

Wigan and Leigh College

Monitoring visit report – subcontracted provision

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Name of lead inspector: Steve Hailstone HMI

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Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Parson's Walk
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Subcontractors:

Citrus Training Solutions Limited
Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside
I & F Limited
Power in Partnership
Progress Sports Limited
The Skills Network
Wigan Council



Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

On 6 February 2018, Ofsted's deputy director for further education and skills informed providers that Ofsted would increase its focus and reporting on the quality of subcontracted provision. The letter stated that Ofsted would carry out a series of monitoring visits to a sample of providers. Three inspectors carried out this monitoring visit to review the management and quality of subcontracted provision.

Wigan and Leigh College currently subcontracts around a third of its apprenticeship provision to Citrus Training Solutions Limited, which accounts for over 500 apprentices, mainly in business management and administration. In addition, a very small contract for pharmacy-based apprenticeship provision is in place with I & F Limited. This contract will come to an end very shortly when the one remaining apprentice completes the programme.

The college subcontracts a proportion of its education and training provision to five local community-based partner organisations: Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside (Groundwork), Power in Partnership, Progress Sports Limited, The Skills Network and Wigan Council. This provision accounted for around 18% of all qualifications taken on study programmes and adult learning programmes in 2016/17. Approximately 200 learners were enrolled on subcontracted education and training programmes at the time of the visit.

Themes

Are leaders and managers managing subcontracted provision effectively?

Insufficient progress

The actions of governors and senior leaders to improve the performance of subcontractors have not been rapid enough. The proportion of apprentices on subcontracted provision who achieve their qualifications is too low and has fallen over the last three years. In 2016/17, only just over half of apprentices at Citrus Training Solutions Limited completed their programmes successfully. Most learners on subcontracted community-based education and training programmes make good progress in developing their personal, social and work-related skills. However, the proportion who achieved their qualifications in 2016/17 was lower overall than those on the college's directly delivered provision and was too low at Progress Sports Limited and Power in Partnership.

Quality assurance arrangements for Citrus Training Solutions Limited have had too little impact for too long. Until recently, arrangements relied too much on college managers ensuring compliance with quality assurance processes at the expense of evaluating with rigour the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Very recent changes have resulted in an improved approach to the quality assurance of the

apprenticeship provision, with a stronger focus on working collaboratively with Citrus Training Solutions Limited to identify and implement improvement actions. Although these actions have resulted in early signs of improvement, the quality of subcontracted apprenticeship provision at Citrus Training Solutions Limited is not yet high enough.

Arrangements for assuring the quality of subcontracted community-based provision delivered by Groundwork, Power in Partnership, Progress Sports Limited, The Skills Network and Wigan Council lack sufficient rigour. The quality of information that college managers receive from these subcontractors about the effectiveness of provision and learners' achievements varies significantly and, in a few instances, is insufficient and inaccurate. College managers do not challenge these community-based subcontractors well enough to improve their reporting on outcomes for learners and the quality of provision; nor do they check quickly enough that agreed actions have been implemented, including, for example, after-lesson observations.

Governors and senior leaders have started recently to focus much more closely on subcontractors' performance and have made recent appointments to enhance their capacity to manage subcontractors. They recognise weaknesses in subcontracting in their self-assessment, and identify accurately the need to improve achievement rates. Recent actions have resulted in a few early signs of improvement, such as better retention in the current year. However, it is still too early to measure the impact of these actions on increasing the proportion of apprentices and learners who complete their programmes successfully.

Senior leaders have established a clear strategy to reduce the volume of subcontracted provision and to align it more closely to the needs of learners and the local community. Their strategy is to cease subcontracting apprenticeship provision and work only with community-based partners to meet the learning needs of disadvantaged young people and adults in the borough. Senior leaders have informed Citrus Training Solutions Limited that they will no longer contract with them once the apprentices currently on programme complete, and managers at the subcontractor have ceased recruiting new apprentices to this provision.

Are leaders and managers ensuring that learners and apprentices in subcontracted provision benefit from high-quality training and education that lead to good or better outcomes? Reasonable progress

Managers and teachers at Groundwork, Power in Partnership, Progress Sports Limited, The Skills Network and Wigan Council ensure that most learners make good progress in developing the skills and personal attributes that they need for their next steps. They are highly committed to, and skilled in, ensuring the success of disadvantaged young people and adults who would find it difficult to attend a course at the college. Leaders and managers at the college recognise the value of

community-based programmes in providing a first step into learning, and are fully committed to maintaining them through subcontracting arrangements.

Learners at Groundwork and Power in Partnership benefit from participating in innovative projects and activities that motivate and inspire them. For example, learners on a Prince's Trust programme run by Groundwork carried out a neighbourhood improvement project and were able to talk clearly and confidently at a presentation event about the skills that they had gained through the project. For many, it was the first time they had spoken in public, something they would not have felt confident to do only a few weeks earlier.

As a result of their programmes, most apprentices on subcontracted provision at Citrus Training Solutions Limited develop new skills and knowledge, and improve their confidence in carrying out their job roles. Assessors who have an appropriate level of expertise meet with apprentices frequently to review progress and identify further training needs. However, the quality of training that apprentices receive is still not of a consistently high standard, and this impedes the progress of too many apprentices.

Where employers engage fully with the apprenticeship programme, they select appropriate qualification units to ensure that learning is relevant to the needs of apprentices and the organisation, and participate actively in reviews of apprentices' progress. However, in too many instances, managers at Citrus Training Solutions Limited do not ensure that employers are involved sufficiently in tailoring programmes to meet their needs.

Assessors at Citrus Training Solutions Limited provide effective support to enable apprentices to improve their English and digital skills well. Too often, however, they do not support apprentices well enough to improve their mathematical skills. Many apprentices who have not yet achieved an English and mathematics qualification at level 2 do not take these qualifications until late in the programme. This means that, unless they pass first time, too many do not complete their programme until after the planned end date.

Are leaders and managers ensuring that safeguarding arrangements in subcontracted provision are effective?

Reasonable progress

Safeguarding arrangements at all subcontractors are effective in ensuring that learners and apprentices are safe. Contracts make clear the duties and responsibilities of subcontractors in relation to safeguarding. College managers monitor the actions taken by subcontractors to ensure that learners and apprentices are safe.

College managers evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements through lesson observations and discussions with learners when they visit subcontractors.

They check that subcontractors are conforming with safe recruitment practice. They also ensure that any safeguarding concerns are reported to them. They recognise, however, the need to scrutinise subcontractors' own records of concerns more closely so that they are assured fully that responses are appropriate.

Staff at all subcontractors carry out an appropriate range of training on safeguarding, including on the 'Prevent' duty. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to ensure that learners are safe from all risks, including those relating to radicalisation and extremism. On subcontracted provision delivered by Groundwork and Power in Partnership, staff place a strong focus on developing learners' awareness of all risks to their safety. However, too many apprentices at Citrus Training Solutions Limited have only a very basic understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

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