

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Local authority

Inspection dates		15–18 January 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Learners and apprentices are highly motivated, make good progress and achieve good outcomes. These include good development of subject knowledge and substantial development of skills that prepare them very well for further study or employment.
- All staff are well qualified, very experienced, enthusiastic, dedicated and passionate about the work they do. They support learners exceedingly well to help them achieve.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good.
- The range of provision based in schools and within other partners' premises is extensive and meets the learners' needs very well. Partners work extremely well to promote learning.
- Based on detailed analysis of the local provision, Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council (the service) successfully plans to fill the gaps in learning provision. It ensures that learners from all age groups, including those from the targeted areas and apprentices, benefit from opportunities to acquire new skills, improve their knowledge and lead fulfilling lives.
- Leadership and management of the provision at all levels, including of the subcontractors, is good. All are strongly focussed on improving the quality of life and the future prospects for Wigan residents through learning.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Outcomes for learners are not yet outstanding. Not all learners develop sufficient levels of independent learning skills or improve their spelling and grammar sufficiently.
- Only a small percentage of teaching, learning and assessment sessions are outstanding.
- Contract management and improvement processes are still new in the service's recently acquired role of managing agent for work-based learning and apprenticeships.
- Reporting and accountability arrangements for the service are not sufficiently robust.
- A few elements of leadership and management require further development.
- Equality and diversity are not fully integrated within lessons.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - planning sessions to meet specific needs of the more-able learners in community learning
 - making induction more interactive and imaginative so that it engages learners well
 - using learning materials that broaden and extend the understanding of apprentices' vocational subjects in wider contexts
 - a greater use of the virtual learning environment and other innovative learning technologies by all staff and learners.
- Develop a supportive management culture that enables all staff to reflect routinely on their own performance taking full responsibility and pride in improving their practice.
- Ensure that the service emphasises the development of independent learning skills in its course objectives and equips learners to develop these skills for lifelong learning.
- In community learning and childcare apprenticeships ensure learners know how to improve their written English, in particular by providing sufficient clear written feedback and by marking work thoroughly.
- Increase the impact of learning about equality and diversity by planning lessons and using learning resources that integrate equality and diversity learning objectives and activities into learning tasks on a regular basis.
- Develop the impact of leadership and management by formalising the reporting process to the council leaders by the head of service to ensure that they have a clearer view of the service's key strengths and areas for development.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for apprentices, learners in community learning and for 16- to 18-year-old learners on the European Social Fund (ESF) project are good. Learners gain good levels of confidence and raise their own aspirations and those of their families. For many this is their first successful learning experience that leads them to progress to higher level courses in the local college or within the service.
- Community learning learners make good progress relative to their low starting points to achieve their clearly defined personal learning objectives, often exceeding their expectations. They enjoy learning, gain new knowledge and skills, meet new people, develop new interests or overcome isolation. Attendance and retention rates on all programmes are high.
- Apprentices develop a strong work ethic and highly developed interpersonal skills. They acquire a broad range of transferable technical and soft skills that enhances their employment prospects. They assume greater responsibility willingly and are keen to achieve success and engage in learning.
- Nearly all apprentices in customer service and in care complete their qualifications in the planned timescale or earlier. Current apprentices on the recently started business administration, teaching assistants and sport programmes are making good progress. The standard of apprentices' practical work in the workplace is valued by their employers and colleagues. Their portfolios contain strong and wide ranging evidence of good skills and knowledge development.
- Care apprentices prove very valuable in the workplace as they impress their colleagues and employers with their up-to-date knowledge and its application in areas such as safeguarding and child protection, safety and child development.

