

# Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Federation

## Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Marina Gaze HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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## Information about the provider

1. Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Federation (GMLPF) is a not for profit organisation representing 54 work-based learning providers, including colleges, across the six boroughs of Merseyside: Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral. Established in 2001 it promotes and enables collaborative working between providers. A board of elected directors governs GMLPF.
2. In April 2008 Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) awarded GMLPF a contract to provide accelerated programme-led pathway programmes. The programme provides technical certificate and key skill training, and placement experience with the aim of progressing learners to apprenticeships. All learners are aged 16-18 years old and 90% were previously not in education, employment or training (NEET).
3. The programme is managed by a chief executive, supported by an administrator and a programme manager, all of whom are based in Toxteth, Liverpool. GMLPF subcontracts training and assessment. Of the 89 learners on programmes during the inspection 36 are following customer service, 15 are following administration, 24 are following childcare, learning and development, nine are following health and social care and five have just begun hospitality programmes. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas GMLPF offers but only graded administration programmes, which include customer service and business administration, separately. GMLPF has no previous inspection history.
4. Unemployment in Merseyside is 7.3%, higher than the national average of 5.7%. A high 17.4% of the population have no qualifications compared to 12.4% nationally. In 2008 the GCSE pass rates A\* to C (including English and maths) ranged from 30% in Knowsley, to 51.4% in Sefton compared to 47.6% nationally. Only 4% of the population of Merseyside is from minority ethnic groups compared with 9% nationally.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
  - Alder Training Ltd
  - Asset Training and Consultancy Ltd
  - Joint Learning Management and Training Services
  - Sysco Business Skills Academy Ltd

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2007/08
Young learner provision: Further education (16-18)	58 full-time learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject areas	Grade
Administration	2

## Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of GMLPF's provision is good. Most learners who start the programme achieve qualifications and many become apprentices. Many learners on the programme did not achieve qualifications at school. Employers are very impressed by the excellent skills learners develop. Learners are ambitious and receive good support to help them reach their goals. Teaching is good and learners enjoy taught sessions. The programme meets everyone's needs well. Training is offered in subjects where jobs exist including hospitality, retail, customer service, administration and child care. Learners feel safe and are safe on the programme. Learners' individual needs, including their religious, physical and learning needs, are very well met. GMLPF works hard to give learners the best possible training opportunities and works with good quality training organisations to do this. GMLPF and the training organisations it works with act on learners' suggestions to make improvements.

## Main findings

- The programme gives young people who have found it difficult to gain employment good opportunities to gain the skills and knowledge they need to become apprentices. Learners enjoy their programmes and appreciate being treated as adults and with respect.

- Learners make very good progress. They achieve technical certificates and qualifications in literacy, numeracy and first aid. For many learners this is the first time they have achieved a qualification.
- Learners develop excellent skills valued by employers, including confidence and time keeping.
- The number of learners progressing to apprenticeships and/or achieving all their qualifications has improved and is good.
- All subcontractors are equally successful at helping learners gain qualifications and apprenticeships. There are no significant differences in the success rates of male and female learners.
- Some learners attend a useful sexual health awareness session but generally there is insufficient emphasis on healthy lifestyles. Learners have some opportunities to volunteer, which help them develop skills employers appreciate and contribute to their communities.
- Learners feel safe and demonstrate good working practices. Learners are well protected. Arrangements for safeguarding are good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Learners enjoy taught sessions. They like numeracy and see the relevance of key skills.
- The provision meets the needs of learners and employers very well. The programme is the only one in the area run by a learning provider network that prepares young people to move into apprenticeships. Subcontractors work well together to offer learners programmes in a range of subject areas across the boroughs.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance and are confident they are on the right programme. Learners are fully aware of their progress and they have ambitious goals. They are supported to succeed and care is taken to ensure that learners progress to apprenticeships only when they are ready.
- GMLPF provides good training for subcontractors to help them recruit and support learners. Learners' individual needs, including their religious, physical and learning needs, are very well met by subcontractors, placement providers and other learners. However, certain aspects of equality of opportunity are not reinforced sufficiently.
- Subcontractors share good practice and address issues to improve learners' programmes. Good systems are in place to monitor subcontractors' recruitment, retention and achievement and to monitor what learners do when they leave the programme. Processes to ensure the quality of teaching, learning and reviews are less well developed.

