

Harrow Council

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Family learning
- Community development

Description of the provider

1. Harrow Council (the council) receives funding from London West LSC to provide adult and community learning across the borough, through its adult community and family learning service (the service). The council delivers most of the adult and community learning (ACL) by subcontracting arrangements with a range of providers and through the direct delivery of community-learning ICT and arts courses, and family learning provision. Subcontracted provision is delivered through contracts with Harrow College and Stanmore College, in addition to a number of community organisations, charities and faith groups. Wider Family Learning and Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) are delivered directly and in partnership with schools, colleges and the voluntary sector. The volume of direct delivery represented approximately 22 % of enrolments during 2006/07.
2. At the time of inspection, there were 2,584 learners on courses run by Harrow council and its partners. During the inspection there were 335 learners on 35 directly delivered courses. During 2006/07, there were 5,047 enrolments, of which 1,129 were on directly delivered courses.
3. Harrow is an outer London borough with a population of around 211,000. The population is increasing, including a growing number of older people, currently 19% are over 60. The borough has a highly diverse profile and is the most religiously diverse in the United Kingdom. The black and minority ethnic (BME) population is approximately 42%, primarily Asian. Harrow is home to the highest proportion of Indians in London, at 22% of all residents, and is second only to Leicester nationally. Within other BME communities the Somali community is fast-growing and is now the largest refugee community in Harrow, numbering between 7000-9000.
4. Overall, employment levels and household earnings are relatively high across the borough, but at ward level and within specific groups there are significant differences in indicators of social and economic deprivation. In some wards, unemployment levels reach 8%, and up to 30% of residents in some wards have no qualifications.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject area

Family learning	Good: Grade 2
Community development	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards are good. Learners develop good confidence and skills, and in some areas, particularly in family learning, progression to more advanced courses is good.
6. Teaching and learning are good overall, though satisfactory in community learning provision. No inadequate classes were observed during inspection. In most sessions, tutors plan effectively to meet learners' needs and a good variety of teaching and learning approaches are used. Resources for teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory, though some accommodation is old and cramped. Learners enjoy their classes, work successfully and often produce work of a high standard. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Implementation of the system for the recognising and recording of learners' progress and achievement on non-accredited courses (RARPA) is ineffective.
7. The council responds very effectively to the needs and interests of learners and measures to ensure social inclusion are good. Partnership arrangements are particularly effective, and the service manages its subcontracted provision well. The council provides a wide range of local learning opportunities, especially in areas of social and economic disadvantage.
8. Information, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Learners in community learning have an appropriate understanding of progression opportunities, and progression is good in family learning. Arrangements to meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are currently under-developed. Staff across the provision do not have confidence in advising learners of the support available, and there is a lack of awareness about the service's skills for life strategy.
9. Leadership and management is good. Strategic plans are clear and comprehensive in identifying priorities for service development. Curriculum management is good overall, with very effective curriculum planning to meet community needs. Support for tutors is good in family learning. The implementation of RARPA is currently under-developed. Equality of opportunity is good overall, with some very successful strategies to engage traditionally under-represented groups. The quality improvement arrangements are good and have been revised and improved since the previous inspection.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The council has demonstrated good capacity to improve. The effectiveness of actions taken since the previous inspection has been good. For example, the Council has widened participation by extending the use of community-based learning centres and strengthened its external partnerships. Family learning programmes are more strongly linked to Every Child Matters and skills for life strategies, although skills for life are not well promoted across provision. Procedures to recognise and record progress and achievement are now in place, but these have not been fully implemented in all programmes. Arrangements for observing teaching and learning have been improved and were judged to be a strength by inspectors.

11. Quality assurance arrangements are good. Procedures have been revised to achieve greater consistency in implementation and provide continuous monitoring and evaluation of performance. Quality assurance is supported by data systems which adequately process feedback from learners. Subcontractors' performance is effectively monitored against targets set out in service-level agreements.
12. Arrangements for self-assessment are good and the process is thorough and accurate. Procedures for self-assessment are well documented and understood by staff. The process is fully inclusive and judgements made in the self-assessment report draw upon the views of learners and partner organisations. Self-assessment reports are written for direct delivery by the council and for subcontracted provision by partners and these are incorporated into a single report for adult and community learning following thorough consultation.

