

# Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 55402

Name of lead inspector: Bob Busby HMI

Last day of inspection: 29 January 2010

Type of provider: Local Authority

Address: Wirral Education Centre  
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Bromborough  
Wirral  
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## Information about the provider

1. Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision is managed by the Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service (WL&FLS) which is part of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's Children and Young People's Department. The head of service is based in Bromborough. WL&FLS provides learning programmes for families and adults, directly and through partners. It has main centres in Rock Ferry, Birkenhead and Leasowe, which are in areas of disadvantage. Outreach provision is offered across the Wirral in around 60 different venues each year. The Lifelong and Family Learning Service supports a number of small projects which are designed to combat social exclusion and widen participation, through work in partnership with schools, voluntary and community organisations, Children and Young People's Department and Adult Social Services. Other project funding has been accessed by the Service working in partnership with local organisations.
2. Currently, 2,343 learners attend learning programmes in the Borough. Almost all learners are adults and most attend provision for learning for social and personal development. Most courses are non-accredited. Courses are offered in 13 subject areas in 60 community venues, schools and pre-school settings. A small proportion of Train to Gain learners attend work-based learning programmes; most are employed by the Borough or in the community. The majority of learners are women. Approximately 6% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds, 17% have a disability and 38% live in the most deprived areas. Forty-three per cent of learners have not undertaken any learning since leaving school and just over half hold no qualifications at level 2 or above. The current offer is predominately entry, level 1 and taster courses ranging in length.
3. Funding for Lifelong and Family Learning is through the Learning and Skills Council Greater Merseyside.
4. According to the 2001 census the population of the Borough is around 312,000. Approximately 3.5% are from a minority ethnic background. Between July 2008 and June 2009 unemployment on the Wirral was 7.6 %, comparable with the Northwest unemployment rate of 7.6% and slightly higher than the national rate of 6.9%. In 2009, approximately 54% of pupils achieved five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics, slightly above the national average for maintained schools of 50.7%.
5. WL&FLS provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Halton Metropolitan Borough Council (Train to Gain, Skills for Life)
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
  - Prenton High School for Girls (Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLIDC))

- Ferries Family Groups Limited (NLIDC)
- Wirral Environmental Network (NLIDC)
- Inclusive Access UK Limited (NLIDC)
- Gautby Road Joint Management Committee (NLIDC)
- North Birkenhead Development Trust (NLIDC)
- 3 E's (NLIDC)
- Wirral Multicultural Organisation (NLIDC)
- Wirral MBC Department of Adult Social Services (NLIDC)
- Wallasey School (NLIDC)
- VCAW UKonline (NLIDC)
- Behaviour Support (Family learning)
- Wirral Girls Grammar School (languages)
- Halton Metropolitan Borough Council (Employability skills programme)
- Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (Employability skills programme)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for adult learners: Learning for social and personal development	2,780 part-time learners
Learning for qualifications in employment: Train to Gain Employability Skills Programme	48 learners 85 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	3
Equality and diversity	1
Subject areas	Grade
Learning for social and personal development	2
Arts media and publishing	2
Family learning	2
Preparation for life and work	2
Community development	2

## Overall effectiveness

7. Overall effectiveness is good. Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates on provision for learning for social and personal development are high. Learners enjoy attending learning programmes in the Borough and value the progress they make and what they achieve. They demonstrate increased confidence and improved self-esteem. There are no significant differences between the achievement rates of learners from different social and cultural backgrounds. The proportion of learners completing work-based learning programmes successfully is high. Learners feel safe on Borough courses at community venues and schools. Many learners contribute to annual community and national events or become volunteers and some have become 'learning buddies' to support new learners on their courses.

8. Teaching and learning are good. Most sessions are well planned and contain a wide variety of stimulating learning activities. Initial assessment and assessment in the classroom and in the workplace are thorough. However, targets set for learners do not help them to improve their skills sufficiently; their progress is not always well monitored or recorded.
9. WL&FLS is good at meeting the range of interests and needs in the community. The service has effective partnerships, particularly with community groups, support organisations and other learning providers. Partnerships with established employers are growing, working relationships are good, but the number of partnerships with employers other than the council is low. Care, advice and guidance are good.
10. Leaders and managers inspire staff to provide a high quality service for learners. Staff development is good. Staff have received basic training in equality and diversity and in safeguarding. WL&FLS is outstanding at promoting equality and diversity in the local community. Learners feel safe. The service has satisfactory safeguarding arrangements. Quality improvement arrangements are good.

