

# Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Local authority

## Inspection dates

14–17 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- The majority of learners achieve their qualifications and learning aims, mostly within the planned timescales.
- Apprentices develop good occupational and personal skills in the workplace and quickly make a strong contribution to business efficiency.
- Almost all learners make good progress and develop increased confidence and self-esteem.
- Tutors use a good range of resources very effectively to make learning stimulating and to raise and maintain learners' interest.
- Tutors and employers have high expectations of apprentices to achieve and progress successfully.
- Leaders and managers are highly committed to improving the quality of life and employability prospects for local residents through relevant training.
- The service provides a broad range of courses in conveniently located learning venues throughout the borough.
- Managers have developed strong collaborative partnerships with a network of training providers and employers which are of considerable benefit to learners.
- The council has continued to maintain a consistent level of funding for learning despite budgetary constraints within the authority.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Tutors do not use the results of assessments of learners' starting points sufficiently to set individual learning targets to support all learners making rapid progress.
- The service does not systematically track the progression of learners into further training or employment to assess the impact of the provision.
- Adult learners do not always receive feedback that is helpful and informative. Too often their errors in English go uncorrected and in a few cases tutors' feedback also contains spelling errors.
- Tutors do not systematically promote equality and diversity or British values, including the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism, to learners.
- Quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently rigorous to drive continuous improvement.
- Senior leaders are not sufficiently aware of the quality of provision, learners' personal development, behaviour and welfare, and the effectiveness of leadership and management.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) manages the economic development and skills service within the council's places directorate. The service also engages 11 subcontractors to provide programmes throughout the region. The service offered a range of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities, funded by the Skills Funding Agency, to 3,945 adults in 2014/15. Programmes are offered in 25 centres and outreach venues including libraries, community centres, social services centres, children's centres and schools. Programmes are available in nine subject areas but are predominantly in community learning. The service also offers training to apprentices and to learners on traineeships. The service is committed to expanding its apprenticeship provision. Almost one third of courses lead to accredited qualifications.
- The unemployment rate across Wigan is slightly lower than the rate for the north-west of England and the national average. The proportion of young people not in education or training is slightly lower than the average for the north-west. The proportion of adults holding level 2 qualifications or above is lower in Wigan than in the north-west or nationally. More young people achieve five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, than the average in the north-west or the national average.