Key strengths

- Good strategic leadership and planning
- Good management of subcontractors
- Particularly good arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning
- Fully inclusive self-assessment arrangements
- Good development of learners confidence and skills
- Good development of adaptive technologies to support learners
- Effective planning to meet learners' diverse needs

Key areas for improvement

- Ineffective promotion of skills for life strategy across the provision
- Insufficient recording of learners' progress

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

13. Achievement and standards are good overall. The development of learners' confidence, knowledge and skills is good across the provision. Learners gain confidence both through developing skills related to the area of study and through interacting with their peers. In family learning, parents gain confidence in dealing with their children's schools, and in supporting their children's schoolwork. In ICT classes, learners develop many practical technical skills. Some learners achieve good progression to employment or further study. Learners also effectively develop their subject knowledge, are well motivated, enjoy their courses and attend classes punctually and regularly.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

14. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, with no inadequate sessions observed. In community learning there are too many satisfactory classes. The better lessons are well planned and tutors use a range of approaches to meet the needs of their learners. Tutors in all curriculum areas have good subject knowledge and are well qualified.
15. Provision in community learning and family learning is well developed to meet the needs of the borough's diverse population groups. Strong and productive relationships with a range of partners promote recruitment from traditionally under-represented groups.
16. Information and guidance is satisfactory overall. Course information is available on the service's very well designed and informative website and is also available at council venues and community centres. Community networks play a significant part in providing information about courses and progression to further learning. Induction is effective in most classes.
17. The recording of learner progress is ineffective in both community learning and family learning, and some target-setting is ineffective in family learning. The service has systems in place for RARPA, but some tutors do not make satisfactory use of prior achievement information for planning learning. However, there are some good examples of individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

18. Service managers provide good strategic leadership and planning. The service is well represented at senior levels in the council, and elected-member portfolio holders are well briefed and closely involved in the development of the service. Plans for service improvement and development are closely integrated with council strategic objectives and with community priorities expressed in the council's long and medium term planning documents. In 2005/06 the council's scrutiny panel carried out a thorough review of provision and presented a set of clear recommendations for the continued development of provision to meet community needs. Many of the recommendations have been adopted and have resulted in strengthened provision and enhanced community links.
19. The service has good measures in place to manage its subcontracted provision. Around 80% of provision is secured through two colleges and a range of community organisations, all of whom are productively involved in service planning, self-assessment and review. There are very good service level agreements in place with partners, and targets are set and monitored for recruitment and achievement. Partners, including colleges collaborate fully in quality assurance measures, including observation of teaching and learning.
20. Arrangements for quality assurance are well co-ordinated by a dedicated part-time quality assurance officer. Council managers have frequent contact with partners and good communication is maintained. Generally staff are well aware of quality procedures and performance measures. A quality assurance steering group meets twice a term, with representatives from subcontracted partners. Meetings provide an effective forum for partners to influence strategic planning, share information and best practices as well as facilitating networking and standardising quality procedures. Policies and procedures are well written and these provide staff with clear guidelines which identify the council's expectations and values across the provision.
21. Management of quality improvement is good and identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Procedures for monitoring performance are effective in identifying areas for improvement and action planning. Managers have introduced systems for collecting information from learners and partner organisations and information is used well to evaluate performance and guide curriculum planning.
22. Arrangements for observing teaching and learning are particularly good. The council has introduced a system using trained tutor observers across all programmes, including sessions delivered by its partner colleges. Partners work together very effectively to support the moderation of teaching and learning observations. Prompt and detailed feedback is provided to tutors with appropriate recommended action. The findings of observations are used well to plan staff training and development.
23. Arrangements for self-assessment are fully inclusive. Guidance documents for the completion of self-assessment are effective in raising staff awareness of the process. Self-assessment reports are written by all partners delivering programmes and arrangements to moderate judgements are good. The managers of non-delivery partners attend termly

meetings with council managers and complete progress update reports as part of the self-assessment process. Their findings are used to inform overall judgements. The council's report is detailed, comprehensive and largely accurate.

