

# ProCo NW Ltd

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321562

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Animal care and veterinary science
- Engineering and manufacturing technologies
- Preparation for life and work
- Business, administration and law

## Description of the provider

1. ProCo is a limited company based in Wigan. It was established in October 2003 and formed from the merger of two local training providers, Metropolitan Training and Vocation Station. ProCo have a strategic alliance with Manchester Solutions who provide three of the six company directors. It has a main training centre in Wigan. ProCo provides work-based learning for young people in animal care, veterinary nursing, motor vehicle, customer services, accounting, team leadership, engineering, business administration, hairdressing, and retailing. ProCo has a contract with Greater Manchester LSC for its work-based learning. ProCo also provides an entry to employment (E2E) programme for young people and a small Train to Gain programme for adults who have no previous qualifications at level 2.
2. ProCo employs 23 full-time assessors/trainers, eight part-time assessors/trainers and a senior management team that includes a chief executive and two senior managers. The unemployment rate in Wigan is currently 2.8% compared with the national average for August 2008 of 2.3%. Wigan is rated 80 out of 354 local authorities in the index of deprivation. The percentage of young people achieving five GCSEs at grades A\*-C in Wigan in 2007 was 60.8% compared with a national average of 62%.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Sector subject areas

Animal care and veterinary science	Good: Grade 2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Leadership and management are good and the arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Provision is good in animal care and veterinary science, preparation for life and work and in business administration. Provision in engineering and manufacturing technology is satisfactory.

#### Capacity to improve

#### Good: Grade 2

4. ProCo has demonstrated it has a good capacity to improve. Effective improvements have been carried out across the provision and significant improvements have occurred in overall success rates since the previous inspection, which have raised achievements from a very low level to satisfactory. Actions to carry out improvements have been planned well and monitored carefully. The arrangements for quality assurance and improvement are well established, comprehensive and managed well.
5. The self-assessment process relies on contributions from all staff. The process is thorough and effective and is broadly accurate. The process has been completed annually for a number of years and forms part of the cycle of quality improvement. However, the self-assessment report is not well written and does not fully justify the good processes that produced it.

## Key strengths

- Good development of learners' skills
- Particularly good employer engagement
- Very good development of teaching resources
- Good arrangements for independent learning
- Very good support for learners
- Good strategic and operational management
- Effective external partnerships

## Key areas for improvement

- Continue to improve satisfactory success rates
- Weak target-setting for learners
- Low staff awareness of equality and diversity

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Overall achievement and standards are satisfactory, as judged by three of the four sector subject areas inspected. Improvement has been steady in success rates in all areas. At provider aggregate level for all apprentices success rates improved from 49% in 2005/06, to 65% in the current year. Despite improvements, overall success rates have only improved from poor to satisfactory.
7. The development of learners' skills and the standard of work produced by learners is generally good. Learners in preparation for life and work develop good social and vocational skills. Learners generally work hard and enjoy their studies and training.
8. No differences exist in levels of achievement or attainment between different groups of learners. The self-assessment report placed too much emphasis on the improvements to overall success rates and overgraded this aspect of provision.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

9. Learners benefit from particularly good employer engagement, as identified in the self-assessment report. Employers in business administration make a significant contribution to the good training in the workplace. In animal care and veterinary science employers work well together and often provide good workplace training for learners from other employers where the range of work is inadequate. Employers in engineering have worked well with ProCo in developing the training programme.
10. ProCo provides very good support for learners in all sector subject areas. ProCo staff work well with employers and sub-contractors to support learners on- and off-the-job and in the time they spend with subcontractors. Formal learning support is effective and personal support for learners is very good.
11. The provider has very effective arrangements for developing good teaching resources. Good quality class notes and presentations have been prepared for motor vehicle learners in engineering and in business, administration and law. In animal care and veterinary science resources for off-the-job training are good and handouts and other learning materials are prepared to a high standard.
12. ProCo has good arrangements to facilitate independent learning, particularly in business administration where a range of informative learning materials have been developed and are used effectively to engage and motivate learners. Customer service learners do not attend classes but work through distance learning notebooks. In addition CDs have been compiled for all learners to use outside the classroom.
13. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory as are initial assessment and literacy and numeracy support for learners. Target-setting for learners is weak in some areas of the provision. The quality of targets is inconsistent. Some learners are set targets which are

insufficiently clear and not specific enough to help them progress to achieve their learning goals.

