

Wigan Council

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Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider	4
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement	6
Effectiveness of provision.....	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement	7
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision	8
Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	9
What learners like.....	12
What learners think could improve	12
Sector subject areas	13
Information and communication technology.....	13
Community learning	16

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.

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), 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:

- Information and communication technology
- Community learning

Description of the provider

1. Wigan Council (the council) contracts with Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities across Wigan. The Learning and Employment Service, which is part of the council's Department of Adult Services, manages the adult and community learning provision. This provision is characterised by personal and community development learning, first steps provision, neighbourhood learning in deprived communities funded provision, which is predominantly literacy and numeracy, and family learning programmes.
2. The council is also the main contract holder for a European Social Fund (ESF) project which started in 2008/09. The project aims to work with young people aged 14–19 who are disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged and to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training. This project is located in the council's Children and Young People Services Department.
3. The council does not directly deliver any provision. Instead it works through partner providers who deliver the provision on behalf of the council.
4. The Borough of Wigan has a population of 305,000 residents, 56% of whom live in the worst 20% of deprived wards in the country. The rate of unemployment in Wigan in March 2007 was 3.7%, with the national average then at 5.5%, but with pockets of much higher unemployment in the most deprived wards. The number of young people achieving 5 or more GCSEs at A* to C in 2008 was 66% compared with the revised national average of 65.3%.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
European Social Fund	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
European Social Fund	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Community learning	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning
European Social Fund

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The effectiveness of the council's provision is satisfactory for adult and community learning and ESF. Provision is also satisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT) and community learning.
6. Achievement and standards are satisfactory in adult and community learning. The development of learners' skills and confidence is good in ICT, community learning and family learning. Success rate data on accredited and non-accredited provision in 2007/08 are not sufficiently accurate.
7. The quality of provision is satisfactory in adult and community learning. Much teaching and learning are good, for example in ICT, community learning and family learning. However, the use of ILT in classes is insufficient. The identification and recording of learners' progress and achievement is satisfactory overall. The range of programmes meets the needs and interests of learners well.
8. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory in adult and community learning. Information, advice and guidance are appropriate, with good opportunities for learners to access specialist support at some centres. Support for learners is satisfactory.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory for adult and community learning and ESF. The council sets a clear strategic direction for all its provision, with a strong focus on meeting local, regional and national priorities. Quality improvement is insufficiently thorough in adult and community learning.
10. Equality of opportunity is good. Partnership working to widen participation is very good, which greatly benefits learners and the wider community. The council and partner providers work very effectively to remove barriers to learning. In adult and community learning an equality and diversity action plan focuses on a relevant range of actions.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. The council has demonstrated satisfactory capacity to improve. Since the last full inspection of adult and community learning in October 2005, the council has maintained many of the key strengths identified in the inspection report. Strategic

planning continues to be good and partnership working to widen the participation of learners continues to be very good. The grade for overall effectiveness has declined from grade 2 good to grade 3 satisfactory. Progress to secure improvements in key weaknesses was slow until the end of 2007. The appointment of a new senior management team from January 2008 has significantly increased the rate of improvement. The use of management information is now satisfactory overall, as is the implementation of processes to recognise and record learner progress and achievement. However, quality improvement arrangements are no longer a key strength and are currently not sufficiently thorough.

12. The council's self-assessment processes in adult and community learning are sufficiently consultative and are satisfactory. The self-assessment report for 2007/08 recognises many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors. However, the self-assessment report does not include sufficient detail and judgements on learners' achievement and standards or on the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- Good development of learners' skills and confidence
- Good strategic planning
- Very good use of partnerships to widen participation

Key areas for improvement

- The full implementation of all quality improvement processes
- The implementation of more accurate processes to monitor and record accreditation and learners' progress and achievement
- The further strengthening of safeguarding arrangements

