

London Borough of Camden

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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' monitoring 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:

- Community learning
- Family learning

Description of the provider

1. London Borough of Camden Council (the council) contracts with London Central Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide adult and community learning services to approximately 5,000 learners each year, mainly in deprived wards across the area. The adult and community learning service (the service) is part of the council's children, schools and families directorate.
2. The service delivers its adult and community learning directly and through three main subcontractors. The largest subcontractor is Westminster Kingsway College (WKC), which enrolled 2,035 learners in 2006/07 in a number of different sector subject areas. City Lit delivers a subcontracted family learning programme. The Working Men's College (WMC) subcontracts arts, media and publishing courses from the service. In 2006/07, 480 learners enrolled on subcontracted courses at City Lit and 438 at the WMC. The council also runs family learning courses directly and enrolled 263 learners in 2006/07. Information and communications technology (ICT) courses take place mainly through a UK Online partnership, as well as at two council-owned learning centres and a number of other community-based providers. The council targets this provision at adults who are new to learning or have not been in formal education for a considerable period of time. In 2006/07, almost 2,000 learners enrolled on the service's own community learning programmes, most of which use ICT to attract learners. At the time of the inspection, 3,862 learners accounted for just over 6,000 enrolments across the provision. Most activities take place at approximately 80 community venues.
3. The head of service and quality is responsible for the provision and reports to the assistant director for learning and school effectiveness. The service's team comprises a family learning manager, a UK Online support officer, an e-learning manager, a learning centres' manager and a learner support officer, as well as a number of staff responsible for administration, management information and crèches. One full-time tutor and 11 part-time tutors and learner support assistants plan and deliver the direct family learning and community learning provision.
4. Camden is a relatively well educated and prosperous community and an important business and tourism district. Just under half of its residents are qualified to level 4 or above. However, it is a borough of contrasts and there are some wards with extreme multiple deprivations. Almost 15% of residents have no qualifications. The overall unemployment rate for economically active residents is 8%, higher than the London average. According to the 2001 census, black minority ethnic communities represent just over 27% of the borough's population, compared with 9% nationally. More recent data shows that 20% of the residents are non-British white residents and that Camden has a growing migrant community.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject areas

Community learning	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Family learning	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. The quality of provision in community learning is satisfactory and it is good in family learning. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision are satisfactory. The council's leadership and management are satisfactory and equality of opportunity is good.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. The council demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. The effectiveness of steps taken by the provider to promote improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The service has rectified some of the weaknesses identified at previous inspections, but concerns remain over the quality improvement arrangements. A small number of areas for improvement have appeared in successive inspection and self-assessment reports. Target-setting to improve the provision is under-developed and inspectors did not have full confidence in the validity of achievement rates on most non-accredited courses. Some staff in the service are not sufficiently aware of the areas for improvement identified through self-assessment. The grades given by inspectors broadly match those given at the previous inspection for similar aspects of the provision, including leadership and management.
7. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It includes all staff in the service, but does not incorporate the views of all community partners. Where subcontractors contribute to the process, the overall self-assessment report is too general and does not attribute specific strengths and areas for improvement to particular providers to assist in identifying where improvements are required. The use of data to support judgements on performance in the most recent report is weak. The report is not sufficiently evaluative and focuses too much on describing partnership arrangements and the context in which the service operates. The judgements and grades given by inspectors match most of those in the report, but inspectors gave a lower grade for community learning, which is the most significant area of provision.

Key strengths

- Good development of learners' personal and social skills.
- Flexible and accessible community-based provision.
- Very good partnership working.
- Good development of volunteers and learners to take up roles in the service.
- Strong promotion of diversity and opportunity.

Key areas for improvement

- Under-developed assessment practices for non-accredited learning.
- Insufficient use of data to bring about improvement.
- Insufficient monitoring of subcontractors and community partners.
- The extent to which self-assessment is sufficiently detailed and evaluative.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The self-assessment report did not include sufficient evaluation to support the service's judgement that achievement and standards are good. Retention rates are high overall, particularly on non-accredited courses. Attendance rates are satisfactory. Success rates on the small number of accredited programmes are low at 58% in 2006/07. Learners develop good personal and social skills and improve their self-confidence. Learning has a significant effect on learners' personal lives in many cases. The service does not identify sufficiently accurate success rates for its non-accredited provision. Where the data is reliable, the performance of learners from different backgrounds is satisfactory and does not show any particular groups who perform better or worse than the service's averages.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. The quality of provision is satisfactory, as are teaching and learning. Inspectors judged most of the teaching observed to be satisfactory, as identified through self-assessment. The planning of learning is insufficient on some courses. Formal assessment practices are insufficiently thorough across much of the provision. Target-setting for many learners is weak. Teaching and learning resources are appropriate.
10. The range of programmes is appropriate to meet the needs and interests of learners. In community learning, the provision is highly flexible and accessible. The range of courses is satisfactory. Courses take place at a wide range of venues and attract adults from a very diverse range of backgrounds. The arrangements for childcare are good. The provision contributes well to improving learners' employability prospects.
11. Guidance and support are satisfactory. In family learning, support for learners is good, as partly identified through self-assessment. Information, advice and guidance are integrated with all courses and staff spend a lot of time developing learners' self-confidence. Learners with additional learning needs receive appropriate support. Pastoral support is satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

12. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as identified through self-assessment. Strategic planning and management are effective in locating provision in the borough's most deprived wards and in meeting the requirements of the service's mission statement and the council's community strategy. Service plans and strategy documents are clear, well developed and have a good level of articulation with the council's wider corporate plans and strategies. The skills for life strategy reflects the challenges the borough faces and presents a coherent plan to improve residents' literacy, language, numeracy and ICT skills. Senior council officers are fully involved in service planning and are supportive of

its activities. Internal communications are good and managers maintain an open and consultative style. Staff have a clear understanding of the service's aims and delivery plans.

13. Communication and co-operation with other council directorates and agencies are very good. Particularly effective links exist between the service and the council's economic development unit. The service briefs external agencies well about its developments and works successfully with a range of partners who represent minority ethnic groups across the borough. Staff have established some very productive links with schools, libraries and museums. Community partners receive good levels of support and training from the service, which supports many smaller partner organisations to make the transition from a community centre to an education provider.
14. The service manages resources well to develop and maintain provision in small venues, which meet the needs of isolated and disengaged communities. The council resources its own learning centres well. Crèche provision is good. The service is particularly effective in developing its own staff and in giving opportunities to learners to progress through volunteering to take on learning support and tutoring roles. The service is responding well to recent workforce reform legislation for part-time tutors.
15. Equality of opportunity is good. The targeting of disengaged and hard-to-reach learners is particularly effective across the borough and the service's provision plays a significant role in improving the life chances of many residents from Camden's most disadvantaged groups. Clear and well understood council commitments to equality and inclusion help shape the planning and delivery of the service. Staff have a good understanding of equality and diversity and work sensitively and successfully with many under-represented groups of adults. Celebrations of learners' achievements and participation are imaginative and powerful. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is almost double that in the local population, but male representation is low, as identified through self-assessment. The service has made a number of attempts to increase the number of men on courses and is currently contributing to a borough-wide initiative to recruit male outreach workers. The service receives good support to meet its obligations for race relations, disability, gender and age equality. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Training for staff in aspects of child protection is good and the monitoring of subcontractors' and partners' safeguarding procedures are thorough.
16. The service receives good data management support from the council and most data is accurate and reliable. The service does not use the data routinely to improve quality and to evaluate performance in sufficient detail across the provision. In some areas, definitions of retention and achievement are unclear and the service does not always verify subcontractors' claims for attendance, retention and achievement. Targets for the recruitment of different groups of learners, such as men, do not feature in service level agreements or contracts.
17. The recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievements in non-accredited learning are underdeveloped, as identified in the most recent self-assessment report. The service has provided training for staff, but the implementation of procedures is incomplete. Target-setting for learners is weak on many courses, as is the integration of the outcomes of learners' initial assessments with classroom teaching and progress monitoring.

18. Quality improvement paperwork is clear and accessible and includes some useful procedures to monitor quality. Some aspects of the quality improvement arrangements are under-developed and not all community partners use the correct paperwork. Much of the teaching and learning is satisfactory but too few formal observations of classes have taken place in some parts of the provision. Many observation reports do not include action plans to help staff improve their performance. The service does not monitor the quality of lesson plans or individual learning plans in sufficient detail. Where the service has identified areas for improvement in subcontractors' provision, it does not set formal targets through the contracting process to ensure the weaknesses are always rectified.

What learners like:

- The difference that learning makes to people's lives.
- The friendly and welcoming environment at the learning centres.
- The opportunity to gain recognition for one's achievements.
- The friendly and supportive staff.
- The effect of courses on family life.
- The self-confidence and social skills that learners develop.

What learners think could improve:

- The way in which courses are advertised and promoted.
- The availability of computers at some centres.