24. The Council has been effective in its strategies to engage with learners from under-represented groups and to widen participation. ACL is delivered in 40 venues across the borough, including centres placed in locations of greatest need. Accommodation has been selected to provide good accessibility to learners. The premises are physically accessible, local to learners, and provide an environment which is sympathetic to learners' ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
25. ACL managers work closely with other council departments and community support groups to maintain a high profile for its services to disadvantaged groups. For example, the council is involved in the borough's cluster scheme to work closely with community groups to plan and deliver programmes to socially excluded families as part of a co-ordinated and cohesive approach to family learning. The council works in partnership with Mind in Harrow on the Stepping Stones project helping learners with mental health problems develop skills and confidence. The council's collaborative and partnership work is effective in recruiting learners from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds and people with learning difficulties and disabilities.
26. Recruitment of learners from black and minority ethnic groups has been particularly successful with 43% of total learners in 2006/07 from these groups. The ethnic profile of learners closely matches that of the borough, although generally recruitment of male learners and those from white communities has fallen short of set targets. For example, only 24% of learners are male. Recruitment of learners with a declared disability is good at 8.8% compared with the local figure of 4.2%.
27. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good and services are delivered within Harrow Council's equality and diversity statement *Making a Difference*, which ensures the council meets statutory obligations, promotes equality and diversity, and monitors performance through data collection. Generally the council promotes equality and diversity well through its high profile of involvement in local community initiatives and working with local support agencies and groups. However, inspectors observed few examples of tutors reinforcing cultural diversity within the classroom in community learning programmes.
28. The council has made good development of adaptive technologies to support learners with sensory impairment. Access to learning is supported through the use of mobile phone and MP3 technology as alternatives to paper-based formats. Learners have good access to web-based materials and specialist software. Staff trained in disability awareness carry out adaptive assessments for learners with learning disabilities. The council provides online interactive training to guide staff in making reasonable adjustments in teaching practices to support disability. The council uses partnerships with other support agencies well when referring learners for specialist support and assessing learners' support requirements.
29. Promotion of the service skills for life strategy is ineffective across the provision. The service's strategy is satisfactory, and there is adequate knowledge in subcontracted areas. However, some tutors in direct-delivery areas are unsure how to support or refer learners with literacy or numeracy needs. Awareness of the service's skills for life strategy is inadequate amongst staff in curriculum areas very recently taken on by the council from another failed provider. Managers are aware of the need for staff development in these areas.

What learners like:

- Local learning centres
- Lively approach of the tutors
- Useful ICT training – ‘My learning here has made me feel part of the 21st Century’

What learners think could improve:

- Opportunities to use a computer outside of the class time
- Provision of English for speakers of other languages courses

Sector subject areas

Family learning

Good: Grade 2

Context

30. Family learning (FL) provision in Harrow comprises family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning (WFL) delivered through direct delivery, collaborative partnership and formal subcontracted agreements. The provision helps parents and carers to develop skills and support their children's learning.
31. Opportunities include taster sessions, workshops, short and longer courses in a wide range of curriculum areas. FL is delivered over 23 venues, involving all seven school clusters, children's centres and voluntary and community sites across the borough. At the time of the inspection 235 learners were enrolled on 12 courses. A FL Day in October attracted 64 adult learners and 87 children. In 2006/07 458 learners enrolled on FL courses. Courses are prioritised for families living in the areas of highest deprivation and whose children qualify for free school meals and are underachieving at school.
32. Language, literacy and numeracy skills are established in both the FLLN and WFL programmes. In 2006/07, four learners gained a national qualification in numeracy at Level 2 and four learners at Level 1. The FL provision is managed by a part-time FL manager supported by a part time co-ordinator for the direct delivery of WFL in the south-east and central areas of the borough.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' confidence and skills
- Good teaching and learning
- Effective planning to meet learners' diverse needs
- Good management of the curriculum area

Areas for improvement

- Inadequate recording of individual targeting setting and progress reviews

Achievement and standards

33. Achievement and standards are good. The development of learners' confidence and skills is good. Many learners are new to the country and borough. Parents and carers gain knowledge about the school system and teaching methods and gain the skills to read, write and speak English and improve their own numeracy skills. They gain confidence and are able to use their skills to help their children with homework and better communicate with the school through contact books, by telephone and at parents' evenings. Learners are more active in the school and community. Some act as interpreters and advocates, recruiting new learners. Others join their school council, and a number have trained as school assistants. One learner is now a community outreach worker. Learners with children achieve good standards in a range of activities that they can use at home including writing recipes, making books and creating weathermen. Learners also learn strategies for anger management to better manage their children's behaviour.

34. Learners are well motivated, enjoy their courses and attend punctually and regularly. FL contributes to the every child matters agenda and through their enjoyment and commitment, learners act as role models for their children. Most learners progress to courses at a higher level, often at a college. Some learners gain national qualifications and secure employment.

