

Wandsworth Council Lifelong Learning

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53152

Name of lead inspector: Tony Noonan HMI

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Type of provider: Local Authority

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Information about the provider

1. Wandsworth Council Lifelong Learning (the Service) is part of the borough's Children's Services Department. The Service has 26 staff, with overall responsibility held by the Head of Lifelong Learning and three senior managers. The Service derived funding from a number of sources, predominantly the Central London Learning and Skills Council. Around 90% of provision is sub-contracted to four main partners and approximately 30 smaller, community-based organisations.
2. Most provision falls into the learning for social and personal development category. The major subjects are: art, media and publishing; literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); sport and leisure; languages; information and communication technology (ICT); health and social care; retail and commercial enterprise; business; and family learning. Employer provision is offered through Train to Gain programmes and a small number of apprenticeships.
3. Wandsworth is an inner London borough with a population of 282,000. Nearly half are aged between 20 and 39 which is above the London average. The proportion of residents of minority ethnic heritage is one third, the largest groups comprising White other (11%), Black Caribbean (4%), Indian (3%) and Black African (3%). In the 2007 English Indices of Deprivation, the borough is ranked 144 out of the 354 local authorities, with pockets of deprivation in areas of Roehampton, Battersea and Tooting.
4. The borough's unemployment rate has increased over the past year and is currently 4.1%, which is below the London average. Wandsworth has around one half of the working age population qualified with degree-level qualifications, which is twice the national average. However, 13% of the working age population has no qualifications, the same as national figures.
5. The following organisations offer learning opportunities on behalf of the Service:
 - South Thames College
 - Putney School of Art and Design
 - Southfields Community College
 - The Library Service.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Adult learner provision Learning for social and personal development	11,125 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	242 learners 19 apprentices

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 1**

Aspect	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Learning for social and personal development	
Sport and leisure	2
Art, media and publishing	2
Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages	2
Family learning	1

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of provision is good. Learners' outcomes are good and most complete their courses successfully. A high standard of learners' work is evident in all subject areas. They gain many personal and social benefits, thoroughly enjoy attending sessions and attend frequently. Many learners acquire valuable skills that are useful in their everyday lives. Although most learners are content just to develop their skills, some would like more opportunities to gain recognised qualifications through their studies. Many

learners progress to the next level of course, but this opportunity is not available in all subjects and learners' destinations are not collated systematically.

7. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors maintain interest by varying tasks and ensuring the work is relevant. However, the use of information learning technologies (ILT) to enliven sessions is inconsistent. Learners receive good support in teaching sessions; they highly appreciate childcare support when it is available. Individual achievement targets for learners set by teaching staff are often too vague to be really helpful. The achievements of learners are celebrated very enthusiastically by staff. Equality and diversity are promoted well, although tutors miss opportunities to raise these topics during sessions.
8. Senior managers are highly successful in securing funding to develop adult and community education. The Service has developed a broad range of high quality programmes across the borough that attracts increasing numbers of learners. Outstanding partnership working with the main partners, coupled with strong collaboration with voluntary and community organisations, ensures that much of this work benefits local residents living in deprived areas.
9. Managers and staff have worked hard to continue to improve the service and tackle the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The very clear strategic direction is fully supported by staff. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous. Budgets are controlled rigorously and the provision offers outstanding value for money. Inspectors judge the Service's capacity to make and sustain improvements as outstanding.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners' retention and success rates have increased over time and are high for programmes leading to personal and social development and for those meeting the needs of employers.
- The overall standard of learners' work is high. Many learners gain in self-confidence, developing literacy, numeracy and other skills to help them in their everyday lives and prepare for employment.
- Learners derive much fun and enjoyment from their sessions and attendance rates are high. Many progress to more advanced programmes, although suitable progression routes are not available in all subject areas.
- Learners feel safe in the centres. Safeguarding procedures are good and fully meet government requirements.
- Teaching and learning are good. Rigorous lesson observation procedures lead to improvements in teaching. However, not all teachers appreciate the relevance of using ILT to promote learning and the use of a virtual learning environment is underdeveloped.
- The range of provision is outstanding and fully meets the needs of learners. This is exemplified by the steady rise in participation rates by learners, many of whom live in deprived areas of the borough.

- Partnership working is exemplary. Managers and staff develop strong and productive relationships with a very wide range of providers, leading to many innovative and flexible programmes. Progression to higher level courses is possible in some subjects, but not all, and staff do not collect learners' destination information systematically.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners of family learning programmes in particular benefit from arrangements for childcare and subsidised travel. However, individual learning plans often lack specific and measurable individual targets.
- Leadership and management are good. The Service has a very clear strategic direction. Highly motivated staff work tirelessly to ensure sufficient funding is available to attract more learners. Value for money is outstanding.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good, although its profile in sessions is inconsistent. Many learners are from groups that traditionally do not participate in lifelong learning. Learners' achievements are celebrated vigorously.
- Curriculum management is good. Quality improvement plans set challenging targets that are regularly monitored and reviewed. Quality assurance procedures are effective and the Service is very well positioned to continue to make improvements.

What does Wandsworth Council Lifelong Learning need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress by ensuring that specific, measurable achievement targets are agreed with all learners.
- Enliven teaching and learning by extending the use of ILT in all subject areas and developing the virtual learning environment for tutors and learners.
- Improve teaching and learning further by ensuring equality and diversity issues are promoted more regularly in all subjects.
- Increase the value and benefit of provision to learners by increasing the opportunities to gain formal accreditation where appropriate.
- Extend the options for learners to progress to higher level programmes where appropriate and improve the collation and analysis of learners' destination data when they complete programmes.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the social aspects of learning and making new friends
- the knowledgeable tutors who make sessions interesting and enjoyable
- being able to help their children with homework and gaining a better understanding of how English and mathematics are taught in schools

- courses that keep their brain active and body fit
- gaining self-confidence that helps them to get a job
- learning new words and pronouncing them correctly, so their children are not embarrassed any more when they speak English
- the fantastic community atmosphere
- the personal support they get from all the staff.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the frequency of courses, because sometimes learners have to wait before the next course starts and sessions stop during holidays
- the amount of car parking at centres
- the fear of having courses cancelled due to funding cuts
- the number of courses that lead to qualifications
- the expensive fees.