

# Redbridge Institute of Adult Education

Focused monitoring visit report

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## FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

London Borough of Redbridge delegates the management of its Adult Education services to the Redbridge Institute of Adult Education (RIAE). The Head of Service reports to the governing body and the chief Culture, Sport and Community Learning Officer. RIAE offers courses in 11 sector subject areas. In 2008/09, RIAE enrolled 2,533 learners onto personal and community development learning (PCDL) courses, 639 on neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC) courses and 1,043 on family learning programmes. Some 2,170 learners enrolled on further education (FE) courses leading to accredited qualifications. RIAE funded this provision through contracts with the London East Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Courses take place at RIAE's main centre in Gants Hill and at 42 schools and community-based centres across the borough. The inspection in 2009 judged all aspects and subject areas to be good. Since the inspection, the Institute has started a new Train to Gain contract, partly supported by the European Social Fund.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has RIAE made in increasing the thoroughness of its self-assessment process?

Reasonable progress

RIAE has made reasonable progress in increasing the thoroughness of its self-assessment process. The council and partners are closely involved in reviewing performance and development planning. They provide robust challenge as governors. The service's profile has been raised, giving broader access to resources for learners. External subject experts coopted into performance review meetings are helping to develop a productive focus on meeting commercial standards. Very successful collaboration between East London Adult and Community Learning providers has established good arrangements to share and develop good practice. Peer reviews have increased managers' skills, confidence and knowledge significantly, particularly in judging teaching and learning and in self-evaluation. The data toolkit, another significant improvement, analyses detailed data at a glance, empowering managers to monitor progress proactively and act decisively to plug gaps.

The self-assessment report is very detailed with clear judgments, and is used effectively to plan improvement. However, it is not yet aligned to the new common inspection framework. For instance, it does not include summary judgments on outcomes other than achievement. Although the service has increased its focus on safeguarding, developing staff and learner awareness, this is not sufficiently recognised in the report.

## Outcomes for learners

How effectively is RIAE maintaining high success rates on accredited courses and improving outcomes for learners? Reasonable progress

Success rates on long courses remain high. Learners on long courses are achieving particularly well at foundation level. However, while rates at levels 2 and 3 were still above national averages, they declined in 2008/09. The decline was particularly marked at level 2 and on short courses, where 40% had low success rates. RIAE has identified that tutors used initial assessment with insufficient rigour when enrolments rose significantly last year. New measures ensure that learners receive better advice and guidance, and are appropriately supported with bridging courses so that they can succeed in their original aim. Short course success rates show clear impact. For instance, 87% of learners on childcare courses achieved their qualification, 30 percentage points higher than in 2009.

Other outcomes for learners are good. Learners enjoy learning and are encouraged to reach a high standard. Many develop skills to enhance their economic well-being. Work with the voluntary sector makes a strong, positive contribution to building community capacity. Health is promoted through family learning and sport and fitness courses and there is a council subsidy for over-60s to take up swimming. Learners are encouraged to develop awareness of safeguarding issues.

What progress has RIAE made in raising retention rates? Reasonable progress

RIAE is making reasonable progress in raising retention rates. Regular attendance is a key priority for staff and absences are promptly followed up. Information advice and guidance have been strengthened to ensure that learners know what to expect from their courses. Short introductory courses also help with this. Initial assessment is more thorough and is used well to identify learners' starting points and support needs. Tutors communicate better what the course is about and plan more thoroughly to meet identified needs. Success is regularly celebrated and learners have good opportunities to display their work both in local and prestige venues. The service has increased the number of support staff, and has recorded clear impact from their work. Learners on vocational courses are encouraged to attend personal development courses to increase their employability, for instance in building their curricula vitae. RIAE is redressing its gender imbalance by offering more courses appealing to men. However, many of these measures are new and have yet to show full impact.

## Quality of Provision

### Teaching and Learning

What progress has been made in developing systems to improve teaching and learning? Significant Progress

RIAE has made significant progress in responding to comments in the previous report that, although much teaching and learning was good, the quality of teaching and learning observations was inconsistent. The observation process now has a good focus on learning rather than the mechanics of teaching. Good post-inspection action

planning with the use of external guidance, joint observations, internal reviews and staff training have developed a more consistent approach. A carefully researched and detailed observation record could be restricting, but it currently provides a rigorous system with a satisfactory evaluation of learning. Most observations clearly identify minor and key areas for improvement. This leads to helpful action planning for tutor improvement. Moderation of observations is regular and helpful, but there is no policy for the frequency and focus of such moderations, and results are not well fed back to observers. Data suggest that the proportion of inadequate lessons has increased since the inspection; however, this reflects the more rigorous and accurate system. Support for those tutors judged to be satisfactory or inadequate appears to be improving, with good support from teaching and learning advisers and managers.

What progress has RIAE made in improving systems to plan and monitor individual progress? Significant progress

RIAE has made significant progress on this aspect with clear impact on demonstrating learners' development. Managers carried out thorough research to understand best practice in the sector. Well organised partnership activity in peer groups, and focused training, have increased confidence and ownership among staff. Target setting is improving and becoming sharper through improved audit processes and clearer guidance to help tutors. A more holistic and thorough initial assessment identifies learners' starting points reliably and provides a better basis to negotiate individual programmes and, later, to review progress. New paperwork provides more rigorous data about progress and achievement. A differentiated approach incorporates the needs of different courses and subjects well. The process is new and still evolving. Managers are working hard to improve the consistency of targets and progress measurement. They are developing systems to analyse the data and enhancements to training and guidance for staff.

### Leadership and Management

What progress has RIAE made in developing its new Train to Gain programme? Reasonable progress

In late 2009 RIAE started to deliver, as the prime contractor, a European Social Fund Train to Gain programme. This joint project involves five voluntary sector organisations, and the 350 outcomes have to be completed by December 2010. Progress in ensuring that the programme is delivered in a timely and proper way is reasonable. Managers have invested a considerable amount of effort in setting up systems to manage the changing contract, and the associated paperwork. The basics for enrolling learners, entering them on appropriate systems and starting the programmes are now well in place. Partners received good initial training on administrative aspects. Communication with partners is very good. RIAE monitors contract compliance well, in terms of recruiting and initial registration. Quality improvement visits are helping partners in their work, particularly those new to Train to Gain. Observations of training are planned. Partners have suitable systems to monitor the important aspects of learner progress. However, learners' progress is not yet reviewed in detail by RIAE, and there is no systematic assurance that learners will complete in time. Wider partnership working is still a significant strength at RIAE.

## Equality of opportunity

How well is learners' understanding of diverse cultures promoted in arts subjects?

Reasonable progress

In the previous report, inspectors judged that diverse cultures were insufficiently promoted during arts lessons. RIAE has made reasonable progress in improving this aspect. Training and development for staff have been effective in raising the profile of diversity and how it could better be promoted. Tutors document topics more clearly to highlight diversity in lesson plans, schemes of work and learning plans. They regularly identify and share ideas and good practice and actively seek opportunities to consider and discuss learners' cultural influences and share their experiences. Individual learning plans were always informed by learners' interests, but now they are smarter and more culturally aware. However, staff point out that some learners from other cultures enrol specifically to learn about European culture and craft techniques. Tutors are proactive in developing cultural inclusion by encouraging and supporting learners to make use of the rich and diverse resources available in London, for instance in exhibitions, galleries and museums.

Records of observations of teaching and learning include equality of opportunity as a key theme. However, completed observations show that some arts tutors still do not incorporate diversity sufficiently in their lessons.

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