

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: November 2009	Meeting Name: Executive Member for Children's Services and Education
Report title:		Outcomes of Adult Learning Service OFSTED Inspection	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Environment and Housing	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Executive Member for Children's Services and Education notes the findings of the inspection.
2. That the Executive Member for Children's Services and Education notes the resulting action plan and the proposed bids to fund it.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Southwark Adult Learning Service (ALS) delivers a programme of adult and family learning, including learning leading to qualifications. The service is funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) by means of an annual grant as well as through funds from other sources secured by way of application. The Council makes no financial contribution to the service.
4. Adult Learning is subject to inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The most recent inspection took place in week commencing May 11th this year and this report sets out the main findings of the inspection and the resultant action plan.
5. Considerable work has been undertaken in the last two years to improve ALS. This has included a major re-structuring of the service, the implementation of external verification and consequent findings; improved financial management and a strengthened approach to the commissioning of third party delivery. Progress has also been made in diversifying the funding of the service, with successful bids to a number of sources including one for £750,000 from the LSC's capital fund.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Inspection regime and judgements

6. The OFSTED inspection is applied to all LSC funded adult and family learning and replaces the former ALI (Adult Learning Inspection) regime.
7. Inspectors use a four point scale to summarise their judgements about Achievement and Standards, Quality of Provision, Leadership and Management and overall effectiveness of provision. Leadership and Management also includes a grade for Equality of Opportunity.

8. Four grades are identified for each area inspected. These are:

- Grade 1 = outstanding
- Grade 2 = good
- Grade 3 = satisfactory
- Grade 4 = inadequate

Scope of the inspection

9. 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 LSC or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.
10. In addition to reporting on the overall areas identified above, this inspection focused on specialist provision in the following subjects:
- Arts, media and publishing
 - English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
 - Literacy and numeracy
 - Community learning
 - Family learning
11. The ALS was last fully inspected in February 2004. All areas were judged to be "Satisfactory" with the exception of Leadership and Management which were rated "Inadequate". This element of the service was re-inspected in May 2005 and was found to be "Satisfactory".

Overall judgements

12. The Overall Effectiveness of Provision was judged to be Satisfactory, as were all subject areas inspected. Achievement and Standards were also judged to be satisfactory, with learner's achievement of their own personal learning goals being "at least" satisfactory. The inspectors noted that overall success rates had significantly improved since the previous inspection, especially for accredited provision.
13. The inspectors also considered that capacity to make further improvements is "Satisfactory". The report highlights the significant improvements made and the distance travelled since the previous inspection. The inspectors noted that success rates had significantly improved, indeed, they are now above the national average, a comprehensive quality framework has been introduced, partnership working was seen as flexible and effective in terms of capacity building, the service offer has been expanded geographically, significant funding secured for the refurbishment of the Thomas Calton Centre and communication and accountability within the service improved following a re-organisation.
14. The appointment of a new service manager is highlighted within the report as being key to clarifying roles and responsibilities and increasing accountability within the service. It was also noted that senior management successfully promote independence in management decision making to the team leaders.

Outcomes – areas of good practice

15. The inspectors judged all areas of provision to be “Satisfactory”. The following were identified as areas of strength:
 - Good personal support for learners
 - Strong internal and external partnerships to promote social inclusion
 - Strong commitment to improve the quality of provision
 - Good staff development
16. In addition to this, within the overall grades, the following areas were described as “Good”.
 - Arts, media and publishing – good development of practical skills
 - Arts, media and publishing – good specialist advice offered by tutors
 - English for speakers of other languages – good support for learners in learning sessions
 - Literacy and numeracy – good support for learners
 - Community learning – good standards of work
 - Community learning – good teaching for health and fitness courses
 - Family learning – good planning of courses and teaching to meet learners’ needs
 - Family learning – good partnerships to support learners
17. Although these outcomes were insufficient to achieve an overall rating of “Good” in any of the areas inspected, it is a sound basis for further improvement and indicates the service’s capacity to improve. It is especially encouraging that support for learners was consistently identified as being of a “Good” standard, identifying progress against one of ALS’ key objectives of delivering a learner-centred service.

Outcomes – areas for improvement

18. As the service secured an overall rating of “Satisfactory”, the inspectors also identified key areas for improvement. These included:
 - Quality of teaching and learning – the inspectors judged too much teaching and learning to be no better than satisfactory
 - Risk assessment of learners’ activities was assessed as requiring improvement
 - Quality assurance systems require more robust implementation
 - Capture and use of management information requires improvement
19. The service management had identified these areas as requiring further action prior to the inspection and were referred to in the self-assessment. The inspectors acknowledged the thoroughness and accuracy of the self-assessment.
20. These areas are addressed in detail in the post-inspection action plan, which is appended.

