

South London Learning Consortium

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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RE-INSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

The South London Learning Consortium (SLLC) is a community interest company, based in Croydon. Membership of SLLC consists of organisations that work with disadvantaged communities across south London. It sub-contracts much of the delivery of its provision to eight partners in various London boroughs. Since the previous inspection SLLC has started to directly deliver some programmes, especially in business administration and law.

SLLC's vision is 'to support and promote the economic, social and educational prosperity of London through community learning'. It offers Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes and contracts with London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC). SLLC also offers European Social Fund funded programmes. Train to Gain learners constitute the bulk of provision, which is in health, public services and care, business administration and law, preparation for life and work, information and communication technology (ICT), and retail and commercial enterprise.

At the previous inspection, in April 2009, all main aspects of provision were graded as satisfactory, with the exception of business administration and law, which was inadequate. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in improving quality assurance arrangements, including the consistency and effectiveness of their application with partners? Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, a key area for improvement was the quality assurance arrangements and standardisation. Since the previous inspection, SLLC has implemented a number of new quality assurance arrangements, although these are all recent and it is too early to judge fully their effectiveness. They include an updated 'partner framework tool' for 2009/10 with performance measures for each partner. Each partner has a dedicated SLLC administrator who monitors their paperwork and the monthly learner progress forms. SLLC now issues the updated provider manual in both hard copy and on a CD-ROM, and key paperwork is now mandatory for the partners to use. The quality and curriculum manager carries out random sampling of individual learning plans and learners' progress review forms. The new quarterly quality forum has met once and gives SLLC and its partners the opportunity to review their work and share good practice. The self-assessment process is still satisfactory and broadly accurate.

What progress has been made with the development of quality assurance systems in business administration and law, especially in relation to the work of partners? Reasonable progress

The quality assurance of provision in business administration and law has improved, as part of SLLC's overall work to improve the consistency and application of quality assurance arrangements. Most business provision has been offered by one sub-contractor partner, as was the case at the previous inspection. However, after their current learners complete they will no longer be contracting with SLLC. SLLC is beginning to develop its own direct provision, especially in business administration and law. With its own team of assessors, SLLC is improving the rigour of quality assurance. Additionally, since the previous inspection, SLLC has upgraded its expectations of partners. Partners delivering business programmes identify more systematic monitoring of their work by SLLC. More formal meetings with partners take place. Standard documentation has been introduced with mandatory paperwork to be completed by partners. SLLC is now analysing, and acting upon, monthly progress and tracking records. SLLC is now aware of planned external verifier dates and is able to take an overview of these and their outcomes.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving outcomes for learners, including reducing the extent of slow progress? Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, achievement and standards were satisfactory overall, but progress for learners was slow. In the past seven months, overall success rates have remained at similar levels but timely success rates have improved across most areas ranging from a 13 percentage point improvement in business administration and law to a 41 percentage point improvement in health and social care. SLLC's overall timely success rate for its direct delivery provision is higher than those for any of their partners, at 72% for 2008/09. In ICT, the previously high timely success rate has dropped to only 7% and in literacy and numeracy has dropped to 48%. SLLC has identified the reasons for this and is working with partners to improve performance. At the previous inspection, SLLC did not closely monitor learners' progress across the partners. SLLC identified that many learners were on unrealistically short programmes and now monitors the start-up paperwork for all learners, including the length of the planned programme. Partners now produce monthly learner reports using SLLC's management information system and SLLC uses this information to identify slow progress by learners.

What progress has been made in improving success rates and ensuring timely progress for learners in business administration and law? Reasonable progress

Success rates and timely success rates in business administration and law were particularly low at the previous inspection. They are still low, but they have both improved in the relatively short period since then and have also improved overall against performance in 2007/08. In 2007/08, the overall success rate for Train to Gain learners was 51%. In 2008/09, allowing for learners successfully completing their programmes, but not yet finally

externally verified, overall success will be around 60%. Timely success rates show greater improvement; from 3% in 2007/08 to 16% in 2008/09. SLLC and their main sub-contractor for the delivery of business administration and law have a clear understanding of why success and timely completion rates are low, especially in the substantial provision for customer service. SLLC, with its partners, has identified the need to match learners to programmes more appropriately, match learning plans to individual learners' needs and to improve the monitoring of learners' progress and target setting. It is tackling the improvement of these aspects well. Additionally, led by one partner, the initial assessment of learners' needs is being improved and the outcomes are being used more effectively to plan learning.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving the monitoring of learners' progress and target setting in business administration and law, noted as inadequate at the previous inspection? Reasonable progress

SLLC has improved the quality of its target setting for learners and is monitoring their progress more systematically. Assessors and learners now have a better understanding of learners' targets and progress. A new standard mandatory SLLC individual learning plan was introduced in September 2009. Prior to this, SLLC and partner staff reviewed the quality of existing individual learning plans, developed their expertise in the use of targets and helped design the new individual learning plan. SLLC and its partners now use the new individual learning plan, accompanied by a revised system of progress review which links more closely to the clearer targets in learners' plans. However, there is still much work to do to achieve a consistently high standard of completion of learning plans and to suitably engage all learners and employers in their use. A further training day is planned for early December to help address this improvement priority. In provision for business, the SLLC centre team, which increasingly delivers most assessment and training, is often setting and achieving good standards in assessment and progress review. It is developing its capacity to help partners to improve their work. Overall, SLLC is now much better informed about the progress of its learners, using the comprehensive monthly progress reports.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving the monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity, noted as a key area for improvement at the previous inspection? Insufficient progress

At the previous inspection, equality of opportunity was satisfactory overall but there was inadequate monitoring and promotion of it. SLLC did not monitor or analyse the achievements of learners from minority ethnic groups and, along with its partners, it did not check the equality of opportunity policies and procedures of employers. There was insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity in learners' progress reviews. SLLC now produces a detailed breakdown of enrolments and achievement data but there is little analysis and identification of areas to improve. SLLC still does not monitor whether partners have checked that employers have appropriate policies and procedures in place before

learners start on the programme. Since the previous inspection, SLLC has run equality and diversity workshops for partners' staff and its own staff. In September, it issued new, mandatory learner progress review forms which include a question on equality and diversity. It has also developed a list of questions to be used at reviews. It is too early to judge whether these new developments will improve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

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