## **Leadership and management**

**Good: Grade 2**

### **Equality of opportunity**

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. Strategic and operational management are good. Good leadership and management was identified as a strength in three of the four sector subject areas inspected. Managers and staff have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the organisation and take appropriate action to maintain strengths and resolve weaknesses. Planning within the organisation is particularly good. Senior managers have worked effectively with staff at all levels to produce thoughtful and well considered strategic and effective business plans. A detailed and well managed quality improvement plan derived from the self-assessment is in operation. Communications within the organisation are good. The structure of meetings is streamlined and effective. Meetings have appropriate set agendas, minutes are clear, detailed and produce useful actions. Managers at all levels and staff make good use of the accurate and timely data available to them to support strategic management.
15. Performance management is good. Board members are demanding and knowledgeable. They carefully scrutinise all the papers presented to them. Senior managers are required to account for their actions and performance. The reports presented to the board by the senior managers are clear and comprehensive and make good use of data in a critical evaluation of performance. The appraisal system is very effective, long established and used well within the organisation. It gives staff the opportunity to discuss their performance and development needs in a supportive atmosphere. Data is used well to measure organisational and individual performance.
16. Learners benefit from particularly effective external partnerships. ProCo shares its own good practice and learns from other providers within the local provider network. Strategic partnerships have provided access to additional funding and helped ProCo to expand its curriculum offer.
17. Quality improvement arrangements are very effective and well established. Improvements in overall success rates have been steady since the previous inspection. ProCo has detailed and appropriate policies and procedures in place covering most aspects of learner activities and a range of useful key performance indicators with associated targets. The cycle of quality assurance and improvement activities is clear and well established, and is carefully carried out in accordance with a formal plan and calendar. All key learning and training processes are observed and areas for improvement are identified and monitored. The observation includes teaching, assessment, reviews and induction.
18. ProCo listens to its learners and employers and carefully gathers and analyses their feedback using a range of methods. Learners are informed of the results of the learner surveys and of the actions taken in response to issues raised. Action-planning is particularly good. Actions are appropriate and have clear targets, are time-bound and the



person responsible for actions is clearly identified. Monitoring is frequent, formal and effective; every action is monitored to completion.

19. The self-assessment and action-planning process is good. All staff contribute and the whole process is managed well. Good use is made of achievement data as evidence for many judgements and learners' and employers' views are considered. However, the self-assessment report lacks clarity and is insufficiently referenced to the supporting evidence collected so effectively during the process.
20. Sub-contractors are monitored effectively. ProCo staff have productive meetings with sub-contractor staff and carefully scrutinise their quality assurance documentation such as lesson observations and external verifier reports. However, focus on learning in the observation of teaching and learning is insufficient. Observation checklists used by ProCo encourage their observers to concentrate on teacher activity and as a result the observers do not give sufficient emphasis to the quality of learning in the training sessions. This accounted for some over grading when comparing ProCo observations to those carried out by the inspection team. External verification is broadly satisfactory except in engineering where some shortcomings have been identified.
21. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. ProCo has detailed equal opportunities policies and procedures. Procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment are in place and records show that ProCo acts in accordance with its policies and procedures when dealing with incidents and complaints. Few complaints have been received about equality and diversity but where needed ProCo acts swiftly to deal with them efficiently and fairly. The management of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The arrangements are overseen by a working group chaired by the chief executive. Several staff have formed links with various minority groups and represent ProCo on a number of external groups. ProCo works hard to meet the needs of traditionally under-represented groups but still has difficulty recruiting young women into some areas such as the construction-dominated E2E programme. Training in equality and diversity has not had a significant affect on staff knowledge and awareness of the subject. Some staff have insufficient knowledge of the principles of equality and the practice of equal opportunities. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

## What learners like:

- Learning a trade
- The extra qualifications such as level 1 and level 2 in English
- The work placement that ProCo arranged
- Learning new trades
- Job satisfaction
- Learning something new every day
- Good support for training and assessment
- Chance to evaluate own work
- Doing all the training at work
- Good explanations that are easy to follow
- Doing a qualification while earning money
- 'The assessor is really good and explains everything to me so that I understand'
- 'We had lots of fun and it was very enjoyable going into centre for technical certificate classes'

