

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: London Borough of Camden
Date of visit: 6 August 2009

Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in June 2008, at which the London Borough of Camden Council (the service) was graded as satisfactory for the effectiveness of the provision, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management. The service's arrangements for equality of opportunity were good. Provision was judged to be good in family learning and satisfactory in community learning. The service continues to hold a contract with London Central local area Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide adult and community learning provision. The number of learners who enrolled in 2008/09 was 4,338, which was slightly less than in the previous year. The service continues to work with four subcontracted providers and 18 community partners. The service has restructured in the year since the previous inspection.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has there been in improving retention and achievement rates?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, the overall success rate on the small number of accredited programmes was low at 58%. Since then, the service has evaluated retention and achievement rates and how well their accredited course offer meets learners' needs. Some courses have been changed to non-accredited provision and others restructured to allow learners more choice in accreditation. Managers have set a 65% overall success rate target across the service. This target was significantly exceeded in 2007/08, when overall success rates on long accredited courses were 100% and on short courses were 85%. Managers do not set an accredited programme overall success or retention rate target for the subcontracted provider that offers the largest proportion of accredited courses.

At the previous inspection, retention rates on non-accredited courses were high. These high rates were maintained at 92% in 2007/08 and have increased to 95% in the current year, with some data still to be confirmed. Managers now monitor trends in retention rates through regular and frequent data reports. The service has piloted

an attendance wall chart scheme with family learning learners. Attendance and retention rates have improved significantly.

At the previous inspection, the service did not identify accurate success rates sufficiently for its non-accredited provision. Since then, managers have raised awareness with tutors of the definitions of retention, partial and full achievement rates on non-accredited courses. The service does not have an appropriate definition for overall success rates. Theirs includes both full and partial achievement of learners' identified aims.

Quality of the provision

How much progress has been made in developing assessment practices for non-accredited learning?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, formal assessment practices were insufficiently thorough across much of the provision. Target setting for many learners was weak, and for community learners was not sufficiently based on the results of initial assessment. Following the inspection, the service organised a joint training and sharing of best practice session with one of their subcontracted providers. This was used as the basis to improve the procedures for initial assessment and the recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement. All tutors were then trained in the revised procedures. Tutors have improved how they use initial assessment to set individual learning targets. The revised initial assessment procedures are appropriately flexible to meet learners' needs. Tutors' monitoring and recording of learners' progress is now clearer. The service has introduced an audit of a sample of individual learning plans to check the quality of learners' targets and assessment plans. As a result of this, the service has identified that there are still some variations in assessment practices and that they need to make further improvements.

How much progress has been made to improve the planning of learning on community learning programmes?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, the planning of learning on community learning programmes was insufficiently thorough in a number of lessons. Lesson plans did not contain strategies to challenge more able learners and some less confident learners struggled to keep up with the class. Since the inspection, many tutors have achieved or started teaching qualifications. Managers now check the quality of lesson plans, including strategies for differentiation, through an internal audit and observations of teaching and learning. Where observers identify that lesson planning is insufficiently thorough, tutors are set clear action plans for improvement. Information from initial assessment is used more effectively to plan lessons to meet the individual needs of

learners, particularly those who are less confident. The planning of strategies to challenge the more able learners in lessons is less well developed.

Leadership and management

How much progress have managers made in improving their use of data to bring about improvement?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, the service was not using data routinely to improve quality or to evaluate performance in sufficient detail. Managers were not verifying subcontractors' claims for attendance, retention and achievement. Data reports are now produced more routinely and frequently; five times a year. Managers use these to identify trends throughout the year and to verify tutors' records of attendance and retention. Data reports have been developed to meet the needs of specific managers, for example, by funding source in family learning. Service level agreements now contain targets for the recruitment of men, retention and success rates. These have been adapted to be suitable for each provider. Managers hold contract review meetings with the subcontracted providers every four months. Contract review meetings include appropriate discussion of achievement of recruitment targets, including by men, and progress towards meeting retention rate targets. Despite initiatives to recruit more men onto programmes, the service's own target is not being met. There is insufficient recording of the discussion and evaluation of retention and success rate data in the minutes of contract review meetings. The service does not separate the partial and full achievement % age rates to monitor trends and improvements in the full achievement of learners' goals.

How much progress has there been in the monitoring of subcontracted providers and community partners?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, there was insufficient monitoring of subcontracted providers and community partners. Some aspects of the quality improvement arrangements were underdeveloped. The service recognises that the quality framework is not currently fully implemented. This has been delayed through restructuring and staff issues. At the previous inspection, there were too few formal observations of classes. The number of lesson observations has increased through training internal staff as observers. The observations carried out by internal staff are currently used for developmental purposes and are not graded. Some teaching observations, carried out by external consultants, are graded. The service has set targets to increase the proportion of teaching which is good or better. Teaching and learning grades from the external consultants' observations and those of two of the subcontracted providers show an increase in the proportion of good and better teaching on the previous year. The service has not yet discussed the results of the observations of teaching and learning in contract reviews or set formal targets for improvement. The outcomes from the major subcontracted provider's observation

scheme have not been collected. This provider delivers approximately 40% of the provision.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has been made in improving the self-assessment process?	Insufficient progress
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Although the self-assessment process was satisfactory at the previous inspection, the extent to which it was sufficiently detailed and evaluative was an area for improvement. The report was too descriptive. The use of data to support judgements was weak. In the most recent self-assessment report, data is used more effectively to make appropriate judgements about retention rates but not overall success rates. The service has improved the process they use for obtaining information from each of the community partners and subcontracted providers. In particular, a member of the service's team meets with community partners to discuss performance, which is used towards self-assessment. Key managers do not have access to the results of these discussions, which were not available at the monitoring visit. The timing of the monitoring visit meant that the full cycle of gathering information towards self-assessment had not been completed. What had been collected was not detailed enough to provide evaluative judgements for the self-assessment report. The service does not have sufficient information from all their subcontracted providers to make reliable judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. The use of learners' feedback in the self-assessment report is insufficient. The 2007/08 self-assessment report includes the views of only 59 learners.