## What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Tutors should set specific learning targets based on learners' starting points, including personal goals.
- Collect and analyse systematically the data on learners' destinations when they leave their course so that senior leaders and managers are fully aware of the impact of the provision and they use the information to develop the curriculum to meet local priorities.
- Ensure that senior leaders receive detailed and accurate information about learners' success rates; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare; and the effectiveness of leadership and management so that they can hold senior managers to account for all aspects of the quality of provision.
- Tutors should provide helpful feedback to all learners, including the correction of spelling and grammatical errors, so that learners are fully informed about what they need to do to improve their work.
- All tutors should promote equality and diversity and British values, including the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism, so that all learners are fully aware of these issues and what they can do to protect themselves.
- Ensure the self-assessment report is clearly and explicitly focused on strengths and areas for improvement across all aspects of provision. Ensure the quality improvement plan accurately identifies the required actions and impact measures to improve identified weaknesses and that progress in improving quality is monitored closely.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and managers are highly committed to improving the quality of life and employability prospects of local residents through the skills and learning service. The service successfully promotes and supports the council's vision of Wigan as a 'confident place' with 'confident people'.
- A broad range of courses is offered in learning venues throughout the borough in addition to a rapidly increasing number of apprenticeships in a range of vocational areas. Leaders and managers are passionate about, and successful in, widening participation by attracting learners who do not necessarily see adult education as a passport to their future well-being and economic security.
- Curriculum planning is good. Managers place a high priority on designing courses that meet the needs of individual learners, local communities and businesses. Managers place considerable importance on raising learners' aspirations, developing their personal effectiveness and enhancing their employment prospects through training. Managers fully endorse the importance of English and mathematics. They are committed to providing opportunities for learners to improve their English and mathematical competencies.
- Managers have developed strong collaborative partnerships with a network of training providers throughout the borough. This has enabled many learners to access learning in their local communities. Partners' performance is rigorously monitored at regular intervals by managers who take decisive action to terminate contracts if underperformance is identified and not eliminated quickly enough.
- Managers promote equality of opportunity successfully. Tutors, assessors and learners show high levels of mutual respect and there is zero tolerance of bullying, harassment, discrimination and unfair treatment.
- Senior managers and leaders are unwavering in their support for the skills and learning service. Since the service was previously inspected in 2013, the local authority has been reorganised on several occasions as a result of reduced budgets. However, they have not allowed financial constraints to have any adverse impact on the skills and learning service. The same level of funding has been skilfully maintained, with an added commitment to increasing the apprenticeship provision.
- The self-assessment process is thorough. Although the key judgements in the self-assessment report are accurately graded, their key strengths and areas for improvement are not identified. The report is insufficiently incisive. The quality improvement plan does not always accurately identify the required actions and their impact on the quality of the provision.
- Leaders and managers do not have accurate information about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through the observation process. Strengths and areas for improvement are not sufficiently detailed, not enough importance is placed on learning and the reports are too descriptive. Tutors and assessors are not routinely reflecting on, and evaluating, their own performance to improve its quality. This was an area for improvement when the provision was inspected in 2013 and has not yet been implemented fully.
- Leaders and managers are not collecting and using comprehensive progression and destination data. As a result, they cannot judge accurately the impact of training on learners particularly in community development and employability programmes.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Communication between the manager responsible for the skills and learning service, senior managers and the chief executive has improved and is now good.
  - The senior management team and the scrutiny committee present greater challenges and greater support to the assistant director and the skills and learning service manager than in previous years. They ensure that the provision is sharply focused on meeting the needs of local residents throughout the borough and supports the council's priorities for confident, trained and employable people.
  - The assistant director, director and the councillor with responsibility for learning and skills meet regularly to review the effectiveness of the provision. However, they have insufficient information about success rates; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare; and the effectiveness of leadership and management. They cannot, therefore, hold managers to account for bringing about rapid improvements in these key areas.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - The skills and learning team takes its responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners very seriously. It is committed to providing safe environments for all learners.
  - Managers liaise very closely with the council's human resource and legal departments to ensure that enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are requested for all tutors, assessors and advisers working with young learners.

- The service places a high priority on training tutors, assessors and managers so they are fully aware of what constitutes safeguarding and the procedures to follow if safeguarding issues arise or are suspected. Attendance at training sessions is high. Failure to attend mandatory training sessions results in tutors' contracts being suspended until they complete the training. Most staff have completed training on the 'Prevent' duty and the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- During induction learners are provided with relevant information about keeping themselves safe, including online safety. However, their recall is very poor. Reinforcement is lacking and tutors do not place sufficient importance on regularly checking and extending learners' knowledge and understanding.
- When potential safeguarding issues are reported, designated safeguarding officers act very quickly to ensure that appropriate action is taken to deal with them.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**is good**

