

Greenbank Project

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Voluntary organisation

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

The Greenbank Project (Greenbank) is a registered charity, based in South Liverpool, that specialises in providing education, training, sport and recreational opportunities for people with disabilities, medical conditions and those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2007/08, 53% of its learners declared a disability or long-term medical condition; 19% were from a minority ethnic group.

Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds provision in information and communications technology, catering and hospitality, sport and recreation, fashion and textiles, preparation for life and work and business administration and law. Future Jobs provision, funded by Liverpool City Council, and the LSC/European Social Fund co-financed Routeways to Employment were out of scope.

This re-inspection monitoring visit follows the previous inspection in June 2009, when leadership and management, and capacity to improve were judged inadequate, equality of opportunity was judged good and all other aspects were satisfactory. Greenbank's small Train to Gain contract was not inspected due to low numbers.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in developing self-assessment and action planning as effective tools for improvement? Reasonable progress

Self-assessment and action planning have improved since the previous inspection. The self-assessment cycle begins earlier in the year. Staff are actively involved in the self-assessment of their own subject areas and are consulted regularly as the overall report develops. The self-assessment process draws from a wide range of evidence, including course reviews, data, the outcomes of the observation of the teaching and learning process and learners' views, to support the judgements. The self-assessment report is appropriately evaluative and the grades awarded are realistic against the context of the judgements. The detailed post-inspection action plan sets appropriately challenging targets against each area for improvement. Managers monitor the action plan regularly. Inspectors confirmed the self-assessment judgements and progress shown in the action plan, for the themes investigated during the visit, as broadly accurate. The recently developed quality calendar clearly identifies the place of self-assessment within the wider framework of Greenbank's planning and monitoring activities.

Capacity to improve

What progress has the provider made in completing the development and implementation of its quality improvement arrangements? Reasonable progress

Aspects of quality improvement that focus particularly on the learning experience have progressed well and form effective tools for development. The observation of the teaching and learning process now explicitly focuses on learning as well as teaching. The process is well supported by clear documentation, grading criteria, moderation, analysis of findings and action planning to support individual and corporate development. Re-observation of all satisfactory and inadequate sessions takes place but this is not explicit in guidelines. The outcomes of the observation process are reported to managers and trustees but these reports are underdeveloped.

The collection and use of feedback from learners and other stakeholders have improved and are used effectively for improvements. The standardisation of key processes such as internal verification and documentation has begun. However, the overall quality framework is not yet fully articulated. The quality manual remains incomplete. It includes some policies, procedures and a quality calendar but does not show how quality processes form a coherent cycle. Some existing quality procedures, such as the internal audit, are not fully documented.

The quality team meets regularly to review and report on progress against each area of development. A new quality development manager has been appointed but has not been able to work full time so far.

Outcomes for learners

How effective have Greenbank's early actions to improve attendance and retention proved? What progress has been made in improving overall success rates? Reasonable progress

Overall retention improved from 62% in 2007/08 to 76% in 2008/09 but is still below the previous year's national average. This marked improvement in retention shows a positive impact on the overall success rate. This has improved from 58% in 2007/08 to 75% in 2008/09. For learners aged 16 to 18 on level 1 courses, success rates have improved from 61% to 74%. At level 2, success rates have been maintained at 69%. For adult learners at level 1, success rates have improved significantly from only 51% in 2007/08 to 77% in 2008/09. Very good improvements have been made at level 2; success rates were only 56% in 2007/08 but are now 76%. Success rates have improved on short courses but are still low at 65%. Greenbank has made good improvements in every subject area except business administration, where success rates dipped. Almost all learners who complete their courses achieve their qualification or learning goal. In-year retention at the time of the visit was high at 93%, an improved picture since the previous year. A satisfactory proportion of

learners on non-accredited courses achieve their learning goals. Thorough monitoring has improved the attendance of learners. Success rates for the few Train to Gain learners remain satisfactory.

