

South London Learning Consortium

Inspection date

3 April 2009

Inspection number

332905

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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:

- Health, public services and care
- Information and communication technology (ICT)
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. The South London Learning Consortium (SLLC) is based in Croydon and was formed in 2007. Membership of SLLC consists of organisations that work with disadvantaged communities across south London. Currently SLLC does no direct delivery and subcontracts provision to provider partners. Provider partners with learners in scope for the inspection are; Advice UK, Amani Training, B2B Engage, Elthorne Learning Centre, Grenfell Housing Association, Lifeline, London College of Professional Training and St Giles Trust.
2. SLLC is a Community Interest Company and its board of directors are from the South London Community Voluntary Services (CVS) Partnership. Board members are from community voluntary service organisations from six south London boroughs. SLLC vision is to support and promote the economic, social and educational prosperity of London through community learning. SLLC offers Train to Gain programmes and contracts with London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC). SLLC also offers ESF funded programmes, Nextsteps Information Advice and Guidance provision, as well as adult response delivery in partnership with FE and ACL colleges.
3. In 2007/08, 73% of SLLC learners were from minority ethnic groups. For the same period, 43% of learners were male, 6% had some form of disability and 5% had a recognised learning difficulty. Census data of 2001, states that 30% in Croydon are from minority ethnic groups. The number of adult residents in the Croydon district without qualifications is 15.8% which is above London and Great Britain at 12.8% and 13.1% respectively.

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 areas

Health, public services and care	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Inadequate: Grade 4

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop good vocational and personal skills, however many learners make slow progress.
5. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are satisfactory. On and off site training is satisfactory. Tutors are appropriately qualified and accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. Support for learners' additional literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory. Learners' progress is insufficiently recorded or monitored.
6. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds or from hard-to-reach communities have good access to a broad range of programmes. Most learners work for community and voluntary sector employers. For many learners, this employment is the first chance they have of working and gaining a qualification that fulfils their needs.
7. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Partner providers and employers offer learners satisfactory support. A broad range of support services are available to help learners achieve. Overall, information, advice and guidance are appropriate to meet many learners' needs.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers' and board members have a particularly focused and effective strategic direction. The goals of SLLC are met through very effective provider partnerships. However, quality assurance systems and procedures are not yet fully developed. Overall, equality of opportunity is satisfactory. SLLC has made a particularly positive impact recruiting disadvantaged and hard-to-reach learners, however it does not monitor the performance of the different minority groups it recruits. The promotion of equality of opportunity is inadequate.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. SLLC demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. This is its first inspection. It is a young organisation with a clear and specific strategic focus. It manages a diverse range of partner providers working in the community and voluntary sector to enable it to meet its goals. Management of partner providers is satisfactory and improving. Much of the accredited training offered has only been available since the end of 2007. Achievements vary amongst the subject areas. The development of learners' skills is good. Management information data is now sound and accurate and its use by managers is becoming established. Systems to monitor learners' progress are still not consistently applied. Targets on individual learning

plans agreed with learners are not sufficiently specific and do not have clear timescales for completion.

10. SLLC has made satisfactory progress in meeting the key challenges it identified in its own quality improvement plan. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory and improving. However, some of the improvements have not yet had sufficient time to show effect and the quality of provision varies too much between provider partners.

11. The self-assessment process is satisfactory and the report is broadly accurate, particularly in identifying areas for improvement. Most grades awarded in the self-assessment report match those of the inspectors, however the inspection grade for the extent to which provision meets the needs and interests of learners' was higher than in the self-assessment report and the grades awarded for equality of opportunity and business, administration and law were lower than at self-assessment.

Key strengths

- Good development of learners' skills
- Good learning and assessment on advice and guidance programme
- Very good initiatives to support under-represented learners and employers
- Particularly focused and effective strategic direction
- Very effective partnerships with the community and voluntary sector

Key areas for improvement

- Slow progress of many learners
- Insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- Quality assurance arrangements and standardisation
- Inadequate monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

12. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2007/08, ICT success rates were satisfactory. The retention rates of health, public services and care learners were good. For customer service and management learners success rates were low. However, the provision was too new to make overall judgements on success rates across all programmes.
13. The development of learners' vocational and personal skills is good. The standard of learners work is satisfactory. Overall, the progress of learners is slow. Currently, SLLC does not analyse achievement data by individual groups. SLLC's grade for achievement and standards in the self-assessment report matched those of inspectors.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. The quality of provision and teaching, learning and training are satisfactory. On site training is effective and off site training is satisfactory. In the better sessions, tutors prepared well, used a good range of teaching methods, motivated learners and maintained a challenging pace. Weaker sessions were not sufficiently planned. The range of teaching methods was not sufficient to maintain learners' interest and planning was not sufficient to meet learners' individual needs. Arrangements for the initial assessment of literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory, as is the support for those who receive it, however a few learners with low literacy and numeracy results were not offered any additional learning support. Initial assessment results are not sufficiently used in planning sessions. Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced and the learning materials they use are satisfactory. Employers are not sufficiently involved in the planning or monitoring of training. Overall, assessment practice is satisfactory. Areas for improvement have been recognised by SLLC in the self-assessment report.
15. The extent to which the provision meets the needs and interests of learners is good. Initiatives by SLLC and provider partners to support learners from groups traditionally under-represented in learning, and community and voluntary sector employers, are very good. The range of programmes is closely aligned to local community and learner needs. Most learners work for community and voluntary organisations and many have themselves been in receipt of support from the same organisation. Approximately a third of learners reside in areas officially designated as deprived and a significant minority work as volunteers. Providers are generally located in areas with convenient access for the local community. The inspection grade for this aspect of provision is higher than contained in the self-assessment report.

16. Advice, guidance and support for learners' is satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate support from partner provider staff. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory overall, although SLLC recognises the need to improve advice and guidance to learners who are nearing the end of the programme. Individual learning plans are not sufficiently developed or used. Learners' have little understanding of their own progress or how they can influence the length of time spent on programme. Progress reviews generally do not include sufficient input from the learner or employer, however employers' support for learners is satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The SLLC board of directors has a particularly clear goal to engage community and voluntary sector organisations and learners who would not easily access conventional work-based learning. The board brings much experience and knowledge which it uses effectively to meet the aims of SLLC. Key board members hold regular meetings with senior managers to monitor performance. SLLC is very effective in developing partnerships with community and voluntary organisations. SLLC carefully selects appropriate organisations to support its aims and objectives. SLLC and its members are highly committed to co-ordinated development of provision through partnership working. In addition to SLLC's training role, it is effective at working with a large number of voluntary sector organisations to advise, inform and train their members.

18. Management information is reliable and timely, although it is too early to judge its effectiveness in the monitoring of partner providers' and learners' performance. Actions to improve learners' slow progress have not yet been effective. SLLC has introduced targets for improvement in success rates to all partner providers, however the targets set are too general and do not sufficiently reflect each provider's potential to meet them. The management of partner providers is satisfactory.

19. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory and are continually being further developed. For example, SLLC is currently standardising the documents it requires all providers to use, such as individual learning plans and progress review records. Quality improvement plans link well to the self-assessment report and are regularly reviewed and updated. SLLC now monitors providers with poorly performing provision more closely and places limits on learner recruitment. However, too many variations in the quality of provision between providers remain. Quality assurance procedures such as observations of teaching and learning are not sufficiently developed across all providers. Observations do not focus sufficiently on learning outcomes and the implementation of actions for improvement arising from observations is not systematically monitored. Too few tutors have been observed.

20. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The process is well established and involves full-time and provider partner staff appropriately. The report is evaluative, and broadly accurate. Grades awarded in the self-assessment report generally matched those of the inspection team.
21. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. SLLC is highly successful in working with community and voluntary sectors to engage hard-to-reach learners. Equality and diversity policies and procedures are appropriate. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities. Complaints and appeals procedures are clearly explained at induction. Staff and providers have attended equality and diversity training. A few tutors effectively incorporate equality and diversity into session planning. However, SLLC does not monitor or analyse the achievements of those from minority ethnic groups. SLLC and its partner providers do not check that employers have appropriate policies and procedures in place. In learners' progress reviews, promotion of equality and diversity is not sufficient.
22. Appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor health and safety. However, procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults do not meet current government requirements. SLLC does not sufficiently monitor its partner providers' policies on safeguarding or whether they carry out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for all relevant staff and volunteers.

