

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of provider: The Learning Trust

Date of visit: 22 April 2009

Context

The Learning Trust (the Trust) was established to provide education services in the London Borough of Hackney and took over responsibility for education services from the local education authority in August 2002. The London East Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds the trust to provide adult and community learning courses, including family learning and neighbourhood learning in deprived communities in Hackney. The Trust subcontracts the delivery of most of its programmes.

The previous inspection report was published in June 2008. Overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management were all judged to be satisfactory. Equality of opportunity was good. Provision in information and communications technology (ICT) was good, and literacy, numeracy and courses for learners with English as an additional language was satisfactory. Provision in family learning was inadequate.

Hackney has a population of over 210,000 spread across 19 wards that are all in the top 10% nationally in terms of deprivation. Of Hackney's population approximately 76% are over 16 and approximately 66% of the adult population do not have a higher-level qualification. Hackney is the third most ethnically diverse local authority in the United Kingdom. Its population changes frequently, with recent increases in residents from Eastern European communities. Of the adult population, 41% is made up of non-white and ethnic groups compared with 34% in inner London and 9.1% nationally. It is estimated that there are 90 languages spoken by learners within the borough.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has been made to improve learners' achievement and standards?	Significant progress
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The previous inspection in June 2008 judged achievement and standards as satisfactory. Analysis of overall learner outcomes for 2007/08 shows that significant progress has been made. Retention rates on non-accredited programmes increased from 90% in 2006/07 to 95% in 2007/08. Success rates on accredited programmes increased from 65% in 2006/07 to 78% in 2007/08. Outcomes for learners from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are equivalent to other learners. Attendance rates for learners in 2007/08 were 82%.

This exceeded the previous year's attendance of 79% and the service's target of 80%. Learners value the service highly, results from end of course questionnaires in 2007/08 show that 98% rated their learning experience at least satisfactory and 41% rated it as outstanding. These high levels of satisfaction are borne out by the very positive personal testimonies from family learning learners interviewed during the monitoring visit.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made to improve the quality of provision of Family Learning?	Reasonable progress
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Inspectors judged family learning to be inadequate at the previous inspection and reasonable progress has been made to improve the quality of provision. The Trust has now extended many of the effective practices it carried out at the previous inspection to its family learning provision. Strong partnership working has resulted in a good range of provision across the borough. Learners are well supported. Graded lesson observations indicate the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Crèche support for learners is available on 41 of the 44 programmes and around two thirds of courses provide additional teaching or language support for learners. Information, advice and guidance are an integral part of all courses. The family learning handbook is a comprehensive document for providers and tutors. The Trust arranges provider induction meetings to clarify expectations and to ensure that staff from subcontracted providers understand the necessary procedures. Tutor forums enable the sharing of good practice and these are valued and seen as useful. Accommodation and furniture are now suitable for adults attending family learning courses. Individual learning plans have a revised and more appropriate format and the Trust now monitors their use more closely. However, tutors do not always record the outcome of learners' initial assessment in the plans or use this information to plan teaching and learning and to meet the individual needs of learners. Not all family learning tutors use individual learning plans effectively to monitor and record learners' progress and some individual targets for learners are still vague and unspecific.

Leadership and management

How effective are arrangements for self-assessment and the post inspection action plan?	Significant progress
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Enthusiastic and committed staff have made significant progress to rectify the areas for development identified at the previous inspection. The post inspection action plan for family learning fully incorporates all of the key weaknesses raised in the previous inspection. The trust reviews the progress of the plan thoroughly and current indications show that it is bringing about good improvements. Thorough scoping and commissioning arrangements exist for all contracted out provision, including family learning programmes. The commissioning process is supportive and helps to build the capacity of providers. Pre-inspection visits by service staff to providers and

comprehensive induction procedures help to ensure programmes run smoothly. Tutors now fully understand the need for adults on family learning courses to develop the appropriate skills. Processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement are improving.

What has been the impact of quality assurance procedures, including those used to evaluate teaching and learning and the planning and monitoring individual learning?	Reasonable progress
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Inspectors identified the consolidation and extension of systems to improve provision continually as a key area for development at the previous inspection and for family learning, these systems were inadequate. The service has made reasonable progress to ensure it now uses procedures consistently for all aspects of provision. Quality assurance systems are comprehensive. All tutors follow the clear documentation contained in the tutor handbook. The Trust monitors the quality of provision through monthly reports and termly contract monitoring meetings between service staff and providers. It plans training for tutors in how to assess non-accredited learning more effectively. Well-trained staff evaluate the quality of teaching and learning regularly through graded observations of sessions. Joint lesson observations and moderation of observation proforma help to maintain consistency of judgement between observers. New teaching staff are observed at the beginning of their course and underperformance is tackled swiftly. Observation paperwork describes the main points of the session comprehensively, but actions for teachers to improve their teaching are sometimes superficial and lack specific targets.