

Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Federation

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates		08–12 April 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
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:

- Success rates leading to vocational qualifications are high in most subject areas. Learners' achievement of non-accredited learning programme targets is consistently good.
- Learners make very good progress relative to their starting points with a good proportion, particularly of apprentices, entering education or training, and developing good personal and social skills.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are generally good. Tutors have high expectations of learners, provide good support and challenge learners to succeed.
- Learners receive good quality initial assessment and information and advice.
- Leadership and management of the provision are good. The provider successfully recruits and helps learners who are reluctant to engage in further education and training.
- The provider uses good partnership links to ensure the programmes offered are relevant and meet learners' and employers' needs well. Strategies to raise learners' aspirations and cultural awareness are very effective.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Learners do not reach a high enough level of achievement in English and mathematical functional skills. Their attendance at taught sessions is not good enough across all the provision.
- The quality of taught sessions is not yet consistently of a high standard and not enough lessons are outstanding.
- Leaders and managers have not fully implemented all relevant quality assurance arrangements that would help to further improve the quality of the provision and raise standards for all learners.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should further improve outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring all tutors:
 - fully use initial assessment results to better plan lessons and meet learners' individual needs so they achieve to their full potential
 - make better use of information learning technology to fully engage learners and ensure all subcontractors offer and use an adequate range of information and communication technology (ICT) resources to support learning
 - rigorously review learning points to check and reinforce learners' understanding
 - set consistently effective targets that are detailed, precise and focus fully on learning to support a review of learners' success that routinely includes an assessment of progress made against previously established objectives.
- Improve learners' employability and achievement by raising attendance rates and fully embedding functional skills in all taught sessions to support significant improvements in the achievement of English and mathematical functional skills qualifications. Ensure all subcontractors offer learners the opportunity to gain appropriate qualifications and tutors routinely correct grammar and spelling errors in learners' written work.
- Continue to improve the learning experience by fully implementing all aspects of the quality assurance arrangements to better inform senior managers about the quality of the provision and to further raise standards.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good with high vocational qualification success rates in most sector areas. However, the success rates for food safety and sports programmes require improvement. Learners' achievement of non-accredited learning programmes targets is consistently high. Different groups of learners achieve at a similar rate.
- Learners make very good progress relative to their starting points, produce a good standard of work and achieve an impressive number and variety of qualifications and personal objectives within a relatively short time. Most learners who commence their training have a record of low educational achievement, which the provider effectively addresses through its use of support and training to remove barriers to progress and promote individual ambition.
- Learners' achievement of ICT level 1 functional skills qualifications is good; however, the comparable rate for English and mathematics is not consistently high enough across all the subcontracted provision and requires improvement. Not all subcontractors effectively raise learners' understanding of the importance of good attendance at taught sessions to help them achieve and enhance their employment prospects.
- Learners make good gains in personal and social skills that they apply very effectively to support progress while on programme and within their private life. For example, employability learners demonstrate good independent and collaborative working when researching and evaluating the most cost-effective way to borrow and repay a financial loan. Learners very effectively use relevant mathematical skills to calculate overall borrowing costs for a range of realistic situations and are able to link well the implications of their learning to their lives. They significantly improve their confidence, self-esteem and communication skills through participation in presentations to other learners and gain useful insights into personal motivation and goals using peer and individual reflective practice.

