

London Borough of Greenwich Adult and Community Learning

Inspection date

1 May 2009

Inspection number

330816

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider	4
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement	6
Effectiveness of provision.....	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement	7
Main findings.....	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision	8
Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	9
What learners like.....	13
What learners think could improve	13

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:

- Preparation for life and work

Description of the provider

1. Greenwich Council (GC) is funded by the London East LSC to deliver its Adult and Community Learning provision. All the provision is subcontracted to local providers, the largest of which is Greenwich Community College with over 85% of the provision. In 2007/8 the college supported 4,517 learners, largely in Personal and Community Development Learning. This provision was not inspected. Adult and Community Learning in colleges is normally included in the main college inspection.
2. The remaining provision is delivered through contracts with five smaller, mainly voluntary, organisations. In 2007/08, 629 learners were engaged in Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC), Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) and Wider Family Learning courses. At the time of the inspection 222 learners were undertaking these courses.
3. Since GC's previous inspection in 2005 the service has been reorganised and is now part of the council's Directorate of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills. The provision is managed by a head of service with two lifelong learning officers. An elected council member is responsible for governance. The Adult and Community Learning service report to the Greenwich Employment and Skills Partnership led by this council member.
4. The Office for National Statistics reports that Greenwich had an estimated resident population of 223,000 in 2007, of whom 51% were female. Amongst those of working age, unemployment in September 2008 was 7.2% compared with the national average of 5.3%. Greenwich has a young population, with an average age of just under 36 years and a rich mix of ethnicity and culture with more than 100 different languages spoken.

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: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3
-------------------------------	-----------------------

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of GC's adult and community learning is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Teaching and learning and support for learners are satisfactory. The matching of programmes to meet the interests and needs of learners is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. GC has a satisfactory capacity to improve. The effectiveness of steps taken to improve the provision since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Most key strengths have been maintained. GC has effectively built upon partnerships to meet strategic objectives and improve the quality of the provision, with good arrangements to engage first time learners. Procedures for subcontracting are generally well developed and monitored effectively, with a strong focus on target-setting and performance management. However, progress in establishing safeguarding arrangements with smaller subcontractors has been slow. Effective action has been taken to resolve many of the key challenges identified at the previous inspection, particularly in the development of a satisfactory quality assurance framework and monitoring programme. The observation of teaching and learning does not focus sufficiently on learning and attainment, however, the quality of teaching and learning remains broadly satisfactory. The use of management information for monitoring and planning purposes is satisfactory but data is not yet used sufficiently to develop quality improvement.
7. Self-assessment arrangements are satisfactory and have improved since the previous inspection when they were judged to be inadequate. The current process is systematic and inclusive, with a clear procedure. Self-assessment is broadened by a wide range of relevant information including reports of observations of teaching and learning, a learner survey and learner comments. All subcontractors are fully involved in the self-assessment process. Data, however, are not used sufficiently at course level. The self-assessment report is satisfactorily evaluative and comprehensive but some aspects of the report are overly descriptive and lack clarity. Some of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors were not included in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- Good development of learners' practical skills and confidence.
- Good arrangements to engage first time learners.
- A particularly wide range of personal development programmes.
- Clear strategic planning.
- Good development of subcontracting arrangements.

