

Gloucestershire Probation Trust

Inspection report

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The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) works in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prison and Probation and inspects the management and provision of learning and skills for offenders across the whole range of custodial establishments and probation areas. Inspections may include those serving whole or part of their sentence in the community.

Inspectors judge the quality of the provision against the *Common Inspection Framework* for further education and skills 2009 (*Common Inspection Framework* 2009) and contribute to the inspection frameworks of Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation.

Information about the probation trust and its providers

The Gloucestershire Probation Trust (the trust) covers six local authority areas, with a population of just over 589,000 inhabitants. The trust has two offices in Gloucester and offices in Cheltenham, Coleford and Stroud. It has one approved premise in the city of Gloucester and serves Her Majesty's Prison, Gloucester. The trust's current caseload is 1,800 offenders; of these, approximately 88% are white and over 89% are men. The unemployment rates in Gloucestershire vary and average 5.2% against 7.9% in Great Britain. The unemployment rates in Cheltenham and Stroud are 7.4% and 6.4% respectively.

The education, training and employment team report to the Director of Operations. The area manager for interventions is the strategic lead. The Education, Training and Employment Operational Manager, who also has responsibility for offender accommodation, supports her. The team comprises an officer, who has lead responsibility for information, advice and guidance; two full-time and two part-time worker posts, one of which is vacant; one full-time employment-support worker and one administrative support post. The workers and support officer are based in the different offices across the county.

The Probation Area became a trust in April 2010 and has recently achieved the renewal of Matrix accreditation for the provision of information, advice and guidance.

Information about the offender learning and employability providers:

Lead providers and their subcontractors	Number of learners on discrete provision 2009-2010	Types of provision
Gloucester and Cheltenham College	97 starts	Skills for Life (literacy and numeracy)
Stroud College	17 starts	Skills for Life (literacy and numeracy)
Easton learning (Learn Direct)	44 starts	Skills for Life (literacy and numeracy)
Gateway Consultants Ltd.	81 starts	NOCN vocational awards
GPT ETE Team	17 starts	NOCN employability awards
Other providers	Number of learners	Types of provision
GPT Employment Support Officer	250	Construction Skills Certificate Scheme card (CSCS)
Prospect Training	57	Fork lift truck driving Construction Plastering
GPT	23	British Health and Safety awards

The following text is Ofsted's contribution to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's offender management inspection.

Summary report

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade: satisfactory
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Capacity to improve	Grade: satisfactory
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	Grade descriptor
Quality of provision	good
Assessment and sentence planning	
Implementation of interventions	
Achieving and sustaining outcomes	satisfactory
Leadership and management	satisfactory
Equality and diversity including arrangements to support vulnerability	satisfactory

Overall effectiveness, including capacity to improve

Offenders received a satisfactory initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy needs, which was appropriately followed by a more thorough diagnostic assessment. The information, advice and guidance were particularly effective at directing offenders to the appropriate education, training and employment intervention. Offenders received a satisfactory risk assessment. Learners benefitted from highly individualised learning experiences. The provision for unpaid work was of good quality and it supported offenders well in developing personal and social skills as well as achieving vocational qualifications. The education and training offer, however, did not meet the needs of all offenders, particularly in the Coleford office.

In the last three years, overall, the trust had met the majority of its nationally set education, training and employment targets. However, data had been insufficiently used to identify the achievement of qualifications by offenders across all educational and vocational training programmes. Attendance to unpaid work projects was satisfactory although it remained poor, as it was at the previous inspection, for most education and training sessions.

The provision benefitted from very good networking and partnerships in the community. The provision had been improved through the successful sharing of good practice amongst other trusts in the region. The trust placed particular emphasis on the training and development of the education, training and employment team to enable them to meet offenders' needs more effectively. Although there were imminent plans to produce an education, training and employment strategy that aligned itself appropriately to the trust's reducing re-offending strategy; there had been no formalised strategy for the past few years. The promotion of equality of opportunity including the delivery of safeguarding arrangements within the provision was adequate.

