

INSPECTION REPORT

Elfrida Rathbone (Camden)

09 November 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Elfrida Rathbone (Camden)	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	2
What learners like about Elfrida Rathbone (Camden)	4
What learners think Elfrida Rathbone (Camden) could improve	4

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	5
Equality of opportunity	6
Quality improvement	6
Preparation for life and work	8

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Elfrida Rathbone (Camden) (ERC) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It was established in 1982 and is based in Camden, London. It administers four projects which provide a range of educational, recreational and support services for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and vulnerable families. The organisation employs 24 staff.
2. There are three staff on the Leighton project, plus a number of sessional teaching staff. The Leighton project was set up in 1983 to meet the educational and social needs of young people aged between 16 and 25. It aims to provide learners who could not easily access other training, with the skills for independent living, enabling them to move into employment, training or further education. The organisation contracts directly with the London Central Learning and Skills Council. There are 12 learners currently attending the project. Learners complete a self-accredited essential skills award, which develops their life and work skills. They also receive training in art and sexual health. Learners attend additional sessions in information and communications technology (ICT) at another local training organisation and fitness training at a local gym. Work placements are introduced to learners in year two of their programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** ERC's leadership and management are good, as is its approach to equality of opportunity. Its arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Provision in preparation for life and work is good.
4. **Achievement and standards are good.** The overall achievement rate in 2005-06 was 75 per cent. Learners make good progress and develop the social and life skills they need to make a successful transition into adult life. They increase their confidence, become more independent and feel more able to make informed choices. Most learners acquire new skills which they use at home and in daily life. Learners gain a clear sense of achievement. Ninety-two per cent of learners in 2005-06 progressed to further training at ERC or other local colleges, or gained employment.
5. **The quality of provision is good.** All classroom sessions are satisfactory or better. ERC effectively develops learners' skills, knowledge and understanding. Learning is delivered through a wide range of relevant, practical activities in classrooms, in the community and in the workplace. These motivate and meet the needs and interests of individual learners. Tutors make particularly effective use of visual materials for assessment at induction and to support learners.
6. **The range of programmes and activities to meet learners' needs is good.** Extensive links with the local and wider communities help to meet individual learning needs. Learners have numerous opportunities to improve their personal and social skills as well as increase their ability to cope with daily life experiences.

ELFRIDA RATHBONE (CAMDEN)

7. Support for learners is satisfactory. Volunteers and support staff provide effective support. Learners receive clear and appropriate information, advice and guidance about the programme before they enrol and before they leave, often in consultation with parents and care workers. However, there is insufficient support for the teaching of literacy skills with some learners.

8. The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process. ERC produced its annual self-assessment report in September 2006. Staff are fully included in the self-assessment process and contribute to the production of the self-assessment report. The views of learners, parents and carers, managers and referrers are reflected in the report. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the report were very similar to those identified by inspectors.

9. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements. Managers have implemented a number of improvements which benefit the learners. In addition, ERC has taken additional measures to improve provision, although these have not yet had time to affect the learners.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ELFRIDA RATHBONE (CAMDEN):

- maintain and develop the good use of community resources
- raise the overall quality of teaching and learning
- improve the identification and teaching of literacy skills
- continue to focus on equality and diversity with learners
- make the quality monitoring of provision more systematic

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		3

Preparation for life and work		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Community learning		2
Adult and community learning	12	2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

10. The inspection was carried out in a single visit to the provider. All provision in preparation for life and work was inspected.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	11
Number of staff interviewed	13
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	5
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	3
Number of visits	1

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- good strategic leadership and direction
- particularly effective focus on equality and diversity

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of some aspects of provision

Preparation for life and work

Strengths

- very effective holistic development of learners' skills, knowledge and understanding
- good use of the community to support learning
- particularly effective use of visual materials for assessment, induction and support

Weaknesses

- insufficient identification and teaching of literacy skills

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ELFRIDA RATHBONE (CAMDEN):

