

# ProCo NW Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

12–15 February 2019

Overall effectiveness		Inadequate	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>	16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Apprenticeships	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Outcomes for learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

## Summary of key findings

### This is an inadequate provider

- Leaders and managers have not rectified most of the weaknesses identified at the previous three inspections. As a result, the quality of provision has not improved sufficiently.
- Leadership and management of subcontracted courses are poor. This accounts for almost half of the provision.
- Governors do not scrutinise the work of staff and senior leaders or hold them to account sufficiently well to bring about rapid and sustainable improvements.
- Achievement is too low for apprentices, particularly for those on level 2 programmes and those who are aged 16 to 18.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is of a consistently high standard across all courses, including those of subcontractors.
- Tutors do not use information about apprentices' and learners' starting points well enough to plan individual learning. Consequently, too many apprentices and learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Attendance by learners and apprentices on the majority of programmes is too low.

### The provider has the following strengths

- The proportion of learners on study programmes who pass their qualifications has improved and is now high.
- Most apprentices and learners who stay to the end of their programmes progress into further study, apprenticeships or employment.
- Staff provide very good support to apprentices and learners on courses provided directly by ProCo NW Limited. As a result, apprentices and learners participate effectively in their studies, and gain new skills, knowledge and experience.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- ProCo NW Limited (ProCo) is an independent, not-for-profit learning provider that operates in Wigan, Greater Manchester. It recruits apprentices and learners from a wide geographical area. Approximately two thirds of learners are aged 16 to 18. The company offers study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 up to level 3, including traineeships, and apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced levels in building and construction, sport, animal care and veterinary science, motor vehicle, business administration and childcare. ProCo subcontracts nearly half of its apprentices and learners to eight subcontractors. Most apprentices and learners on subcontracted courses are on sport programmes.
- Around one quarter of the working-age population in Wigan have qualifications at level 4 or above, which is low compared with regional and national averages. Levels of unemployment in the local authority are around the same as regional and national averages.

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

- Improve the management of subcontracted courses so that the quality of provision is high across all subcontractors.
- Ensure that governors:
  - request and receive accurate information and reports about the quality of the provision and the outcomes for apprentices and learners
  - scrutinise and use reports to challenge leaders and managers and hold them to account for improvements in the quality of provision.
- Increase, to a high level, the proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes and qualifications, particularly those aged 16 to 18 and those on level 2 apprenticeships.
- Improve learners' and apprentices' attendance so it is high across all courses. Monitor their attendance on subcontracted courses rigorously and frequently and take steps to ensure that poor attenders are encouraged to attend all their sessions.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so it is consistently high across all courses, including those provided by subcontractors.
- Ensure that tutors use information about apprentices' and learners' starting points to plan individual learning, set specific targets for learners, and provide helpful feedback, so that apprentices and learners make the progress of which they are capable.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Governors, senior leaders and managers have not yet rectified most of the weaknesses identified at the previous three inspections.
- The need to address a financial shortfall has been a distraction for governors and senior leaders. Subcontractors' poor performance in 2016/17 led to senior leaders terminating contracts with underperforming subcontractors. As a result, in 2017/18, the quality of provision improved. In 2018/19, senior leaders made the decision to subcontract nearly half of the provider's programmes to eight subcontractors. Two of these subcontractors have residual contracts for apprenticeships. This has had a detrimental effect on the quality of provision.
- The leadership and management of subcontracted courses are poor. Managers have not put in place rigorous methods to ensure that the quality of courses is of a high standard across all subcontractors. Managers rely too much on the subcontractor providing the information they need. As a result, managers do not always have an up-to-date or accurate picture of the quality and outcomes of the provision. For example, although subcontractors monitor attendance, they only report to ProCo managers once a month.
- Managers have not yet implemented their plan to reduce the number of apprentices and learners in subcontracted provision. The proportion of apprentices and learners in subcontracted provision has risen since the previous inspection from a third to nearly half. Around half of current apprentices on subcontracted courses make slow progress.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes and apprenticeships continues to require improvement. Too many apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those on level 2 apprenticeships do not complete their qualifications by the planned end date. Tutors still do not use sufficiently the results of the assessments of apprentices' and learners' starting points to plan learning that meets individual needs.
- Managers' self-assessment of the quality of provision is insufficiently rigorous. They have failed to identify weaknesses that have an impact on learners and apprentices. When evaluating the standards of education and training, managers do not take enough account of the progress and achievements of apprentices and learners.
- Managers' strategies to improve the quality of courses are ineffective. Managers do not analyse the data well enough to pinpoint exactly what needs improving. They do not set clear targets in the associated quality improvement plan. As a result, managers are not able to assess accurately the progress being made and, as a result, governors cannot hold them to account. The pace of improvement over the last six years has been too slow.
- Leaders do not use data well enough to set clear targets for improvement and to hold managers and staff to account. Managers do not monitor apprentices' and learners' overall progress accurately. Consequently, they do not have a clear understanding of the progress that apprentices and learners are making. As a result, too many learners aged 16 to 19 and apprentices are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Managers have recently improved the way in which they assess the quality of lessons. As a result, observers now accurately assess the quality of teaching, learning and