Target setting for learners

What progress has been made to improve the setting of learners' targets and their use to plan and monitor individualised learning? Reasonable progress

Greenbank introduced a redesigned individual learning plan in September 2009. This provides fit for purpose documentation with the potential to tell the developing story of learners' progress and achievement throughout their programme. Initial staff training in target setting has taken place. Consideration of individual learning plans and the quality of target setting forms an aspect of the observation of the teaching and learning process. Managers' audit of individual learning plans, sampled from each of the teaching staff, has helped to identify existing good practice but has also identified similar inconsistencies to those found by inspectors. These include the insufficient use of personalised targets, vague targets and vocational targets that are frequently too big. This audit information will be used to plan the next stage of staff development. Learners interviewed had a good understanding of their targets and could recognise those that were more helpful to them for monitoring progress. The individual learning plan has been refined to ensure that it effectively builds in systematic review of progress. A small-scale pilot of this includes the development of model documentation for training and promotion of consistency when Greenbank launches this learning plan in September 2010.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to ensure the revised organisational structure is effective, particularly in terms of staff development and curriculum management? Reasonable progress

The senior management team has been strengthened through the appointment of a quality manager and information manager. The trustees and Chief Executive are more active in their promotion of high standards in the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. Changes to the committee structure include a new cost centre managers' group that meets with other key groups to monitor development and performance. The new structure gives greater focus on curriculum leaders who meet frequently together to improve consistency. Trustees give a higher priority to teaching and learning. Their new curriculum sub-committee meets with key college managers regularly. Trustees receive more regular and accurate information to enable them to assess Greenbank's performance.

The revised organisational structure made a demonstrable impact on improving learner performance during 2008/09 and continues to bring about improvements. Systems to record the continuing professional development of staff have improved but it is too soon to judge the impact of the recently implemented staff development

plan. All teachers are qualified or are working toward teaching qualifications. A number of staff are studying for academic and vocational qualifications. Internal training focuses on college priorities and, in particular, teaching and support. Arrangements to introduce industrial updating of staff are at an early stage.

Use of data

What progress has been made to improve the use of data to manage and monitor provision? Reasonable progress

Greenbank has given high priority to improving its use and analysis of data by installing a new management information and learner performance system and appointing a data manager. An electronic register system provides prompt and accurate attendance records. Tutors now follow up absences promptly and effectively. Attendance has improved. All staff receive a good range of reports that clearly illustrate learner performance by course and subject area, making useful comparisons to previous years. Managers, and most tutors, understand the data and are beginning to use them in decision making. Staff are confident in the accuracy of the data, unlike at the previous inspection. Useful reports from the learner performance system are available on request. However, restricted direct access to the system limits its full potential as a quality improvement tool. The senior management team and trustees only recently received reports showing whole college performance. Data analysing participation and performance by different groups are now in place but not used to plan improvements. Data for at-risk learners are used to good effect to improve attendance and retention. Subject areas have varying systems to monitor learners' progress but these do not link to central records. Data to show successful learners' progression and destinations are not yet developed.

Safeguarding

What progress has been made in completing the development and implementation of safeguarding arrangements? Significant progress

The arrangements for safeguarding learners are now complete. Greenbank managers have made good progress against an appropriate safeguarding action plan. Designated managers for safeguarding are in place and are well known to staff. All staff, including volunteers and trustees, have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks that are recorded in a single central list. Effective arrangements are in place to audit the safeguarding arrangements of subcontractors. Staff, volunteers and trustees have attended training on safeguarding and on cyber-bullying; further training is planned. Key staff have had safe recruitment training. Staff have a good understanding of how to recognise abuse and deal with disclosures. Links with the local children and adult safeguarding boards are established. Trustees now receive regular reports on safeguarding issues. Access to the building is carefully controlled, except the sports academy, which is open to the public. All learners, staff and visitors sign in and wear identification badges. Closed circuit television is in place. Learners

feel safe and know what to do if they suffer abuse. The learner feedback questionnaire now includes a safety question.

Strategy for additional learning support

What further progress has been made in the implementation of the strategy to provide additional learning support that had improved to satisfactory at the previous inspection? Significant progress

Greenbank has reviewed and updated its additional learning and Skills for Life strategies. Both are set clearly in the wider context of national and local priorities and targets. The additional learning strategy explicitly supports Greenbank's mission to reduce inequality, recognise and value differences and meet its Skills for Life priorities. Initial screening for literacy and numeracy is now an entitlement for every learner without full level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics. The assessment tool allows wide differentiation from entry level 1 to level 2 to identify any need for diagnostic assessment. Very good resources and staff support promote effective implementation of the strategy. Well-trained paid and volunteer staff plan support well, paying close attention to the high level of learners' input in deciding their preferences. Support staff are very well aware of the needs and challenges faced by the learners they support. They report much improved teamwork since the previous inspection. Of the 24 learners receiving support during 2009/10, all but one, who left for health reasons, were still in learning.

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