- Many vulnerable learners aged 16 to 18 facing a range of personal and social difficulties are identified at an early stage and supported very well to join the local college, apprenticeships or other learning opportunities. Retention, achievement and progression rates are high.
- Family learning learners develop a deeper understanding of child development, behaviour and how their children are taught various subjects in schools. They make particularly effective use of the skills and their new found confidence to listen, talk and teach their children. This has raised children's attainment levels in schools and improved the quality of relationships within families.
- All groups of learners achieve their learning objectives and gain qualifications equally well. The numbers of minority ethnic groups are too low for any meaningful comparison. The engagement of men in community learning at 34% is high compared to the rest of the sector.
- The development of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills is good for apprentices and family learning learners and appropriate for the other groups. The development of ICT skills is strong particularly for redundant workers or workers at risk of redundancy. They gain access to public services and use the internet to research information on companies where they might seek jobs.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which is reflected in the good outcomes. Staff provide good support and encouragement for learners to set high expectations. Learners and apprentices value the support and encouragement they receive to achieve their learning goals. They enjoy sessions and adopt a positive approach to learning.
- Tutors in community learning are well qualified, have extensive specialist knowledge and are passionate about their subjects. They make good use of stimulating activities in well-paced and enjoyable lessons. They motivate learners well and many have raised their aspirations to pursue further learning and vocational training. For example, many learners wish to become classroom assistants, teachers or go to university.
- Staff working with apprentices are equally well qualified and experienced. They work closely with employers to plan sessions well to provide enjoyable learning sessions that develop apprentices' skills and knowledge particularly effectively.
- Staff plan and deliver their lessons well; lessons are underpinned by well-considered schemes of work and lesson plans. Sessions engage learners very effectively. Apprentices benefit from well organised and productive individual learning sessions at work where learning is put into context effectively. Although learners make good progress, the service does not explicitly focus on developing independent learning and analytical skills for all learners.
- Apprentices learn skills from experienced staff at work. For example, in customer service, apprentices learn to carry out reception duties very effectively, learning skills for dealing with customer requests, confidently using the phone, providing information and booking appointments using the latest office technology.
- Learners receive good help in identifying their personal learning objectives and recording these in well considered individual learning plans. These are comprehensive in community learning but based purely against the skills requirement of a particular course. Tutors do not conduct a thorough needs analysis of the learners, including their previous learning, to establish the accurate starting point for their learning. Consequently, the tutors do not provide sufficient challenge for the more-able learners in lessons.
- In community learning, sessions take place in a wide variety of venues across the borough, which promotes good access and widens participation by those often not typically involved in any learning. The accommodation and resources to support teaching, learning and assessment are good. The use of virtual learning environments for all learners is limited.
- Apprentices have a clear understanding of the requirements for making progress and achieving their learning goals. Clear well-constructed individual learning and assessment plans are based on effective initial assessment. Regular reviews guide learners and support their progress.

- Assessment and feedback on how to improve further is particularly good for customer service apprentices. It includes a detailed critique of the work and meaningful feedback on the improvements needed. Apprentices on care programmes benefit from clear verbal feedback and they understand well what and how to improve.
- Tutors on care programmes do not provide any written feedback on the assignments to celebrate learners' achievement of good work and to share with the rest of the class to raise standards. In providing feedback to the learners, tutors comply with the examination body requirements often with a meaningless 'tick' without any written comment. They do not correct the spelling errors, punctuation and incorrect use of grammar in marking the apprentices' assignments and observations.
- For all learners, staff provide helpful information, advice and guidance sessions regularly based on the course and subject area at the start of the courses. This helps learners to plan for their future development and to seek progression opportunities in a similar field. However, guidance on progression for learners in broader subject areas and employment opportunities is inconsistent. Induction, although detailed, is tedious and does not add to the learners' experience.
- Learners develop a good understanding of equality and diversity. The service is very successful in providing programmes for some of the most excluded groups such as the elderly, young parents, the long-term unemployed and pupils at risk of exclusion from schools. Apprentices develop a good knowledge of bullying and harassment and their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. Tutors do not systematically plan to integrate equality and diversity in lesson objectives and learning tasks.

Customer service

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+ Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which is reflected in the high success rates achieved by learners at the sole subcontractor. Staff provide good support for apprentices who are very well motivated and positive in their approach to learning. Apprentices benefit from well organised and good individual sessions at work where learning is put into the context of the customer service practices in the business.
- Apprentices benefit from experienced tutors who ask open questions about customer service in the work setting and prompt reflection and good learning. They reinforce learning points well and give apprentices confidence to tackle learning tasks. Learning tasks and assignments are related to daily work and settings.
- Apprentices learn to integrate theory with practice well as they learn from their experienced colleagues at work. For example, they follow company procedures and carry out reception duties very effectively, dealing with customer requests confidently as well as providing information and booking appointments by phone.
- Coherent schemes of work underpin well-planned learning sessions. These engage apprentices very effectively. Although apprentices develop good skills in their own work setting, they have limited scope to broaden their understanding and knowledge of customer service in other sectors. They do not have access to learning materials that, for example, develop the apprentice's knowledge of customer service policies and practices in top ranked services and businesses.
- Apprentices have a clear understanding of what they need to do to make progress and achieve their learning goals. Individual learning and assessment plans based on effective initial assessment are clear and well constructed. Tutors guide learners and support their progress through valuable regular reviews. They promote reflective learning which extends and broadens