Sector subject areas

Community learning

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

19. At the time of the inspection 1,174 learners were enrolled on community learning programmes which aim to increase learners' confidence and their motivation to participate in learning. In 2006/07, 1,871 learners enrolled on community learning courses, of whom 64% were from minority ethnic groups. The service has designed the provision to meet the needs of adults living in the most disadvantaged wards across the borough of Camden and who have often not been in formal learning for many years. Many of the learners face particular challenges in their everyday lives, such as ill health, learning difficulties and/or disabilities, unemployment, homelessness and poverty. Courses take place in partnership with a wide range of community partners and focus mainly on ICT programmes to attract learners initially to the service's provision. Courses include basic computing, research using the internet, employability skills and citizenship, as well as open workshop sessions. The e-learning manager and the learner support officer manage the community learning provision, supported by nine learner support assistants and a number of crèche workers.

Strengths

- Particularly good development of learners' confidence and social skills.
- Highly flexible and accessible community-based provision.
- Good development of tutors and volunteers to support community learning.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently thorough planning of learning.
- Insufficient monitoring of community providers.

Achievement and standards

20. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop particularly good social skills and significantly improve their confidence. Well motivated, they often stay at the end of classes to complete their work. Learners use the new skills they acquire to improve the quality of their everyday lives, talking enthusiastically about how they can now email their families and friends, shop on the internet and develop other interests, such as researching family histories. Many learners develop useful ICT skills which help them when they progress to study for accredited qualifications. For others, the community centres act to reduce their social isolation and vulnerability. Learners develop enthusiasm for lifelong learning, attending one course and then enrolling on others. Retention rates and attendance rates are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

21. The quality of provision is satisfactory, as are teaching and learning. Many tutors provide good individual tuition and mentoring, which they plan effectively. In the better classes, tutors use a range of teaching techniques to inspire and challenge learners to achieve. They encourage learners to work individually and in groups and facilitate wide-ranging discussions that enhance learners' understanding.
22. The planning of learning is insufficiently thorough in a number of lessons. Tutors do not use the outcomes from initial assessments sufficiently well to write assessment plans or to set realistic short-term targets. Lesson plans do not contain strategies to challenge more able learners and some less confident learners struggle to keep up with the pace of the class. Most learners record their progress regularly for tutors to review, but tutors do not structure their assessments sufficiently well to fully develop learners' technical skills and knowledge.
23. Programmes and activities are satisfactory to meet the needs and interests of learners. Community-based provision is highly flexible and accessible. It is located in urban estates and areas with multiple deprivations throughout the borough so learners can access classes easily and keep transport costs to a minimum. Most venues have a welcoming and friendly environment and offer a range of courses. Learners frequently enrol on more than one programme at a time. The courses have a good reputation locally and many learners find out about the provision through positive word-of-mouth comments from friends and colleagues. Programmes take place throughout the week, including evenings, and on Saturdays. Centres produce their own promotional materials in a range of languages, such as Urdu, Bengali and Portuguese, to meet community needs. The range of courses is satisfactory, but is mostly ICT-based. Some classrooms at community centres are cramped and hot. Few men enrol on community learning courses.
24. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners benefit from appropriate personal support. The service ensures that learners with additional learning needs receive satisfactory support. Tutors and other staff are experienced in dealing with adult learners who face many barriers to learning and who feel vulnerable and unsure about their ability to cope with a formal programme of learning. Many staff come from backgrounds that reflect the ethnicity and culture of the learners.

Leadership and management

25. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The development of volunteers to support community learning is good. Many tutors and volunteer support workers begin their association with the service as learners. They provide good role models to whom the learners can relate and aspire. The tutors' previous experiences as learners and members of the local community ensures that learners receive a supportive introduction to learning. Staff training has supported the transition of staff from library services to become tutors. Most have achieved, or are currently studying for, teaching qualifications.
26. There is insufficient monitoring of community providers. External consultants carry out observations of teaching and learning and the range of identified strengths and areas for improvement match inspectors' judgements. The service monitors each community partner's enrolments, but does not set any other targets to recruit particular types of learners or to bring about identified improvements to the provision. The service has not

rectified the low male representation on courses through its service level agreements with partners. Staff have implemented a system to monitor partners' achievement, retention and attendance rates recently, but do not always check the validity of the reported data. The sharing of good practice in teaching and learning is insufficient. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory as is the self-assessment process. Three quarters of the community providers write their own self-assessment reports, which contribute to the service's overall self-assessment. The most recent report is too descriptive and does not take sufficient account of all aspects of the learners' experiences in determining an overall judgement. Inspectors gave a lower grade than that identified by the service.