Quality of provision

35. The quality of provision is good overall, and teaching and learning are good. Courses are well designed and responsive to learners' needs. Many courses include outings and new experiences for learners. Lessons are well planned and tutors are proficient in using a range of approaches to meet the needs of the different learners. The premises are physically accessible, local to learners, and provide an environment which is sympathetic to learners' ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Topics are relevant to families and varied practical activities are used to make the sessions interactive, enjoyable and productive. Tutors maintain order and establish a good rapport with learners. In particular, those covering sensitive topics use the right approach to establish group trust, confidence and encourage contributions from all learners.
36. The FL programme is effectively planned and offers a wide range of courses that meet the diverse needs and interests in the borough. Provision is closely linked with the extended schools service and the minority ethnic achievement service. The family learning steering group is an effective forum for joint planning by statutory and voluntary organisations. Guidance workshops advise partners on service criteria and priorities. Many schools use of their own resources to complement their FLLN or WFL provision, providing additional courses for families not meeting service criteria and thus extending the range of provision. Collaboration is enhanced through the involvement of the FL manager and the WFL co-ordinator with the school cluster group and the children services unit respectively. Partners feel supported and regard the service very highly.
37. Publicity and marketing of FL provision is satisfactory. Information, widely translated in the different languages in the borough is distributed through partners and letters from schools. Personal contact in the playground, through home visits and by word of mouth, is effective in promoting the benefits of participation..
38. Accommodation for FL is satisfactory overall. Some schools and venues provide spacious rooms with a range of facilities. In other places accommodation is limited and learners are cramped. The service awaits completion of a new children's centre and a refurbished learning centre.
39. Health and safety is satisfactory. Proper risk-assessment is undertaken before all delivery. Care is taken to provide children with aprons for messy activities and disinfectant wipes for cookery. Appropriate statutory checks are undertaken on all tutors and helpers.
40. Additional support for learners is satisfactory. Childcare arrangements are offered for some courses. In FLLN, learners benefit from contact with assistants who speak their language. The information and guidance on FL courses is satisfactory. Tutor Handbooks include information on advising learners on their nextsteps. A staff member is undertaking a national qualification in information and guidance to enhance the service's expertise.
41. Individual target-setting and recording of progress is inadequate. Tutors do not make effective use of documentation designed to record learners' individual targets and

progress. Initial assessment is undertaken, but individual targets are not always recorded for all learners. The review of progress is not completed for each session and in many cases does not sufficiently record how well a learner has achieved. End of course evaluation is undertaken by all learners and tutors and informs future course design.

Leadership and management

42. The management and leadership of the curriculum area are good. There is good use of management information and local social indices to prioritise the allocation of resources.
43. The quality assurance system is good. A good lesson observation scheme covers direct and partner delivery. The Tutor Handbook is informative and comprehensive. Communications are good and the FL Manager and co-ordinator are readily accessible to advise and support tutors. Learning resources are good. There are good opportunities to share good practice. The annual conference for all tutors and partners is well attended and includes provider presentations to showcase their service and experiences. Workshops provided three times a year enable providers' tutors to develop their professional skills in areas of their own choice. The service also has external, national profile, and has published articles about its work.
44. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The diverse needs and interests of communities are met, and there is effective provision to meet the individual needs of learners.
45. The self-assessment process is satisfactory, and the area's self-assessment report is suitably critical. The service identified most strengths accurately, but the need for improved recording of monitoring and target-setting was not clearly identified.

Community development

Good: Grade 2

Context

46. Community learning consists of ICT, health and movement, visual and performing arts, electronic keyboard and courses for developing skills in the community. ICT provision is located in 10 community venues, and health and fitness and visual and performing arts courses are in 4 community venues and an arts centre. Community learning is delivered through partnerships with voluntary and community groups and by direct delivery. Courses are non-accredited and include a range of tasters and short courses in ICT, art and fitness.
47. At the time of inspection there were 185 learners on 24 courses. In 2006/7, 671 learners participated in 87 courses over the year. Some 48% of the learners were from minority ethnic groups, 12% were disabled learners, 73% female and 27% over 65.
48. Two outreach tutor/co-ordinators and 12 sessional tutors deliver the programme supported by the programme development officer.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' confidence, knowledge and skills
- Good development of community learning
- Good use of volunteers to support learning

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient recording of learner progress

Achievement and standards

49. The development of learners' confidence, knowledge and skills is good. Learners develop their confidence in a variety of ways, appropriate to their needs. Confidence is gained through developing skills related to the area of study and through interacting with other members of the group. ICT learners became more confident in using computers at home and in the learning centre. Older learners feel more a part of today's world, gain more respect from their children and grandchildren and can now offer opinions about technological matters. In one class a learner increased her confidence by using her skills to help another learner achieve.
50. Learners also effectively develop their subject knowledge. In one art class, background knowledge on the impact of colour improved techniques to produce good work in pastels. Art displays are of a good standard, and learners produce good quality work. A group of mental health users gained theoretical knowledge of music which increased their ability to differentiate notes. ICT beginners competently plug and unplug computer hardware at the end of the first session.