apprentices' knowledge and understanding of customers, their requirements and the unique selling points of the business in which they work.

- Feedback from assessment is thorough, clear and accurate. This enables apprentices to have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. Assessment includes a broad range of activities and methods. Tutors plan and carry out assessments well to suit the setting and the needs of the apprentices.
- Apprentices clearly recognise the value and importance of good skills in mathematics and English to their future employment and to employers. They work diligently to develop these skills taking all opportunities to improve their levels of achievement of qualifications in functional skills.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance sessions is good. Staff provide helpful and informative sessions regularly during the course of the programme that encourage apprentices to discuss ideas and formulate plans for their future development and progression. Apprentices reflect on their progress and develop increased understanding of the way customer service operates in the business environment.
- Apprentices develop a good understanding of equality and diversity by engaging in learning topics such as working with customers with disabilities and recognising specific individual needs. Their behaviour and attitudes in the workplace demonstrate respect for differences in people. Tutors do not use all available opportunities to integrate equality and diversity learning points into some of the customer service learning tasks.

Community learning

Learning programmes for 16-18 Learning programmes for 19+ Community learning

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment lead to good outcomes for all learners in community learning. Tutors are well qualified and have extensive specialist knowledge of their subjects. They communicate their passion for their subject by making good use of stimulating activities in well-paced and fun lessons. They motivate learners very well.
- Planning of teaching and learning is good. Detailed schemes of work and clearly linked lesson plans inform the broad range of activities that take place in the classes. Learning is provided in safe and secure venues that are assessed thoroughly for any risk. Tutors develop good relationships in classes and create a productive learning environment.
- Learners gain good levels of skills and talk confidently about how they use different strategies for dealing with their own children with special needs and reinforce their children's learning. Language learners enjoy the mental challenge of learning new skills in order to communicate when abroad. Floristry learners enjoy the nature and beauty of the flowers and make beautiful flower arrangements for friends and family for special occasions.
- Assessment is appropriate for the courses that learners enrol on. Learners develop detailed individual learning plans and set challenging targets and objectives which they achieve well.
- Tutors do not identify the previous learning and achievements fully to plan appropriately for all learners, particularly the more able. Induction is tedious as it focuses too much on learners completing excessive amounts of paperwork at the start of the course. Standard induction is too long for returning learners.
- Positive verbal feedback challenges and encourages learners to think about how they improve and use the skills learnt in a wide range of contexts. For example, the tutor of a French class was very precise in her reinforcement of accurate pronunciation in a sensitive but lively manner. Learners refresh and improve their levels of English and mathematics well in classes as well as learning more about recent developments in the teaching of mathematics in family learning.