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. The development of learners' skills and confidence is good in ICT, community learning and family learning, as are the standards of learners' work. Learners develop skills which help them in their everyday lives and for work. Retention is generally high, although in-year retention in 2008/09 is low in languages and retention data is inaccurate for the literacy and numeracy provision. Punctuality and attendance are satisfactory.
14. For the accredited provision in 2007/08, which is predominantly in literacy, numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and family literacy and numeracy, data returns to the LSC were inaccurate, which the self-assessment report identifies. Achievement data for the non-accredited provision is also not sufficiently accurate.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

15. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Much teaching and learning are good, for example in ICT, community learning and family learning. Tutors vary the work with learners and make good use of peer support. Learners work productively and make good progress in lessons. In 2008/09 teaching and learning are only satisfactory in languages. The use of ILT across the provision to support teaching and learning is insufficient.
16. The identification and recording of learners' progress and achievement is broadly satisfactory, with some examples of good practice, but also examples in ICT of the insufficient implementation of these processes. Learners have access to an appropriate range of learning resources.
17. The range of programmes meets the needs and interests of learners well. In line with the council's strategic priorities and as identified in the self-assessment report, many of the partners target disadvantaged communities to engage hard-to-reach learners, both in identified areas of multiple deprivation and to disadvantaged groups with common support needs. Courses local to learners are offered across Wigan. Managers have plans to introduce unit accreditation for some of the community learning courses, but this is not currently available for learners. Progression opportunities for learners are available in many centres, but the monitoring of actual learner progression is currently insufficient.

18. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory in adult and community learning. Learners receive effective pre-course information and advice. Welcoming and knowledgeable front of house staff in the centres, as well as tutors present at enrolment sessions, provide further help to guide learners to appropriate courses. Learners also have opportunities to access specialist information, advice and guidance at some centres. Support for learners is satisfactory, with appropriate individual support, use of adaptive technology and aids to learning and childcare provision.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning
European Social Fund

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

19. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The council's strategic plans clearly identify the contribution that the adult and community learning and the ESF provision make in achieving the council's strategic priorities, with good links with the council's overall corporate plan and community strategy. Strategic planning is based on a detailed analysis of local needs, as well as in response to local, regional and national priorities. The council's partnerships and interagency working are very effective in implementing its strategic objectives. The council makes good use of this collaborative approach to avoid duplication and to maximise positive outcomes for learners.

20. Equality of opportunity is good. Although the council does not directly deliver any provision, its partnership working with a wide range of agencies and partner providers, to widen participation for learners, is very good. Through its subcontracting arrangements for adult and community learning, the council carefully locates the provision in areas of significant deprivation. Participation rates by learners from the most deprived areas of Wigan, relative to other areas, are good. The council also very successfully worked to develop an ESF project to engage specifically with 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.

21. The council and partner providers work very effectively to remove barriers to learning and to ensure that learners are treated with dignity and respect. Diversity champions reinforce this inclusive approach very well. Learners with restricted mobility have good access to the accommodation and facilities.

22. The council's response to legislation is appropriate; with for example, equality impact assessments and a detailed equality action plan from May 2008 in adult and community learning. Equality and diversity is promoted satisfactorily to

learners during the induction and learners understand their rights and responsibilities. In some sector subject areas in adult and community learning, such as in ICT, tutors promote equality and diversity particularly well in lessons. However, this does not happen consistently across the provision. The implementation of strategies to ensure effective training in equality and diversity across the provision is slow.

