

Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Federation Ltd

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 58818

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Last day of inspection: 28 September 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Federation Ltd (GMLPF) manages a number of selected subcontractors that deliver an accelerated pre-apprenticeship programme specifically targeted to engage with young people who are hard to reach, or not fully engaged in learning or ready for employment. The subcontractors provide access to an increasing number of vocational sector areas.

At the last inspection in 2009 the overall effectiveness of the provision managed by GMLPF was judged to be good as were capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision, and leadership and management. Safeguarding and equality of opportunity were also judged to be good. Provision in administration was good. This report focuses on the themes explored by inspectors during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made to improve the systems to monitor, review and self-assess the provision to improve the experience for learners?	Reasonable progress
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Since the last inspection in 2009, the good process of self-assessment has been maintained. Subcontractors contribute very effectively to the process by way of completing individual self-assessment reports, as well as taking part in regular and frequent partnership meetings. The Programme Manager maintains a very close and detailed overview of the subcontractors. Quality assurance visits to all providers placed particular emphasis on the quality of learner reviews. Observation of subcontracted delivery is in the early stages of development. Senior managers meet weekly to review the programme and to analyse performance against targets. These meetings identify very successfully both potential improvements in the provision and further developmental opportunities, such as adding new areas of learning and/or providers that target priority groups of learners.

The quality improvement plan is detailed and addresses effectively key aspects of the provision and areas identified in the self-assessment report. All of the identified actions support improvement in the quality of provision but a small number of the stated outcomes are vague and lack detail or a challenging target. Also, it is not clear on the plan how records are kept of the progress made against each item.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made to improve outcomes for learners since the last inspection by continuing to engage with hard to reach learners?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, GMLPF has continued to engage successfully with hard to reach learners by expanding the number of subcontractors they link with and by increasing the range of subject areas to provide learners with a greater choice. This has been effective in attracting learners onto the programme and retaining them. Learners continue to develop a good range of skills to enable them to become more employable. These include personal presentation, communication skills, and life skills such as behaviour and time keeping.

In the year just completed, 52% of learners completed the programme and continued to an apprenticeship or achieved all of their planned qualifications, which is a slight improvement on the previous year. Nearly half of the learners have still to complete their programme but for those who have completed, 60% have achieved all of their programme aims and 91% have achieved all or major aspects of their programme. GMLPF recognises that further clarification and standardisation of the component parts of their programme are required. This will enable more detailed analysis and monitoring of both provider and overall performance against targets for core and additional aspects of the provision.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made to improve systems used to ensure the quality of teaching and learning and reviews?

Insufficient progress

The previous inspection found that GMLPF needed to improve the consistency of the subcontractors' work, including their teaching and learning. The inspection also established that the organisation had to encourage the sharing of good practice to ensure consistently good teaching and learning within its subcontractors.

Following the inspection, the programme manager attended training on how to observe and make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. The manager has increased her experience of observing teaching and learning sessions by conducting a number of observations of subcontractors' delivery. The manager is negotiating with the subcontractors the development of a framework to improve the consistency of the teaching and learning grades generated by their different observation processes. This will include the introduction of a moderation process. The manager has worked effectively with the subcontractors to define clear criteria for lessons which are outstanding, good, satisfactory or inadequate. GMLPF has also been negotiating with its subcontractors to develop a peer group observation system for the sharing of good practice. However, currently there is no formal framework established to moderate observation grades, share best practice or ensure consistency of subcontractors' work.

What progress has been made to enhance the programme to enrich the learners' experience? Reasonable progress

GMLPF continues to provide good support to its subcontractors to develop initiatives to enrich the programme for learners. Good emphasis is maintained on broader developments for learners, such as developing good life skills as well as employability skills. Subcontractors focus particularly effectively on recognising the development of individual learners, delivering learning in innovative and non-threatening ways. This approach successfully retains learners on programmes and in many cases it can have a dramatic impact on the learner. Sessions include topics and activities that generate discussion and challenge learners' perceptions of society and of how they react to situations.

Providers deliver a wide range of learning opportunities that include access to formal qualifications as well as non-accredited training. Many learners contribute to voluntary activities and take part in a range of fund-raising activities to support local communities. Providers also offer a range of healthy lifestyle training, including diet, general health and sexual health issues. Systems are in place to offer access to testing for sexually transmitted diseases and to advise on both accessing and using contraception. GMLPF and its providers have also organised specialist 'day events' to focus on healthy eating, internet safety and awareness, and smoking cessation.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in the development of a more effective management information tool? Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, GMLPF did not have its own management information system (MIS) and was using another provider's system which did not meet its needs. Following the inspection, GMLPF reviewed a number of systems and has now purchased its own. This system allows the staff convenient access to data and is also used by a number of subcontractors who train most of GMLPF's learners. GMLPF has worked effectively with the MIS developer and a number of the subcontractors to develop and customise the system so that learners can be enrolled efficiently, their progress monitored and their performance analysed. The MIS also allows the organisation to process the financial claims of its subcontractors in a timely manner. Although the pace of progress has been appropriate, GMLPF acknowledges that it needs to utilise fully the system's capacity to produce reports on learners' achievements and progress. GMLPF is working with its subcontractors and the MIS developer to define the range of data needed to analyse more readily the recruitment, progress and achievement of different groups of learners.

What progress has been made to improve the learners' understanding of how people should expect to be treated in the workplace?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, learners' induction was not memorable and some learners had insufficient understanding of the appropriate use of language in the workplace.

Since the inspection, GMLPF has offered and facilitated a number of training and discussion events on equality and diversity for its subcontractors, which include courses on the implications of The Single Equality Act and how to recruit young people with mental health issues. Subcontractors have updated their equality and diversity policies and now offer learners a course on employers' rights and responsibilities. The organisation has worked hard to identify good practice in promoting equality and diversity within its subcontractors. These include examples such as the use of DVDs and case studies promoting diversity, the use of a quiz during induction sessions to monitor and reinforce understanding of diversity matters, and the introduction of a learner code of conduct to clarify what is acceptable behaviour and language in a variety of social and employment settings. GMLPF is consulting with its subcontractors about introducing these practices and increasing the promotion of equality and diversity within the teaching and learning process. However, some subcontractors have been slow to implement these good practices.

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