Family learning

Good: Grade 2

Context

27. The council delivers family learning courses directly and through two subcontractors, City Lit and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). At the time of the inspection 76 learners were enrolled on the subcontracted provision at City Lit and are included in the scope of this report, but the provision at the WEA is very small and was not inspected. The service also delivers its own family learning courses directly at two council-owned learning centres and at a number of other venues across the borough. The council's own wider family learning courses is attended by 65 learners and the service targets parents who want to support their children's learning and/or who want to enrol on courses after a number of years without any formal education. The 15 learners on family literacy, language and numeracy programmes are enrolled on courses such as helping your child with reading and writing. Most of the parents on family learning courses have children at the foundation stage or key stage 1 of the National Curriculum. Almost 70% of the learners are women, 68% come from a minority ethnic background and 20% have a learning difficulty and/or disability. A full-time family learning manager is responsible for the provision, supported by one full- and two part-time tutors.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' personal and social skills.
- High retention rates.
- High achievement rates on non-accredited courses at City Lit.
- Particularly good support for learners.
- Very good partnership arrangements to target excluded families.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently thorough assessment on direct delivery courses.

Achievement and standards

28. Achievement and standards are good. Learners develop good personal and social skills, which they value highly. Many of them have severe barriers to learning, including those from some minority ethnic groups with no previous experience of attending classes. Tutors encourage them to develop their self-confidence and social skills through small and varied activities. Learners gain a good understanding of the National Curriculum and how children learn. Head teachers at local schools confirm the positive effects of family learning in helping children with their reading skills. One learner who enrolled reluctantly for a family learning course has now completed several programmes, worked voluntarily at her child's school and is a parent governor.

29. Retention rates are high. In 2006/07, the overall retention rate was 91% across the subcontracted and direct delivery provision. Some of the courses take place for a short period of time only, but many of the programmes run for ten weeks or longer and target hard-to-reach learners with no previous educational attainments.

30. Achievement rates on non-accredited courses at City Lit are high at 78% for 2006/07. Progression rates are satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

31. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Tutors support learners effectively in learning sessions. The use of information and learning technology to support learning is good. Peer support in learning sessions creates an atmosphere in which learners want to, and do, succeed.
32. The assessment strategies on direct delivery non-accredited courses are insufficiently thorough. The service has made slow progress to rectify this area for improvement. Tutors do not use sufficiently detailed checklists to assess learners' oral skills formally on family literacy, language and numeracy courses and do not integrate their assessments effectively with targets in individual learning plans. The assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills is under-developed in some parts of the provision. Target-setting to meet individual needs is insufficient on many programmes. At City Lit, individual learning plans record detailed targets for learners, which tutors review in the middle and at the end of each course.
33. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners well. The main centres have well equipped crèches, which learners with children appreciate as it enables them to take part in learning. Courses take place at over 40 community venues across the borough, including secondary schools, libraries, museums and community centres. City Lit targets much of its provision deliberately at new centres and new groups each year.
34. Guidance and support for learners are particularly good. The service and City Lit employ full-time crèche co-ordinators to manage the good quality childcare. The crèche facilities remove a potential barrier to learning and enables learners and their children to enjoy and achieve together. The service integrates information, advice and guidance very well with all courses. At City Lit, all tutors include guidance sessions in their schemes of work and specialist advice staff visit all classes towards the end of each course. Tutors are available outside of formal lesson times to provide a wide range of help and support. They accompany individual learners on visits to colleges to find out about educational opportunities.

Leadership and management

35. Leadership and management are good. Partnership arrangements to target excluded families are very good. Partner agencies include schools, libraries, family centres, Sure Start and the British Museum. They value the service's

responsive and flexible approach and the good working relationships. The successful partnership with City Lit allows the service to reach particularly hard-to-reach parents and carers from local communities who have not previously valued the importance of education. Innovative partnership events to promote family learning across the borough attract vulnerable families and offer good information and advice on a range of services and learning opportunities. Many of the partnerships target specific groups successfully, such as Bangladeshi fathers.

36. Support for staff is good. They take part in a range of training and development events and receive good support to gain appropriate qualifications. Communication and teamwork are particularly effective. The service shares training opportunities with partner organisations. The arrangements for quality improvement are appropriate. Managers use feedback from learners and staff to assist in curriculum planning and the observation of teaching and learning process is accurate. Some observations do not have action plans to improve teaching and learning. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learning resources are inclusive and sensitive to learners' backgrounds.
37. The self-assessment report identifies many of the strengths and areas for improvement accurately. Staff understand the self-assessment process and its significance. The grade in the most recent report matches that given by inspectors.