## Main findings

- Learners make good progress; they develop good skills which improve their contribution to family life, their employability prospects and support for career progression. Learners are keen and engaged in their learning. Attendance is high.
- Achievement rates are high and consistently improving across most of the service. Retention is high on most courses but is low on long courses; for example, in preparation for life and work. Learners praise the impact of their learning and describe warmly the difference it has made to their lives.
- Teaching and learning are good overall. Most sessions are lively and involve a variety of well-considered activities. Information learning technology (ILT) is used well; however, it is underdeveloped in family learning. Most sessions are well planned and take into account learners' starting points. However, some lesson plans are insufficiently detailed.
- Arrangements for assessment are good. Learner's records are used effectively to record progress. Learners are clear about what they have achieved and what they need to do to make progress. However, some learners do not record sufficient detail in their personal learner records to be of value. Thorough and rigorous procedures for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) are used constructively.
- The range of provision meets learners' needs well. The service provides a wide choice of courses at a range of levels and in a variety of locations to widen participation. The service has increased recruitment amongst families in areas of deprivation; the proportion of men attending courses has increased. Learners value the convenience of the local learning centres. Many learners gain a qualification, often for the first time.

- Additional learning support is effective. Initial and diagnostic assessment is thorough. Tutors provide good individual support and learners are positive about the impact. Support is particularly good for learners who have declared a learning difficulty and/or disability. Alternative forms of assessment are used to accommodate disabilities.
- Curriculum management is good. Communications between managers, partners, subcontractors and teaching staff are good. Managers give good support to teams in outreach venues.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. WL&FLS maintain a very diverse curriculum with clear progression routes. The curriculum and associated programmes are targeted with care to those in greatest need. These programmes play a crucial part in enhancing the life experiences and chances of learners. The service has particularly effective initiatives to support many learners from diverse backgrounds.
- The provider works effectively with the Greater Merseyside Quality Improvement Network and Curriculum Improvement Group and community and voluntary organisations to develop the provision. Communication is less effective with employers about the progress of their learners and their evaluation of training programmes.
- Strategic management is good. Leaders have clear priorities, set high expectations and provide a good programme of staff development. Staff understand how their own targets contribute to the strategic objectives of the Council.
- Quality assurance arrangements are good. Curriculum managers ensure a standardised approach across the whole provision. Observation of the teaching and learning process is satisfactory. Observation reports of teaching sessions are evaluative and moderated with suitable action points. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded in 'paired observations' and with the service's judgement that too little teaching and learning is outstanding.
- Self-assessment is thorough, accurate and leads to improvement. The views of learners and partners are taken into account appropriately. The self-assessment report reflects judgements made during the inspection.

### What does Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of lesson planning to take account of different abilities within groups, and also to develop the use of ILT in the classroom to enrich teaching further.
- Improve the assessment of learning in lessons by developing a wider range of techniques for teachers to check and confirm understanding. Ensure that individual learning plans and personal learner records are used consistently in monitoring learner's progress.

- Improve the choice available to learners by increasing the number of evening classes offered and by widening the range of courses available at the Multi Cultural Centre and in arts, media and publishing.
- Improve the quality of action planning following teaching and learning observations.
- Increase participation by male learners by continuing to develop and promote courses that meet their needs.
- Increase the active involvement of employers through frequent collection of their views and effective action.

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

#### What learners like:

- extending their own skills, confidence, self-esteem and horizons, often for the first time in their life, so improving job prospects
- making practical objects that they can give as presents, sell or use for themselves
- being made to feel special by friendly, approachable tutors who treat them as adults and support and encourage them
- the opportunity to get out of their houses to meet with like-minded people and share new ideas within a friendly environment
- participating in projects that improve their lives and improve their environment
- spending quality time with their children working together on structured tasks
- learning about the school curriculum and how to help their children
- the 'fun' nature of the lessons, playing games to develop skills in maths.

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

- Social Services transport that is sometimes late and makes them late for classes
- better refreshment facilities at some centres
- more provision (longer classes, longer courses, more courses)
- more evening classes at the Leasowe Centre
- more opportunities to repeat some of the difficult subjects in class.