- the range of experiences - 'I like all the things we do'
- the enjoyment of learning - 'I really had fun yesterday, it was good'
- the support provided by tutors - 'I get help when I need it'
- the secure and friendly environment - 'I'm happy here'
- the practical activities - 'I like cooking best, especially eating the pizza and spaghetti'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ELFRIDA RATHBONE (CAMDEN) COULD IMPROVE:

- matching activities more closely to prior learning - 'sometimes we do stuff we've done before'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good strategic leadership and direction
- particularly effective focus on equality and diversity

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of some aspects of provision

11. ERC has good strategic leadership and direction. It has carried out a well-structured and thorough analysis of its mission and role as a provider of training for learners with mild to moderate learning difficulties. It has a clearly focused view of its capacity to meet different learners' needs, and has a thorough and well-defined strategy for the recruitment of learners. The management committee of ERC has been particularly closely involved in strengthening the business-planning processes for the Leighton project, and in setting very clear financial and recruitment targets. Members of subcommittees, for example the curriculum subcommittee, play a full role in reviewing and improving the curriculum. The overall organisation of ERC provides very effective support for the Leighton project, and makes good use of the common interests and activities contained within ERC. The management of ERC have been very successful in accessing additional funds to support ongoing work and development of the Leighton project. ERC works closely and very effectively with an extensive range of partner and voluntary organisations, and draws on these well to support the programme and to provide additional specialist input. ERC has carefully redefined its key management roles to meet developing organisational needs. Its revised management structures, which include a job-share scheme, have empowered managers at operational level to take actions to improve the provision for learners. ERC has also provided good training and support to its managers to develop their professional understanding and skills.

12. Communication at ERC is effective. Scheduled meetings are held weekly with the tutors and managers, using a standard agenda, to review individual progress and to deal with other management issues. Detailed notes are circulated to all staff involved in the project. However, notes do not always clearly identify agreed actions. In addition, staff employed by all four projects within ERC meet routinely to share experience and exchange information on developments. ERC communicates effectively with parents and carers, formally and informally, and parents feel included and well informed of individual progress throughout the programme. ERC maintains good informal communications with all its key partners.

13. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. They are encouraged and supported to take further training, and all staff have frequently taken additional specialist training, for example in project management, first aid, delivering learning to learners with special needs, and epilepsy. Resources at ERC are satisfactory. Classrooms are suitably equipped and learners have access to a suitable range of equipment such as digital cameras and computers. Managers receive regular, monthly financial reports and monitor expenditure and income closely.

14. The system for supporting the development of learners' needs in literacy, numeracy and language is generally adequate. All learners have a detailed assessment using nationally recognised tests, and tutors provide ongoing support. However, some learners do not receive sufficiently well-structured support to meet their needs in literacy.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

15. ERC focuses particularly well on equality and diversity. Throughout its programmes, ERC focuses, with its learners, on key messages of mutual respect, fairness and dignity. It has a comprehensive range of policies, which are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in legislation. ERC is particularly successful in making these policies and procedures meaningful to learners with a range of learning difficulties. Language in the learners' charter, complaints procedures, equality of opportunity statement, and other codes of behaviour is carefully adapted to meet learners' needs, and well-chosen visual images clearly reinforce the written language. The documents are closely interlinked to give learners a comprehensive picture of their rights and responsibilities, from induction. Staff work very effectively with learners throughout their programmes to reinforce these messages through well-focused activities. For example, learners visit a range of multi-faith locations such as temples and churches, and then discuss the dress, foods, and customs which reflect the different beliefs of the learners. Learners at ERC demonstrate mutual respect and shared understanding and support each other well.

16. ERC routinely and effectively monitors data relating to equality of opportunity. Its current programme has 66 per cent of learners from black and minority ethnic groups, which closely reflects the local context. In 2005-06, ERC recognised that it had a disproportionate number of number of men on the programme, representing 92 per cent of the total number of learners. It has since taken very effective actions to redress this imbalance, and through its additional targeted activities has increased the proportion of female learners from 8 per cent in 2005-06 to 50 per cent in the current year.

