

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: London Borough of Lambeth
Date of visit: 14 October 2008

Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in May 2007 of the London Borough of Lambeth's (LBL) adult learning service at which overall effectiveness of provision, leadership and management and capacity to improve were satisfactory. Arrangements for equality of opportunity were good. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision were satisfactory. Provision in family learning was good and in community learning it was satisfactory.

The borough holds a contract with the London Central Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide adult and community learning. The adult learning service is located within the directorate of regeneration and housing. Community learning provision is subcontracted to 10 providers, including two colleges, the Children and Young People's Services directorate of the council and seven community and voluntary sector organisations. Courses are provided at over 40 locations, mainly in community settings, across the borough. The only direct delivery provided by the adult learning service is the Lambeth Online IT service, which offers short information and communication technology (ICT) courses from one centre in Brixton. The Children and Young People's Services directorate delivers the family learning provision through its Early Year's division.

During 2007/08, the volume of accredited provision has reduced, largely on skills for life and ICT programmes. LBL has increased its non-accredited personal and community development (PCDL) programmes. Most ICT accredited courses are now subcontracted to an external provider.

Achievement and standards

Has good achievement in family learning been maintained and has action to improve achievement in community learning been effective?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, learners' work was generally of a good standard and they gained in skills and confidence. In community learning, however, achievement was poor with few learners successfully gaining qualifications. Success rates in ICT were satisfactory, but low on skills for life programmes. In family learning, achievement

and standards were good with many learners progressing to further learning and employment. Since then, LBL has made reasonable progress. LBL has improved its arrangements for the initial assessment of learners' skills. It has established new partnerships with relevant providers. LBL reduced the overall number of its accredited courses in 2007/08, mainly in community learning. Opportunities to gain qualifications have increased for those on family learning courses, especially for learners taking English for speakers of other languages. LBL now encourages community-based providers to enter individual learners for accreditation only when they have demonstrated that they have developed the required skills to achieve the qualification. The overall success rates for accredited programmes improved from 46% in 2006/07 to 67% in 2007/08. Success rates in 2007/08 for learners achieving their target learning goals on non-accredited programmes have been maintained at 89%. Attendance across all programmes in 2007/08 was 85%.

Quality of Provision

What changes have been made in programme planning to enable learners to progress in accredited and non-accredited learning?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection, the range of non-accredited programmes was limited and provision was fragmented with insufficient planning to enable progression. In community learning, many learners' targets on non-accredited programmes were not measurable or sufficiently challenging. Since then, LBL has made significant improvements to progression routes in accredited and non-accredited provision. LBL now conducts a comprehensive three-yearly tendering process involving all its current and prospective partner providers. The tendering process is accompanied by an effective annual curriculum planning conference at which all partners are brought together to discuss borough-wide provision, referral and progression routes. LBL consults well with its provider partners and they make positive contributions to the process. LBL has encouraged and supported community-based providers well to broaden or refine their provision beyond that traditionally offered. The head of the Adult Learning Service chairs productive provider network meetings, at which partners discuss curriculum planning, quality and other matters. The service has also worked closely with Lambeth College to clarify and improve progression routes into accredited and non-accredited further education provision. At present, the college and the borough are at an early stage in investigating ways to provide improved fast-track enrolment and progression routes from adult and community learning into college programmes.

Have changes been made to procedures for better use of individual learning plans (ILPs) and improved recording and measuring of learners' progress and achievement?	Reasonable progress
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Previously, many tutors did not routinely review and record learners' progress. Tutors did not set measurable targets or use them to plan and assess learning. In some cases, they did not use the results of initial assessment to produce effective ILPs. Generally, the use of ILPs varied considerably. Since then, LBL has made reasonable progress in improving systems to review and record learners' progress. Target setting has improved overall. Tutors use targets more frequently to plan or assess learning sessions. Following the previous inspection, LBL put in place an improved set of procedures and instruments to record and monitor learners' progress. Tutors had good opportunities to comment on and influence the design of monitoring forms and procedures. Well-attended training sessions took place at the beginning of the current academic year to develop tutors' skills in target-setting, recording and reviewing learners' progress. Tutors receive a useful handbook which includes examples of completed forms and recording documents. Following the introduction of a nationally recognised initial assessment process, LBL uses information collected from initial assessments more effectively to produce individual learning plans. Where learners are less able to complete their own learning plans or record targets, a proportionate and appropriate level of recording is undertaken by tutors.

Leadership and management

Has the introduction of new management information systems enabled staff to access complete and accurate data and is this data used well to evaluate performance and assure quality of provision?	Significant progress
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Management data, at the time of the previous inspection, was used insufficiently and data for learners' achievement and success rates was often inaccurate. Although LBL was in the process of introducing a new management information system (MIS), it did not use it effectively to analyse learners' successes and achievement. Since then, LBL has made significant progress in improving its collection and use of data. The new MIS is now fully operational and provides up-to-date, complete and accurate information on learners' progress and achievement. The web-based system offers good access to providers to input information and download performance data. A dedicated member of staff manages the data system and provides a good level of support and guidance to LBL's partner organisations. LBL has organised training for providers in the use of the MIS. Datasets, produced monthly for each provider, separate information for accredited and non-accredited programmes. Close analysis of data by location and course provides a high level of performance monitoring and

an early identification of concerns. LBL takes prompt action to deal with underperformance. For example, data collected for the monitoring of equality of opportunity identified under-representation of learners from specific post code areas and LBL has used this knowledge to direct its marketing strategies. LBL produces performance reports for monthly management meetings which it uses effectively in its strategic planning processes.

Has the good leadership and close working with providers in the community been maintained?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, managers provided good leadership with clarity of management and sound organisational structures to support adult learning. LBL had established good partnerships with outside organisations and with other LBL directorates. The management of subcontracted providers was satisfactory and close working with providers had contributed to improvements in performance, although performance remained weak in some areas of provision. Since then, LBL has made reasonable progress in strengthening its partnerships. Leadership has remained strong and LBL has clear strategic vision and objectives that are clearly understood and supported by its partners. Good communication with providers enables LBL managers to gain useful local information and this is used well to guide policy and strategic planning. Staff training is better focused on providers' needs, especially in the area of self-assessment and quality improvement. The holding of 'awaydays' for providers has encouraged networking and led to stronger team working and better mutual support and understanding between providers. Providers value the more active approach to sharing issues and working together to find solutions.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

Have self-assessment and improvement planning been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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Previously, LBL made insufficient use of quality improvement arrangements to improve teaching and learning. In community learning, overall teaching and learning were inadequate with much teaching planned for whole group learning rather than meeting individual learner's needs. Teaching and learning in family learning, however, were good with well planned sessions providing a variety of stimulating and motivating activities. Since then, LBL has made reasonable progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The self-assessment process continues to be effective in accurately recognising strengths and areas for improvement in provision. LBL supports its provider partners well through the self-assessment process and moderates and quality assures their self-assessment reports carefully before the compilation of the overall service's self-assessment report. However, individual provider partners do not review each other's self-assessment reports before the service produces the overall report. Since the inspection, LBL has placed a suitable

emphasis on raising the quality of satisfactory teaching and learning and during the previous year the proportion of good or better teaching and learning observation grades has improved. The teaching meets more individual learners' needs. Overall, achievements and success rates have improved since the previous inspection.