Quality of provision

51. The development of community learning is good. Provision in ICT is particularly well developed, is relevant to local needs and successfully engages learners. Strong working

relationships with a range of partners strengthen recruitment and also lead to innovative provision. A course on citizenship and courses to enhance the skills of those working in the voluntary and community sector are particularly valued by partners and learners. Thorough planning draws on socio-economic data to ensure that provision is located in areas of greatest need. Older learners, disabled learners and learners with mental health problems are well represented. The location of ICT provision at a local Hindu temple and in a mosque attracts minority ethnic learners in good numbers. However, minority ethnic learners are not well represented in art and movement classes.

52. The use of volunteers to support learners is good. Learners value the individual attention they receive from the use of volunteers in ICT classes. Deaf learners are particularly well supported with signing. Learners who work at a slower pace or lack confidence welcome the individual attention. Volunteers also appreciate recognition of the contribution they make. They also speak highly of the opportunities to develop their ICT skills and update knowledge. A volunteer signer received financial support to develop her skills and is very positive about her opportunity to practise in the classroom.
53. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with no unsatisfactory lessons observed. Tutors have good subject knowledge and many are established practitioners in their field. Many have teaching qualifications. In the better classes a good range of teaching methods are used and learners benefit from group activities as well as individual help. Questioning is used well to extend and also to check learning. Many learners appreciate and speak highly of the help, support and patience of tutors. In some less good classes delivery is tutor dominated. Sessions where long periods of tutor input held up practical activities were inappropriate for some older learners. A few lesson plans were insufficiently detailed and reliant on a standardised content, failing to address more specific needs of individual learners.
54. Resources are satisfactory overall. Tutor-produced handouts are clear and support learning. Most classrooms are suitable for purpose. Many computer suites in the community are well equipped but most rooms for other provision at the Harrow arts centre are basic.
55. Information and guidance is satisfactory. Course information is available on the website and is provided at community centres and other council venues. Information is brief, but appropriate and covers progression opportunities. Community networks also facilitate progression. Induction is satisfactory and meets learners' needs.

56. The recording of learner progress is insufficient. The systems for RARPA and achievement in non-accredited learning are in place. The paperwork provided by the service is useful in supporting tutors, but the effectiveness of its implementation varies across community learning. In shorter ICT courses it is better developed, although the dull introduction of RARPA at one class, meeting for the first time, did not encourage learners to value the process. In some cases the starting point for learning was not recorded and there are no records of learner progress. Some tutors are insufficiently aware of how to embed RARPA to support learner progress successfully. However, there are some good examples of individual learning plans. In one art class the learning outcomes were identified and progress charted. The learners were clearly involved in making the judgements backed by evidence. In another class, the tutor recorded progress and adapted lesson plans on a laptop to demonstrate good links between the two processes.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management is satisfactory. Good team work within the service and through partnerships leads to the effective use of resources for community learning. Partners value the good support they receive from service managers.

58. Staff development is satisfactory. Termly tutor forums are held to develop and update skills. The service website is a very useful resource to support staff. Termly formalised monitoring of provision in community centres is systematic with information feeding into the service self-assessment report. Summary sheets reporting on learner progress are completed by tutors at the end of each course and monitored by managers to provide useful feedback on quality. Observations of teaching and learning are regularly carried out, and are effective in improving quality. However, new tutors on short courses are not observed early enough.

59. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. There are good strategies to engage learners from under-represented groups. Provision developed in partnership specifically for asylum seekers and refugees draws on diverse life experiences. However, in other areas there is little promotion of equality and diversity in the classroom. Learning activities are sometimes not set in sufficiently diverse cultural contexts.

60. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Many of the strengths found by inspectors matched those in the service self-assessment report. However, some of the weaker aspects of teaching and learning and the implementation of RARPA are insufficiently addressed.