- The provision includes apprenticeships, traineeships and adult learning programmes. The provider offers a wide range of programmes for adult learners, including information and communication technology (ICT) courses and courses that prepare people for employment. The large majority of courses for adult learners are non-accredited. Adult learning provision also includes courses in English and mathematics that lead to qualifications. Apprenticeship programmes include health and social care, arts and digital media, and business administration. Traineeship programmes include fish husbandry, land-based studies, construction, and leisure, travel and tourism. At the time of the inspection, 460 apprentices, 25 trainees and 189 adult learners were enrolled on programmes.
- Most tutors demonstrate high expectations of learners. They use these very effectively to motivate and enable the large majority of learners to achieve their qualifications or learning goals. On apprenticeship programmes, tutors expect all apprentices to complete their apprenticeship and to progress to a higher level of study.
- Tutors are well qualified and experienced in their specialist areas. Most tutors make very good use of their specialist knowledge and experience to plan learning that meets the needs of learners and trainees with different abilities. As a result, the large majority of learners and trainees make good progress.
- Most tutors use a range of teaching and learning activities and resources effectively to make learning interesting. For example, in a session on preparing trainees for job interviews, the tutor made effective use of a job description and person specification to enable the trainees to identify successfully their relevant knowledge, skills and experience.
- Tutors identify learners', apprentices' and trainees' starting points and individual learning needs accurately. As a result, they are enrolled on appropriate courses at the correct level. Good additional learning support is provided to those who need it.
- Tutors monitor and assess learners', apprentices' and trainees' progress carefully during sessions. Apprentices and trainees benefit considerably from regular progress reviews that advise them about their progress and achievements and what they still need to do to complete their programme successfully.
- On traineeship programmes, tutors integrate English and mathematical skills successfully in their sessions. Trainees make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. For example, in a session on making rigs for pole fishing, trainees learned the terminology for all components of a rig. Also in a session on searching for jobs, trainees worked out how much they would earn each week from an annual salary and whether they would be able to afford driving lessons.
- Tutors do not make sufficient use of the results of the initial assessments they carry out with learners to set specific learning targets. Too many learning targets are not specific enough. As a result, learners are not sufficiently aware of the particular skills they need to improve.
- Tutors do not always challenge the most able learners and apprentices. Consequently, these learners and apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Adult learners do not always receive feedback that is helpful enough. In too many cases, tutors do not identify the errors in learners' written work. As a result, learners are not aware of their errors and too often repeat them. In a very few cases, tutors' written feedback includes spelling errors.
- Tutors do not promote diversity sufficiently during sessions. They do not increase learners' awareness of people's different characteristics to prepare them more effectively for life and work in a diverse society.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**are good**

- Learners, apprentices and trainees enjoy their learning. Most demonstrate considerable pride in their work and in their achievements. Adult learners on an ICT course spoke proudly about how they had learned to use presentation software to produce slides which could be used in job interviews or in the workplace.
- Adult learners increase their self-confidence and many return to take up further learning opportunities, including courses in English and mathematics. Apprentices are highly motivated and produce high standards of work. For example, the skills of digital media apprentices meet industrial standards. Through their assignments apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of the theory they have studied.
- Learners, apprentices and trainees develop knowledge, skills and understanding they can apply in everyday life or to increase their chances of gaining employment. Adult learners in an English class are now able to communicate more effectively with their children's teachers. Trainees on a land-based studies course have learned how to search effectively on the council's website for jobs that match their skills and previous experience.
- Apprentices and trainees benefit from good information, advice and guidance. They have a good awareness of the content and requirements of their programmes and of the options for further training, education and job opportunities.
- Attendance is good in most courses. Most learners, apprentices and trainees attend regularly, arrive on time for their sessions and are prepared for learning. Most learners, apprentices and trainees demonstrate good standards of behaviour. They comply with the provider's code of conduct and show high levels of mutual respect.
- Trainees have a good understanding of British values. They are able to speak respectfully about the rights of migrants to work in the United Kingdom and about some of their different customs and practices. Apprentices' and adult learners' knowledge and understanding of British values are insufficiently developed.
- Too many learners, apprentices and trainees do not demonstrate sufficient awareness of how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Although tutors advise learners how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism during induction, they do not revisit these issues often enough so that learners remain alert to and understand fully the risks.
- Tutors make sure that learners are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that their fellow learners are respected and they behave in a thoughtful and caring way. However, during class discussions, a minority of learners did not exhibit respectful listening skills; they talked over each other without giving other learners sufficient opportunity to voice their point of view.