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

#### What employers like:

- ICT courses help learners to undertake tasks that even the employer is unable to do
- tutors work well with learners and break down tasks and learning in such a way that makes sense
- we ask our learners how to do things now

- the enjoyment and progress that learners are making, especially when they disliked school so much.

What employers would like to see improved:

- better feedback on individuals' progress
- more private/commercial employers who offer real placement opportunities
- more opportunities to provide an opinion or feedback on the course that employees are following.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

11. WL&FLS demonstrates good capacity to improve and has maintained the good quality of provision since the previous inspection. The service's leadership and management are good. WL&FLS' arrangements for equality and diversity are outstanding. Provision is good in all of the areas of learning inspected: arts, media and publishing, family learning, preparation for life and work and community development. The service is committed and focused on quality improvement. However, the arrangements for teaching and learning observations, whilst effective for providing solutions for inadequate teaching and improving satisfactory teaching, are not sufficiently evaluative to lead to a higher proportion of outstanding lessons.
12. Most of the inspection grades match those contained in the most recent self-assessment report. Outcomes for learners are good; the proportion of learners achieving a qualification has improved. As at the previous inspection, the service's clear focus on strategic management and quality improvement has enabled it to identify its development needs accurately. The self-assessment process provides a clear focus for further changes and continuous improvement. The performance of different groups is well monitored and targets are set for further improvement. The resulting action plan is well monitored and has led to improvement.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

13. Outcomes for learners are good. Achievement rates are high and consistently improving for most courses. Retention rates are high on most courses except for long courses in preparation for life and work. Overall success rates on preparation for life and work courses declined in 2008/09 but remain satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy success rates for Train to Gain learners are high. Success rates on the employability skills programme are too low at 48%. Many learners progress to further study, gain employment or voluntary placements or become active in their local parent teachers' association. Learners praise the impact of their learning and describe warmly the difference it has made to their lives.
14. Learners are keen and remain engaged in their learning. Their attendance is high. Most learners show a marked increase in their confidence and their self-esteem. Many gain the confidence and skills to progress from non-accredited to accredited programmes. Learners value and benefit from social interaction. They develop good personal and social skills which enable them to communicate more effectively with their children.
15. Learners make good progress in their personal learning goals. They participate fully in projects and topics which are engaging and enjoyable. Learners develop good literacy, numeracy and employability skills which increase their

contribution to family life, their employability prospects and support their career progression. Those on community development courses and projects gain skills in team work, networking and negotiation. Learners in arts, media and publishing courses produce high standards of work. The skills and techniques that learners acquire enable them to produce work for sale, to give to others or for their own use.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

16. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. The better sessions are well paced; tutors use a good variety of activities and methods to challenge and engage learners. Most of the time sessions are lively and tutors encourage, support and motivate learners to make progress and enjoy their learning. ILT is used well where appropriate. However, the use of ILT to support learning is underdeveloped in family learning, where suitable equipment is not always available. The service is planning to use notepad computers to help remedy the situation. Tutors use praise well to build their learners' confidence. In arts, media and publishing learners have undertaken some excellent projects leading to a significant impact on their lives. Tutors make demands of learners, irrespective of disabilities. Most sessions are well planned and take into account learners' starting points. However, some lesson plans are insufficiently detailed about learning. In the less effective lessons the range of learning methods is too narrow and they are led by the tutor too much. The pace of these lessons is sometimes too slow. Tutors use questioning to check learning but this is not always directed at individuals.
17. Resources are generally satisfactory. Staff are well qualified. All tutors have or are working towards qualified teacher status. Four of the specialist Skills for Life tutors hold a literacy or numeracy qualification at level 4, one has an ESOL qualification and two are working towards literacy or numeracy specialist qualifications. The information technology and employability skills specialist tutors are trained in literacy and numeracy within the curriculum. Many tutors use imaginative games and well-prepared interactive materials. Learners' access to computers and the internet varies depending on the venue. Worksheets are of good quality, providing learners with interesting and varied activities. In some sessions worksheets are over used, leading to too little active involvement by learners and tutors making too little use of the technology available. In one lesson, the accommodation had an adverse impact on both teaching and learning.
18. Assessment practices are generally good. Personal learner records are used well to record progress. Tutors give constructive feedback that motivates learners to improve further. Learners are clear about what they have achieved and what they need to do to progress; however, some do not record sufficient detail in their own records to be of value. In family learning there are thorough and rigorous procedures for RARPA which are used constructively.
19. WL&FLS offers highly responsive provision. The service provides a wide choice of courses, at a range of levels and in a variety of locations to widen