- Written feedback on the assessed work is insufficiently detailed to provide direction to learners about how they might improve or why their work is good. Learners focus on completing the tasks without reflecting on the skills and competences developed. Learners do not develop sufficient levels of analytical and independent learning skills.
- Subject specific advice and guidance provided by the tutors is good and helps learners enrol on the correct courses and make good progress. Advice and guidance on employment and progression opportunities in broader subject areas is inconsistent. Some learners are unsure about their next progression opportunities including volunteering.
- Support for learners, including study support, is good. Classes provide a welcome outlet for many learners who face challenging personal circumstances. Learners are well supported on longer courses; however, staff do not anticipate and plan support for learners on short courses in advance.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good in many classes. The learning environment in classes reinforces respect for all individuals which learners adhere to well. Not all tutors make effective use of learning resources and tasks to broaden learners' outlook on diversity in society.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The service has a clear and ambitious strategic vision and priorities, with a strong commitment to improving the quality of life for local residents through learning. The service plan is closely linked to the council's objectives. Staff are enthusiastic and have high expectations in helping the council realise its vision of Wigan as a 'confident place' with 'confident people'.
- Council leaders fully understand the role the service plays in achieving its strategic objectives. They meet with the head of service monthly to discuss developments on an informal basis. Although she is appropriately challenged, the impact of leadership and management needs to be further strengthened by formalising the reporting processes to the council leaders to ensure that they have a clearer view of the service's key strengths and areas for development.
- Performance management of subcontractors is thorough with regular quality monitoring visits. These focus on checking the quality of the learners' experience including conducting lesson observations at the subcontractors. The service effectively conducts due diligence checks on the subcontractors, including their staff qualifications, before accepting the role of a managing agent. The service acted very effectively to ensure that programmes continued when one subcontractor ceased trading.
- The service has a good track record of improvement and attaining high standards. Since the inspection by Ofsted in 2009 all aspects of the service have improved. Inspectors judged the current processes to be robust and leading to many improvements.
- The arrangements for and the quality of staff development are good with a broad range of training on, for example, safeguarding, integrating equality and diversity into lessons and improving assessment practice. Not all staff reflect critically on their own practice and evaluate their lessons. Managers do not focus sufficiently on checking this aspect.
- The service's self-assessment processes are strong. Subcontractors use a broad range of evidence to produce accurate and self-critical self-assessment reports. These are critically evaluated by the service to produce a single report. The service has an appropriate quality improvement plan.
- The service makes good use of the views of its learners and partners. Views are gathered effectively at the end of each course and the local managers and tutors use them well to identify and make improvements. Some of the examples include improved access to ICT in a local centre and less frequent and more productive progress reviews.
- Curriculum planning is excellent. The service provides a broad range of first-level courses with integrated career guidance and advice that meet the needs and interests of Wigan residents. These are quickly established in response to the needs identified by the subcontractor schools,

learners and the local intelligence. The programmes have been extended to people who have been made redundant or are at risk of redundancy. The ESF project to engage young learners aged 14 to 18 is very successful.

- The council has made a strong commitment, backed with resources, to extend and broaden apprenticeship programmes at a time of austerity. The local college provides progression courses for many learners in the spring and summer term. For example, a course in family learning in helping and working in schools was developed after consultation with the local headteachers and a local university.
- Although learners enjoy a good learning experience this could be improved by online enrolments, better induction, more consistent progression guidance and support for finding volunteering opportunities. A system designed to provide information on learners' previous learning does not work due to inaccurate information which makes it difficult to track learners' progression.
- Leaders and managers place a high priority on the promotion of equality and diversity. The service is particularly effective in engaging with hard to reach groups, targeting deprived areas and carers. The low course fees make learning available to many learners who would otherwise not be able to attend.
- The service meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Risk assessment of the sites and courses is thorough. Learners feel safe and tutors and learners know what action is to be taken if required.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Customer Service	2
Community learning	2

Provider details

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	
Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 225
	Part-time: 4,133
Principal/CEO	Carol Halford
Date of previous inspection	May 2009
Website address	http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/EducationLearning/AdultEducation/

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time								
Part-time	70	140		39				
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	54	66	24	43				
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	179							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ GK Training■ YMCA■ Active Synergy■ Abraham Guest Academy■ Bedford High School■ Lowton Church of England High School■ Westleigh High School■ Wigan and Leigh College■ Fix It UK■ Venture Learning■ Ashton YMCA■ Wigan Training Centre■ Wigan Leisure Culture Trust							

Additional socio-economic information

Wigan is an ex-mining town that is ranked 67th out of 354 of the most deprived areas in the country. One in six people is over the age of 65. Some 16% of the working age population claim key benefits compared to 12.5% in England; key indicators for poverty, low educational qualifications, alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, smoking, obesity and long-term unemployment are high. Most of the provision is subcontracted except for 24% of the employability programmes linked to National Careers Service and a small number of apprenticeships in business administration. The council is the main contract holder for an ESF project that aims to work with young people aged 14 to 19 who are disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Harmesh Manghra HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the business manager responsible for quality assurance and direct delivery as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report including those of the subcontractors and development plans, and the previous inspection report and focussed monitoring visit. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider including ESF programmes for 16- to 18-year-old learners. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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