17. Access to ERC is satisfactory. ERC's training provision is housed in modern premises which provide good access for learners with disabilities. Within the building, ERC also operates a crèche facility.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

18. ERC has introduced a number of clear quality improvements. Within the curriculum, for example, it has successfully increased the number of work placements available to learners to broaden their experience and support their personal development. Learners have benefited from this experience and have clearly increased their confidence in working with others. ERC has also reviewed its feedback arrangements and has standardised its approach across the organisation by introducing an annual ERC student review. It has also extended the range of feedback to include the views of referral agencies, parents and carers, and managers, as well as the views of learners. These views are carefully considered and clear actions are taken to deal with identified problems and to inform future plans. ERC has a good system for observing teaching and learning, and has strengthened its internal arrangements for the observation of its staff by linking with an external organisation to carry out reciprocal and joint observations. Staff who have been observed appreciate the constructive feedback they have received, which has made improvements to delivery.

19. ERC has a satisfactory self-assessment process, and staff contribute fully to it. ERC produced its most recent self-assessment report in September 2006. The key strengths and weaknesses identified in the report matched those made by the inspectors.

20. The quality monitoring of some aspects of provision is insufficient. In particular, ERC does not sufficiently monitor some aspects of the provision delivered by voluntary agencies to ensure consistency. ERC is aware of this, and has negotiated revised service level agreements to include observation of training for all tutors provided by the voluntary organisations. It has also supported its external voluntary providers to develop and introduce standardised schemes of work and session plans. However, ERC does not always monitor the effect of these improvement measures sufficiently. Some tutors are not sufficiently aware of the individual learning aims and targets identified by ERC's staff, and they do not take sufficient account of these targets in planning their teaching. Although health and safety is satisfactorily dealt with at induction to each new area of provision, ERC does not monitor its subsequent reinforcement sufficiently. Some of the monitoring arrangements for work placements are also not fully developed. ERC does not always use data sufficiently to monitor the effect of its actions to improve quality, such as those for improving learners' attendance.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Community learning Adult and community learning	12	2 2

21. There are 12 learners on the two-year essential skills programme, eight of whom are in their first year. Most learners are referred by their school, Connexions or through their key worker from one of a number of local authority adult services. Fifty per cent of learners are women and 66 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. The 10 learners who are full time attend for 18 hours a week over four days. All learners work towards completing modules of an accredited award. The project has three directly employed staff, two of whom job share to teach and manage the programme. Service level agreements are in place with four organisations to provide keep fit, ICT, art, and sexual health training. Learners are supported in sessions by a part-time volunteer tutor and a support assistant who also has a separate role as the work-placement officer.

Strengths

- very effective holistic development of learners' skills, knowledge and understanding
- good use of the community to support learning
- particularly effective use of visual materials for assessment, induction and support

Weaknesses

- insufficient identification and teaching of literacy skills

Achievement and standards

22. Learners with diverse learning difficulties and disabilities achieve satisfactorily. In 2005-06, 75 per cent of learners obtained their essential skills modules which were identified on their learning plan. Ninety-two per cent of these learners progressed to further training at ERC or other local colleges or gained employment.

23. Learners effectively develop the social and life skills they need to make the transition into everyday adult life. They increase their confidence, become more independent and feel more able to make informed choices. Most learners also acquire new skills which are used very constructively at home and in everyday life. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Good use is made of digital photography to record and display learners' work and learners gain a clear sense of achievement.

The quality of provision

24. ERC develops learners' skills, knowledge and understanding very effectively. Learning is appropriately delivered through a wide variety of sessions in classrooms, the community and in the workplace. A wide range of relevant, practical activities motivates and meets

the needs and interests of individuals. There is an appropriate mix of classroom-based activities and learning, which takes place in settings such as cafes, shops and on buses. Tutors focus well on the skills learners need to make the transition into adult life safely. For example, learners are able to learn more about relationships and sexual health as well as becoming more streetwise and less vulnerable when dealing with the wider general public. ERC has worked successfully to increase the range and number of different kinds of work placements for learners. Work placements match the learners' employment aims well and provide good opportunities for learners to develop relevant skills in a supportive environment.