## Outcomes for learners

**are good**

- In 2014/15, the proportion of adults studying on accredited courses and achieving their qualifications was high. The proportion of current learners who remain on their course has improved year on year and is also high. Most learners are making good progress. There are no significant variations in the achievements of different groups of learners.
- Apprenticeship success rates are high. Most apprentices succeed within the planned time. Apprentices develop good occupational and personal skills. Employers recognise the skills gained by their apprentices and the valuable contribution that they make to the productivity and the efficiency of their business.
- Most learners on adult learning programmes complete their learning programmes, achieve their personal learning goals or gain qualifications relevant to their needs. More than half move on to further courses relevant to their career aims or future plans. Almost all learners improve their confidence and self-esteem. The most able learners and apprentices are not sufficiently challenged by their work. Consequently, these learners and apprentices do not make the progress they could.
- Most learners produce work that is of the expected standard. Learners are enthusiastic about their studies; they often choose to learn independently from home. Learners grow in confidence and return to learn. Learners enjoy their courses and are positive about their experiences. Learners who experience feelings of isolation or depression benefit from taking part in courses. In particular, elderly learners and young mothers appreciate the learning opportunities provided for them.
- The majority of learners and apprentices who follow functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics are successful. Most make good progress. Trainees make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. Apprentices who already hold GCSEs at grade C or above in mathematics and English are not given sufficient opportunities to develop these skills further.
- In 2014/15 the destinations of too many learners were unknown. Data on learners' progression is not collected, analysed and used by managers to inform future planning. Of the known learner destinations,

too many learners do not progress to a higher-level course or gain employment. A high proportion of learners are not challenged to develop higher-level skills. Adult learners, particularly the most able learners, are not always given useful and personalised advice about routes to further study. This is particularly the case for learners with higher abilities.

## Types of provision

### Adult learning programmes

are good

- So far this year there have been 2,490 adult learners taking part in learning. More than three quarters have followed courses that are not externally accredited. Subjects include child development, cookery, creative arts, floristry, history, ICT and languages. The remainder are on accredited programmes in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, employability skills, ICT, and job search. Currently 189 learners are enrolled on adult courses.
- Tutors are well qualified. They use their experience to good effect so that learners can relate activities to real-life situations and their learning needs. Tutors use questioning skilfully to make sure that learners fully understand concepts before moving on to new activities.
- Tutors make learning fun and interesting by creating a range of stimulating resources and organising a variety of relevant activities. Learners particularly enjoy carrying out practical activities; for example in a tranquil babies class mothers carried out baby massage to soothing music.
- Good oral feedback from tutors in lessons builds learners' confidence, reinforces learning and encourages their enjoyment of learning. For example, in a cake decorating class learners were told to have high expectations of themselves and not to be too self-critical.
- Learners are enthusiastic about their studies and they often choose to continue to learn independently from home. Learners in a Spanish class spoke enthusiastically about learning on the internet. Working relationships in class between widely differing groups of people, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, are good.
- Learners' support needs are carefully identified and responded to by tutors. Mutual respect between learners and tutors is good. Learners feel safe and their behaviour is good.
- Tutors develop learners' English and mathematics effectively in many classes. However, a minority of tutors do not mark learners' work and suggest how they can improve it. Consequently, these learners are deprived of good opportunities for progressively increasing the quality of their work.
- Tutors identify learners' starting points accurately. However, in a minority of cases they do not translate these into challenging activities for the most-able learners.
- Many learners are bored by the induction programme and cannot see its relevance. This was a weakness identified at the previous inspection and insufficient work has been done to improve its delivery and increase its appeal.
- Assessment of learners' progress is accurate but the range of evidence used to demonstrate and record learning is often limited.