23. The management of the ESF project to work with young people in the not in education, employment or training is satisfactory overall. The project is based on detailed research and carefully considered approaches to working with learners. The council's arrangements in 2008 to set up the ESF project through its partner providers have been very effective. Work with learners started in January 2009, with satisfactory progress to date. Transition mentors are playing a key role in removing barriers to successfully engage learners and in supporting learner development and progression. Although arrangements to monitor project outcomes are in place, arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality of the delivery of the project are insufficient.
24. The management of the adult and community learning provision is satisfactory overall. From the previous inspection in October 2005, to the end of 2007 when senior management arrangements were in transition, the impact of quality improvement measures was insufficient. A new senior management team was appointed in 2008, which clearly identified the priority areas for improvement. Progress in implementing strategies to improve the quality of the provision is now satisfactory.
25. Communication between the council and its subcontracted providers is frequent and effective. A satisfactory learners' voice strategy is in place, to gather information from current and potential learners. The council's financial management is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money. Staff development is also satisfactory. The council has an appropriate strategy in place to support tutors who still need to achieve a teaching qualification. Processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning are satisfactory overall, with some pockets of good practice, but also examples where they are not yet fully implemented. A Skills for Life strategy was not introduced until October 2008, with satisfactory progress in its implementation in 2008/09 to date. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory.
26. The use of management information to support quality improvement is satisfactory. Managers use the updated management information system, which is accessible to all providers, to analyse effectively learner participation rates. Management data reports help the council to analyse performance to some extent, but these are insufficiently detailed, as the self-assessment report recognises. The data for family literacy and family numeracy, as well as for other literacy and numeracy external accreditation, is inaccurate for 2007/08 and retention data for Skills for Life is inaccurate in 2008/09 to date.

27. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements in the ESF project. They did not meet current government requirements in adult and community learning at the time of the inspection. Formal risk assessments in relation to learners were insufficient, and there has not been systematic training of staff in relation to safeguarding.
28. Aspects of the council's quality improvement arrangements for adult and community learning are insufficiently thorough. Agreements with the subcontracted providers and roles and responsibilities in relation to quality assurance are not sufficiently clear. The council's arrangements to directly monitor and evaluate the provision have insufficient impact. . The use of learner feedback to inform quality improvements is satisfactory. Formal course evaluation has improved from January 2009, with the introduction of more detailed course evaluations by tutors. It is too early to judge the impact of this development.
29. Observations of teaching and learning across the provision remain incomplete, with only 22% of tutors formally observed in 2007/08 and 50% in 2008/09 to date, with a target of 50% in total for the year. Feedback to tutors focuses predominantly on teaching and does not sufficiently cover learning, learner progress or the standards of learners' work. Although the sharing of good practice within individual partner providers is satisfactory, it is insufficient across the provision.
30. The self-assessment process and report for 2007/08 is satisfactory overall. Partner providers, as well as curriculum managers for sector subject areas, initially produced individual self-assessment reports. These varied considerably in quality. The council then used these reports to complete an overall self-assessment report, which recognises many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors. However, the report is not sufficiently detailed in relation to the achievement and standards of learners or the overall quality of teaching and learning.

What learners like:

- Classes being in local centres with helpful staff
- The helpful, patient, knowledgeable and above all, friendly tutors
- Making new friends
- Being able to pay for classes in instalments
- 'Thanks to our tutor we've gelled as a group and help each other, irrespective of our age differences and ability'
- 'The way I can work with no pressure and at my own pace'
- 'I'm not frightened of the computer anymore'

What learners think could improve:

- The fact that some advertised courses do not always run
- The length of some courses which are too short
- The use of paperwork
- The parking at some centres
- 'I would like more vocational courses'

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

31. The council subcontracts all the information and communication technology (ICT) provision, with 242 learners enrolled on 27 courses, located in eight community venues. The courses range from beginners' taster courses to those at more advanced levels. They cover standard ICT programmes, the internet, computer maintenance and digital imaging. All of the courses are non-accredited. Thirty-three per cent of learners are male.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' skills and confidence
- Much good teaching to meet learners' individual needs
- Very effective use of partnerships to widen participation

Areas for Improvement

- Insufficient recording of learners' progress and achievement
- Insufficiently effective quality improvement processes

Achievement and standards

32. Achievement and standards are good. Retention is high at 91% in 2007/08. Learners make good progress and the development of learners' skills and confidence is good. Learners develop a wide range of practical skills, which are applicable both in their home lives and in relation to employment. Many learners increase their confidence, often from a very low level. Learners enjoy learning and the standard of their work is good. This is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners make every effort to attend their courses and punctuality and attendance are good.