participation. The service has increased recruitment amongst families in areas of deprivation and the proportion of men attending courses. The service is very effective at supporting innovative projects that engage hard-to-reach learners. Learners value the convenience and informality of the local learning centres and the friendly supportive environment. Learners who are not usually involved in education and training are encouraged to enrol and many gain a qualification, often for the first time. The range of courses encourages commitment, self-selection, progression and development of employability skills and/or skills that benefit the community. WL&FLS works closely with many outside agencies, to develop courses and projects in local centres and attract learners who would not attend traditional colleges.

20. WL&FLS responds effectively to the needs of particular groups of learners. Good links with social services enable learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to take advantage of the courses offered. Train to Gain provision has been developed with union learning representatives and benefits staff from Council departments. The service works well with schools, children's centres and the voluntary sector. WL&FLS plans to extend entry level provision and offer courses in the evenings and weekends in response to learners' feedback. The range of provision in arts, media and publishing is too narrow.
21. Additional learning support is valued and highly effective for learners. Initial and diagnostic assessment identifies learners' needs for support effectively and early on in their programmes. It is thorough and systematic. Most tutors provide good individual support in classes and learners are positive about their impact in promoting their achievement. A creche is available at most venues. Support is particularly good for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Alternative forms of assessment are used to accommodate individual disabilities. WL&FLS works effectively with Social Services to borrow equipment for specific learners with disabilities, and with the Social Enterprise Group that enables learners to develop their work commercially. Staff have received appropriate training to support the considerable number of learners who have declared a disability, including those with mental health difficulties. A small but efficient group of learner support assistants assist tutors and learners within classes.
22. Learner induction is satisfactory. Tutors encourage learners to take the next steps and advise them about progression opportunities.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

23. Leadership and management are good. Strategic management is good. Leaders have clear priorities and set high expectations. WL&FLS is committed to providing high quality provision for the local community and to widening participation within the borough. Leaders provide a good programme of staff development. Staff understand how their own targets and objectives contribute to the strategic objectives of the department and the Council. Since the previous inspection, WL&FLS has improved the resources available. Leaders use data and information effectively to evaluate the success of their actions.

24. Curriculum management, planning and development are good and are based on national and local priorities. Managers give good support to teams in outreach venues. Communication between managers, partners, subcontractors and teaching staff is good. Staff feel valued and supported. Staff are well informed through regular team meetings. The self-assessment report is mainly accurate. Equality and diversity are celebrated and there is much emphasis on positive imagery in several centres. Accommodation in schools and children's centres is at least satisfactory and often good. Resources which are available in schools and those provided by the service support learning effectively.
25. Partnership working is good. The provider works effectively with the Greater Merseyside Quality Improvement Network and Curriculum Improvement Groups as well as community and voluntary organisations to develop the provision and benefit learners. Volunteers are trained as 'literacy buddies' to support pre-entry level learners in their reading. WL&FLS works closely with social services, hearing and sight impaired services, substance misuse service and social projects for particular community initiatives. There are many examples of cross-Merseyside groups being developed to improve and share practice, and facilitate collaborative and consultative working. Employers are not sufficiently communicated with in relation to the progress of their learners or involved in contributing to the evaluation of the training programmes.
26. WL&FLS is good in meeting the needs and interests of learners. The diverse curriculum includes community projects and well considered responses to employer needs. Effective partnership working helps to widen participation and provides important progression routes into learning for new learners.
27. Arrangements to promote equality and diversity are outstanding. WL&FLS maintain a very wide range of inclusive programmes. The curriculum is diverse and there are clear progression routes between courses and from non-accredited to accredited provision. The curriculum and associated programmes are targeted carefully at those in greatest need. WL&FLS has been highly successful in recruiting learners from under-represented groups and widening participation throughout the Wirral. It has proved very successful in increasing the number of people achieving a qualification from the most deprived areas it serves. WL&FLS is fostering harmony, integration and promoting a fairer set of opportunities. WL&FLS is not only successful in penetrating these neighbourhoods but also supporting the integration of individuals within these settings. Programmes are inclusive and play a crucial part in enhancing the life experiences and chances of learners. Learners articulate clearly what they have achieved; they give examples of how learning has benefited their lives and their communities. All learners are treated equally, encouraged and supported to realise their full potential. However, participation rates by males are low. Provision for learners from the Bengali community has been extended. There is little difference in the attainment of different groups.
28. Managers monitor and analyse regularly the performance by different groups of learners. The participation, retention and achievement rates for learners with