What learners like:

- Support from assessors
- The chance to learn while working
- Opportunities to get a better job
- Individual coaching
- Gaining qualifications
- Learning new skills and improving confidence
- Making friends
- Working at own pace

What learners think could improve:

- Being able to complete the course more quickly
- What happens when assessors do not turn up for assessments
- Being able to learn keyboard skills
- The regularity of assessor visits
- Bridging programme to help learners where English is not the first language
- The organisation of the courses

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

23. At the time of the inspection, SLLC has 220 learners on health and social care, childcare and advice and guidance programmes. Of these, 38 are working towards advice and guidance NVQs at levels 3 and 4, 106 towards health and social care NVQs at levels 2 and 3 and 76 learners on childcare NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Six partner providers deliver training for SLLC. Learners are either employed or working as volunteers in a wide range of settings. Training and assessment takes place in the workplace. For many of the learners English is their second or additional language. SLLC recruits 75% of learners from minority ethnic groups. Of the learners, 24% are male.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' personal and professional skills.
- Good learning and assessment on the advice and guidance programme.
- Very responsive provision to meet learners' needs.

Areas for improvement

- Slow progress on health and social care and childcare programmes.
- Insufficient planning and target-setting on health and social care programme.

Achievement and standards

24. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners demonstrate good workplace and personal skills, correctly recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners are enthusiastic about their learning and eager to apply new understanding and skills to their practice. Learners are able to support service users' effectively and to work independently. For example, childcare learners develop lively and imaginative activities to meet children's needs and become much more confident in using them.

25. At the time of the inspection, not enough data was available to judge success rates. For 2007/08, overall retention is high. However, the progress of learners on childcare and health and social care programmes is slow, as identified in the self-assessment report. Many learners' are well past their planned completion date and often not clear when they will complete. The standard of learners' work in their portfolios is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

26. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Training and assessment on the recently introduced advice and guidance programme is good. Training sessions are lively and include a range of appropriate teaching methods to extend the learners' knowledge and understanding. Learners enjoy both the taught sessions and the individual coaching they receive. Competent, confident and experienced assessors use monitoring systems to monitor and support learners. They make frequent assessment visits and involve managers well in the review process. Target-setting and planning are effective. Individual learning plans are regularly reviewed and appropriately amended.
27. Training and assessment on childcare programmes is satisfactory. Planning of training is appropriate and learning resources are satisfactory. For example, in one childcare workshop, learners enjoyed learning a new song and accompanying it with sign language. Learners then made many useful suggestions about language development and ways of applying this approach in childcare settings. Overall, assessors provide effective coaching and use appropriate range of evidence to show learners' competence.
28. On health and social care programmes, partner providers do not sufficiently plan learning or set appropriate targets. Individual learning plans do not show interim targets or a planned completion date. Progress reviews generally relate to assessment planning and do not involve employers. The planned programme length for many learners is unrealistically short, recognised in the self-assessment report as an area for improvement.
29. The identification and support for literacy, numeracy and language are satisfactory. Some partner providers offer additional learning support and others help learners to enrol on literacy or classes in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) with other training providers. The difference between the evidence used to support learners' competence at levels 2 and 3 is not sufficient, a small number of level 3 portfolios do not contain sufficient evidence of learners' competence.
30. Tutors and assessors are appropriately qualified and experienced. However, many employers are not sufficiently involved in the planning and monitoring of training.
31. The extent to which SLLC meets the needs and interests of learners is good. SLLC is very responsive to the needs of learners, correctly recognised as a key strength in the self-assessment report. Partner providers are particularly effective at recruiting learners who would otherwise have little opportunity for training and gaining a qualification. This includes volunteers working with clients with complex needs, who have themselves had social problems and, in childcare particularly, working with mothers who wish to enter employment. SLLC and partner providers have effective links with local community and voluntary groups which they use effectively to help recruit hard-to-reach learners. For example, support sessions

for designated groups, such as Somali women, may lead to enrolment onto NVQ programmes.

32. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Employers' support for learners is satisfactory. Assessors provide learners with satisfactory support and are contactable between workplace visits via telephone and email. Initial assessment identifies additional learning needs, and, in some cases, preferred learning styles. Information, advice and guidance to learners are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified. The management of resources is satisfactory. Internal verification systems are generally sound. SLLC and provider partners carry out observations of teaching and learning sessions, although not all staff have been observed. Written feedback to tutors following observations is satisfactory and in some cases actions for improvement are appropriately recorded. SLLC does not provide sufficient opportunities for sharing of good practice across the provision, for example at assessor or internal training verifier events. Judgements in the self-assessment report broadly match inspection findings.
34. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory overall. In one partner provider's premises, each room is named after a prominent black role model, and in each room is a brief biography of that person. Equality and diversity are appropriately included in the teaching, learning and assessment process, although promotion at progress reviews is not sufficiently developed.

