

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Stockport MBC

Date of visit: 8 May 2008

Context

This re-inspection monitoring visit follows the inspection in June 2007 of Stockport MBC's adult and community learning and work-based learning provision. The effectiveness of provision, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management were satisfactory. Hospitality and catering and community development were good. Early years and play work, languages, literature and culture and preparation for life were satisfactory. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) was inadequate. Since the previous inspection, apprenticeships in early years and play work have transferred to another provider. Apprenticeships in the other sector subject areas will not continue after this year. The numbers of learners on Train to Gain programmes in catering and contact centre operation and customer service have increased.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving success rates, particularly the very low success rates for apprentices?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in improving success rates. Support for the few remaining apprentices completing their programmes is good and additional support, for example in key skills, has been very effective. Most apprentices have or are about to successfully complete. The very small number of learners who will not complete before the summer are being transferred to another provider. Success rates for all Train to Gain programmes are outstanding at over 95%.

Retention and success rates for adult and community learning provision are improving and are high for short courses at over 90%. Although rates for long courses are improving, they are lower. However significant variation exists between sector subject areas, with some areas of poor performance for example in health, public services and care.

What progress has been made in the recording and monitoring of learners' progress since the previous inspection?	Reasonable progress
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An improved individual learning plan has been developed and introduced into most sector subject areas. In the better examples tutors successfully use the individual learning plan to record learners' starting points and measure progress made along the way. However, this is not consistent across all sector subject areas and some individual learning plans are incomplete. Staff development has taken place to improve and develop tutors understanding of recognising and recording progress and achievement. However, many of the training sessions have been poorly attended. The sector subject area manager responsible for recognising and recording progress and achievement completes an annual quality improvement report on a sample of courses to evaluate the effectiveness of the process and identify areas for improvement. Some sector subject areas are well developed in the recording of outcomes such as confidence building and improved self-esteem. In art good use is made of photography, exhibitions and virtual galleries to celebrate learners' achievement.

Quality and Standards

What progress has been made to improve provision in information and communication technology?	Insufficient progress
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Since the previous inspection, the service has appointed a new sector subject area manager. However he has only been in post for six weeks and progress has been insufficient. The manager has already completed an analysis of the area to identify key priorities to improve the provision. A key focus is improving teaching and learning, with appropriate staff development planned for the next few months. Communication with other sector subject areas has improved. For example, the manager is working with skills for life tutors to improve support for learners with literacy and numeracy support needs. The skills for life co-ordinator now attends the ICT team meetings. ICT tutors have had sessions to raise awareness of how to support learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

The new manager is being mentored in the observation of teaching and learning. All ICT staff will be observed three times each year and team meetings are planned to enable tutors to share good practice. The manager is completing a strategic review of the range of provision and intends to offer a more appropriate range of courses from September 2008.

Accommodation has improved since the previous inspection. A good range of new technology equipment is now available. However, staff have not yet had sufficient training to effectively use the new equipment. Staff training is planned for the summer.

Progress to improve the quality of initial advice and guidance since the previous inspection has been insufficient. One member of staff is currently taking training to improve this. The recording and monitoring of learners progress has improved. A new individual learning plan has been introduced which better records learner progress. However, target-setting is inconsistent and in some cases too vague.

Success rates have improved from 67% in 2005/06, to 82% in 2006/07. However, success rates have fallen on short non-accredited programmes from 96% to 81%. Retention overall has improved from 72% to 82%. Enrolments fell from 473 in 2005/06 to 270 in 2006/07. The use of management information to contribute to planning and curriculum development has not improved since the previous inspection.

What progress has been made to improve the observation of teaching and learning and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning?	Insufficient progress
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Progress in improving the observation of teaching and learning and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning has been insufficient. Moderation of the observation of teaching and learning is now more extensive and involves an external consultant. More observations have been moderated this year and a number were identified as overgraded. At the previous inspection, the identification of strengths and areas for improvement was inconsistent and this remains the case. Some good sessions only had one or two identified strengths or significant weaknesses. The observation of teaching and learning form is detailed but encourages description of activity, rather than identification of evidence of the quality of teaching and learning, and evaluation of performance. Some staff have not been observed this year and those that have only have one observation each year. No system is in place to ensure that tutors are observed during different aspects of the learner journey. The provider does not have a system to ensure good practice is shared between tutors. No system exists to identify and meet training needs that arise from the observation of teaching and learning. In work-based learning tutors and assessors are observed more frequently, and good use is made of the additional observations for internal verification to supplement the process. Common areas for improvement are collated and form the basis of a good timetable of development sessions for staff.

Leadership and management

Significant work has been carried out to improve the management information system. What progress has been made in its accuracy and use?	Insufficient progress
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The accuracy of management information has improved since the previous inspection but progress in its use has been insufficient. A thorough review of the information

has been carried out and problems with the current system identified. A new management information system is in the process of procurement and a new member of staff with specific responsibility for the system is being recruited. Senior managers have increased confidence in the accuracy of data and are starting to use it to analyse performance. However, this is at an early stage and is yet to be used by all managers to monitor performance. Information is not detailed enough and does not show retention and success at individual course level or by tutors.

What progress has been made in producing a more accurate and evaluative self-assessment report?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, the self-assessment report was insufficiently critical and evaluative and this is still the case. Some progress has been made in making the self-assessment report a tool for quality improvement by introducing a timelier interim report for all courses. However, little individual course data is available from the management information system and many staff are using their own data which does not always match that held by senior managers. Plans are in place to produce a shorter evaluative document for the whole service but this has yet to be developed.

What progress has been made developing more effective quality improvement procedures?	Insufficient progress
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Progress in tackling the very detailed post-inspection plan is slow. A number of actions have been identified as not being completed, but no evidence exists of what will happen next or how any subsequent action plans will be monitored. Variations in performance between different sector subject areas are significant. The service has a number of processes to support quality improvement but these do not work together in a co-ordinated and effective way. Gaps exist in the follow-through of required actions. For example the newly introduced system of quality improvement notes is inconsistently used. Little identification and sharing of good practice takes place across sector subject areas. Outcomes from the observation of teaching and learning process are not analysed to identify common themes. Target-setting remains an area for improvement in all quality improvement processes.