- Meeting other learners at the centre
- Lots of practical work
- Good support with portfolio-building and evidence collection

### What learners think could improve:

- ‘The number of girls (on programme)’
- ‘We would like the chance to do more crafts such as electrics or plumbing’
- The burdensome and unnecessary portfolios
- The qualification takes a long time to complete
- The opportunities to meet other animal care learners
- Earlier and more frequent assessment

## Sector subject areas

### Animal care and veterinary science

**Good: Grade 2**

#### Context

22. Currently 36 learners are enrolled; 13 are in animal care, consisting of nine apprentices and four advanced apprentices and 23 in veterinary nursing consisting of 12 apprentices and 11 advanced apprentices. Of these, 17 transferred from the previous training provider (AC Training) which was incorporated into ProCo from 1 August 2007. An additional four learners are working towards animal care national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 on Train to Gain. A few learners are completing animal care qualifications on a commercial basis, including three from local schools working towards NVQ level 1. Veterinary nursing learners attend on a day release basis for 36 weeks in preparation for veterinary nursing examinations. Currently four learners are male.

#### Strengths

- Excellent links with employers
- Well structured approach to training and assessment
- High success rates for veterinary nursing apprenticeships

#### Areas for improvement

- Some slow progress towards animal care qualifications.

#### Achievement and standards

23. Achievement and standards are good. Few learners have left the programme since ProCo took over the provision. Aggregate overall success rates for programmes in this sector subject area are high. Of a total of 19 people leaving programmes since August 2007, 74% have successfully completed their framework goals. Overall success rates for veterinary nursing are high and six of the seven veterinary nursing leavers have completed successfully. However, of six animal care leavers, only three have completed successfully. Progression of veterinary nurses to relevant employment is high as learners are invariably retained by their current employers. Most learners have significant experience and prior achievement with many attaining more than the minimum GCSE requirements for entry. Many learners become committed to their work and develop high levels of technical and interpersonal skills and become trusted by their employers to fill positions of responsibility.

#### Quality of provision

24. The quality of provision is good. The small class sizes in veterinary contributes to the good quality learning. This is appreciated by both employers and learners. Resources for

off-the-job training are good and include a small dedicated laboratory for veterinary nursing training. Handouts and other learner materials are prepared to a good standard. Training is well planned and structured and this is appreciated by both learners and employers. Attendance at off-the-job training is very good at 95%. All learners carry out emergency first aid training as part of their framework. Two animal care learners have also completed the technical certificate for veterinary nursing as an additional qualification. Planning for training and assessment in the workplace is good. While key skills support is delivered on the job for most animal care learners, additional coaching is given at ProCo's training centre for those who need this.

25. Learners receive a satisfactory induction at the start of the programme covering health and safety and equal opportunities and an introduction to programme content. Learners are visited at work at six to eight week intervals. Progress reviews are satisfactory with appropriate actions recorded and followed up at subsequent reviews. Reviewers make good use of praise and are methodical in covering required issues including those relating to health and safety and equality of opportunity. Targets set are appropriate.
26. Learners are encouraged to progress if possible, and ProCo offer an additional course to help animal care learners without other formal entry requirements, to progress onto veterinary nursing programmes.
27. ProCo works in particularly effective ways with employers for the benefit of learners. Work placements are of good quality and supportive of learners' training. Staff maintain excellent communication with employers. ProCo provides training for employers to enable them to have their own work-based assessors, and regular assessor standardisation meetings are held at the provider's training centre for all work-based assessors to ensure consistency of standards and practice.
28. Support for learners is very good. Some learners benefit from on-the-job training and assessment to start their portfolio and vocational work, before the formal start of their veterinary nursing training. Ongoing support is provided if needed, after the formal end of training. Additional coaching is sometimes offered to learners at work where needed. Where one employer is unable to offer the range of experience needed, ProCo arrange alternative experience at another placement to ensure all requirements are met. Regular visits are adjusted for frequency according to learner or employer need. Reports on learner progress and ongoing communication with assessors and reviewers also help ensure the high level of success rates. ProCo make good efforts to improve documentation and processes for training and assessment in the workplace.
29. Literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory. An appropriate initial assessment process identified that no current learners formally require literacy and numeracy training.
30. Following the recent appointment of a replacement assessor for animal care, learners are now making good progress and assessment visits to the workplace are regular and effective. However, this has not fully compensated for previous long delays in some assessment, and some learners have made slow progress towards their qualification goals.