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

35. At the time of the inspection 69 learners were on ICT programmes. SLLC works with three partner providers, two of which share responsibility for 85% of the contract. Of the learners, 67 are working towards a level 2 qualification and two at level 3. Learning and assessment takes place in the workplace. Assessors visit learners every two weeks. One partner provider provides off-the-job training for learners who request it. Learners are mostly employed in community and voluntary sector organisations. Most learners are female and most are from a minority ethnic group.

Strengths

- Good standards of work and skills development.
- Flexible and accessible community based learning.

Areas for improvement

- Incomplete quality assurance procedures.
- Insufficient monitoring and promotion of equality and diversity in the workplace.

Achievement and standards

36. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for 2007/08 were satisfactory. Of the 14 learners that started, the current success rate is 72% with three learners still on programme near completion. Learners' progress during the programme is satisfactory. In 2007/08, eight learners achieved their qualification in a timely manner.

37. The standard of learners work and the skills they develop are good. They quickly learn how to work with folders and software which they use well in their workplace, correctly recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners demonstrate a greatly improved understanding of their work role. They speak confidently about using applications and many are well motivated. Many learners use their skills away from work and have taken up new hobbies such as genealogy and on-line auctioning. Many use the internet to research their existing interests and often use their skills well to help others in their workplace. One learner with dyslexia is using her newly acquired skills effectively to check spellings in her text and now works independently.

Quality of provision

38. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory, as identified in the self-assessment report. In better training sessions, tutors use a variety of learning strategies to enhance learning. They

work effectively with individual learners to ensure their training and qualification outcomes are relevant to their workplace. In one partner provider, tutors effectively design off-the-job learning sessions to cater for learners' different levels of confidence. Tutors set learners satisfactory short term, measurable targets and provide continuing verbal and written feedback. Some tutors make effective use of a progress monitoring sheet that identifies learners' progress against short term targets to motivate and encourage them to improve. However, some coaching sessions are too assessor centred. In these sessions, assessors fail to check learners' understanding at regular intervals. Some training practice is poor. One assessor clearly had insufficient understanding of the requirements of Train to Gain. A partner provider failed to keep assessment appointments and did not provide learners with appropriate guidance on completing the qualification. Changes in staffing at another provider partner disrupted learners' progress.

39. Resources in the workplace and off-the-job learning venues are satisfactory. Centres offer a good range of up-to-date hardware and software. Most centres are spacious and light. Employers are effectively involved in the planning of learning and in learner reviews.
40. The extent to which SLLC meets the needs and interests of learners is good. SLLC concentrates its recruitment very effectively in deprived areas of the community and offers learners work in a stimulating environment, which was recognised in the self-assessment report. All centres are in the heart of urban estates and built-up areas, and are easily accessible. Centres cater well to a good cross-section of the local community. They offer a wide variety of activities in the day and evenings that appeal to minority groups in the area. Many learners are volunteers and work towards a qualification while working in community centres.
41. Advice, guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Learners are appropriately supported in the workplace and during off-the-job training sessions. Partner providers provide satisfactory initial assessment which they adequately match to the learners' work environment and job role. Induction is thorough and tutors ensure learners choose the right units appropriate to their workplace. Overall, information, advice and guidance are satisfactory, however in a few cases, tutors give learners the wrong advice about the programme and do not sufficiently inform learners of their rights.

Leadership and management

42. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The management of resources is satisfactory. Links with community and voluntary sector organisations are good and help learners' achieve qualifications not otherwise generally available to them. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Communication between SLLC and provider partners is satisfactory, although sharing of best practice between partners is not sufficient. The self-assessment process and report is satisfactory and generally matches inspection findings.
43. The provider has incomplete quality assurance procedures. Two partner providers have satisfactory internal verification procedures. However, the other has no

internal verification policy for ICT and many documents are not completed appropriately. The experience of learners differs greatly depending on their partner provider. Procedures and documentation vary between provider partners and directly effects the learner experience. However, SLLC is developing more standardised documentation for providers' use.