33. The recording of learners' progress and achievement is insufficient and not consistently well done across all courses. The council's achievement data on the non-accredited ICT provision is not yet sufficiently accurate.

Quality of provision

34. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Much of the teaching to meet learners' individual needs is good. Tutors know their learners well and are skilled at identifying when to help them and when to let them work things out for themselves. Some tutors promote peer support very successfully. Tutors vary the work with learners, with examples of the use of activities which promote healthy living and equality of opportunity well. The atmosphere in classes is friendly and

welcoming. Learners use up-to-date equipment and work productively. Some centres allow learners to drop in if they do not have a computer or refer learners to other available resources, for example in local libraries.

35. Initial assessment and the provision of support for those learners with additional learning needs are satisfactory. The recording of learners' progress and achievement is insufficient. Some tutors fail to record learners' progress or assessment outcomes and others are late in doing so. Not all individual learning plans have progress or achievement judgements recorded, even when learners have attended for several weeks. The management information system also identifies some learners as having completed their learning and achieved their learning goals, but the corresponding individual learning plans do not contain sufficient evidence to support these judgements.
36. The ICT programmes meet the needs and interests of learners effectively. The centres where learning takes place make good use of local demographic data to market the courses. Free and subsidised beginners' courses are successful in attracting returning learners. Progression routes can take learners from absolute beginners to advanced level courses, and partnerships with the local college of further education provide progression to accredited courses. However, the council does not monitor actual learner progression. Managers have been successful in attracting more male learners by introducing more technical courses, such as personal computer maintenance.
37. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Potential learners receive appropriate impartial information and advice. Learners can also access more in-depth information, advice and guidance from specialist staff at many centres. Learners with additional support needs are identified early, with appropriate support or referrals to meet these needs. In class support is available for learners who need additional help to achieve their learning goals. The use of adaptive technology is satisfactory and learners with disabilities have access to technology that meets their individual needs. Managers do not identify the extent to which learners receiving additional support achieve as well as other learners.

Leadership and management

38. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The use of partnerships with local community organisations and schools to widen participation is very effective. This enables the council to provide learning opportunities targeted in areas of greatest need. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. Some tutors promote equality and diversity in classes particularly well, although this good practice is not sufficiently shared across the provision. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities and understand the complaints' procedures.
39. Curriculum management is satisfactory. The use of data is generally satisfactory, although achievement data on non-accredited provision is not yet sufficiently accurate. Processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement are not yet sufficiently thorough across the provision. This is recognised in the

self-assessment report. Communication is satisfactory, with the online dissemination of key information. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Development needs identified through observations of teaching and learning inform the staff development programme. However, the take-up of staff development is insufficient, particularly by ICT tutors who do not have a teaching qualification. For example, only four ICT tutors and none of the ICT tutors without teaching qualifications attended the assistive technology training.

40. Quality improvement processes are insufficiently effective. The number of observations of teaching and learning has been insufficient for the past two years. Managers have failed to prioritise observing teachers who do not have teaching qualifications. Observation reports are insufficiently detailed and do not sufficiently focus on learners' progress, skill development and achievement. Course evaluations were not sufficiently thorough in 2007/08 and made an insufficient contribution to quality improvement. These have improved in 2008/09, but do not include sufficient analysis of retention and achievement. Examples of good practice in teaching and learning are not always widely shared across the ICT provision.
41. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. However, the self-assessment report is not sufficiently detailed in relation to the ICT provision. Some of the strengths are no more than standard practice and strengths and areas for improvement do not have sufficient supporting evidence to confirm these judgements.

Community learning

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

42. The council subcontracts all the community learning provision. Courses include art, craft, pottery, floral art, garden design, card design, cookery, cake decorating, languages and accountancy. They are located in six main sites across Wigan in the morning, afternoon and evening. Courses run for one term. In the period of September 2008 to March 2009, 966 learners enrolled on community learning courses. Twenty per cent of the learners are over 60 and 80% are female. All the courses are non-accredited.