## **Leadership and management**

31. Leadership and management of the curriculum area is good. Staff work effectively as a team and meet regularly to discuss learners' progress and resolve concerns. Communication is good. The first self-assessment of animal care and veterinary nursing provision since this became part of ProCo, was completed in July 2008. The grade awarded and the main judgements in the self-assessment report matched inspection findings. All learning processes are observed including initial assessment and classroom sessions. ProCo have increased the number of observations of assessment following a period when too few were carried out, and these are now satisfactory. Internal verification is thorough, and follows a well defined structure ongoing through the programme. Reports offer useful ideas for improving assessment practice.

## **Engineering and manufacturing technologies**

### **Satisfactory: Grade 3**

#### **Context**

32. ProCo has 131 learners on engineering and motor vehicle programmes, including 38 apprentices, 89 advanced apprentices and four learners on Train to Gain programmes. Currently 72 engineering learners are enrolled across a range of engineering disciplines with 59 motor vehicle learners including four Train to Gain learners. Duration of the programmes is from 24 to 48 months. Assessors visit the workplace every four to six weeks to complete assessments and to carry out progress reviews. For engineering learners the off-the-job, key skills and technical certificate training is mainly carried out at either Wigan, Saint Helens or Preston College one day each week. For motor vehicle

learners, off-the-job, key skills and technical certificate training is mainly carried out in the provider's training centre one day each week.

### **Strengths**

- Effective employer engagement
- Good development of teaching resources for motor vehicle learners
- Particularly effective support for learners

### **Areas for improvement**

- Slow progress towards framework achievement
- Weak aspects of target-setting and monitoring at progress reviews
- Weak internal verification in engineering

### **Achievement and standards**

33. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are satisfactory. For apprentices, an improving trend has been established from 37% in 2004/05, to 65% in 2006/07 and 72% in 2007/08. For advanced apprentices, success rates improved from 49% in 2004/05 to 62% in 2005/06 but fell to 49% in 2006/07. The latest data indicates that success rates improved again in 2007/08 to 73% and are now satisfactory.
34. Learners develop appropriate practical skills but progress towards framework achievement is often slow. Timely success rates are low, particularly for advanced apprentices. Learners' achievement in demonstrating competence is often less than would be expected at their stage of their programmes. A few learners work on complex tasks with the minimum of supervision within their workplaces. These learners are making good progress, gaining confidence and self-esteem and quickly become valued members of workplace teams.

### **Quality of provision**

35. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good aspects. Good quality class notes and presentations have been prepared for motor vehicle learners. These are well designed and structure learning well.
36. Training resources are good. Modern machinery and equipment is accessed and used by learners in the workplace. Resources in the training centre are satisfactory. Computer rooms are well equipped with modern computers and appropriate software. Learners can access online testing for key skills and for motor vehicle awards. The motor vehicle workshop facilities are satisfactory although the vehicle stock is dated.
37. Progress reviews are satisfactory but target-setting is weak. Reviews are completed every four to six weeks. The review content is good and includes detailed discussions relating to tasks carried out in the workplace, development of health and safety and equality and diversity topics during reviews is good. However, the review documentation does not accurately reflect these discussions. Most employers are involved in the review process and receive copies of the review document. Target-setting at reviews is inconsistent and in

some cases poor. Some targets are not specific and have insufficient focus, many are insufficiently individualised. Progress against targets is not sufficiently followed up at the next review. In some reviews no targets were set.