The trust's capacity to improve was satisfactory. The education, training and employment team had managed sustain focus on ensuring continuity of provision and improving outcomes for offenders, amidst a phenomenal amount of change and reduced resources. Achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications had greatly increased in 2008. Some of the quality improvement systems were under-developed, particularly on the education and training section.

What does the Gloucestershire Probation Trust need to do to improve further?

- Develop an education, training and employment strategy that is appropriately aligned to the trust's reducing re-offending strategy and informed by the analysis of the needs of offenders across all areas to make the best use of the resources available.
- Review and extend the provision to offer a wider range of educational and vocational training opportunities and to improve outcomes for offenders.
- Fully develop the appropriate quality assurance systems to ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision offered throughout all partners.

Offender perspective - learning and employability as confirmed by inspectors

Inspectors interviewed a total of 27 offenders as part of the inspection process, individually or in groups. All learners valued the support and guidance they received from education, training and employment workers, placement supervisors and training staff. They were well aware of their progress with the qualifications they were taking and the progress they made in completing their orders. Offenders could recall much of the information they received during their induction and they were clear and confident about health and safety and their rights and responsibilities. They had a good understanding of the opportunity to take part in education or training for 20% of their unpaid work hours and of the consequences of not attending unpaid work or education, training and employment sessions. Most offenders completing vocational qualifications on unpaid work placements described their experiences as excellent, reporting an increase in confidence and self-esteem as well as valuing the

vocational skills they gained. One offender was planning to continue visiting the placement as a volunteer after completing their order. However, some offenders felt that the lack of education provision at weekends slowed their progress and hindered their economic improvement as they could only work part-time during the week whilst attending classes.

Main inspection report

The quality of provision

Grade: good

Assessment and sentence planning

The provision for information, advice and guidance was very effective in directing offenders to appropriate opportunities. Offenders received useful information about the opportunity to use education, training and employment as counting towards 20% of their unpaid work orders, as well as enabling them to develop their skills for employment. Offenders found the information, advice and guidance sessions helpful in highlighting their current skills and identifying where they needed to develop skills further. Records contained detailed useful and clear information, with specific and time-bound action plans to help steer offenders towards their agreed goals. Links with local colleges and training providers were very good and the employability worker ensured links to Jobcentre Plus were reinforced and all parties maintained regular contact.

Offenders received an adequate and prompt assessment of their literacy and numeracy needs during their first guidance intervention. Those providers and contractors who delivered education or training courses on behalf of the trust carried out a further, comprehensive diagnostic assessment, to identify the offender's correct level of literacy and numeracy. However, the diagnostic for English language needs was not as specialised. Until recently, the trust had invested in the dedicated language development of one of its education, training and employment workers. However, this had stopped and language support relied on referring offenders with language needs to the local colleges.

Implementation of interventions

Literacy and numeracy session plans reflected the individual needs of learners well and individual learning plans closely related to the outcomes of the initial assessment of literacy and numeracy needs. Teaching and learning resources were good and delivered in probation offices. Handouts and photocopied worksheets were clear and attractive. The effective use of a wide range of information technology delivered good learning support for offenders. Teaching staff were well qualified and experienced in working with offenders. The assessment of learners' performance and progress was timely, and appropriate. Learners obtained helpful feedback on their progress and the further work they needed to complete. A learning support assistant

worked closely with the tutor to offer help and support to learners in class. Learners made good progress in achieving their learning goals, which were regularly reviewed and updated.

A wide range of unpaid work placements were available for offenders that were carefully matched to their needs and the outcomes of their risk assessments. These included placements that were suitable for more vulnerable offenders such as women who may have experienced domestic violence. The trust offered appropriate child care provision. Offenders in full-time employment could access weekend placements. Staff gave careful consideration to offenders' home locations, bus routes and accessibility to placement projects. Transport arrangements were in place for those who needed it. Community beneficiaries valued the significant contribution that offenders made to supporting and enhancing their own services.

Records of offenders' attendances, skills development and progress through qualifications and training were satisfactory. Unpaid work supervisors accessed the computerised information system regularly, updating it and reviewing entries made by the offender manager and the education, training and employment worker.

