruitment and retention on family learning programmes has improved. LBRT makes good use of its well developed partnerships to guide the development of the service. A clear decision process is now in place on whether low recruiting courses are closed or supported to meet strategic aims. Decisions on the development and closure of courses are now fully discussed.

Significant progress has been made in providing better progression information and guidance to learners. Progression has significantly improved. From very little progression in 2005/06, 13% of FLLN learners progressed to additional learning or employment in 2006/07.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in developing effective quality improvement arrangements?	Significant progress
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Quality improvement procedures are significantly improved since the last inspection, when they were judged to be insufficiently formal and not well established. There is a good strategic context and overview to guide quality improvement. LBRT's strategic commitment to improve quality is clear. It has helped to inform the model for the delivery of provision which builds upon the particular strengths of providers.

Management of quality assurance has improved. The permanent full-time appointment of a community learning and training manager has provided a positive focus for the development of a more thorough approach to quality improvement. LBRT's expectations of providers of family learning are now clear and agreed in advance. Performance is appropriately monitored. The improved availability and use of learner performance data aids this monitoring. Providers of family learning are appropriately supported as they develop their expertise in quality improvement.

LBRT's growing expertise in assuring the quality of its own provision has helped it to know better what information it needs from providers to determine that the quality of their provision is being assured. Quality improvement arrangements now place appropriate emphasis on the quality of the learners' experience. Learner evaluations significantly inform judgements in the self-assessment report. The scheme of lesson observation for family learning is well established and thorough. Good arrangements for the moderation of judgements and grades are in place. The outcomes help to inform a well conceived programme of staff development.

The joint steering group for adult and community learning, the family learning provider forum and the Richmond Learning Partnership are valuable groupings for

the development of quality improvement, including the sharing and development of good practice and for the critical review of plans and outcomes.

What progress has been made in making effective use of data to monitor and plan the provision?	Reasonable progress
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The use of data in monitoring and planning provision is improved since the last inspection. The provider's capacity to effectively generate and analyse data has improved. LBRT has introduced its own management information system for family learning. Managers now have readily available data on learner numbers and on the various equality and diversity related categories. They use the data to manage courses better and to inform their quality reviews with providers. Learners' postcode data is used effectively to identify gaps in the coverage of provision and to help with course planning. Analysis of learners' gender has led to the development of courses targeted at men. Data is now used to set targets for improvement, such as for retention. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this work. Data reports are not routinely made available to providers. LBRT is currently determining which reports would be most useful to providers.

The development of managers' expertise with data has enabled them to discuss more productively their data needs of the college provision. These discussions have led to changes to the college and authority systems to facilitate analysis.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How effective is self assessment and improvement planning in resolving the areas for improvement from the last inspection?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the last inspection, self-assessment was used well to plan and implement actions for improvement. Reasonable progress has been made in making the process increasingly effective. The particularly good involvement of partners in the self assessment process, identified as a strength at the last inspection, has been maintained. The self-assessment report sits as an integral part of the now established LBRT quality improvement framework. It makes effective use of a good range of evidence including evaluation reports from providers. Judgements are increasingly based on outcomes of the scheme of teaching and learning observations, learner evaluations and better analysis of learner data. Judgements in the self-assessment report are clear with good reference to the post inspection action plan.

Post inspection action-planning is an integral part of the wider LBRT scheme for business action-planning. The action plan is regularly and frequently reviewed and revised. It comprehensively charts the progress made with areas for improvement since the last inspection. In the themes reviewed by inspectors, their judgements on

progress made since the last inspection generally agree with the judgements in the business action plan. The action plan is realistic in identifying what further work is to be done.