assessment. Managers have put in place effective support for staff who need to do better; consequently, the practice of individual tutors has improved. Nevertheless, there remains a high degree of variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment between different aspects of the provision.

- Senior leaders work very closely with several external organisations, including the local enterprise partnership (LEP), to ensure that the curriculum aligns with current and future skills requirements in the Wigan area. ProCo provides opportunities for progression and further training to local people who have experienced significant barriers to learning in the past.

## **The governance of the provider**

- Governors have an appropriate range of skills and experience. However, their actions have not brought about enough improvement since previous inspections.
- In too many instances, the pace of improvement has been too slow because governors have not requested or received accurate information to hold senior managers to account with sufficient rigour. For example, governors have not received sufficient detail about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, they have not been able to challenge senior leaders and managers about the actions taken to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Although governors set senior leaders headline targets for improvement, they have not received regular progress reports against these targets. Discussions have not resulted in clear actions for leaders and managers to take in order to achieve the required improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have established effective arrangements with external agencies such as mental health services, the police and the local authority. Appropriate and prompt referrals are made to these agencies when concerns are identified.
- The designated safeguarding officer is a senior manager with appropriate training, and one governor maintains an oversight of safeguarding. Managers ensure that all new staff complete the necessary recruitment checks. Staff and governors undertake appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training.
- Staff report any safeguarding concerns effectively and in a timely manner. The safeguarding team follows these up promptly. Leaders and managers have in place a suitable 'Prevent' duty risk register and action plan.
- Apprentices and learners feel safe and most know how to recognise the signs associated with radicalisation and extremism. They know how to work safely when working online.
- Managers record disclosures made by apprentices and learners relating to safeguarding and ensure that suitable actions are put in place. However, managers do not record consistently the actions taken and the continued monitoring of any apprentices or learners at risk.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not of a consistently high standard across all courses, including those of subcontractors. Tutors on courses delivered directly by ProCo assess apprentices' and learners' skills and knowledge, including occupational skills, accurately at the start of their programmes. This is not the case, however, for learners on traineeships. Tutors do not make sufficient use of information to plan individual learning well enough, or to set ambitious targets. This sometimes inhibits the rate of progress learners and apprentices make.
- Subcontractors' staff do not adequately assess apprentices' and learners' occupational skills at the start of their course. As a result, tutors on subcontracted courses do not plan learning to meet the individual needs of apprentices and learners well enough.
- Tutors do not use routinely information about apprentices' and learners' progress to set sufficiently detailed or challenging targets. As a result, too many learners on subcontracted courses make slow progress.
- In practical and theory sessions, learners and apprentices develop substantial new technical skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, in motor vehicle provision, learners on level 1 study programmes were able to apply their theoretical knowledge to practice as they made and fitted brake pipes competently and to industry standard.
- Apprentices who study veterinary nursing and learners on sport courses make good progress because of the improvements to their work following constructive feedback from tutors. However, this is not the experience of apprentices and learners on other courses.
- Apprentices and learners benefit from effective support on directly delivered courses. For example, apprentices in animal care receive specialist support in the workplace for functional skills in English and mathematics.
- Leaders' and managers' strategy to improve English and mathematics teaching on directly delivered programmes has been most successful in GCSE mathematics. Apprentices and learners benefit from effective teaching in which tutors challenge them to develop their understanding of increasingly complex mathematical formulas.
- Leaders and managers have not shared their English and mathematics strategy with subcontractors. As a result, apprentices and learners do not develop these skills consistently well across all courses.
- Although learners and apprentices are provided with sufficient opportunities to develop their oral communication skills in most lessons, this is not the case for their writing skills, which remain weak.
- Apprentices and learners benefit from well-resourced, industry-standard facilities. For example, in motor vehicle provision, apprentices use a wide range of vehicle types to practise and extend their knowledge and skills in motor vehicle maintenance and repair.
- Staff are skilled and have relevant industry expertise in their subject specialisms. Most tutors use their knowledge and skills well to motivate apprentices and learners and to develop their understanding. For example, in level 2 plumbing and heating, apprentices extend their knowledge of how combi boilers work through skilful questioning by tutors.
- Employers support apprentices and learners well to develop their skills in the workplace.