38. Assessment is fair and accurate, with a good mix of assessment by direct observation, witness testimony and written questions. Learners receive prompt feedback following observations in the workplace. However, assessment is compressed into the final year of the advanced apprenticeship with insufficient formative assessment early in the programme.
39. Internal verification on motor vehicle programmes is satisfactory but internal verification on engineering programmes is weak. Planning of internal verification is insufficient to ensure that sampling includes all units and all learners. Observations of assessment seldom identify actions for improvement. Portfolio evidence is verified but takes place too near to the end of learners' programmes.
40. ProCo offers a wide range of engineering programmes, which adequately meet the needs of the learners and local employers. ProCo have effective links with employers with whom they work closely. Individualised training programmes have been jointly developed to include appropriate NVQ units to meet the needs of learners and the demands of the business. Most learners are employed at the start of training. ProCo have worked well with employers to find good sustainable employment for unemployed learners following young apprenticeship or E2E programmes. ProCo carefully matches learners with employers during work placements to maximise employment opportunities. Currently five local schools send learners to ProCo on young apprenticeship programmes.
41. Support for learners is particularly effective. Learners are visited in the workplace every four to six weeks and more frequently if necessary. Learners can contact assessors by telephone at any time to arrange assessment in the workplace. Assessors arrange visits to suit shift patterns of working including unsociable hours and weekends. Learners receive good support from skilled craftsmen in the workplace. Assessors work effectively to minimise duplication of effort for learners. ProCo offers regular support sessions to support learners who are falling behind in their studies. Additional learning needs are identified at initial assessment and suitable support is provided in the training centre by provider staff.

## **Leadership and management**

42. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication between staff is good. Regular staff meetings and individual progress meetings take place. Resources in the training centre are satisfactory. Key aspects of training are suitably quality assured but this does not always lead to improvement. For example, observations of progress reviews by managers identified weak target-setting and insufficient recording of discussions but insufficient action has taken place to ensure improvement. Risk assessments have been carried out and control measures have been identified but these have not been actioned quickly enough.
43. Equality and diversity is well promoted and reinforced at reviews. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. All staff were involved in the compilation of the self-assessment report. The inspection findings matched the main strengths and areas for improvement identified but the self-assessment report failed to identify weaknesses in

internal verification and underestimated the impact of success rates and slow progress of learners on the overall grade.



## **Preparation for life and work**

### **Good: Grade 2**

#### **Context**

44. ProCo has a direct contract to provide E2E for the Wigan Borough and is one of five delivery providers working with Connexions. Currently 101 learners are on programme and all are based at the ProCo centre where most teaching and learning takes place. Of these 98 learners are male. Learners' attend for a minimum of 16 hours per week.

#### **Strengths**

- Good development of social and workplace skills
- Good enrichment activities
- Good induction
- Good individual support
- Good curriculum management

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Slow progress for some learners
- Weak target-setting
- Insufficient placements
- Low female participation

#### **Achievement and standards**

45. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Development of vocational and social skills is good. Good learning takes place in construction and motor vehicle workshops. Learners on placement develop their skills in a range of occupations including electrical installation, catering and graphic design. Learners are encouraged to think for themselves and they show pride in their work. Learners develop very effective life skills in personal and social development (PSD) sessions such as dealing with stress and anger and working effectively in teams. Several learners who were excluded from school are now achieving and moving onto apprenticeship programmes.

46. Learners develop satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills. They work in an occupational context and are helped by good communication between vocational and skills for life tutors.

47. Progression is satisfactory, from 58% in 2005/06, to 54% in 2006/07, to the current level of 58%. Of these, 12% progress to apprenticeships. Attendance is carefully recorded and checked, and currently stands at over 80% for most classes.

48. Achievement is satisfactory in an appropriate range of qualifications. This includes vocational qualifications, literacy, numeracy, key skills and CLAIT (computer, literacy and information technology). The pass rate in literacy and numeracy is over 70% with 56% of learners gaining qualifications.

49. Approximately one quarter of the learners are progressing too slowly with literacy and numeracy qualifications. Recent changes have improved the situation and these learners are now expected to achieve. Learners starting more recently are making satisfactory progress to achieve their qualifications.