Due to the recent funding cutbacks, the range of provision had been reduced. There was no education or training provision available during the evenings or at weekends. The education and training offer in the Coleford office was considerably smaller than the offer at the other centres. There was no specialist knowledge within the team to deal with English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) needs. All ESOL offenders were doing unpaid work and they rarely used the 20% rule to benefit from the development of English language skills.

Achieving and sustaining outcomes

**Grade:
satisfactory**

Offenders developed good personal and social skills that enhanced their employment prospects through team working activities, contact with community members and work colleagues or volunteers. Work placements offered a challenge to some offenders who had a very low skill base and facilitated their skills development. Placement tasks were demanding and offenders were challenged to address identified areas for personal development such as making a contribution to group discussions, decision making and dealing with the public. Offenders taking catering qualifications were able to make informed choices about their health and well-being and developed useful budgeting and life skills. Learners created very good work products and were well motivated and focused.

Offenders successfully gained vocational skills in horticulture, cookery, brick work and information technology, as well as completing nationally recognised vocational qualifications. Some placements enabled offenders to make a good contribution to wider community and charitable causes such as at the lunch club where offenders were baking cakes for sale to raise funds for Children in Need.

Health and safety training was satisfactory. Offenders received health and safety training at induction where the trust supplied them with the required protective clothing. Offenders displayed safe working practices in the tasks they carried out in the unpaid work placements by using the appropriate tools and equipment with care and in accordance with regulations.

In the last three years, overall, the trust had met their nationally set targets, however, the achievement of language, literacy and numeracy qualifications had been low for the last three years although it had improved in the last year. In 2007/08, 36% of all learners enrolled on one of these programmes achieved a qualification. In the following year, 2008/09, this figure decreased to 20%. However, the achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications greatly improved last year with 47% of the learners achieving a qualification.

Most unpaid work projects experienced good attendance rates, although attendance to education, training and employment sessions was low at approximately 50%. This had not changed since the last inspection. In the last twelve months, information technology (IT) sessions had also suffered with low attendance in the Cheltenham office, as identified by the trust in their team meetings. Pre-work placement sessions also had low attendance. The team did not sufficiently scrutinise the attendance figures to identify which area was performing badly. Some IT classes sessions had a much greater capacity than the actual number of learners who attended them.

Leadership and management

**Grade:
satisfactory**

In the last twelve months, the education, training and employment team had experienced substantial change. The recently appointed managers were relatively new to the delivery of education, training and employment. The trust had re-structured and funding arrangements had been remodelled. The management team had focused very effectively in securing the continuity of the service by successfully negotiating different, imaginative funding contracts. The team had clearly prioritised their actions and greatly focused on improving outcomes for offenders.

Unpaid work managers worked closely together to meet the offenders' personal, social and employability skills needs. They ensured that placements provided community benefits and that offenders were appropriately risk assessed. Actions on offenders who breach their orders meet the required standards. Daily contact between unpaid work supervisors and the community payback project officer facilitated the good sharing of concerns or issues and any offender authorised absences, or staff stand downs. The performance of offenders completing vocational qualifications was monitored through monthly meetings between the vocational training provider and unpaid work managers. Unpaid work placements were routinely quality assured through site monitoring visits. Reports on the starts, progress and completion of qualifications were discussed and actions to remedy shortcomings implemented. Offenders routinely completed exit questionnaires evaluating the quality and value of their experience of unpaid work.

The education, training and employment team had developed very beneficial partnerships with other agencies and local colleges. The trust had worked particularly well with one of the colleges to quickly modify the delivery model of some of its language, literacy and numeracy provision to maximise its value for money. There was good evidence of sharing best practice across the region's other probation trusts. The trust had successfully trialled the delivery of functional skills to its offenders; this had been highlighted and shared as good practice by other regional trusts. Some of the partner agencies were already successfully working together to the benefit of the service the offenders receive. However, the trust provided insufficient opportunities to its partners to meet, share best practice and maximise joint-working.

