

City of London Corporation

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Richard Beaumont HMI

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Type of provider: Local Authority

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Information about the provider

1. The City of London Corporation is located in an area traditionally seen as the financial centre of the British economy covering an area of just over one square mile. Its population is approximately 9,000 and is characterised by a higher than average proportion of mobile economic migrants. Unemployment is very low when compared to the average for London. The resident population is 84% White.
2. The City of London Corporation's (the corporation) Adult and Community Learning Service is based in its Community and Children's Services Department. Much of the provision is learning for social and personal development. The corporation has developed a range of programmes to meet the learning needs of borough residents and city workers. The largest subject areas are languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work and family learning. Over the past 18 months, the corporation has introduced a range of Train to Gain provision. All provision is subcontracted to other training providers, with Hackney Community College delivering the majority of social and personal development learning. The Central London Skills Funding Agency funds the provision.
3. Learning is delivered in various locations. These include: community centres; libraries; primary schools; children's centres; the Barbican Arts Centre; Museum of London and Guildhall Art Gallery. In 2008/09, just over 20% of learners were aged over 60; 11% declared a disability; 75% were women and 27% were from minority ethnic groups.
4. The corporation's mission is 'Promoting outstanding opportunities for learning and skills development in the City of London'.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the City of London Corporation:
 - Hackney Community College
 - Bishopsgate Institute
 - Stephanie Kingdon Associates
 - Taxi Trade Promotions Ltd

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2008/09
Provision for adult learners: Learning for social and personal development	2,343 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	183 learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Learning for social and personal development	
	Grade
Community learning	2

Overall effectiveness

6. Most learners enrolling on non-accredited programmes achieve their individual learning objectives. Success rates for accredited provision, including Train to Gain, are high. Learners enjoy attending courses and they develop their social and personal skills well. Generally, learners on social and personal development courses demonstrate increased confidence. Overall, the standard of learners' work and the progress they make are satisfactory. Learners feel particularly safe.
7. Teaching and learning are good. The corporation has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for further improvement in teaching and learning. Assessment is satisfactory, although the process for monitoring learners' progress is not always sufficiently thorough. Support is effective for all learners, including those recognised as needing additional support for literacy and numeracy.
8. The range of courses meets the diverse needs of the residential and working community well. Provision to attract under-represented groups is good, particularly in family learning. However, few courses lead to recognised qualifications. Partnership arrangements are outstanding; very effective work with a broad range of partners helps develop courses specific to community and learner needs. Resources are shared well; the corporation and its partners

monitor the impact of learning closely and work effectively together to make further improvements. Care, guidance and support are good. Staff and tutors regularly go out of their way to help learners achieve and progress.

9. Leadership and management are good. Strategic direction is particularly effective. The City of London Corporation offers adult and community learning provision the systematic support of all related services to maximise its effectiveness within the community. The outstanding collaboration with subcontractors ensures prompt and continuous improvements in provision that meets learners' needs very effectively. The corporation promotes high standards in a very positive and supportive culture and has a good understanding of the quality of provision. Its quality assurance arrangements are good. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The corporation regularly seeks learners' views, and actions to improve are well timed and effective.

Main findings

- Success rates for accredited provision are high. In 2009/10, Train to Gain success rates are high and completion within the allocated time is good. Most learners on social and personal development courses achieve their learning objectives.
- Most learners improve their social and personal skills well. For many, attending courses actively improves their confidence and, for a number of learners, their health and mental well-being. Learners enjoy attending their classes. The standard of learners' work is appropriate to the course aims and they make satisfactory progress.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors are careful to meet the needs of most learners. They are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and convey this well. Not all learners have sufficient access to learning resources. Overall, assessment is satisfactory, although the link between initial assessment, course and personal objectives and monitoring of progress is not always sufficiently clear enough to confirm that all objectives have been met.
- The corporation works particularly well to meet the needs of learners, especially in family learning. It is responsive in introducing new courses and offers effective provision to a diverse city population. Progression routes are clearly signposted. Opportunities for learners to gain qualifications are limited.
- Partnership arrangements are outstanding. Links with schools, community groups, libraries and city organisations are well established and very effective. the corporation works actively, together with its partners to develop provision to widen participation, broaden its impact and jointly bring about greater community cohesion.
- Support for learners is good. They receive good advice and guidance. Individual support from tutors, the corporation and its subcontractors is effective. Initial assessment and support for literacy, numeracy and language are good.

