
ADULT LEARNING INSPECTION

Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Stephen Harker, Education Portfolio

Responsible Director(s) - Geoff Pennington, Director of Education

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the recent inspection of adult and community learning by the Adult Learning Inspectorate.

Summary

2. The Authority's Adult and Community Learning provision was inspected in February 2004 by the Adult Learning Inspectorate.
3. As anticipated, the inspection highlighted some weaknesses within the service but also identified many strengths – in particular Family Learning, which was categorised as grade one service. The full report has now been published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate website (www.ali.gov.uk) and is also attached at **Appendix 1**
4. The key issues emerging from the report are: the service has clear strategic management; there are good partnership arrangements; there are very good collaborative strategies to widen participation and support disadvantaged learners; there is inadequate curriculum management of subcontracted provision; there is poor management of sub-contractors; there is insufficient updating of Council policies relevant to equality of opportunity; there is inadequate quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision; there is an inadequate system for the collection and analysis of data.
5. Despite some of these issues the inspectors received a very positive report from learners. Inspectors reported that achievement in Family Learning is outstanding; in visual and performing arts, the learners' work is good; in ICT the learners' achievements are satisfactory; in English, language and communications the standard of achievement is satisfactory; there are good specialist resources.

Information and Analysis

6. The inspection took place between 2nd and 7th February 2004.
7. The inspection team comprised 6 inspectors totalling 38 inspection days in all. The inspectors interviewed 139 learners; 29 staff; 25 partners and other organisations. They also visited 21 sites where learning is delivered.

8. Inspectors use a 5-point scale to summarise their judgements, about the quality and provision in curriculum areas; the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the 5 grades are:

grade 1 – outstanding
grade 2 – good
grade 3 – satisfactory
grade 4 – unsatisfactory
grade 5 – very weak
9. The inspectors judged the approach to equality of opportunity as good but the quality assurance arrangements to be unsatisfactory.
10. The quality of Family Learning was judged to be outstanding. The quality of visual and performing arts was judged to be satisfactory and the quality of provision for ICT and languages to be unsatisfactory.
11. The inspection highlighted weaknesses in provision which is contracted-out, this is the part of the service which is delivered on our behalf by a network of schools and other adult learning providers. In contrast it identified strengths in provision which is directly delivered by the service (i.e. Family Learning). Due to the significant difference in quality evident between the two types of delivery, and in order to improve the quality of provision which is currently contracted out, the whole service will be delivered on a ‘direct delivery’ basis from September 2004.
12. Due to the number of identified weaknesses, the service will be re-inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate. The most likely date for this is February 2005. We are currently working with the ALI and the Learning and Skills Council to improve the quality of the provision and initial meetings with the ALI suggests we are on course to significantly improve our performance.

Outcome of Consultation

13. No consultation was involved in the preparation of this report.

Legal Implications

14. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

15. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in

its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

16. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

Decision Deadline

17. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

Key Decisions

18. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Recommendation

19. It is recommended that Cabinet note the contents of this report.

Reasons

20. The recommendations are supported because Cabinet need to be informed of the outcome of the Adult Learning Inspectorate inspection of adult and community learning which took place in February 2004.

Geoff Pennington, Director of Education

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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