### What does GMLPF need to do to improve further?

- Further improve consistency in the quality of subcontractors' work and continue to encourage the sharing of good practice to ensure consistently good teaching and learning.
- Continue to set challenging targets and increase progression to apprenticeships.

- Further develop volunteering opportunities and healthy lifestyle provision to enrich learners' experiences on programme.
- Develop a management information system which GMLPF owns and can use effectively and efficiently, that will generate reports to further improve the management of the provision.
- Reinforce learners' understanding of how people should expect to be treated in the workplace to enable a greater understanding of equality and diversity.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- the enjoyable and good quality teaching and learning
- their improved ability to do maths
- gaining qualifications, often for the first time
- the skills gained and their ability to move into placements and apprenticeships
- the improvements in their confidence
- the pride they and their families feel in their achievements
- the very good help and support they receive
- the help they are given to achieve their ambitions

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- brighter rooms at one training centre
- nothing

### Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

#### What employers like:

- the good relationships and communication with subcontractors' staff and the flexible, accommodating support given by subcontractors' staff
- the high quality of the learners they take on work placements and the high standard of work the learners produce in their placements
- the high level of commitment from the young people and their desire to progress

#### What employers would like to see improved:

- nothing

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. GMLPF's capacity to make and sustain improvements is good. GMLPF subcontracts with carefully selected providers who have good Ofsted inspection grades and good achievements. The subcontractor base was reviewed after the first group finished. Contracts with some subcontractors were terminated, new subcontractors were engaged and the allocation of learners to high performing subcontractors was increased. Recruitment, achievement and the quality of the provision have improved since the review. The proportion of learners entering apprenticeships and/or achieving their planned qualifications increased considerably from 43% for the first group, to 71% for the second group. Targets for achievement have been exceeded and increased. The appointment of a programme manager is having a demonstrable impact on improving recruitment, retention and achievement across the provision.
8. GMLPF has a clear vision for improvement which the board and all subcontractors share. The board effectively provides leadership, direction and challenge for the programme. Subcontractors meet monthly to discuss and address issues and share good practice to improve the learners' experience. For example, two subcontractors are now using the same health and safety tutor. The focus group system for obtaining learner feedback developed by one subcontractor is being used by others. Learners' views are sought and acted upon to improve learning. For example, learners requested smaller class sizes and as a result two groups were set up and the class size was halved. Another learner request for first aid training resulted in first aid training being offered to all learners. The self-assessment process is inclusive of all subcontractors who state it reflects accurately their own judgements. The self-assessment report is sufficiently critical and has identified many of the areas for improvement.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Outcomes for learners are good. The programme successfully engages previously low achieving learners and gives them good opportunities to gain qualifications and become apprentices. Learners make very good progress in relation to their starting point. They achieve technical certificates and qualifications in literacy, numeracy and first aid. For many learners this is the first time they have achieved a qualification. The programme allows them to achieve at their own pace. Some learners make very fast progress. One administration learner with no qualifications achieved all the key skills and the technical certificate in six weeks.
10. Learners develop excellent skills valued by employers, including confidence and time keeping. They quickly become valued staff and placement providers praise

their motivation, commitment and ability to work within a team. Dental nurses develop good customer service skills which improve their employability.

11. The number of learners progressing to apprenticeships and/or achieving all their planned qualifications has improved and is now good. The proportion of learners entering apprenticeships and/or achieving their planned qualifications increased considerably from 43% for the first group, to 71% for the second group. An additional 19% of learners in the first group and 16% of learners in the second group progressed to further education. The proportion of learners in the third group likely to enter apprenticeships and/or complete their planned qualifications is 79%. There are no significant differences in the success rates of male and female learners.
12. Some learners attend a useful sexual health awareness session and there are plans to extend this across the provision. Generally, however, emphasis on maintaining healthy lifestyles is insufficient. Learners have some opportunities to volunteer, which help them develop skills employers appreciate and which they can add to their curriculum vitae.
13. Learners feel safe and demonstrate good, safe, working practices. Learners' health and safety awareness is good and this is reinforced during the programme and on placements.
14. Learners enjoy their programmes and appreciate being treated as adults and with respect. Learners understand their programme and are aware of their progress towards employment. They are prepared to make financial sacrifices and to have non-employed status to achieve their goals.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. The quality of the provision is good. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners are very positive about the quality of the teaching and their relationships with tutors. Learners enjoy researching their key skills projects. Numeracy sessions are made interesting and relevant and learners receive good support with basic concepts. However, some sessions are not adequately planned to address the varying needs and abilities of individual learners. During the inspection internal teaching and learning observers gave accurate feedback, identified strengths and areas for improvement and correctly graded sessions. However, the observation records of one subcontractor do not always match the grade awarded. Learners' work is assessed quickly and they receive supportive feedback on how to improve. Records of reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory.
16. The provision meets the needs of learners and employers very well. The programme is the only one in the area managed by a learning provider network that prepares young people to move into apprenticeships. The programme helps learners who are not yet ready for an apprenticeship to develop employability skills and gain qualifications which form part of the