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient attention to the development of learners' language skills.
- Insufficient focus on learning and attainment in lesson observations.
- Insufficient use of data for quality improvement.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Retention is satisfactory. In 2007/08 average retention across all GC programmes was 88%, but in NLDC and FLLN programmes it was lower at 74% and 82% respectively, which was recognised in the self-assessment report. GC does not have sufficiently strong data to validate 2007/08 learners' success rates for its non-accredited provision. Learner feedback, however, indicates a high level of learner satisfaction and achievement of course objectives. Where data is available, there is little variation overall between the achievements of learners from different ethnic, age or social groups. Success rates for the very small proportion of learners on accredited courses are particularly high. In 2007/08 all 33 NLDC learners who were entered for an e-Digital Competence Certificate gained the award.
9. Learners develop good practical skills and confidence. On ICT courses many learners, who have never used computers before, work with confidence. Learners develop good practical skills on craft and creative courses. Their work is often of good, and in some cases excellent, quality. Learners are enthusiastic and many are highly motivated to continue to develop their skills and knowledge. Many gain confidence and social benefits by working with other adults, talking to tutors, explaining ideas and sharing their opinions with the whole group. Learners realise the importance of developing their own literacy and numeracy skills for personal development, to support their children's learning and for employment.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better sessions tutors skilfully introduce a range of technical and practical skills. They pay good attention to developing learners' study skills, such as note-taking, with a strong focus on developing learners' employability skills. Learners have good opportunities to work individually at their own pace or in group projects. They share their skills and expertise with others and make good progress through practising new activities. In the less successful sessions tutors dominate the lessons, relying too heavily on long verbal explanations. A minority of lessons are dull and uninspiring with an over-reliance on worksheets and a limited range of learning activities.
11. Insufficient attention is paid to the development of language skills in practical and literacy and numeracy classes. Tutors use overly complex language, speak too quickly and fail to simplify worksheets sufficiently. Learners with limited English cannot fully participate in the lesson. Tutors do not always make use of naturally occurring opportunities for learners to practise using spoken English.

12. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners well. Arrangements to engage first time learners are good. GC has developed good partnerships with schools and voluntary and community groups to target and involve local people in learning. Partners include community centres on deprived housing estates, health centres, children's centres and schools where children's attainment is low. Effective use is made of 'learning champions' to engage those from particularly hard-to-reach groups. A local labour and business employment brokerage supports the focus on work skills and employment. The value of these partnerships is recognised in GC's self-assessment report.
13. The range of personal development programmes is particularly wide. GC has worked well with its partners to meet the basic and employability skills learners need while maintaining a wide selection of courses supporting the creative, practical and health development needs of local residents. For example, courses in website design and digital photography sit alongside others in clock repair, weaving and stained glass. Learners enjoy the enriching experience while developing skills relevant to their economic wellbeing.
14. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Appropriate information and advice leaflets are available at venues throughout the community. Learners can access financial assistance and free childcare. Additional support and adaptive technologies are available for learners with disabilities. Learners receive satisfactory in-class personal support and encouragement from tutors. However, some tutors lack sufficient experience in effectively using documentation, such as individual learning plans, to develop independent learning.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

15. Leadership and management are satisfactory. GC has maintained clear strategic planning for the adult and community learning programme which is reflected in the self-assessment report. The service has been effectively restructured and relocated within the council to support its identified strategic objectives of skills for employability, supporting families, community engagement and progression into further education. GC maintains very productive partnerships with other providers and partners to support the delivery of a coherent programme of adult learning. Leadership is very effective in the communication of strategic priorities to stakeholders. Partnership working is supported well in careful planning to meet objectives.

-
16. The development of subcontracting arrangements since the previous inspection is good. Provision is subcontracted to a diverse range of providers and GC's performance management of the provision is thorough. Monthly visits by GC staff are used very effectively to monitor performance and progress towards meeting the challenging targets. GC's management of the monitoring process is carried out well, supported by particularly effective communications and action planning with subcontractors. Support for the subcontractors is good.
 17. The management of resources is satisfactory. GC makes efficient and effective use of the resources available to achieve value for money. A useful set of portable teaching and learning equipment is available as a loan resource, to support community engagement. Staff experience and qualifications are satisfactory. The council has relevant staff performance review and development arrangements. Most staff participate in appropriate training and some are working towards higher level qualifications. Staff roles are well defined and team work is effective.
 18. Overall, quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Policies and procedures are appropriate to support the quality improvement plan, which is frequently reviewed and suitably updated. Effective and frequent support is provided to subcontractors for quality improvement. GC has developed informative good practice guidelines to improve the quality of the learning experience. These include well considered guidance on teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills and actively involving learners in using a wider range of learning resources, however these materials are not sufficiently used by all tutors.
 19. GC has developed satisfactory management information systems to develop the planning and monitoring of provision for operational management. The revised arrangements for data collection and reports are effective in providing useful management information. Much of the information obtained is accurate, well understood and used systematically.
 20. Insufficient use is made of data for quality improvement. Too much of the data used in the quality improvement plan is focused on broad targets. In 2007/08 not enough completed individual learning plans were returned to validate learner's success rates. This was recognised in the self-assessment report and action has been taken to improve arrangements for 2008/09. Data is not used sufficiently to develop planning or to measure improvement progress in specific areas of delivery. The monitoring of learner destinations is not yet fully effective.
 21. The focus on learning and attainment is insufficient in the lesson observation system for FLLN and community learning. Where tutors' facilitation of learning and checking of individuals' understanding and progress is insufficient, this is not adequately identified by observers. Inspectors found evidence of over grading in the observation process for teaching and learning. This had been identified in GC's self-assessment report.

