



Children's Services

Lifelong learning Technical Education

1. Executive Summary

The Technical Education section, being a curricular area within the Lifelong Learning Service, shares the overall aims of the Service.

The section aims, by providing a range of learning opportunities within the general fields of technology and creative arts, to meet the learning needs of local people and those living or working within the LSC London East area, to include the development of:

Confidence in the use of tools and creative processes.

Access to social interaction within a safe, inclusive and stimulating educational environment.

Skills that will enhance personal and community development, self confidence and achievement as necessary prerequisites to formal educational and economic progression.

Courses to meet LSC objectives in raising local skills levels to Level 2 and above in order to meet the vocational learning needs of local people and reduce the skills shortages that impede local and national economic development.

Tower Hamlets Lifelong Learning Service (LLS) a section within the Children's Services Directorate has a remit to provide learning opportunities for the local community and, under Learning and Skills Council requirements, an education service to those from outside the borough boundaries. A main focus of the lifelong learning service is to widen participation in adult learning. Therefore, key to the promotion of equality of opportunity is to ensure that local people have access to learning opportunities appropriate to their social, economic and personal learning needs.

Current assumptions and practices can set up barriers that prevent access and can discriminate against people on the grounds of race, gender, faith or religious belief, sexual orientation and disability. A main focus of the service is therefore to widen participation in it's overall target group: those people of 16 years and upwards.

Technical education classes include strong elements of mutual support amongst learners that extend beyond ethnic, cultural and religious parameters.

Learners are encouraged to (and do) meet one other outside of scheduled class times to, for example, help maintain each other cars or visit learners who have been absent through sickness. The Tutor cohort reflects a diverse ethnic and gender profile and learners are of mixed age ranges and abilities. It is recognised that the feelings of group affiliation engendered by a shared learning experience and facilitated by Tutors can have a very positive influence upon attendance and retention, -factors also valued by funding stakeholders.

Where the learning objective is ongoing a "club" atmosphere develops amongst learners, many of whom are from diverse backgrounds.

2. Data Collection & Consultation

Data Collection

QLS Management Information System
Student Surveys
Learner Voice Survey
LSC national, London-wide and local data

Consultation

Termly learner surveys are carried out and resultant information feeding the quality assurance system of the service and impacting upon quality improvement and planning at all levels. The current survey however is not directly linked to equalities target groups.

Courses have been created as a result of consultation; the technical section has linked with Account 3 (Women into Employment) to create a car maintenance course for female trainee driving instructors who needed this knowledge to enable their future students to pass the practical driving test's 'Show me Tell me' questions as part of the new driving test. Theory for the Driving Test courses, taught by a tutor working jointly with Account 3 continue as part of the mainstream programme and many women are referred to mainstream Car Maintenance and other classes via this route.

Consultation with the Coburne Centre for people with learning difficulties (and combinations of physical disabilities) resulted in ongoing 'Woodwork for People with Special Needs' courses. The attendees include others who are self-referred or come with their own carers.

Annual Learner Voice Consultation

Consultation with parents and staff at George Green's School regarding choice of new classes
Consultation with tenants of Turin Street Estate with multi-agency working party lead by Housing Directorate as a result of which new classes to take place in Bethnal Green Technology College in summer 2004.

3. Key Findings

Ethnicity

The policy may have the potential to affect racial groups disproportionately because there are larger and longer established communities within the Borough who have the leadership and competence to work with partners such as LLS in order to gain access to education. For example, there are fewer students from Somalia or Eastern Europe than from Bangladesh. There is no evidence of an adverse impact or unlawful discrimination. A programme is in place in order to engage minority ethnic learners.

Gender

The gender balance is roughly equal. There is some variance between courses. Jewellery and woodwork have distinct (opposite) gender balances whilst car maintenance has equal representation.
Marketing actively promotes positive images of both genders in all activities.

Disability

Increased participation by students with disclosed disability.
All 4 Idea Stores are fully accessible but are not suitable for technical courses.
Replacing the Bethnal Green Centre with modern facilities is a priority.

Overall, problems with the voluntary self-declaration of disability render the available data statistically invalid. However, courses are targeted at this group via Community partners. Many of the community or voluntary venues are unsuitable for disabled students. Buildings are often inaccessible and access may be up several flights of stairs with no lifts. It can be justified on the grounds of widening participation and if a community or voluntary organisation has a group of learners who wish to participate in LLS courses, they will, in all probability be able to access the venues. If a disabled prospective learner approaches the Community Learning team for a course, the team will endeavour to recommend a venue that is completely accessible.

Age

- The Lifelong Learning Service delivers courses to adults aged 16 years and over. Children under 16 years may participate in Family Learning courses, accompanied by a responsible adult carer. Learners with children aged 6 months to 5 years are eligible to use the Service's crèche facilities subject to places being available.
- 16 % of learners are aged 60 years and over (compared to a national average of 15%).
- The learners' age profile is in line with the borough profile.
- Learners aged 60 years and over have been entitled to concessionary enrolment rates but this policy is up for review under anti-ageist legislation.
- The Service actively seeks under-represented groups and individuals and promotes equality of opportunity for these groups.
Concessionary enrolment fees enable older people and people on lower incomes to access the service more easily. (But see above). 16-19yr old learners in full time education and Family learning courses are free.

Sexual orientation

No data is available as the Service does not monitor this information.

There is no evidence that the policy affects LBG groups differently or has the potential to do so. However, this is not a matter for complacency as there is equally no evidence that the policy does not affect LBG groups differently.

Religious belief

No data is available as the Service does not monitor this information.

There is no evidence that the policy affects Faith groups differently or has the potential to do so. However, this is not a matter for complacency as there is equally no evidence that the policy does not affect Faith groups differently.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

Main areas requiring further attention:

Monitoring and improving accuracy of student enrolment data

Under representation by Bangladeshi community and men

Improving Access at the older sites which are also where most Technical courses are held

Linked to the above, staff enrolment and lifelong Learning awareness training for all 6 Equalities strands especially for Idea Store staff

Summary of recommendations for improvement

Review and monitor Data each term

Regular curriculum planning at management level

Classroom observations on a rolling programme

QA cycle and meetings

Curriculum Team Meetings

Self Assessment and Quality Improvement Plan consultation and reports

Action Plan

Recommendation	Key activity	Progress milestones
Develop a regular H&S training cycle for all Technology tutors	Delivery of comprehensive H&S training to all Technical staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of Plan – Summer 2007 • All FT and significant FTE staff trained to H&S at work qualifications at level 2 – Spring 2009
Improve accessibility to the Bethnal Green workshop current working times	Increased numbers of classes held	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in classes held at weekends – January 2008
Develop courses to increase employability amongst low paid	Delivery of courses targeted at 16-19 and 19+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying partner to deliver the programme with – Autumn 2007. • Creation of short courses in 'soft skills' – January 2008
Increasing numbers of disabled and elderly people taking part in woodwork classes	Increasing numbers of disabled and elderly people taking part in woodwork classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying additional space for extra classes – January 2008 • Adding at least one extra class for this group – Spring 2008