

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Tyne and Wear Autistic Society Adult
Services
Date of visit: 4 July 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

Achievement and standards

How effectively is recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) being developed and used to record learners' progress? How effectively is the distance travelled data used?

- The five stages of the RARPA processes are now integrated well within the new management information system. This is accessible to all staff. The senior tutors and acting principal carefully monitor the quality of completion of documentation and identify areas for improvement. Weekly surgeries are held every Friday afternoon to focus on supporting staff to improve their skills in particular areas of RARPA such as target setting or recording of achievement. Learners are now more involved in setting their targets through a person-centred planning approach which was introduced in January 2007. In general, targets are improved through this process of learner involvement. All learners have had a thorough assessment by the newly appointed speech and language therapist and a range of targets has been developed. In addition, all learners now have an autism- specific target. However, some targets set by staff are written in language that is overly complex and not sufficiently accessible to learners.
- The college now collates distance travelled data which is monitored well by senior managers. The data is included in a termly quality improvement report which is presented to the advisory and trustee boards. This data clearly indicates each learner's percentage achievement against their targets. The report accompanying the data is insufficiently evaluative in identifying areas for improvement. The college has yet to complete a full annual cycle of collating and using data and an evaluation of its effectiveness. Plans are in place to carry out a review at the end of the summer term.

Are learners achieving qualifications on accredited courses in line with expectations?

- Learners have appropriate access to relevant accreditation. Of the current seven learners, two are attending a local FE college for an information technology award, two other learners have achieved a range of numeracy accreditation, one of whom has also achieved a level 1 award in adult literacy.

Quality of education and training

What progress has been made in developing the curriculum since the curriculum review?

- The curriculum was reviewed in January 2007 with the aim of involving learners more in their programme through the introduction of person-centred planning. The revised curriculum has an increased focus on work-related skills and learner involvement. All learners have an external placement or internal work experience through the college's workshops or community shop. The shop is now established in the community and the learners' run it as a project to sell the products made by learners in the workshops. Stronger links have been established with the local Connexions advisor who visits the college every half term and works with the learners to develop an individual programme of work visits. The aim is to provide experience to support their choices in the future. More recently a gardening project has been set up, managed by an ex-learner, to provide an appropriate environment for the development of learners' horticultural skills. They work in the gardens of local people with disabilities. Links are being established with a second FE college to extend access to a range of accredited awards to support the skills developed through the curriculum, including health and safety, woodwork, horticulture, food hygiene and first aid. It is too early to judge the impact of the curriculum changes.

Learner tutorial and transition are now linked to person centred planning. What impact does this have?

- Through person-centred planning, learners have more involvement in their programme. Learner feedback indicates that some learners have a better awareness of their targets and feel more included. All learners

now have an interactive, electronic person-centred learning plan which records information on what they want to do and which involves them in making choices about their programme and relevant national awards linked to their transition. Learners are involved in reviewing their own progress in the weekly tutorial and recording this in their learning plan. Current learners in their third year have a well-developed separate transition plan; for more recent learners it is intended that transition planning will be integrated within their person-centred plan from September 2007. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these changes.

What actions have been taken since the last annual assessment visit (AAV) to further develop the skill levels of learning support assistants (LSAs)?

- An audit was carried out in January of LSAs relevant skills and qualifications with the aim of making better use of these skills as well as identifying areas for development. The effectiveness of learning support is part of the observation of teaching and learning and LSAs receive one-to-one support as required. Some LSAs have shadowed more experienced support assistants to develop their skills further. Each member of staff, including LSAs, is allocated a mentor who provides advice and guidance. LSAs are involved in the weekly surgeries and a range of training has been provided including communication skills, curriculum issues, autism-specific issues, the RARPA processes and using e-learning in the curriculum.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in developing health and safety management?

- Following the appointment of a designated health and safety manager in 2006, a satisfactory range of relevant policies and procedures has been introduced to underpin safe practice and to raise awareness of issues. Regular meetings of the new health and safety committee are effective in monitoring actions and disseminating information to staff and learners. Key members of staff have received adequate training to enable them to carry out specific functions concerning health and safety. Practice is effectively monitored through risk assessments, internal inspections and

meetings. There is satisfactory liaison with relevant external agencies to develop and maintain high standards in safe practice.

How well has the college progressed its accommodation strategy to move to a more accessible building? Is the college meeting the requirements of recent equalities legislation?

- The college commissioned an access audit in 2006 to identify areas for improvement within the existing building, but the recommended actions were not space-efficient. Temporary accommodation on one level has been secured from August 2007 until the college can move into its specially designed new building. The college has liaised with other local providers who have developed specialist accommodation to anticipate and avoid potential problems. Currently, strategies to make reasonable adjustment are in place to support learners, staff and visitors; adaptive technology is introduced and used where appropriate. The college has produced a realistic equality and diversity action plan and is effectively monitoring progress towards its implementation. Staff have had training on recent equalities legislation within the context of their job roles, as well as receiving more generic training. All staff have, or are working towards, relevant accreditation in this area. The college is aware of and complies with the relevant equalities legislation.

How effective is the observation of teaching and learning in improving standards overall including the quality of key documentation?

- The college conducts observations of teaching and learning for each member of staff three times a year. This is closely linked to staff appraisal, supervision and professional development. A team of observers has been trained internally, and plans are in place to work with other providers to share best practice in observations. All records of observations are monitored to establish generic trends and individual targets. Clear, developmental action points are identified and progress towards them is supported and monitored well. Quality improvement measures have been introduced as a result of analysis of these observations. For example, staff have received training in the setting and monitoring of learner targets. They have also received support through the weekly surgeries to improve lesson plans and schemes of work. The records of observation of teaching and learning are linked to

strategic planning and direction, and are adequately analysed to measure improvement and to plan for future improvements.

Is the college meeting the guidance for safeguarding (DfES, 2006)?

- The college places a high priority on safeguarding. A central recruitment and vetting record is in place and is regularly updated.

Any themes from the pre-visit analysis not explored during the visit:

- None

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- None