

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: City of London Corporation
Date of visit: 24 September 2008

Context

The City of London Corporation (CoL) received a satisfactory grade for overall effectiveness at reinspection in 2006. Leadership and management including equality of opportunity were judged to be good. Visual and performing arts, English, languages and communications, foundation programmes and quality improvement received satisfactory grades. Almost all provision is non-accredited; however, CoL is increasing the accredited proportion. In addition CoL has recently established Train to Gain provision.

Achievement and standards

What improvement is made in long and short course success rates?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection curriculum area retention and achievement rates were generally satisfactory. No judgement was made about success rates overall. The first reliable data was available in 2005/06 and since then CoL has made reasonable progress in improving success rates. Improved success rates overall in 2006/07 are maintained in 2007/08 for long and short courses. Retention rates are consistently improved but achievement rates have declined. Success rates for the small proportion of long and short accredited course provision improved in 2006/07 and are maintained in 2007/08. The self-assessment report is much improved in indicating specific achievement data judgements for curriculum areas. Success rates for family learning and 'English for speakers of other languages' are significantly improved. Black African, British and Afro-Caribbean learners achieve well. It is too early to judge the Train to Gain programme success rates.

Quality of provision

What progress is made in the implementation of recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA)?	Significant progress
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CoL has made significant improvement in implementing RARPA. Since the previous inspection, a good range of training has been provided to raise awareness and

understanding of RARPA. CoL has improved the monitoring of the quality of individual learning plans, which show much improved use of group and individual learning goals. A recently appointed curriculum manager has introduced better quality assurance procedures and the quality of individual learning plans is now checked thoroughly by tutors, subcontractors and CoL. Learners' progress and skills are suitably assessed pre-and post-course. The value of RARPA is shared and understood by tutors and learners. Tutors are beginning to incorporate RARPA confidently. Good practice is shared effectively. Greater consideration is now being given to learners' progression both during and following courses.

What progress is made in the implementation of the skills for life strategy?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection CoL's skills for life strategy was satisfactory. Reasonable progress has been made in developing this provision. CoL has plans to improve the skills of its own employees. A project development manager has been appointed and a skills for life steering group includes managers whose staff are benefiting from the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills. CoL is effectively developing Train to Gain. The project development manager actively promotes this provision to managers and potential learners. Awareness of the value of skills for life training has suitably improved within CoL. The number of learners attending skills for life programmes has increased from 132 at the time of the previous inspection to 287 currently. CoL has improved the choice of accredited programmes by establishing Information Technology (IT) training and accreditation. CoL is planning to deliver skills for life training to the police and higher education support staff.

Leadership and management

What improvement is there in the observation of teaching and learning scheme?	Reasonable progress
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The 2005 inspection highlighted that some provision was not observed, the moderation process had recently been implemented and some subcontracted provision was not jointly observed. The process is now much improved. Moderation is established, all classes are observed and joint observations across all provision are systematic. The self-assessment report shows teaching and learning are improving with a greater proportion of good or better teaching in 2007/08 compared with 2006/07. Subcontractors support the observation requirements of CoL and implement them satisfactorily. New quality improvement arrangements are introducing much improved critical reflection of the content of observation records. Some observation records are over-graded or contain insufficient information about the standards of work or details about the quality and types of learning activities.

Have the monitoring arrangements with subcontractors continued to improve?	Significant progress
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Inspectors judged the monitoring of subcontractors delivery as a key strength at the previous inspection. The organisation had introduced a range of very effective initiatives. Since inspection CoL has made significant progress to establish these initiatives and continue to improve sub contractual arrangements. Particularly comprehensive performance criteria are part of the contracting process and these are thoroughly monitored. CoL's requirements are well understood by subcontractors. CoL is actively involved in regularly monitoring contracts. CoL has established better quality arrangements with subcontractors. Subcontractors are effectively supported and formal review meetings are well planned. Communication with subcontractors is improved and CoL has better information about individual learners and tracks the progress of those needing additional support. CoL and subcontractors now share data effectively. Good use is being made of learners' feedback. CoL has very recently subcontracted a large majority of its provision to one new subcontractor. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this arrangement.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress is made in quality of the self-assessment reporting and improvement planning?	Significant progress
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CoL has made significant progress in improving the self-assessment report and made significant improvements in establishing improved quality improvement arrangements, highlighted as incomplete at the previous inspection. CoL includes learners' views well in the process. The 2007/08 draft self-assessment report contains significantly improved evaluative reflection particularly apparent in curriculum areas' identified weaknesses. It shows a greater range of useful information and data trends over time. The moderation process is more thorough in requiring better sources of evidence to substantiate judgements. Staff have received useful training to improve their understanding and skills in evaluating and reflecting provision. The post-inspection action plan has been used well to resolve weaknesses from the previous inspection. Quality improvement planning is improved at highlighting relevant objectives and includes unresolved areas for improvement in subsequent improvement plans.