-
22. GC's adult and community learning procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks have been completed for all council staff and the great majority of subcontractor staff. Reporting arrangements for GC and college staff are well defined and adequately promoted. However, the implementation of appropriate safeguarding arrangements with smaller subcontractors has been slow. Safeguarding arrangements are not part of the service level agreements with subcontractors. A comprehensive record of the CRB status of all staff working with GC's adult and community learners was not available at the start of the inspection. Safeguarding awareness training for adult and community learning staff in the services largest subcontractor is ongoing but training for the staff of smaller providers has not been undertaken. This is recognised by GC and arrangements are now in place to provide suitable training by August 2009.
23. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Equality of opportunity and diversity policies are thorough and well presented. The service complies with current equalities legislation through Greenwich Council's Social Inclusion and Justice Directorate. Suitable race, gender and disability equality schemes are in place and they are appropriately reviewed. The involvement of stakeholders in developing and monitoring the schemes is good. In 2008 a detailed impact assessment of a proposed increase in course fees was undertaken as part of the council's review arrangements.
24. The promotion of learning is good. The attractive 2009/10 prospectus, currently in preparation, brings together the programmes of all GC's partners for the first time. The service takes an active and enthusiastic part in local events to promote learning. There has been a good response to the use of 'Learning Champion' volunteers who engage with potential learners in their local communities. Some 50% of current learners are from areas of identified social deprivation.
25. The use of data to monitor equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Appropriate current demographic data is used effectively to target under-represented groups. The service has recently noted a small drop in participation from black and minority ethnic groups and has revised its promotion of learning to resolve this.
26. Arrangements to eliminate harassment and bullying are strong. A firm and well publicised policy is in place. The promotion of mutual respect and the celebration of diversity in classes is satisfactory. Learners have access to, and make use of, the satisfactory complaints reporting arrangements. The college operates its own scheme and timely analysis is provided to GC. Learners with smaller subcontractors have access to a complaints procedure direct to GC. Complaints receive satisfactory attention from managers and complainants are suitably informed of outcomes.

27. Staff training in aspects of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Appropriate equal opportunity awareness training is provided for new staff and learners at induction. Staff development arrangements include timely updating sessions. Access to learning is satisfactory. Most learning centres provide suitable access for learners, however, at the Greenwich Park site access to the upper floor is poor for those with limited mobility. The service is taking action to rectify this.
28. Health and safety matters are satisfactorily covered at staff and learner inductions. Risk assessments at the college are appropriately managed. GC managers undertake adequate risk assessments of small providers and matters of concern are suitably addressed, however, not all staff who undertake these risk assessments have received specific training for the role. A project risk assessment has been undertaken for the Learning Champions project, but risk assessments for individual volunteers are not systematically completed.

What learners like:

- 'It's a nice way to get back into learning'.
- 'The course helps to build your confidence'.
- The good support from the programme tutor.
- 'That I can support my child's learning'.
- 'I never thought IT was so easy'.

What learners think could improve:

- 'It would be good to have these courses at every school'.
- 'More space for my sewing class'.
- Too much jargon on the paperwork.