

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: The Adult College of Barking and Dagenham  
Date of visit: 24 September 2008

### Context

The Adult College of Barking and Dagenham is a medium sized college maintained by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. In 2007/08, the college provided courses in ten subject sector areas for around 7,000 learners following further education (FE) and adult and community learning (ACL) courses. Over a third of learners were from minority ethnic groups. The college is located in an area of high social disadvantage. In October 2007, the proportion of unemployed in the Borough was 7.9%, compared with 7.3% for the whole of London. Nearly 21% of the local population have no qualifications and only 14.5% have qualifications at Level 4.

At the previous inspection, the overall effectiveness of the provision was satisfactory as were leadership and management and arrangements for quality improvement. Arrangements for equality of opportunity were good. Provision was good in retail and commercial enterprise, and satisfactory in information and communications technology (ICT), languages, literature and culture, and in preparation for life and work.

Since the previous inspection, the activities of the local authority's work-based learning provider, Barking and Dagenham Training Services have been integrated with the work of the college.

### Achievement and standards

#### Improving success rates

What progress has been made with the improvement of success rates over the last three academic years?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made to improve success rates. Success rates for FE accredited provision have improved from 78% in 2005/06 to 80% in 2007/08. For ACL provision for the same years, success rates are 85%, 86% and 83% respectively. This is following the introduction of thorough processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited learning. Overall

retention rates have improved over the last three years to 92% in 2007/08. Current retention rates for FE and ACL provision are 90% and 94% respectively.

Improvement in pass rates for accredited provision is inconsistent, both year on year and between sector subject areas (SSAs). In ICT and in arts, media and publishing, pass and success rates fell significantly over the last two years. In languages, literature and culture, success rates improved over the last two years, in line with improved retention, but pass rates fell markedly. In preparation for life and work, the largest area for accredited courses, success rates have not improved over the last three years (87% to 85%). Retention fell slightly (94% to 91%) and pass rates improved to some degree (93% to 94%). Success rates have improved significantly in the relatively small area of education and training.

In ACL provision application of RARPA systems is thorough and has produced more realistic results. Pass rates overall have fallen over the last three years, from 100% to 90%. Pass rates have also fallen for Preparation for life and work, Health, public services and care and Arts, media and publishing which are the three largest areas of provision.

Managers have a clear understanding of achievement data. They are able to clearly identify issues to aid in the implementation of improvement measures.

### Quality of provision

#### Improving the quality of teaching and learning

What progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning. At the previous inspection, 48% of learning sessions were graded good or better, 43% satisfactory and 9% inadequate. In 2007/08, 88% of learning sessions were graded by the college's own internal observation team as good or better with no inadequate teaching identified. The internal observation scheme is thorough with reports subject to various quality checks to ensure reliability and accuracy. Moderation of grades is carried out by the college and its partners in the East London Partnership (ELP). The college has enrolled the support of an external consultant in 2009 to further improve this process. Reports now provide a greater focus on the quality of learning. All observers complete relevant training and achieve an appropriate qualification.

Sharing of good practice has continued, although some recent Top Tutors meetings were cancelled due to non-attendance of key personnel. New initiatives are planned for 2009/10 through the subject learning coaches' programme. Peer learning opportunities and a buddying system are effective and observation grades for tutors

have improved. Diversity is not promoted sufficiently in learning sessions and session plans are not always thoroughly checked.

### Improving the recording of learners' progress and achievement

What progress has been made in improving the effectiveness of the recording of learners' progress and achievement?	Significant progress
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Significant progress has been made to improve the effectiveness of the recording learners' progress and achievement. A system for the standard recording achievements of ACL learners has been introduced. Arrangements for the RARPA process are outlined in a clearly written document. Learner profiles, or individual learning plans (ILPs) for skills for life learners, are developed setting out expected outcomes. Tutors and learners work together to ensure these profiles and plans are appropriate. A learner record of progress and achievement matches actual outcomes against those planned. Learners achieving 75% of the identified outcomes are judged to have successfully completed.

The process for recording the progress and achievement of skills for life learners is thorough. College wide moderation of ILPs is to become more frequent this academic year. In a small number of learner profiles some tutors' comments are poorly completed.

Tutors are effectively engaged in the process of improving RARPA as part of the college's overall programme to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Learners understand the value of the process in helping them to identify their progress and success.

### Leadership and management

#### Progress in developing effective partnerships

What is the extent of progress in forming partnerships for community development and learning?	Reasonable progress
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The college has made reasonable progress in strengthening and developing partnerships for community development and learning, especially through the increasingly successful links with children's centres throughout the borough. Progress towards establishing meaningful links with employers is slower and is an area for improvement identified in the self-assessment report for 2007/08. A business development manager is to be appointed shortly to help provide with the necessary improvements.

The Barking Learning Centre, jointly promoted with the University of East London and Barking College, is a highly successful partnership. ESOL provision offered by the college is oversubscribed for this year. Curriculum managers work very well to enrol new and hard-to-reach learners. For example, a short spelling course was offered in response to an identified need for learners completing curriculum vitae and application forms. Learners completing this course have gone on to enrol on ESOL courses and level 2 provision.

No member of staff is currently responsible for overseeing developments of partnership work. Existing partnerships with organisations such as Remploy and Age Concern, have been maintained despite funding uncertainties. Funding from the Thames Gateway development is being used to further improve the college's engagement with employers.

### Quality assurance and improvement planning

What recent progress has been made with improving self-assessment and development planning?	Significant progress
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The college has made significant progress in improving the self-assessment processes. Self-assessment is thorough and critical. The funding secured for professional review and development with partner colleges, has facilitated work with staff to raise standards. The college's 'SAR Challenge' and peer review stages of the quality assurance process have also contributed. The engagement of tutors has been strengthened by the renaming of course reviews to area self-assessments.

Strategic and operational plans are clear and the differing priorities of different agencies are cross referenced well. Business plans are clearly derived from the post-inspection action plan and the employment of a consultant has helped establish a set of workable key performance indicators. Targets in business plans are not consistent and not every plan clearly states a monitoring and completion date.

Managers have worked well to rectify the poor links between each of the strategic priorities in the business and curriculum plans. Links are now clear, but no explicit reference is made to the process of curriculum planning. Curriculum planning is now more effective, helped by the increasingly confident use of management information by curriculum managers and a thorough course approval process.