- Leadership and management are good. The City of London Corporation integrates key aspects of its services to maximise opportunities in adult and community learning. This is monitored well. Particularly effective strategic direction ensures that high standards are successfully promoted.
- Collaboration between the corporation and its subcontractors is outstanding. Continuous formal and informal communication and joint monitoring with subcontractor staff and their respective learners have established a culture of continuous, timely improvement. Best practice is openly shared between subcontractors and CoL. The working relationship is a well-developed team effort, driven by meeting learners' needs. CoL and subcontractor staff visit learning centres frequently to monitor the quality of provision and to gain learners' views.
- Equality and diversity are satisfactory. Family learning courses promote equality particularly well and diversity is actively celebrated. However, the promotion of equality and diversity is not consistent across all parts of the provision. CoL's action plan recognises a number of the key areas for further improvement. However, it is insufficiently focused on the promotion of equality and diversity.

What does the City of London Corporation need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of monitoring of learners' progress, for example by integrating the results from initial assessment, course aims and learner expectations to improve the planning of learning and checking of progress for each learner.
- Improve further the sufficiency of, and access to, learning resources so that learners are able to develop skills further and extend their knowledge and skills outside of the class.
- Increase the opportunities for learners to gain recognised qualifications.
- Develop improved ways to review the impact of the provision by monitoring learners' progression onto other courses, training, voluntary work and employment.
- Further develop the opportunities for learners to gain greater awareness of equality and diversity through the effective planning of lessons and by sharing good practice from family learning across all of the provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the delivery of courses close to home
- the high value the corporation places on learners' views and how well it acts on them
- enjoyable lessons delivered by enthusiastic, knowledgeable tutors
- very supportive and understanding staff
- meeting people and talking about their experiences in the lessons
- the range of people in classes and opportunities to learn
- not feeling intimidated by others who have more ability in class.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the provision of learning resources during class and to consolidate and improve learning out of class
- the size of accommodation in some venues/classes
- the number of practical skill classes offered, for example 'do it yourself'
- information on whether the course will continue to be offered
- maintaining similar course times when progressing to a higher level.

Summary of the views of partners as confirmed by inspectors

What partners like:

- effective communication that leads to continuous improvement to the service
- teamwork and the sharing of ideas and resources.

What partners would like to see improved

No views received.

Main inspection findings

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. Since the previous inspection, the corporation has made many improvements to the quality of its provision. Collaboration with specialist subcontractors has improved the learners' experience. The sharing of best practice is particularly effective. Quality assurance arrangements are more thorough and learners' views are actively sought and acted upon. The observation of the teaching and learning process has effectively improved the teaching and learning grade profile.
11. Most of the inspection grades match those in the most recent self-assessment report. The self-assessment report is evaluative and the resulting action plan is detailed. The corporation's managers and staff, and subcontractors work together particularly well to improve the learning experience. Excellent communication ensures that improvements take place very quickly and effectively. The grade awarded by inspectors for equality and diversity is lower than that awarded by the corporation. The equality and diversity action plan recognises the key areas for improvement. However, as yet, these have not been fully implemented.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Most learners on non-accredited provision achieve the course objectives. The proportion of accredited provision is low. Success rates for those learners on courses leading to qualifications in 2008/09 were high at 93%. In 2008/09, Train to Gain success rates and completion of the qualification in the allocated time were satisfactory. In 2009/10, Train to Gain success rates have significantly improved and are now high at 94% and 82% respectively. There are no significant variations in success rates between different groups of learners.
13. Learners develop good social and personal skills. The development of employability skills for learners on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and family learning programmes is good. Learners are enthusiastic about their learning and enjoy attending classes. Many learners improve their levels of confidence and self-belief. Overall, the standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory with examples of good work throughout the provision. For example, learners on a family learning programme exhibited cultural art work at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Train to Gain learners improve their vocational knowledge and skills well.
14. Many learners on social and personal development courses continue on to intermediate or other courses with the corporation and the number of new learners accessing the provision is steadily increasing. However, data to assess the impact of learners' progress towards meeting their future aims are insufficiently developed.

15. Learners feel safe attending courses. Health and safety risk assessments for each class are in place and teachers ensure safe work practices are maintained.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

16. Teaching and learning are good. The corporation has a good understanding of its key strengths and areas for further improvement. Overall, tutors use a good range of interesting and active learning strategies to ensure they meet many learners' individual needs during lessons. Tutors are enthusiastic and use their good subject knowledge to enhance the learning experience. However, there are a number of areas that need further development, for example the sufficiency of, and/or use of, learning resources in a number of classes, the planning of activities to challenge more able learners and the access to, and use of, information learning technologies (ILT) to enhance learning.
17. Good initial assessment of the literacy, numeracy and language abilities of learners, including ESOL learners, effectively ensures that learners are placed on the most appropriate course for their ability. However, this assessment information does not always feed through to course and lesson planning.
18. Overall, assessment and feedback are satisfactory. Workplace assessments are appropriately planned and delivered. Learners on social and personal development courses receive satisfactory informal assessment feedback during classes. All learners have individual learning plans. In most cases these are simple documents designed to show learners' progress over the period of the programme. However, they generally fail to measure progress during the course and do not sufficiently build on the various initial assessments. Many social and personal development learners do not understand why their progress and achievement are monitored and recorded.
19. The range of provision to meet the needs and interests of the different learner groups within the area is good. Courses are monitored effectively and appropriate action is taken to stop courses that are unsuccessful, and develops new ones.
20. There is a strong strategic emphasis on widening participation, particularly involving families in difficult and challenging circumstances. Much innovative work has been successful in engaging vulnerable families, for example the strengthening families and family apprentice programmes.
21. Partnership arrangements are outstanding. The provider has worked very effectively with a range of diverse local partners to develop new programmes and to identify and reach the wider community and more vulnerable groups of learners. Partners include local primary schools, the primary care trust, Connexions, local businesses and large and small local community groups both voluntary and statutory. Most of these partnerships are well established and operate particularly successfully. For example, the strengthening families project works closely and successfully with local schools to identify families who might be experiencing difficulties and offers effective support and learning

