

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Adult and Community Learning

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Community Learning

Description of the provider

1. Adult and community learning in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) 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 and an administrator.
2. Currently, the Royal Borough holds a contract with Central London Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and subcontracts the majority of its adult and community learning provision between Kensington and Chelsea further education college (the college), which delivers 51% of the provision, and twelve local voluntary or community sector organisations. A small family learning provision is also delivered, in conjunction with a number of local schools and children's centres.
3. There were 7,155 enrolments from learners in 2007-08. The subject sector areas with the highest proportion of learners were arts, media and publishing, preparation for life and work, and languages, literature and culture. At the time of inspection, there were 633 learners following a variety of community learning courses.
4. The Royal Borough has some of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the country as well as two wards that are among the most deprived 10 per cent in the country. The Indices of Deprivation 2007, identify wards in North Kensington and parts of Earls Court and West Chelsea which present challenges such as low income, relatively high unemployment and poor health. The largest sectors of employment are in estate agency and business activities, which provide 21% of local jobs; wholesale and retail (21%); and hotels and restaurants (17%). According to the 2001 census, approximately 21 per cent of RBKC's population is from a minority ethnic group, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good : Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good : Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good : Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good : Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good : Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good : Grade 2

Sector subject area

Community Learning	Good : Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade2

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management are all good, as are measures to ensure equality of opportunity. Provision in community learning is also good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade2

6. RBKC has good capacity to improve. Since provision was inspected in 2005, and re-inspected in 2006, the service has worked successfully to deal with weaknesses identified. Attendance rates have risen overall from 63% in 2005/06 to around 90% in 2007/08. The management of provider contracts has been considerably strengthened, and an effective commissioning process is now in place to govern the allocation of contracts. Collection of performance data relating to different learner groups has improved significantly, but some data analysis is still not sufficiently thorough. RBKC makes good use of feedback from employers and learners, and comments are used to inform self-assessment and development planning.
7. The self-assessment process is inclusive, well established and generally well-understood amongst the community providers. The service provides good levels of support to providers in preparing and editing their contributory reports. Accuracy of these provider self-assessment reports has improved in recent years, though some providers still over-grade provision. The overall service self-assessment report was generally accurate and suitably critical. Inspectors agreed with grades for all aspects of provision. Providers are highly supportive of the service's improvement strategies and communications, and involvement in development planning is generally good. Individual community providers have been successfully encouraged to take responsibility for their performance against a range of realistic targets set during the contracting process. Service managers create and communicate clear links between strategic aims and operational activities.

Key strengths

- Good development of personal, educational and employment skills
- High levels of individual support for learners
- Particularly effective strategic planning
- Highly productive partnerships
- Particularly effective actions to broaden opportunities for minority groups

Key areas for improvement

- The proportion of good or better teaching amongst community partners
- Coherence of progression planning
- Co-ordination of advice and guidance services
- Accommodation and facilities in some community venues

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good : Grade 2

8. Achievements and standards of work are good. The self-assessment report broadly identifies the strengths and areas for improvement in achievements and standards found by inspectors.
9. The development of personal, educational and employment skills is good. Learners gain much improved confidence, attain good standards of work and develop good practical skills towards employment. Learners enjoy sessions and develop valuable skills relevant to their daily lives and these, in turn, help them to gain more confidence. Those attending programmes on job seeking and interviews frequently acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to enable them to gain appropriate employment. Learners on entry level ESOL and literacy courses master the essential writing, speaking and listening skills they need most urgently. ICT learners are keen to apply their newly acquired computing skills at home or at work, while those over the age of 50 benefit from classes on creative writing and philosophy to remain mentally active. Most learners are highly motivated and enjoy their courses.
10. With advice from tutors or peers, many learners on community programmes remain at the centre they are familiar with and progress on to the next level or to other courses. About 90% courses are non-accredited. Retention and success rates are high for accredited provision undertaken at community-based providers, at 92% and 90% respectively. The system for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) has now been successfully implemented across most of the non-accredited community learning provision. Achievement rates overall for these courses in the first year of recording are 77%. However, not all the RARPA data is fully captured and the planning of learning by a minority of teachers does not always effectively build on learners' prior achievements or recognise fully individual learner's broader aims. Managers at RBKC have recognised this as an area for further development.

Quality of provision

Good : Grade 2

11. Teaching and learning is good overall. Tutors are very sensitive to the needs of their learners and treat them with respect. They plan carefully and, in the best sessions, they address very effectively the differing needs and levels within the group, taking into account precisely what learners already know or can do. Not all sessions, though, are of such a high standard. In some venues the facilities are cramped, but tutors are particularly skilled at creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere and making the best of the resources and accommodation available.
12. There is insufficient good teaching amongst community providers, though no inadequate teaching and learning was observed. Kensington and Chelsea College offers good teaching and learning for adult and community learners. RBKC manages the observation process of teaching and learning for all community partners, and appropriately devolves

responsibility for observation and other aspects of quality assurance to the college for courses delivered there. The lesson observation system employed amongst community partners is inclusive and well supported by tutors and centre managers. Tutors and managers have received considerable support from the borough in ways to improve teaching and learning. Training of all observers has been thorough and well received and standardisation of observations has resulted in grades being changed. Observers are drawn from across the provider group, and observation outcomes are appropriately shared within centres. Inspectors found that the grades awarded were generally accurate. However, feedback from some observations is insufficiently focused on learning and ways to make further improvements.