Post-inspection action plan

21. The post inspection action plan has been prepared by the ALS leadership and management team in consultation with tutors and administrative staff. Management and curriculum teams have taken account of the inspection findings and identified action for sustaining recognised strengths and correcting or addressing areas for improvement.
22. The plan links with the Southwark Adult Learning and Skills Strategy, the Southwark Family Learning Strategy and the Southwark Skills for Life Strategy.
23. The plan will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated as the work progresses and responsible officers have been identified for each task. Judgements about the impact of actions, improvements made and progress achieved will be key to a successful outcome for the next inspection and any follow-up visits from OFSTED.
24. The plan is designed to build upon areas of strength and to make significant improvements in other areas. There will be some financial implications arising from the plan and these are addressed in the financial implications section of this report.
25. There are two main areas of action required by OFSTED. These are to improve the quality of teaching and to effectively capture, use and learn from management information.
26. Both are fundamental to delivering other improvements and to ensuring the success and progression of learners and accurately reporting this to funders.
27. Key actions from the plan include:
 - Implementing a quality assurance calendar of actions and conducting a programme of quality assurance briefings
 - Raising tutor awareness of “excellent teaching” through observation and the publication of internal “Excellent Teaching” policy
 - Reviewing the quality of learning materials
 - Exploring work shadowing opportunities with “OFSTED Excellent” providers
 - Revising the quality monitoring procedures for sub-contracted partners
 - Strengthening the management information system (MIS) team and seeking financial resource to fund MIS improvement
 - Recruiting more specialist tutors to sustain and develop the specialist advice already available within the service
 - Developing clear progression routes between curriculum areas

- Identifying information and learning technology (ILT) needs and arranging training for Skills for Life (SFL) tutors
- Introduce evening ESOL classes and expand programme of ESOL generally
- Developing MIS to analyse SFL data and utilising this information to plan, deliver and evaluate provision

COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

28. The ALS delivers learning programmes which are responsive to the needs of local people. The majority of its users are from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and are women. Many of its users are people with no or few qualifications and ALS acts as a way back into formal education and to work.
29. The OFSTED inspection judged the service's approach to "Equality of Opportunity" to be "Satisfactory", noting that tutors treat learners fairly, learners treat each other with respect and that new learners are welcomed. It was also noted that some learning sessions particularly demonstrate a commitment to diversity, with, for example, learners researching black potters for Black History Month and African fashion courses being offered.
30. Learner feedback from the inspection highlighted that the service provides opportunities to develop or regain confidence and the positive impact of family learning on both adults and children was also noted.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

31. The ALS is entirely funded through an annual grant from the LSC as well as through successful bids to other external funding streams. The Council makes no contribution to the revenue costs of the service.
32. Most actions identified in the plan will be funded via the core budget of the LSC grant. However, additional funding will be required to complete all of the work identified in the plan.
33. The two areas requiring funding are;
 - Improving the quality of teaching and learning – costs are estimated at £200,000.
 - Effectively capturing and utilising management information – costs are estimated at £250,000.
34. Application is being submitted to the LSC for funding to meet the costs of improving the quality of teaching and learning. This will focus on staff development, identifying and implementing excellent practice and intensive continuing professional development for tutors in particular.
35. A internal capital bid will be prepared for securing the costs of upgrading MIS.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Law, Communities & Governance (WW1009)

36. This report has been reviewed by the Director of Communities, Law & Governance who has advised that there are no legal or policy implications arising from it.

Finance Director (ENV/ET/290909)

37. There is no provision in the Council's current capital or revenue budget to fund the proposed action plan. The capital bid of £250k, for upgrading the management information systems, will be considered as part of the Capital Refresh, which is expected to be considered by the Executive in January 2010. The approval of this report cannot pre-empt that process.
38. The implementation of the improvement plan for teaching and learning will cost around £200,000 and will only proceed, if adequate funding is secured from LSC or other external sources. However, it is understood that the delay will not preclude from continuing to deliver the service.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
1	Southwark Adult Learning Service OFSTED report 2009
2	Post Inspection Action Plan

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Gill Davies, Strategic Director of Environment and Housing	
Report Author	Adrian Whittle, Head of Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure	
Version	Final	
Dated	November 2009	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Executive Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer	November 17 2009	