### **Quality of provision**

50. The quality of provision is good. An exceptionally good range of enrichment activities exist which motivates and encourages learners. This starts at induction with team activities such as go-karting. Learners have the opportunity during their programme to make a podcast, attend creative marketing sessions and a 10 week course in fishing and sessions in graffiti art. Sessions on diving are offered periodically and learners are able to attend an evening pool session if interested. Learners have the opportunity to contribute to the community through a national youth volunteering programme. All learners take part in most of these activities.
51. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Sessions are well planned with clear schemes of work but focus on meeting the needs of learners as individuals is insufficient. Provider observations focus on tutor activity and the self-assessment does not present a convincing case for good teaching and learning. Learners benefit from a good induction. The comprehensive programme is very well structured and delivered and includes initial and diagnostic assessment for literacy and numeracy. A clear scheme of work and lesson plans focus on mainly practical activities that engage and motivate learners. Equality of opportunity and diversity is brought to life by the use of a thought provoking DVD. Learners complete useful self-assessments of their skills, interests and occupational awareness. An informative session is offered on raising awareness of NVQs, key skills and apprenticeships. During induction learners produce their own curriculum vitae. Feedback from learners is positive and retention during induction is above 75%.
52. ProCo provides good additional support to help learners overcome their barriers to employment. A wide range of tasters help with occupational awareness and choice. Staff work very effectively with learners' parents and have good communication with them, with two dedicated key advisers whose roles are solely for support and to carry out progress reviews. Individual support for learners is good. ProCo has many examples of where learners have moved on from having a very poor attitude and poor timekeeping to holding down work in responsible placements as a result of consistent good support from their tutors. Tutors get to know learners well and are aware of their preferred way of learning, their interests and what motivates them. Weekly meetings of all trainers take place to discuss any issues and support needs for learners, including identifying extra support for skills for life and specific learning difficulties. Celebration of achievement is good including ceremonies for 'learner of year' with celebrity presentations. Good use of incentives and rewards is used to motivate learners including meal vouchers, £25 bonuses and trips out. ProCo have contact with a wide range of specialist support agencies including emergency accommodation which they use for referral of their learners. Information, advice and career guidance is satisfactory. An information point is available although it is not well used. ProCo works closely with Connexions to provide information and guidance.
53. Target-setting for learners is weak. Some targets are insufficiently challenging, specific or measurable. More recently progress reviews use codes to indicate behaviour and

achievement so learners' progress can be measured. Reviews and targets have improved in the last six months but still do not contain enough specific targets.

54. Insufficient numbers of learners are on work placements, only 13%, which reflects the downturn in the construction industry. However, training has been changed accordingly to meet the general construction skills required by smaller businesses. Of those learners who are on placement, many are not being reviewed with input from the placement provider and opportunities are being missed to link the on- and off-the-job training.

### **Leadership and management**

55. Leadership and management are good. Curriculum management is good. The curriculum has been changed and developed to meet the needs of the learners and the local economy. A flexible six week rolling programme of different strands of vocational, PSD and skills for life sessions provides learners with a programme designed to meet their individual needs. Managers produce weekly timetables that are useful for learners and which contributes to the effective organisation of the programme. The whole process is tightly managed which allows the size and composition of groups to be carefully structured.
56. Staff, accommodation and resources are satisfactory and staff have the necessary skills and training to carry out their role effectively. Skills for life tutors have good awareness regarding dyslexia and techniques used to help learners.
57. The self-assessment process is good resulting in a broadly accurate evaluation of E2E provision. Quality assurance processes are good. They include regular interviews with learners and observations that are used to inform actions.
58. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. It is promoted at reviews during induction and throughout the programme as part of the PSD sessions. Prompt action is taken to remedy unacceptable behaviour. Only three female learners are on the programme, and both staff and learners are aware of the negative impact of such low numbers of females participating. Some recent actions, including visits to schools and taster days, have resulted in more females being scheduled to attend the next induction.

### **Business, administration and law**

#### **Good: Grade 2**

#### **Context**

59. ProCo provides training programmes in business administration and law for 43 apprentices and five advanced apprentices. Of the apprentices, 30 are following programmes in administration, six in accountancy and seven in customer service. Two learners are studying for an NVQ only in accountancy at level 4. Of the advanced apprentices, one is studying accountancy and four are studying administration. Off-the-job training for technical certificates is carried out at the company's centre. Off-the-job training for accountancy is subcontracted to Wigan and Leigh College, who deliver the training in college one day a week. All learners are employed in a range of small, medium and large enterprises among which are garages, accountants, telephone companies, health centres, housing and local authorities. Induction takes place in the workplace. Learners

receive an initial assessment and a skills scan to help determine their suitability for the programme and to identify any additional support needs. Assessment and review visits are carried out in the workplace every four weeks.