25. Good use is made of the community to support learning. Learners have numerous opportunities to improve their personal and social skills as well as increase their ability to cope with daily life experiences through the use of community resources. Learners who are learning to travel independently use the bus weekly to get to external providers and placements. For example, one learner successfully used new language skills and behaviours to get past standing passengers on a bus at his destination. Tutors use the local area well and encourage learners to notice important safety features when crossing roads as well as reading street signs to help them become more familiar with new locations which they will return to in the future. Many learners increase their confidence and some begin to use community venues in their free time. For example, one learner now has the confidence to use the local gym independently having first attended as part of his programme. Learners particularly enjoy visits to museums, places of worship, and tourist attractions which enrich their learning experiences as well as providing real settings to practise new skills.

26. Tutors at ERC make particularly effective use of visual materials for assessment, induction and support. Symbols are used well on documents to help learners understand rules and regulations at work placements. Very effective use of coloured symbols and pictures allows learners to have greater independence in decision-making, such as selecting their preferred course options for their individual learning plans. Coloured icons and symbols are used well on induction materials. Good use is made of digital photographs, although some that are used to monitor learners' progress are not dated. Well-presented displays provide helpful reminders to learners about their past achievements, as well as helping them to remember the names of people within the organisation that they may need to contact.

27. Initial and continuous assessment of learners' progress is satisfactory. A range of assessments take place in the first six weeks of their programme to identify the learners' cognitive and social abilities and behaviours. In addition, communication, literacy and numeracy and information technology skills are assessed. The process is thorough, although the results are not always sufficiently detailed or used to inform teaching. Progress is monitored satisfactorily through regular tutorials, feedback from tutors and through end-of-term and annual assessments.

28. Teaching in classroom-based sessions is generally satisfactory, and all sessions observed were satisfactory or better. Lessons are mostly well structured and motivate learners well through a variety of relevant, practical activities. However, in some lessons, tutors do not always plan effectively to challenge more able learners. Tutors manage learners' behaviours well. Schemes of work and lesson plans are generally satisfactory, although they vary in their focus on individual learning. Resources are satisfactory.

Classrooms are modern and bright, and learners have access to a kitchen, for practical activities, and to a range of other equipment such as digital cameras and computers. However, tutors do not always ensure that resources such as pens or computers are working properly, and they do not always reinforce health and safety sufficiently with learners when using specialist equipment.

29. Learners receive effective support. Volunteers and support staff provide satisfactory help in most lessons and sometimes the support is particularly effective. However, some support staff allow insufficient time for learners to find their own solutions to problems before intervening. Learners receive clear and appropriate information, advice and guidance about the programme before they enrol and before they leave, often in consultation with parents and care workers. Effective use is made of Connexions advisers to provide information to learners about possible training or employment options.

30. There is insufficient identification and teaching of literacy skills. Learners' literacy skills are initially assessed when joining the programme. However, only a broad level of ability is identified and inappropriate targets are set. The targets recorded on individual plans are not broken down sufficiently into meaningful and easily achievable steps for most learners. Schemes of work and lesson plans do not indicate clearly how or when literacy skills will be taught. ERC does not share individual literacy targets sufficiently with the tutors in different curriculum areas. Some tutors provide appropriate opportunities for practising a range of literacy and numeracy skills within lessons. However, there is little teaching of grammar, reading or writing skills, including spelling, to enable learners to progress. Opportunities are not always taken to teach specific literacy skills in lessons.

Leadership and management

31. Curriculum management is effective. Working relationships with external providers and the local community are good. Managers and staff communicate well and much relevant and useful information is shared regularly. Directly employed staff attend scheduled weekly meetings. Equality and diversity is promoted particularly well through the curriculum, as well as through the more formal policies which are presented to learners at induction. Considerable effort has gone into developing and improving quality systems. Systems are regularly evaluated and appropriate changes are made. For example, the nationally standardised test for initially assessing learners' literacy and numeracy skills was judged to be inappropriate and was amended. However, there is insufficient monitoring of overall provision. For example, tutors from external organisations are not fully aware of the literacy and numeracy skills to be developed by individuals or which strategies should be used.