13. The approach to meeting learners' interests and needs is good. Through effective partnership working with the college and eleven voluntary and community organisations, the service engages with a wide range of disadvantaged groups. It works very productively, for example, with a mental health charity to deliver ICT, floristry and catering programmes. The delivery patterns and location of ACL are responsive to the needs of learners, although there is little provision in the evenings. Through referrals, word-of-mouth recommendation and advertising, demand for existing provision is high, with waiting lists for many programmes. Within both the accredited and non-accredited provision, the focus is increasingly on developing learners' employability skills. Employers and business groups are well represented in planning forums and discussions. Feedback from learners indicates a high level of satisfaction with the range and nature of programmes.
14. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Individual support for learners is good. Once enrolled, initial assessment arrangements are used effectively to identify support needs and aims. This information is generally used well to inform planning and teaching. The provision of additional support is generally good, and is particularly effective where learners have complex needs. Volunteers are used very effectively at many provider partners to support learners. Learners value very highly the individual support they receive from their tutors.
15. The provision of advice and guidance is satisfactory. At each of the community settings, prospective learners receive good guidance about programmes on offer at that particular centre. If appropriate, they are directed to provision elsewhere. However, as acknowledged by the service, a coherent system of initial advice and guidance, to ensure that all learners are made aware of all the opportunities across the borough, remains an area for further development.

Leadership and management

Good : Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good : Grade 2

16. Leadership and management are good. Strategic management is particularly effective. The service has been well aligned to meet the strategic priorities of the borough and its residents, particularly those in areas of deprivation. There is particularly effective engagement with and promotion of economic regeneration and employability agendas. Service managers have very good links with other council services and the head of service has direct involvement with numerous council policy-making bodies. Strategic planning is clearly and appropriately translated into development plans and operational documents. Provider partners are well informed about key strategic aims, and there is good consultation around long-term service planning.
17. Partnership arrangements are highly productive. The service has been effective in capacity-building amongst community providers for the benefit of communities and learners. RBKC's relationship with the college is positive, and communications are good. Constructive and thorough planning and reviews of provision between the service and college lead to continuous improvement of provision. Smaller community providers have received high levels of support in meeting service contract and quality demands. Many provider partners have received assistance with funding bids, staff training and networking to sustain or develop their services to learners. RBKC has been successful in obtaining a range of targeted funding to support projects and development initiatives amongst partners. A useful adult learning forum is chaired by the service head, and gives providers, employer representatives and other organisations good opportunities for sharing good practice, joint planning and resource-pooling.
18. Actions to broaden opportunities for minority groups are particularly effective. Strategies to increase participation from areas of deprivation and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very successful. Challenging targets are set for each partner to increase minority group numbers. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is over double that of the local area. The provider works well with a wide range of specialist organisations who deliver programmes close to areas of need. The provider is active and successful in working with local organisations providing learning opportunities to those with particularly complex needs.
19. Equality of opportunity is good. RBKC has clear equality policies and procedures and these are shared well with partners. The procedures for safeguarding vulnerable learners meet current government requirements, and the service draws appropriately on established council resources for guidance on safeguarding. In addition, the service liaises closely with a number of specialist organisations with particular expertise in safeguarding, for example, in working with adult learners with learning difficulties.
20. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The borough has a very diverse mix of cultures. Partnership staff have a good understanding of the needs of their learners and are mindful of the sensitivities of some minority groups and adapt delivery of programmes accordingly. Data is collected and used to monitor minority group performance. However,

the data is not sufficiently analysed to evaluate differences in group or partner performance. There is no provider equality of opportunity action plan, though equality matters are treated in the service development plan.

21. Measures to provide for quality assurance are broadly satisfactory, with an appropriate range of policies and procedures implemented. Responsibility for quality assurance of college-based provision is appropriately devolved to the college. Community partners have a generally good understanding of RBKC's quality systems and expectations, and there has been a good level of support from service managers in developing quality systems in smaller providers. Guidance on key processes is clear and comprehensive. Course documentation is standardised across most providers, and use of quality mechanisms is monitored. However, in a minority of the community providers, there is inconsistent application of some systems. Service managers have identified this as an area for further improvement. A relatively new system of tutor cluster groups promotes good practice sharing and professional updating.
22. Contract management is thorough. The tendering process is now more stringent and formal meetings check the quality of the provision as well as performance against targets. A comprehensive commissioning process was undertaken to ensure that provision meets community needs.
23. Progression routes across the borough are insufficiently coherent. Whilst most partners provide good progression information relating to their own centres, learners cannot access clear cross-borough information. Borough maps of provision list all providers, but not all learning centres. Many community partners offer learners insufficient information about possible progression routes to the college and to accredited courses. Some providers have professional IAG staff, but learners at the other community providers are less well served. Information is currently insufficient regarding borough-wide progression. Planning is at an advanced stage to establish clearer funded progression routes to college provision, with a pilot scheme about to commence.
24. Within the borough, there are significant difficulties for some partners to acquire suitable accommodation. Of the 15 major learning venues, four have insufficient access for those with limited mobility. Some classrooms are overcrowded or are poorly ventilated, and some venues have inadequate social areas. The service has identified this as an area for improvement.

What learners like:

- the high levels of support from tutors
- knowledgeable tutors
- the location of provision
- the positive atmosphere in learning centres
- approachable staff

What learners think could improve:

- clearer information about provision at other centres
- better classroom accommodation
- fewer waiting lists
- more ESOL classes
- improved opportunities to take qualifications