apprenticeship. Learners can start the programme at any time. The length and content of the programme are tailored to individual needs.

17. Subcontractors work well in partnership to offer learners programmes in a range of subject areas across the boroughs. Training is provided in subject areas where job vacancies exist locally. For example, hospitality was introduced in Southport which is a tourist venue with many restaurants. Motor vehicle provision was stopped in response to the decreasing number of available jobs in the area.
18. Learners receive good advice and guidance. Initial assessment is used very effectively to identify barriers and ensure the learners are on the right programme. Learners are confident they have chosen the right programme. They are fully aware of their progress and they have ambitious goals. All the learners have barriers to learning and to entering employment. Staff have been recruited specifically to support them. A very good range of support is in place. This includes practical financial help and advice, support for emotional needs and support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learners are supported to succeed and care is taken to ensure that learners progress to apprenticeships only when they are ready.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

19. Leadership and management are good. Good action is taken to engage under-represented and previously low achieving learners, raise their ambitions and give them good opportunities to become apprentices. Engaging this group is a local and national priority and GMLPF works hard to raise the profile of the programme and ensure it continues. GMLPF has taken good action to secure the best quality provision for learners by deliberately contracting with good providers.
20. The board effectively provides leadership, direction and challenge for the programme. Two board members, including the chair, are also managing directors of training providers subcontracted to deliver the programme. Board members use their expertise appropriately to challenge senior managers and raise standards. They meet regularly and are well informed by the chief executive and the operations manager.
21. Arrangements for safeguarding are good. Learners are well protected. Subcontractors have well established and effective safeguarding arrangements. All subcontractors have safeguarding policies and have a senior named person responsible for safeguarding. Their delivery, administration and reception staff all have criminal records bureau (CRB) clearance. All subcontractors have provided their staff with aspects of safeguarding training and have staff who are well qualified to support other staff and learners with safeguarding issues. GMLPF has further safeguarding training planned for all its subcontractors.



22. Action to tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap is good. Learners' individual needs, including their religious, physical and learning needs, are very well met by subcontractors, placement providers and other learners. GMLPF provides a good range of training for subcontractors which is well attended. This training helps subcontractors recruit and support learners. For example, training has been provided in how to support learners on the autistic spectrum, learners with sight impairments and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. GMLPF has a good equality and diversity resource library which is used by subcontractors. GMLPF's quarterly newsletter and web site update subcontractors about equality and diversity issues. The provider is involved in initiatives to increase the number of learners from ethnic minority groups entering apprenticeships. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is representative of the local population. Learners treat each other and staff with respect but some learners are not always aware that people may be offended by what they regard as acceptable practice. Coverage of equality and diversity issues at induction is not always memorable and learners' awareness is not always explored during reviews.
23. Good systems are in place to monitor subcontractors' recruitment, retention and achievement and to monitor learners' destinations. Systems to ensure the quality of teaching and learning and reviews are less well developed. GMLPF has identified that its current management information system, which is operated by a college, is not meeting its needs. Time is wasted travelling to the college to input data from paper records and the system is not able to produce reports the provider wants to further manage provision. GMLPF is currently purchasing a management information system.
24. Very useful monthly meetings of subcontractors effectively share good practice and allow issues to be addressed. The subcontractors value these frank and open discussions. User engagement is good. For example, a training event was held for 80 Connexions staff to raise their awareness of the programme. This resulted in more young people being referred to the programme.
25. Value for money is good. GMLPF and subcontractors manage their budgets well and invest heavily in good resources to meet learners' needs.

## Information about the inspection

26. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's chief executive, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the contract began.
27. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions and looked at assessment and review documentation. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Federation

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	89		89		
Part-time learners					
Overall effectiveness	2		2		
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2		2		
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	1				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3				
Quality of provision	2		2		
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2		2		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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