44. Equality of opportunity is inadequate. While SLLC has successfully recruited learners from groups traditionally under-represented in learning, it does not routinely check that provider partners promote and monitor equality and diversity in the workplace. Learners are informed of their rights and responsibilities at induction, but this is rarely further promoted or monitored by assessors. Tutors do not use opportunities to integrate consideration of equality and diversity into off-the-job learning sessions.

Business, administration and law

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

45. The provider has 111 learners on administration, management and customer service programmes. The provision is subcontracted to five provider partners who are responsible for the management of their programmes, training and assessment. All learners are employed in a range of public and private sector organisations. Of these, 47 learners are working towards NVQs in management at level 3, 14 towards administration NVQs at levels 2 or 3, 48 learners are working towards customer service NVQs at levels 2 or 3 and two learners towards team leading at level 2.

Strengths

- Good development of independent learning skills.

Areas for improvement

- Low success rates in 2007/8.
- Slow progress.
- Inadequate monitoring of progress and target-setting.
- Insufficiently developed quality assurance arrangements.

Achievement and standards

46. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Success rates for 2007/8 are low. Learners make slow progress towards achieving the goals in their individual learning plans and many are still working towards their qualifications well after the expected completion date.
47. Learners demonstrate appropriate vocational skills and knowledge and apply them well to work roles. They are very motivated and enjoy their training. Most attend regularly and punctually. Many learners demonstrate much improved self-confidence. They interact well and work effectively with customers and colleagues in the workplace. Learners' standard of work is satisfactory. Portfolios are appropriately structured and organised. Learners' written work is presented to an adequate standard. Many make effective use of the internet, researching information to construct well written personal statements.

Quality of provision

48. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning is satisfactory. Employers provide a wide range of appropriately structured and planned on-the-job training sessions. Training objectives are clear and appropriately linked to organisational priorities. All learners develop good independent learning skills and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own

learning. On-the-job training facilities are suitable and offer sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of learners. Overall, training materials are satisfactory, however, the quality varies considerably across partner providers. A minority of learners with identified additional literacy and numeracy needs do not receive sufficient support.

49. Target-setting and the monitoring of learners progress is inadequate. Most individual learning plans do not specify when the learner should complete units of their NVQ. The few that do are set dates that are inadequately matched to their individual needs. Learners are unable to effectively plan and assess their own progress. Most short-term action plan targets do not have dates for completion, and their completion is not checked. Most employers have little knowledge of their employees' progress and are not involved in the negotiation and setting of learners' targets. Assessors do not ask for the employers views of the learner's progress during reviews.
50. The extent to which programmes meet learners' and employers' needs is satisfactory. The range of administration, management and customer service programmes provides a broad choice with appropriate opportunities to continue learning. Assessors make flexible arrangements to meet learners' needs. They plan workplace visits according to the individual learner's work patterns. Employers provide good opportunities for learners to develop their occupational skills. Most employers make arrangements to allow learners to work on their portfolios during working hours.
51. Advice, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. The provider has appropriate information, advice and guidance procedures and processes. They include an assessment of vocational competence, a learning style questionnaire and assessments of literacy, language and numeracy needs. Assessors provide good individual advice and guidance during workplace visits and training sessions. Learners receive satisfactory individual support to help them complete their programme. This includes access to specialist support services.

Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are inadequate. The provider has particularly effective community links with voluntary sector organisations. Communications are improving as SLLC develops the provision. The provider has regular meetings with partner providers to monitor learners' progress. Training staff are appropriately qualified and have sound technical and practical occupational experience. Regular and continuous professional development ensures staff expertise in their subject area. Internal verification is appropriate and meets awarding body requirements.

53. Quality assurance arrangements are not sufficiently developed. They are not yet fully established across the partner providers and do not sufficiently ensure consistency in what learners receive. SLLC has not fully developed ways to share best practice in, for example, target-setting on individual learning plans and employers' involvement in reviews. The self-assessment report did not recognise these key areas for improvement. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than SLLC in its self-assessment.
54. All learners have an adequate awareness of equality of opportunity. A very high proportion of learners are of minority ethnic heritage. Progress reviews do not monitor or promote equality and diversity sufficiently in the workplace.