### Apprenticeships

are good

- WMBC delivers apprenticeships across north-west England and currently has 460 apprentices. Around two thirds of apprenticeships are delivered by five subcontractors and the remainder through direct delivery by the council. Most apprentices are in business administration or in sport, leisure and recreation. Approximately 40% of the apprentices are studying at intermediate level, another 40% at advanced level and the remainder at higher levels.
- Apprenticeships are well planned and managed by tutors in conjunction with employers to ensure that off-the-job training complements employment roles and on-the-job training to form a comprehensive and relevant programme.
- Assessors are very well qualified and experienced. They use their current industrial experience effectively to plan a good range of relevant learning activities that meet both apprentices' and employers' needs. Assessors have high expectations of apprentices and ensure that the very great majority make good progress and complete their programme successfully.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills in the workplace and contribute effectively to the business needs of their employers. For example, a digital media apprentice has produced a well-constructed brochure which his employer is going to use in a new marketing campaign. A personal trainer advanced apprentice is now sufficiently skilled to deliver fitness classes in the gym where he is employed.

- Apprentices have a good knowledge of what they need to learn to achieve their qualifications and how their competence will be assessed. Assessment is fair and accurate. Assessors use a wide range of assessment techniques to capture effectively evidence of apprentices' progress and competencies. These include the use of written testimonies, direct observations of apprentices at work and video or audio recordings of sessions. Apprentices benefit from detailed written feedback on assessed work which enables them to understand how they can improve. In a very few cases, assessments and reviews take place in areas where privacy cannot be guaranteed.
- Assessors provide good personal support for apprentices. Working in partnership with employers, assessors provide very effective coaching and mentoring that develop apprentices' confidence in the workplace. Assessors visit apprentices regularly in the workplace, often on a flexible basis, and more frequently when apprentices require additional support to help them to catch up. For example, apprentices who fall behind with their work through illness are supported very effectively to achieve and progress to an advanced apprenticeship.
- Information, advice and guidance are effective. Apprentices are fully aware of both the nature of their work roles and the associated training before they embark on the programme. Assessors provide good support to apprentices to help them obtain full-time employment on completion of their apprenticeships.
- Apprentices are highly motivated and enjoy both their time in the workplace and their studies. They feel safe and are aware of what action to take should they have concerns.
- Assessors do not routinely extend apprentices' learning beyond the minimum standards of their programme. Apprentices who could make swifter progress are not developing their learning more quickly because assessors do not give them sufficiently challenging work. Questioning is not always used appropriately to enable apprentices to resolve problems for themselves, which impedes the development of their problem-solving skills.
- A small minority of apprentices are not given sufficient support to develop their English and mathematical skills further. Apprentices with pre-existing GCSEs at grade C and above do not routinely undertake a thorough assessment of their starting points. As a consequence, staff cannot give effective and timely support. Apprentices do not have specific targets to develop their English and mathematics skills.
- Employers do not contribute in sufficient detail to the review of apprentices' progress. Although employers make a brief comment on documentation following formal reviews, they are not sufficiently involved in the process itself. Consequently, much of the good development of specific work-related skills and wider employability skills is not recorded or celebrated.
- Too many apprentices do not develop sufficient understanding of radicalisation and extremism. Assessors have attended training and introduce these topics during reviews, but apprentices rarely explore them with their peers and fully understand their relevance in modern Britain.



## Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,945
Principal/CEO	Mrs Emma Barton
Website address	<a href="http://www.wigan.gov.uk">www.wigan.gov.uk</a>

## 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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	98	N/A	91	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	74	116	38	149	2	81		
	16-19		19+		Total			
	14		11		25			
	N/A							
	Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)						
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ Ashton Wigan and District YMCA							
	■ Bedford High School							
	■ Fir Tree Fisheries							
	■ Fitness, Leisure and Management (FLM) Training Ltd							
	■ Graham and Karen (GK) Training							
	■ Joining Communities							
	■ Lowton High School							
	■ Media College							
	■ Westleigh High School							
	■ Wigan Leisure Culture Trust							



## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Bob Busby, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Clayton	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the skills and learning service manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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