For example, employers enable plumbing apprentices who work in industrial settings to gain experience working in a domestic environment. Apprentices broaden their vocational experience, which means they can contribute more to their employer's business.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

- Too few learners and apprentices attend their lessons frequently enough. Leaders and managers do not monitor sufficiently learners' and apprentices' attendance on subcontracted courses. As a result, too many apprentices do not complete their programme on time. Tutors challenge appropriately the small minority of apprentices and learners who arrive late to lessons.
- Most apprentices and learners on directly delivered courses receive appropriate advice and guidance from tutors to ensure that they are on the right course at the right level. Most apprentices and learners benefit from effective support from tutors that enables them to progress into further study or employment at the end of their programme.
- Learners on a minority of subcontracted courses do not benefit from effective advice and guidance. As a result, a small minority of learners are unsure of their next steps.
- Apprentices and learners enjoy their learning across most courses. They behave well and are respectful towards peers, teachers and employers. Apprentices and learners are keen to learn and to improve their skills. They develop their teamworking and problem-solving skills competently in vocational workshops.
- Learners on study programmes benefit from purposeful work-related learning. Most learners undertake external work experience placements that are relevant to their career aims. Work experience for learners on employability courses with subcontractors is not always relevant to learners' interests or career aspirations.
- Learners contribute well to the workplace. They gain new skills, enabling them to progress to apprenticeships or to gain part-time jobs, for example in plastering and motor vehicle.
- Tutors support apprentices and learners successfully to develop their personal and social skills and the skills they need for work. Apprentices and learners develop their oral communication and reading skills, and technical vocabulary, which they use competently. For example, veterinary nurse apprentices communicate effectively and sensitively with pet owners in veterinary surgeries.
- Apprentices and learners benefit from a range of relevant additional activities that enhance their learning. For example, animal management learners visited a dogs' home to learn how a commercial kennel is managed.
- Learners and apprentices complete additional courses and qualifications relevant to their main studies, in, for example, pet first aid, MOT testing, air conditioning, the 'Prevent' duty and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), which enhance their employment prospects.
- Apprentices and learners feel safe. They know how to work safely in workshops and the workplace. They wear suitable personal protective equipment and follow health and safety practices appropriately. Sport apprentices, most of whom work within school settings, understand and follow the schools' safety and safeguarding procedures,

including to whom they should report any concerns about a child's safety or well-being.