### **Strengths**

- Good development of workplace skills
- Very effective arrangements for independent learning
- Very good employer engagement
- Good management of programme

### **Areas for improvement**

- Insufficient recording on progress reviews

### **Achievement and standards**

60. Achievement and standards have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are satisfactory. Overall success rates for apprentices are satisfactory. Advanced apprentice overall success rates are now good having increased over the past three years from 40% to 67%. The most recent provider data show success rates for 2007/08 at 73%.
61. Timely success rates for apprentices are much improved but are still much lower than the national average. Technical certificate achievement is now very good following changes to the timing and improvements in the standard of off-the-job training.
62. Learners develop good workplace and personal skills. The standard of learners' work is good and of a commercial standard. Learners demonstrate good practical skills in the workplace and display an increased knowledge and understanding of their role at work. They are given more responsible job roles as they develop their ability to work independently. In some cases level 3 learners are mentoring level 2 learners.

### **Quality of provision**

63. The quality of provision is good overall. Arrangements for independent learning are very effective. Off-the-job training is good and a range of informative learning materials have been developed and are used effectively to engage and motivate learners. They include a range of materials for use in the classroom. Customer service learners do not attend classes but learn effectively by working through the very well-designed distance learning notebooks. In addition CDs have been compiled for all learners to use outside the classroom and contain a range of mini videos and assignments that can be used independently to further develop their knowledge and understanding.
64. Employer engagement is very good. Employers make a significant contribution to the good on-the-job training. Assessors involve employers in an initial meeting to identify the most appropriate programmes to meet both learner and organisational needs. Employers are very supportive; time is given to work on qualifications in the workplace and study leave is given for accountancy examinations. Employers participate in reviews and discussions with assessors and learners to plan assessments and job roles. Optional units are chosen after learners have settled into their job role to maximise choice. Most

employers give additional roles and responsibilities to the learner as they progress through their qualifications. In a number of companies the managers and supervisors are previous learners from ProCo and have a good understanding of the qualifications. Some employers also give their time to participate in mock interviews and presentations.

65. Assessment is generally satisfactory. Assessors visit all learners regularly in the workplace to monitor learning. Between visits, assessors are easily accessible by email and telephone. Assessors provide appropriate on-programme and personal support for learners throughout the duration of their programme. Learners value this support. A range of assessment methods are used including professional discussion. Initial assessment is satisfactory overall. Arrangements to identify additional learning needs are satisfactory, as are the arrangements to refer learners for additional support.
66. Arrangements for literacy and numeracy support are satisfactory. Initial assessment is satisfactory and includes an initial interview, as well as assessment tests of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Assessors apply appropriate accreditation of prior learning. Additional support is provided to assist learners with identified needs.
67. Reviews take place regularly and are mostly satisfactory. However, recording on progress review documents is insufficient. This applies particularly to discussions on health and safety and equality and diversity. The progress review document will only state the topic for discussion but will give no indication of the learners' level of participation or understanding of the topic discussed.

### **Leadership and management**

68. Leadership and management are good. Programmes are well managed. Management strategies have improved the quality of provision and increased learner success rates. Staff are well qualified, experienced and benefit from a broad and well focused staff development programme. Training rooms are well maintained and well resourced. Management information is used very effectively to monitor the progress of learners and to manage the performance of staff. Team meetings are frequent and productive with a strong focus on managing learner progress and achievement.
69. Internal verification is good. Targets are in place to ensure that all assessors, NVQ units and learners' work are verified during the course of a year. A planning matrix is used effectively to identify when these activities should take place and managers are given monthly updates that are used in team and individual meetings.
70. Monitoring of the subcontractor is good. A good working relationship exists between the subcontractor and ProCo. Monthly meetings take place and are well documented.
71. The self-assessment process is thorough and accurate. All staff are involved in the process and contribute effectively to the report. Information is collected in a range of ways and data is used effectively to arrive at the self-assessment judgements. All aspects of the self-assessment were discussed during team meetings. The inspection findings broadly matched the self-assessment judgements.

72. The arrangements for equal opportunities are satisfactory. Most learners have a basic understanding of equality and diversity but the review does little to improve this. Training for staff is basic and some staff have insufficient awareness of equal opportunities.

## Annex

## Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by the provider **2004 to 2007**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	141	74	48	45	34
		timely	121	49	31	30	22
	05/06	overall	159	67	53	53	44
		timely	157	47	34	34	27
	06/07	overall	148	68	64	49	58
		timely	158	40	43	28	37
	04/05	overall	204	70	51	50	39
		timely	194	26	29	19	22
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	190	59	58	48	52
		timely	176	33	38	28	34
	06/07	overall	195	61	65	49	61
		timely	168	35	47	32	44

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* Provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)