

Inspection of Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection dates:

8–11 October 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) manages the adult education and skills service within the council's peoples' directorate. The service works with seven subcontractors to provide programmes throughout the borough. WMBC offers a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes from entry level to level 3, funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency through Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

At the time of the inspection, there were 689 learners enrolled on adult learning programmes, including 13 on traineeships. Most learners study qualifications in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, courses for employment or programmes in construction, creative and performing arts and digital media. Programmes aim to provide adults in Wigan and the wider community with the skills needed to gain and sustain employment, apprenticeships, traineeships or other further learning.

WMBC offers programmes in a wide range of venues across the borough, including libraries, community centres, social services centres, children's centres and schools.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

The adults studying courses delight in learning new knowledge and skills. They are enthusiastic about their courses and how they are improving their chances of getting a job.

Learners returning to education increase their self-confidence, improve their self-esteem and develop resilience. They talk confidently about what they now know and can do because of their programmes. Learners have raised their aspirations about what they can achieve in the future and know what they need to do to get there. Many move on to apprenticeships, higher education and higher-level employment. For example, learners on traineeships gain jobs with the 'green space department', replacing an ageing workforce and meeting employment needs in the borough.

Learners are well supported by tutors and their peers. They establish new supportive friendships that extend beyond the classroom. For example, learners on a teaching assistants' programme have set up a secure social network group. They share information such as their findings from research and experiences from work.

Learners who need extra help benefit from individualised support such as additional sessions and one-to-one coaching. This support enables them to achieve their qualifications as well as their peers do.

Learners feel safe and are safe. They develop a good understanding of keeping themselves safe online.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and tutors plan the curriculum well. They help learners develop their skills and build effectively on learners' previous experiences and existing knowledge. Tutors use their subject expertise productively to teach the curriculum in a logical order. For example, music performance learners first learn musical theory and composition. This gives them a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their practical performance skills. Learners rehearse, record and produce music videos for their compositions. This provides learners with a 'showcase portfolio'. They use this to gain auditions and performance opportunities in the music industry. Many learners organise and perform at open-mic and live music events. They are passionate about music and now earn money as a result of their new skills and knowledge.

Leaders and managers have a clear and ambitious vision to improve the lives of the residents of WMBC. They work effectively with partner organisations to design programmes that link to the borough's vision for a healthy and vibrant community. Learners benefit from courses that provide routes into employment, further education and training, and volunteering. For example, learners who want to get a job as a teaching assistant but are not yet ready for the teaching assistant course improve their English and mathematics skills to the required level and complete

a preparation course to understand better what it is like to work in education.

Learners grasp opportunities to practise and recall new knowledge and skills. They increasingly learn more and remember more. Learners complete more difficult tasks and problems as classes progress because tutors plan activities based on what learners already know. Tutors and learners refer to previous work to build on prior learning. For example, learners in mathematics use their newly acquired mathematical skills to practice the expansion of formulae. Most learners achieve their mathematics qualifications.

Leaders and managers do not always support tutors well enough to improve their practical teaching skills. They do not provide enough subject-specific staff development to help tutors improve their practice. Consequently, some learners in a few subjects do not have the same high-quality learning experience as their peers.

Learners benefit from high-quality careers advice and guidance. Leaders and tutors work closely with other departments of the council, the local college and community agencies. These partnerships ensure that adults, many of whom have not studied for a long time, understand the benefits of their prospective courses. Learners go through a robust enrolment process to ensure that they are on the right programme. Tutors use their own experiences well to discuss with learners their career options and next steps. Learners are equipped with the information they need to progress to other providers or the workplace.

The committee responsible for governance has expertise from education, health and housing. Committee members use their experience to support and challenge leaders effectively to improve the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. They use Wigan Safeguarding Adult Board effectively as an advisory body to inform their safeguarding practices. The designated safeguarding officer has the training and experience to carry out the role effectively. Staff benefit from regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, and know how to report any issues. Managers carry out appropriate staff checks during the recruitment process. They ensure that tutors are suitable to work in teaching.

Learners do not have enough understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, particularly in their local area. They do not know how this relates to them.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers need to provide a few tutors with targeted subject-specific staff development programmes to improve the quality of their teaching to ensure that all learners benefit from a high-quality learning experience.
- Leaders and tutors need to ensure that learners understand the dangers of radicalisation and extremism in their local area and how this relates to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	55378
Address	Wigan Life Centre South Building College Avenue Wigan WN1 1NJ
Contact number	01942 489 451
Website	www.wigan.gov.uk
Principal/CEO	Alison McKenzie Folan
Provider type	Local authority
Date of previous inspection	14–17 June 2016
Main subcontractors	Elysium Training Fir Tree CiC GK Training NGTC Limited NW Skills Academy TMP (The Music Project) Transport Training Academy

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the service manager (enhanced) Live Well, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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