- Apprentices and learners demonstrate a good understanding of British values and equality and diversity. Tutors systematically challenge stereotyping and promote equality of opportunity and diversity in teaching and learning. Staff are highly attentive to learners' pastoral needs, especially those needing financial, emotional and practical support. For example, tutors provide effective support for learners when visiting employers and prepare them for, and accompany them to, work interviews. As a result, apprentices and learners are better prepared for work and attend more regularly.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- Despite improvement since the previous inspection, overall outcomes for apprentices require further improvement, particularly for those on level 2 programmes and those who are aged 16 to 18. Over one quarter of apprentices fail to achieve their apprenticeships, and more than one third of apprentices do not achieve their qualifications on time.
- Learners' achievement on traineeships, which account for a very small proportion of the provision, improved marginally in 2017/18 but is still too low. More than one quarter of learners do not achieve their qualifications. Achievement is poor in foundations for learning and life, where more than half of learners do not achieve their qualification. Learners' achievements are high in sport and preparation for work.
- The proportion of learners who achieve standard or strong pass grades in GCSE mathematics is too low, although it improved significantly in 2017/18. A very small minority of learners achieve standard or strong pass grades in GCSE English. Significantly fewer learners on subcontracted courses achieve English and mathematics qualifications than those on directly delivered provision. Learners' achievements in functional skills English and mathematics is high.
- The proportion of learners on study programmes who remain on their programmes to the end has improved significantly but is still too low.
- Around half of apprentices on subcontracted courses make slow progress. On directly delivered courses, apprentices make slow progress on a minority of courses, particularly in construction trades and business administration. Apprentices in veterinary nursing and plumbing make good progress.
- Differences in achievement between male and female apprentices and learners on study programmes have reduced, but male apprentices and learners continue to achieve less well than their female counterparts. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities now achieve as well as their peers. Leaders' and managers' use of data to compare achievement by different groups of learners and apprentices on subcontracted courses is weak.
- The proportion of learners on study programmes who achieve their qualifications has improved greatly since the previous inspection. Pass rates have improved and are now high. A high proportion of study programme learners on level 3 programmes achieve their qualifications, particularly on sport and animal management courses. However, achievement on motor vehicle and construction courses is low.
- Apprentices and learners make good progress in developing their practical skills for their chosen subjects. Learners develop industry-standard skills which employers appreciate



and benefit from. For example, sport learners run coaching sessions competently and motor vehicle apprentices skilfully replace alternators in cars.

- The vast majority of apprentices who achieve their qualifications remain in employment or progress to further study. A high proportion of study programme learners progress into further study, apprenticeships or employment. Too few learners on traineeships progress into positive destinations following their courses.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### Requires improvement

- Currently, there are 165 learners on study programmes, of whom 82 are subcontracted to four providers. Over half of learners study at entry level and level 1, with the remainder split between level 2 and level 3 programmes. ProCo offers courses on its direct provision in construction, animal care and motor vehicle. Subcontractors offer courses in sport and employability. The largest areas are construction and sport.
- The quality of teaching and learning on study programmes is not of a consistently high standard across all subjects. Tutors do not use the information they have about learners' current progress sufficiently to routinely plan lessons that challenge learners to reach their full potential. As a result, too many learners do not make the progress of which they are capable. For example, learners' progress on employability and brickwork programmes is slower than in other subjects. Learners make good progress on animal care and sport programmes.
- On a significant minority of courses, tutors do not put in place the necessary actions quickly enough to improve the progress that students make. Tutors provide limited feedback to learners following assessment, so that too many do not know how to improve their work.
- Tutors do not set sufficiently challenging work for the most able learners in functional skills English and mathematics. Consequently, these learners do not reach their full potential. Tutors in GCSE mathematics have high expectations of learners and challenge them to make very good progress in lessons.
- Attendance is too low on study programmes. One fifth of learners on directly delivered courses attend infrequently. Leaders and managers do not monitor learners' attendance on subcontracted courses rigorously enough to have an accurate picture of current attendance. As a result, too many learners make slow progress.
- Most tutors give clear verbal feedback to learners on their performance in workshops and classroom sessions. Consequently, learners understand what they are doing well and how to make better progress. For example, in motor vehicle provision, tutors gave clear feedback that enabled learners to improve the shape of the brake pipes they were making.
- Learners benefit from relevant and purposeful work experience with good-quality external work placements. They develop well the skills they need for their future careers. For example, in motor vehicle provision, learners contribute to servicing cars and develop their skills in communication, teamwork and working to industry timescales.
- In most practical sessions, tutors use their vocational expertise well. They use probing



questions skilfully to assess learners' understanding and make clear links to applications in industry. For example, in joinery lessons, learners explained the reasons for choosing different types of timber for specific jobs. As a result, learners developed their practical and employability skills successfully.

- Tutors support learners effectively, particularly those with poor prior experience of education. Learners receive good support both in and out of the classroom. They attend extra sessions if they fall behind. Tutors support the most vulnerable learners well to succeed where they have previously failed.
- Learners benefit from effective advice and guidance. Staff provide initial advice and guidance to ensure that they place learners on the right course for them. Currently, a high proportion of study programme learners remain on their courses. Staff provide realistic careers advice to learners during their programme. Consequently, a high proportion progress to further study, employment and apprenticeships at the end of their courses.