- The range and standard of vocational skills development is good. For example, electro-technical engineering learners quickly acquire the ability to build a working model through the accurate interpretation of a relay diagram. Learners participating in nursery work placements are adept at linking theory to practical situations to ensure that they appropriately respond to requests for disclosure of information made by parents and carers. Learners in a wide range of sector areas demonstrate enhanced effectiveness, in a broad variety of work-experience settings, through the application of appropriate customer care skills.
- The progression rate for learners entering education, employment and training following completion of the programme is good. The proportion of learners who enter apprenticeship training is particularly high, reflecting the focus of the 'Key 2 Apprenticeships' (K2A) programme.
- Learners can access a good range of vocational training and sector-relevant qualifications that helps them to progress. They have a sound appreciation of the available career, education and training opportunities and benefit from good support and guidance to help them make realistic decisions about their future.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which is reflected in the high number of learners gaining vocational qualifications and improving their progression to higher-level learning, apprenticeships and employment.
- Staff have ambitious expectations of learners and set challenging learning activities which motivate them. Learners benefit from the good tutor support and they enjoy their learning. They apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills confidently and are able to effectively state their views and contribute well to the many lively discussions within taught sessions. Learners work well independently, for example, to carry out internet research in preparation for presentations on consumer law and regularly complete homework such as completing workbooks for the technical certificate.
- Teaching and learning sessions are mostly of a good quality and successfully engage learners, maintaining and promoting their attention, interest and motivation. Tutors have a good knowledge and experience of their vocational area and use relevant industry specific learning tasks to help learners link theory to practical situations, such as understanding the importance of calculating water pressures for heating systems when connecting pipework. Tutors generally use a good range of techniques to assess and develop learning, such as practical activities, group discussions and probing question and answer sessions.
- In less effective sessions, learners do not experience the effective use of information learning technology to aid their development and not all subcontractors provide an adequate range of ICT resources to support learning. In a minority of cases, tutors do not sufficiently review learning points to check and reinforce understanding.
- Assessment of learners' vocational work is comprehensive, frequent and effectively promotes achievement. Tutors employ a wide range of assessment methods which ensures learners are able to use an extensive range of evidence to demonstrate vocational competency and increased employability skills. The standard of work in portfolios is high and tutors provide learners with detailed constructive feedback to help them improve. However, in a few instances, learners receive insufficient feedback on the quality of evidence presented and tutors do not give enough attention to ensuring the authentication of evidence.
- Initial assessment is thorough and very effectively identifies learners' current levels of experience and learning as well as their aspirations. In addition, subcontractors make good use of an online system to assess learners' English, mathematics and ICT skills as well as their preferred learning styles. For the majority of learners, tutors use the information from initial assessment effectively to inform the completion of individual learning plans. However, not all tutors make enough use of the initial assessment results to plan lessons and meet individual learning needs.

- Learners value highly the regular and frequent good quality progress reviews, which they find motivational. All learners are clear about the progress they have made and what subsequent actions are required to ensure they succeed further. However, review targets are not always consistently effective where they are insufficiently detailed and precise, or fail to focus fully on learning or progress made against previously established goals.
- The quality of information and advice learners receive before, during and on leaving the learning programme are good and effectively supports progression. Induction to the programme is comprehensive and successfully introduces learners to the expectations and employment opportunities in their chosen careers. Learners benefit from being able to participate in a good range of vocational programmes and work experience that very effectively supports their progression.
- The planning and delivery of functional English and mathematical skills requires improvement. Not all subcontractors provide opportunities for learners to gain appropriate qualifications and tutors do not always effectively exploit the available development opportunities within taught sessions. For example, in a health and safety lesson, learners demonstrated a good range of knowledge and skills by building a three dimensional model, but opportunities to further develop functional skills were not fully exploited. Not all tutors effectively help all learners improve their written work by routinely correcting grammar and spelling errors.
- Promotion of equality and diversity through teaching, learning and assessment are good and subcontractors share best practice well to develop their own and learners' understanding. For example, learners participating in customer-care programmes develop a sound appreciation of valuing individual differences and cultural and linguistic diversity. Staff participate in relevant training and use it very effectively to both raise the standard of professional practice and ensure learners make good gains in understanding their responsibilities and rights. Subcontractors have established learning centres that are safe and where learners and staff show each other mutual respect.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Leadership and management of the K2A programme are good. The Chief Executive Officer sets a very clear direction and ambitious ethos for the provision, rightly placing a very strong emphasis on delivering a high quality learning experience for all learners. The board of directors have agreed, communicated and effectively monitor a strategic plan that sets challenging objectives to raise the quality and quantity of the provision that is well understood by all subcontractors.
- Governance is good. Board members are from an appropriate range of backgrounds, including work-based learning and college representatives, and have a good understanding of the organisation's strengths and areas for improvement. They provide robust challenge of decisions made by the manager and the Chief Executive Officer while giving good support to the senior management team's work in driving up performance and improvement.
- Leaders and managers have given a high priority to raising the profile of work-based learning in Merseyside and have been successful in significantly increasing recruitment to the K2A programme. The provider effectively uses attendance at publicity events to promote wider participation and has sponsored an apprenticeship focussed section in a free magazine that is distributed widely across Merseyside. Until recently, this magazine has been almost exclusively about schools. The provider makes very effective use of social media to introduce young people, who are not involved in education, employment or training, to the benefits of participation in further learning.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of their learners and provide a wide range of activities to raise aspirations and encourage them to engage in new experiences. As part of a planned strategy, the provider has been particularly successful in involving learners in activities to improve their cultural awareness and engagement with their local area. Examples include

learners' visits to venues such as the Tate Liverpool art centre, learning to play percussion instruments for a performance with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and performing at a comedy club.