Strengths

- High retention in art and craft
- Good acquisition of learners' skills and confidence
- Good teaching and learning for the development of practical skills

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of ICT
- Insufficient focus on cultural diversity
- Insufficient implementation of quality improvement processes

Achievement and standards

43. Achievement and standards are good. Retention is high in art and craft at over 95% in 2007/08. The acquisition of learners' skills and confidence is good. Learners make significant progress, are able to complete complex tasks and produce work to a good standard. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Learners are highly motivated, work with enthusiasm and develop a good range of new skills which are useful in their everyday lives. In the card making classes, learners produce cards to a professional standard. In the cake icing classes, learners decorate celebration cakes for family and friends. In the gardening design classes, learners apply their skills well in their own gardens and in those of their friends and neighbours.

44. Punctuality and attendance are good. The council's achievement data on the non-accredited community learning provision is not yet sufficiently accurate.

Quality of provision

45. The quality of the provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning for the development of practical skills is good. Tutors have extensive specialist knowledge and make good use of a wide range of stimulating activities in lessons. Demonstrations are very effective and tutors provide good individual coaching

when learners are developing their skills. Learners enjoy taking part in class discussions and evaluating each others work. They assist each other with tasks, share materials and discuss each other's work constructively. Teaching and learning in languages is satisfactory.

46. Many tutors formally record learners' progress and assessment outcomes well. They encourage learners to keep log books for reference, as well as photographic evidence of the progress they have made. Learners are able to articulate well the knowledge they have gained and the progress they have made. Across the provision, not all individual learning plans are fully completed and the recording of learners' progress and achievement is not consistently well done.
47. In many centres, the materials are free of charge. Tutors also sell discounted materials and tools and collect orders from specialist shops out of the area. Handouts are of a good quality. However, the use of ICT is insufficient. Tutors do not make sufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning. Learners miss opportunities to use ICT for research and as an additional tool to support their learning.
48. The focus on cultural diversity is insufficient across the community learning provision. Planning to explore and celebrate cultural diversity is insufficient. Opportunities for learners to explore a rich source of materials from a range of different communities are insufficient. Many of the art and craft classes are based on western culture and learners are not sufficiently introduced to art and crafts from a wider world.
49. The curriculum range is satisfactory in meeting the needs and interests of learners. Classes are located in areas of greatest need and centres make good use of their local knowledge to promote courses to encourage adults back into learning. Progression opportunities are satisfactory. The council does not yet monitor actual learner progression, although this is planned from September 2009. Managers have plans to introduce unit accreditation for some of the courses, but this is not currently available for learners.
50. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate pre-course information and advice. Front of house staff in the centres are also very helpful in guiding learners to appropriate courses. Learners can access more in-depth information, advice and guidance from specialist staff at many centres.
51. Learners have the option of paying their enrolment fees in instalments. The support needs of learners are appropriately identified and support is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The council makes effective use of partnerships to locate the provision in local communities across Wigan. Curriculum management is satisfactory. The use of data is generally satisfactory, although achievement data on non-accredited provision is not yet sufficiently accurate. Processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement are not yet sufficiently thorough across the provision. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Staff development, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.
53. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. Tutors have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities and understand the complaints' procedures. The promotion of equality and diversity across the curriculum is insufficient, with insufficient action planning to secure improvements.
54. The implementation of quality improvement processes is insufficient. Observations of teaching and learning were insufficient in 2007/08. Feedback in observations focuses too much on teaching and not enough on learning and learner progress and achievement. It is not always sufficiently evaluative. Action plans do not always reflect the grades awarded. However, the grades awarded are similar to those awarded during the inspection. Moderation processes have not identified the areas for improvement in the observation process. The sharing of good practice between partners across the provision is insufficient.
55. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. However, the self-assessment report is not sufficiently detailed in relation to the art, craft and related community learning provision. Some of the strengths are no more than standard practice, with insufficient judgements on learners' progress, achievement and standards of work