The trust had a strong focus on staff training and development. All staff delivering information, advice and guidance interventions had received specialist training to a high level. Staff appraisals correctly highlighted any specific training needs related to the role staff delivered and they mapped across training and development activities. They had also received IT training and comprehensive safeguarding training. The trust prepared its staff well by proactively training them in current issues such as the prevention of terrorism. The education, training and employment team had benefitted from receiving training on networking, sentence planning and mental health issues allowing them to increase their awareness of the offenders' needs and the services delivered by other parts of the trust.

Overall, communications between the education, training and employment team and its contracting providers were adequate. However, the trust had discontinued the bi-monthly review meetings between offender managers and the team. Offender managers valued these meetings as they helped them to focus on the appropriate intervention for each of the offenders in their caseload.

Although, the current managers understood the education, training and employment priorities, there was no written strategy or plan highlighting its objectives and future developments. There had been no written strategy or policy since 2008. Currently, the team were planning to formalise their strategy ensuring it was aligned to the trust's reducing re-offending strategy. No analysis of offenders' needs was available to inform the strategy. No account had yet been taken of the role of volunteers from the community in supporting the trust's work.

The education, training and employment team gathered data in relation to their performance against nationally set targets. Data were appropriately shared and monitored at the performance management team meetings. However, the trust did not analyse data sufficiently to gain an understanding on the quality of provision, to highlight the achievement of qualifications obtained by offenders or to identify and rectify any differences in progress and achievement across the diverse groups of offenders.

The necessary monitoring systems to assure and evaluate the quality of the provision delivered were not yet fully developed. The colleges and other main contractors carried out observations of teaching and learning, however, the trust had very little

information on the quality of training and assessment that contractors and own staff delivered on its behalf. Outcomes for learners differ across the different contracting providers. The use of learner and offender feedback was under developed and the team gathered insufficient information from its users to evaluate their provision. The process of self-assessment was not well embedded. The trust had not produced a self-assessment report since 2007. There were no self-evaluation processes in place for the team to identify their strengths and areas for improvement.

The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity was satisfactory. A comprehensive policy focused appropriately on tackling discrimination. It clearly detailed procedures such as fair recruitment, code of conduct and behaviour and complaints processes. Education, training and employment staff had received frequent training on equality of opportunity matters. Unpaid work supervisors and managers responded to offenders' individual needs well and promoted anti-discriminatory practice well by their example. Offenders reported that they were treated fairly and with respect. Provision for women offenders, through the specialist ISIS project and women only sessions, at the horticultural project at Prinknash Abbey, enabled the more vulnerable female offenders to be supported and protected. Offenders attending interventions were adequately safeguarded and protected. Staff took action to identify and respond appropriately to offenders' welfare concerns and their barriers to engagement. The trust provided safeguarding training for its education, training and employment staff and the required checks with the Criminal Records Bureau had been carried out. Partner organisations and beneficiaries visited were aware of safeguarding and had their own procedures to meet government requirements.

Information about the inspection

1. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), assisted by Gloucestershire Probation Trust's area manager for external interventions as co-ordinator, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of provider's most recent development plans, comments from the local Skills Funding Agency or other funding bodies, previous inspection reports, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
2. Inspectors used a range of methods to gather the views of learners including group and individual interviews. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the trust. They also visited learning and information, advice and guidance sessions. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

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Record of Main Findings (RMF)			
Provider Name:	Gloucestershire Probation Trust	Inspection No	57642
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full-time and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including E2E); 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships Blank Column: insert Judicial Services or Nextstep as appropriate			

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall					
Approximate number of enrolled learners	65					
Overall effectiveness	3					
Capacity to improve	3					
A. Outcomes for learners	3					
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3					
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3					
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	3					
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3					
A3. How safe do learners feel?	3					
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2					
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2					
B. Quality of provision	2					
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2					
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3					
B3. How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2					
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2					
C. Leadership and management	3					
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3					
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a					
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3					
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3					
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3					
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4					
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3					

*where applicable to the type of provision