- The provider has detailed quality assurance arrangements that secure improvement but has been slow to introduce fully processes to monitor and enhance standards at all key learning stages. During the focussed monitoring visit in September 2011, inspectors identified insufficient progress in implementing systems to observe and evaluate the quality of subcontractors taught sessions. A detailed framework is now in place but the provider has yet to implement fully processes that gauge the quality of all subcontractors' teaching and learning and inform a comprehensive action plan for improvement. However, the provider and its subcontractors have been effective in maintaining and improving the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment noted at the previous inspection.
- The performance management of subcontractors is good and includes detailed and effective processes to scrutinise new subcontractors. An appropriate service-level agreement is in place for each subcontractor setting out relevant and challenging performance standards that includes targets for success rates and recruitment, which the provider effectively checks for compliance. In addition, all subcontractors produce a detailed monthly performance report that the provider robustly monitors and uses to address quickly any identified delivery shortfalls. The regular bi-monthly board meeting very effectively scrutinises subcontractors' performance using an appropriate range of data.
- The provider's self-assessment processes are effective and make a good contribution to improving the quality of provision. All subcontractors contributed to the current overarching report, which is suitably self-critical and evaluative. The provider made appropriate use of a range of users' views to inform the report's judgements and grading which are consistent with those made by inspectors.
- Leaders and managers very effectively ensure that the range of training activities meets the needs of learners and employers. They use their excellent links with local councils and employers very well to inform strategic planning by determining where both current and future opportunities exist and identifying areas of decline in demand. Subcontractors also make a good contribution to the planning process through the identification and use of local management information.
- The promotion of equality and diversity are good. Since the previous inspection, the provider has delivered a number of courses for subcontractor staff that has made a good contribution to securing improvements in the quality of provision and the raising of learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Subcontractors have successfully embedded good promotion of equality and diversity within taught sessions that contribute well to learners' development and understanding. The provider very effectively monitors the subcontractors' policy and procedure implementation regarding bullying, victimisation and harassment, to aid an assessment of learners' safety and well-being.
- Leaders and managers ensure that all learners are appropriately protected and arrangements meet the organisation's statutory requirement for safeguarding. For safeguarding purposes, the provider keeps an appropriately detailed central record of every member of staff working within the K2A programme. The provider effectively monitors the subcontractors' processes for safeguarding learners whilst in learning centres or during work experience. Learners know to whom they should speak regarding concerns and are confident they will be listened to and helped.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Federation		
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Foundation Learning
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject area graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Foundation Learning	2

Provider details

Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Federation	
Type of provider	Not for profit organisation
Age range of learners	16-18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 0
	Part-time: 316
Chief Executive Officer	Stan Pochron
Date of previous inspection	October 2009
Website address	www.gmlpf.net

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	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	138	N/A	178	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age								
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Aigburth Training Opportunities (ATO) Alder Training Limited Alt Valley Community Trust Asset Training & Consultancy Limited Mode Training Limited North West Community Services North West Training Council Progress Sports Limited Riverside Learning and Education Centre The Vocational College (TVC) Training Plus Merseyside (TPM) Young Peoples Opportunities Project (YPOP)							

Additional socio-economic information

The provider offers a pre-apprenticeship programme branded as 'Key 2 Apprenticeships' that is targeted to engage with young people who are hard to reach, not fully engaged in learning or ready for employment. Subcontractors, who provide access to opportunities in vocational sector areas including health and social care, construction crafts, hairdressing, performing arts, customer service and business, deliver all training. Learners are recruited directly by the subcontractors from the six Merseyside boroughs. Unemployment rates in these areas vary significantly, but are often much higher than the national rate. The main employment sectors are public administration, health and education, with a recent growth in retail, hospitality and tourism. The proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs grades A* to C in the region is around the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Nigel Bragg HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Chief Executive Officer as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. 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. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area listed in the report.

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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