## **Apprenticeships**

## **Requires improvement**

- Currently there are 296 apprentices, of whom 121 are subcontracted to five providers. The majority of apprentices study at level 3 and just over half are aged over 19 years. ProCo offers apprenticeships in a range of vocational subjects, including animal care, motor vehicle, construction, sport and business administration. Around one quarter of apprentices are on animal care apprenticeships, a similar number are on sport apprenticeships and slightly fewer are following construction programmes.
- Too many apprentices make slow progress, particularly those aged 16 to 18 and those on level 2 apprenticeships. Around half of the apprentices on subcontracted courses make slow progress. On courses directly provided by ProCo, apprentices make slow progress on construction trades and business administration courses. As a result, apprentices do not achieve within their planned timescale.
- On directly delivered courses, managers monitor frequently the progress that groups of apprentices make. Tutors accurately record and monitor apprentices' progress from their starting points. Tutors do not set routinely clear or challenging actions for apprentices to achieve their targets. As a result, around one fifth of apprentices on directly delivered courses make slow progress.
- Managers' oversight of the progress that apprentices make on subcontracted courses is weak. Managers do not routinely request or receive information about the progress made by different groups of apprentices. As a result, managers do not intervene early enough to ensure that all apprentices make good progress, remain on their programmes and achieve on time.
- Tutors do not use feedback routinely to help all apprentices improve their work to a high standard. In a minority of cases, tutors' feedback on apprentices' assessed work is too brief to help them improve. As a result, apprentices make the same mistakes in later work.
- Tutors do not coordinate effectively the on- and off-the-job planning and training. Although tutors gather information about apprentices' starting points in occupational skills, they do not use it routinely to enable apprentices to make the progress of which

they are capable. For example, in business administration, tutors do not give apprentices the opportunity to select units from their qualifications that match their current job roles.

- Tutors do not develop routinely apprentices' English and mathematical skills in the context of their job roles, particularly for those who are not required to take functional skills tests.
- Tutors provide effective support to apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). As a result, most apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications.
- Most apprentices develop competently new technical skills and knowledge. They explain intelligently and with confidence the skills they have gained. For example, animal care apprentices gain a good understanding of canine behaviours as they work alongside a dog behaviourist. They know how to manage dogs safely and the risks involved as well as which specialist equipment to use.
- Apprentices use their skills effectively in their workplaces and, consequently, benefit their employers' businesses. For example, apprentices in customer service create bespoke reports for hospitality and retail clients. They gain confidence in speaking to customers and deal with difficult clients professionally.
- Apprentices on veterinary nursing apprenticeships, who make up one quarter of apprentices, make good progress because of effective teaching, learning and assessment. Tutors and clinical coaches in the workplace monitor their progress effectively. Apprentices produce work to a high standard because of detailed feedback. Apprentices work together and provide peer support to each other successfully. They share their specialist experiences of working in small and larger veterinary practices and benefit from secondments to different environments.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning. They benefit from good initial advice and guidance to ensure that they are on the right apprenticeship for their career aspirations, and at the right level. Apprentices receive appropriate advice about their next steps. A high proportion of apprentices who achieved their qualifications in the previous year continue their employment with the same employer or undertake further study or an apprenticeship at a higher level.
- Apprentices follow health and safety procedures appropriately in the workplace and while attending lessons at the provider. They wear suitable personal protective equipment such as safety boots, gloves, goggles and masks when using tools and equipment in workshops and in the workplace. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe in high-risk environments such as airports or when working at height.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	53981
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	990
CEO	Carol Halford
Telephone number	01942 318099
Website	<a href="http://www.proconw.co.uk">www.proconw.co.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	89	2	39	2	37	16	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	78	37	63	118	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	30		0		30			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Aspire Sports Health and Fitness Ltd Creative Sport and Leisure Ltd DMR Training and Consultancy Ltd Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside Sharks Community Trust Wigan Athletic FC Community Trust Wigan Warriors Academy Ltd Wigan Warriors Community Foundation							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality and curriculum, 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 learners, employers and staff; 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.

## Inspection team

Alison Cameron Brandwood, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dilys Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Maura Cummins	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Sharpe	Ofsted Inspector
Kim Bleasdale	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mary Osmaston	Ofsted Inspector

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