

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: London Borough of Havering
Date of visit: 13 January 2009

Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in March 2008 of the London Borough of Havering's (LBH) adult learning services at which overall effectiveness of provision was judged to be satisfactory. Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and capacity to improve were also satisfactory. Provision in education and training, literacy and numeracy and family learning was good. Performing arts, and classical and modern foreign languages provision was satisfactory. Provision in sport, leisure and recreation was inadequate.

LBH's adult and community learning service, known as Havering Adult College, was founded in 1965. Adult and community learning services, which form part of LBH's Department of Regeneration and Strategic Planning, are led by the lifelong learning manager. In January 2008, as part of a restructuring process, the Adult College's senior management team was reduced in number. The team is now comprised of the lifelong learning manager, a quality and development manager, a curriculum and strategy manager and a deputy curriculum manager.

LBH manages and delivers all provision in-house. Provision is offered in ten sector subject areas at 43 venues across the borough, predominantly local schools. Approximately 50% of provision is accredited. All programmes are funded through London East Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Currently, the number of learners on programmes is around 2200.

LBH is a Greater London local authority with a population of around 230,000. The borough has the highest percentage of older residents in London and the lowest percentage of residents belonging to a minority ethnic group. The level of unemployment in Havering is below that for London.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has been made in improving achievement and standards?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, the overall success rates for accredited courses were satisfactory. Retention on all non-accredited courses was at least satisfactory and attendance was satisfactory overall. Learners made good progress on literacy and numeracy and teaching assistant courses. LBH has made reasonable progress and generally, retention rates have improved or been maintained across accredited programmes. During 2007/08, overall success rates improved in most sector subject

areas. For example, success rates increased to 83% from 71% in 2006/07 on teaching assistant courses and to 74% from 69% for art and craft programmes. In accredited literacy and numeracy programmes, the numbers of learners increased by 72% in 2007/08. During this period, however, retention fell from 99% to 86% and success rates fell from 97% to 79%. The good progress made by learners on literacy and numeracy courses, including family learning programmes, has been maintained. For non-accredited programmes, retention improved during 2007/08 to 91% from 86% and the overall success rates of learners achieving primary learning goals was maintained at 86%. Improvements have been made in procedures for providing initial advice and guidance, assessing learners' needs, setting targets and reviewing individual learning plans. Course outcomes for retention and achievement are improving.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in improving the standards of teaching and learning in sport, leisure and recreation?	Reasonable progress
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LBH has made reasonable progress in improving the standards of teaching and learning in sport, leisure and recreation. LBH has taken effective actions to make improvements. Retention rose in 2007/08 to 84% from 78% the previous year and levels of achievement have been maintained. A recent survey carried out by LBH indicates that 85% of learners are very satisfied with their learning experience. Procedures for assessing learners' fitness at the start of courses have been revised and managers have worked with tutors to develop and pilot new standard fitness tests. Generally, the use of individual learning plans (ILPs) and the inclusion of personal targets for learners have improved. New formats for ILPs provide ample opportunity for tutors to record learners' progress towards personal targets, although this has yet to become routine in all programmes. LBH's arrangements for observing teaching and learning have been revised. Observation reports for sport and recreation sessions are detailed and evaluative and provide action points for tutors to help learners achieve their personal goals. LBH has introduced new requirements for all tutors to hold appropriate teaching qualifications. The number of tutors has fallen from twelve to six. All remaining tutors are qualified or working towards an appropriate qualification.

How much progress has been made in improving arrangements to assess and record learners' progress and achievement?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, tutors' use of the processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement (RARPA) were insufficiently established in most curriculum areas. Many tutors did not use initial assessments or learning plans effectively to establish learners' starting points or to set useful individual learning goals. LBH has made reasonable progress in ensuring that initial assessment is used consistently in all curriculum areas. Initial assessment at course level is now

reviewed at the start of term and curriculum managers monitor the results. Good practice in the use of ILPs by the skills for life team, identified at the previous inspection, has been shared with other curriculum areas. The overall procedures for ensuring quality in the monitoring and reviewing of progress have improved. Target-setting within ILPs has improved and the targets agreed with learners are often useful and meaningful. However, not all tutors have implemented the ILP process with full commitment and enthusiasm. The RARPA process is still not fully established in non-accredited learning but imaginative strategies to capture starting points and progress are being used on some personal and community learning courses. Compulsory essential training packages have been put in place to support staff in improving the planning, assessment and recording processes.

How much progress has been made in improving the impact of pre-course guidance and enrolment procedures for 2008/09?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the previous inspection, LBH provided insufficient pre-course advice and guidance to learners. Many learners did not receive adequate information about course content and requirements. Some learners were enrolled on to inappropriate programmes. LBH has made reasonable progress to resolve this weakness. It has phased in a more centralised and focused enrolment process so that more learners receive an initial interview. For all learners wishing to enrol on a Level 3 course, skills for life, modern foreign languages or teacher training courses, a formal interview is required. LBH plans to extend the required formal interview to more learners at the start of the new academic year. All learners enrolling on accredited funded courses are now required to meet their tutor before enrolling. Some prospective modern foreign languages learners are offered a five-week taster course, pre-enrolment diagnostic testing and clear printed course guidance to ensure they are enrolled onto a course at the appropriate level. Procedures for enrolling learners progressing to higher level courses are efficient. Considerable progress has been made in improving on-line guidance to prospective learners. The current year has seen a marked reduction in the number of learners seeking refunds and in the number of classes closed or cancelled. Retention has improved significantly in 2008/09.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in introducing a skills for life strategy?	Reasonable progress
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LBH has made reasonable progress in introducing a skills for life strategy. At the time of the previous inspection, the skills for life strategy had been slow to evolve and a formal policy had yet to be implemented. However, good provision existed in literacy and numeracy and family learning. A cross-organisation working group has now been established to guide strategy and implement policy. A skills for life policy and strategic action plan have been agreed and work is in progress to fully implement the strategy across the curriculum. Senior managers and front-line administration staff

have attended training workshops to raise their awareness of the skills for life needs of learners and how these can be supported across programme areas. Tutors on teaching assistants courses have adopted a more formal approach to identifying learners' literacy and numeracy needs. Success rates have improved on these courses and more teaching assistant learners are gaining supplementary Level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Action to enable all skills for life tutors to gain appropriate Level 4 teaching qualifications has met with limited success. Two tutors are working towards qualifications, but most tutors have yet to start training.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has been made in developing arrangements for quality improvement and self-assessment and in implementing the post-inspection action plan?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, quality improvement was identified by inspectors as a key area for improvement. The self-assessment process did not include all staff, although managers did use course evaluations completed by staff and learners to make judgements. LBH has made reasonable progress in developing arrangements for quality improvement. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and thorough. The process for completing the self-assessment report has been changed so that it now requires curriculum managers to complete a curriculum overview log. This log is reviewed each term and forms the basis for the annual self-assessment report. It allows managers to readily identify areas for improvement 'in-year' and make necessary changes. The self-assessment process has been strengthened by LBH's greater involvement in the East London Partnership peer review project. Although a greater range of staff is now active in self-assessment and curriculum managers have more ownership of the process, tutors are not directly involved until they see the final document midway through the following year. The post-inspection action plan has accurately identified the key issues from the recent inspection and actions to remedy weaknesses are appropriate and regularly monitored. Information from lesson observations is used effectively to plan individual and corporate training programmes.