opportunities. The corporation and its partners share resources well, develop better ways of working to enhance the provision for the community and continually review the impact of the projects and services they offer.

22. Care, guidance and support are good. Recruitment and interview procedures are carefully planned and managed. Learners have good access to information, advice and guidance through personal telephone calls and individual interviews. Progression routes are well signposted. Learners receive good individual support from teachers. Feedback, from learners to inspectors, confirms how much they appreciate staff's efforts to accommodate their personal and developmental needs. Learners with disabilities particularly value progression and careers advice.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

23. Strategic direction is particularly effective. The City of London Corporation effectively integrates its services, for example legal and social care, to support adult and community learning initiatives. The effectiveness of these services linked to strategic direction is monitored well. Members of the City of London Corporation offer valuable and knowledgeable support. The corporation promotes high standards in a very positive and supportive culture.
24. The collaboration between the corporation and subcontractors is outstanding and is well-focused on improving the quality of the learner experience. Open and effective communication enhances the monitoring of provision. Key staff from partners frequently visit learning centres and seek learners' views on ways to improve the service. Learners are fully aware and appreciative of how their contributions are valued and acted upon. The sharing of best practice is good. Curriculum planning is flexible and the management of resources is very good. A very strong team ethos supports the mission statement well.
25. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Policies and procedures are thorough. Service level agreements for subcontractors on safeguarding are concise and clear. A central list is in place and all staff have received at least introductory safeguarding training. A senior member of the corporation oversees the safeguarding of adult and community learning. Subcontractors have an assigned safeguarding officer and they are supported by main learning centres with an on-site safeguarding officer. Risk assessments are in place for each centre.
26. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. Policies and procedures are thorough and achievement data are collected on different groups of learners. The staff profile matches that of the learner body. The corporation runs a range of provision to support under-represented groups. In 2008/09, the proportion of minority ethnic learners accessing learning was 11 percentage points higher than the proportion of minority ethnic groups within the local community of 16%. Induction and posters in learning centres inform learners of the corporation's equality and diversity statements. Learners are aware of the complaints procedures. Equality and diversity are promoted well on family

learning courses. However, the promotion of equality and diversity to all learners is not fully developed. Lesson plans do not always develop an improved understanding of equality and diversity, for example through the use of subject learning materials. The equality and diversity action plan focuses more on procedures rather than impact on the learner experience. The self-assessment report on equality and diversity is insufficiently detailed.

27. Quality improvement arrangements are good. The self-assessment process is inclusive of users' views. Overall, the self-assessment report is concise and evaluative. The quality improvement action plan is detailed and links well to the self-assessment report. The observation of the teaching and learning process is well established and managed effectively. Greater rigour in the process has resulted in far fewer outstanding grades being awarded. The 2008/09 internal observation of teaching and learning profile states that 88% of lessons graded are good or better. However, inspectors noted a few cases of over-grading and insufficient focus on learning in internal teaching and learning records. The formal process of monitoring course report action plans is insufficiently systematic.
28. The City of London Corporation effectively manages its resources to secure value for money. Outcomes for learners are good. The monitoring of the service is particularly effective. The sharing and management of resources and the flexibility of the service to meet learners' needs are good although not all classrooms are big enough. Access to information and learning technology is not available in all classrooms and, when available, its use by all teachers is not yet fully developed.

Information about the inspection

29. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's Head of Adult and Community Learning, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the Skills Funding Agency, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
30. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the City of London Corporation. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

City of London ACL

Learning types: 14-16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships. Social and personal development: all adult safeguarded provision

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	0	0	0
Part-time learners (* includes all learners)	594	51	543
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2		
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	3		
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
A3. Do learners feel safe?	2		
A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	na		
A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	na		
B. Quality of provision	2	2	2
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1		
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
C. Leadership and management	2	2	2
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1		
C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	2		
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2		
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2		
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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