

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Royal Borough of Kensington
and Chelsea
Date of visit: 28 November 2007

Context

This monitoring visit follows a reinspection in May 2006, at which the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) was graded as satisfactory for leadership and management, and for its arrangements for quality assurance and equality of opportunity. Provision was judged satisfactory for hospitality, sport, leisure and travel. Currently, RBKC holds a contract with Central London Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and subcontracts all its adult and community learning provision between Kensington and Chelsea further education college (the college), which delivers 57% of the provision, a variety of other local voluntary sector organisations, and some local schools.

Adult and community learning is the responsibility of the adult and family learning team located within the community learning division of the family and children service business group. The head of adult and family learning reports to the director of community learning and has a management team of three staff.

In total, there were 6,144 enrolments from learners in 2006-07. The subject sector areas with the highest proportion of learners were arts, media and publishing courses, preparation for life and work, and languages, literature and culture courses. RBKC has focused the current provision more on preparation for life and work with a move away from more leisure based courses. The value of the college contract has decreased by 20% and enrolments have decreased. The college was unable to meet its adjusted enrolment targets. Additional pressures on the service arise from the lack of suitable accommodation and the demise of some of the local community providers.

Achievement and standards

What improvements have there been in the attendance, retention and achievement rates of learners?	Significant progress
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The reinspection report noted the overall poor attendance rate of 52% in 2004-05. Improvements in attendance rates have been significant. In 2005-06 the rate increased to 64% and this improved further in 2006-07 to 87%. RBKC have worked hard with its subcontractors, setting clear targets for attendance and monitoring these appropriately through the year. Support has been given to tutors in improving the quality of the provision and in better managing learner attendance. Data on attendance are now effectively gathered and used to monitor performance. RBKC recognise that improved recording of attendance by its subcontractors has contributed to the improved attendance rates.

At the time of the reinspection in May 2006, RBKC had no arrangements to effectively measure the success rate of its learners. Achievement was largely linked to the completion of a learner's period of study. Retention and achievement rates for 2005-06 were 79% and there has been a reasonable improvement to 89% in 2006-07.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in introducing recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA)?	Reasonable progress
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All the learning commissioned by RBKC is non accredited. The service has made reasonable progress since the reinspection in establishing effective arrangements to recognise and record the prior achievement of its learners and to credit their achievements whilst in learning. RBKC has worked closely and effectively with its main subcontractor in using the college's experience to develop a RARPA model. Adult and Community Learning (ACL) tutors were supported in attending RARPA training and the implementation of RARPA is a contractual requirement for all subcontractors.

A RARPA audit was conducted by the service in February 2007. Implementation across the courses sampled was variable. Whilst some 90% of learners received an initial assessment, over 40% of courses sampled had no clear progress review arrangements in place. Most providers did, however, have records or recognition of learner progression. RBKC is currently developing an interesting model to quantify RARPA outcomes. All courses from September 2007 are required to identify six learning outcomes. These are recorded on a commercially developed database which is being used to track learner's initial assessment and their progress in achieving the

learning goals. The service aims to provide a measure of success, based on achievement of at least four of the six goals, by which it can compare its learner's achievements across providers. The goals are, however, largely at course level with limited opportunity to accredit additional individual learning goals. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these arrangements.

Leadership and management

How has analysis of the performance of different learner groups improved?	Reasonable progress
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At the reinspection the comparative analysis of learner's performance was not being routinely conducted to establish trends. Progress in resolving this area for improvement has been reasonable. The services community learning monitoring report, published in October 2007, is particularly detailed and well presented. Extensive information is available on the profile of learners analysed by, for example, subject specialist area, area of residence and subcontractor. RBKC understand well the characteristics of its learners and is using the information appropriately to inform the planning of provision. For example, they have recognised the effectiveness of their community-based subcontractors to attract hard to reach and priority learning groups. This is influencing the plans for commissioning where a greater proportion of funding is now being allocated to the most successful provision. Progress in using data to analyse the outcomes of learning against learner characteristics is less well developed. The service is now routinely considering the attendance and retention of learners by ethnic group, gender and declared disability. However further analysis is currently limited by the lack of RARPA outcome data. The service recognises this and plans to introduce a more detailed report at the end of 2007-08

How have procedures for the quality assurance of providers improved?	Significant progress
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At the time of the re-inspection, quality assurance was satisfactory overall but procedures were insufficiently established in community providers. The formal quality assurance manual, which had just been introduced, is now well developed and used by all providers. It is detailed with clear directions for all procedures. All providers produce self-assessment reports under the guidance of RBKC, which also gives advice on the self-assessment process. Course documentation is now standardised across providers. Tutors and providers participate fully in cluster groups meetings where good practice is shared. Action plan meetings monitor quality improvement of the provision. Observations of teaching and learning are now well established and are managed effectively. RBKC has arranged for suitable training to be given to tutors and managers. Contract management is extremely thorough. The tendering process is stringent and formal meetings check the quality of the provision as well as performance against targets.

How has course paperwork improved to monitor the provision effectively?	Reasonable progress.
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The previous reinspection identified that the course paperwork for hospitality, sport, leisure and travel was ineffectively used. RBKC has now implemented good quality standardised documentation across the provision. RBKC has trained tutors in the use of documentation for the Skills for Life provision and this was well received by staff. Staff training materials included good examples of both hard and soft targets. The implementation of RARPA paperwork was followed up with an audit and RBKC has informed providers of the action points which need to be completed. The induction pack for new tutors contains very comprehensive information.

How have observations of teaching and learning improved to manage the provision?	Significant progress
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At the last reinspection, the observation of teaching and learning (OTL) in some community provision was judged to be ineffective. OTL is now effective and well established. Guidance given to providers contains a very detailed description of the observation process with clarification of the grades and grade descriptors. The paperwork for recording these observations is well designed and used appropriately. The schedule of observations contains a good representative sample of lessons and ensures that each tutor is observed every two years. The observers are appropriately qualified and trained. The ACL quality manager meets with observers to review the observation process and to discuss framework grades. Appropriate moderation of grades takes place between observers who also attend observation of lessons at the college. The observation reports are detailed with a good balance of judgements around learning, teaching and attainment. The grades awarded are consistent with the judgements. Suggestions to improve teaching practice are relevant and supportive to tutors.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How has self-assessment and improvement planning developed?	Reasonable progress
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The self-assessment process in place at the re-inspection had improved and was judged to be satisfactory. The self assessment report was judged by inspectors to be a broadly accurate reflection of the provision. The self-assessment process is now well established and used effectively to improve the provision. The latest self-assessment report is fully informed by reports separately produced by each subcontractor. RKBC gives advice and guidance to the subcontractors to assist them. However, some improvements have yet to be evaluated with respect to their impact on the learner. The post-inspection action plan clearly identifies actions to address weaknesses and this continues to be closely monitored in the latest plan. The monitoring includes setting realistic time-bound targets that are effective in bringing

into place the improvements. In the themes reviewed by inspectors, their judgements on progress made since the last inspection generally agree with the judgements in the action plan. The action plan is realistic in identifying what further work is to be done.