disabilities and for both genders are high, although the retention rates for some minority ethnic learners have declined on some programmes recently. Good progress is made by learners with disabilities, those with learning difficulties and those receiving support for literacy, numeracy or language.

29. All learners show a very good awareness of equal opportunities; learner feedback is extremely positive from most groups. Mutual respect and tolerance for all learners and staff are well developed, understood and practised. Staff, managers, tutors, partners and subcontractors have received extensive training and demonstrate an exceptional understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
30. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. The arrangements meet government requirements with regard to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Staff working with children or vulnerable adults receive Criminal Record Bureau checks. WL&FLS maintains a central list to show that staff are vetted appropriately. A robust risk assessment process exists. Learners comment positively on how safe they feel. Managers and tutors are clear about their statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding and clear steps have been taken to develop practice beyond the statutory minimum. WL&FLS has clear child protection policies and procedures that are well understood by staff who have received training in safeguarding. Policies to protect learners from bullying and harassment are implemented effectively. All learners understand their rights and responsibilities.
31. Quality assurance is good. Curriculum managers ensure a standardised approach across the whole provision. Self-assessment is thorough, accurate and leads to improvements. The views of learners and partners are taken into account suitably. Judgements are moderated internally and externally through the Greater Merseyside Quality Improvement Network. The self-assessment report reflects judgements made during the inspection. The reports of observed sessions are moderated between teams and suitable action points are included. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded in paired observations and the service's judgement that too little teaching and learning is outstanding. However, although data on provision is collected, it is not used sufficiently rigorously to monitor the effectiveness or impact of specific actions or courses and their contribution to the overall quality of provision.
32. The process for observing teaching and learning is satisfactory. It provides a detailed assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. Feedback to tutors is useful and constructive in most cases and provides a helpful tool to improve practice. There was a fair degree of synergy with the services' self-assessment which identified a very high number of good or better lessons and those grades awarded by inspectors. However, WL&FLS' lesson grading guidelines do not include a sufficiently wide range of evidence about the quality of learning. Inspectors found discrepancies in the amount of detail observers are providing. In addition some observers are reluctant to make judgements concerning areas for improvement. Action plans do not provide sufficiently clear guidance on how improvements in the quality of teaching and learning can be secured.

Moderation of the process is adequate. WL&FLS recognises these issues and is taking steps to improve the evaluative aspect of the process.

33. WL&FLS is good at using available resources to secure value for money. Learners have access to appropriate learning materials and new technology in almost all community venues. The service uses funds innovatively in partnership with other providers and community organisations to benefit learners. Most learners finish their learning programmes with increased skills and/or qualifications.

## Learning for Social and Personal Development

Grade 2

*Other learning for social and personal development provision considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded : languages, literature and culture, information and communication technology*

## Arts, media and publishing

Grade 2

### Context

34. There are currently 254 learners enrolled for the 25 classes offered. Classes are offered at 10 venues across the borough in association with Social Services and other partners. The majority of classes are offered in the afternoons. Sixty per cent of the total learners have enrolled for digital arts/photography classes. Other subjects offered are ceramics, dressmaking, home recording for musicians and beginners' arts and crafts.

### Key findings

- Learners produce work of a high standard. The skills and techniques learners acquire enable them to produce high quality work of a standard suitable for sale, to give to others, or for their own use.
- Learners are stimulated and engaged in their learning. Attendance is high. Projects and topics engage learner interest and enjoyment. In some classes learners are so engaged in their activities they eschew designated breaks to continue with their work.
- Success rates are high and improving on all courses. Over the past three years overall success rates have increased from 84% to 90%. Retention rates are particularly high and average 95%.
- There is much good teaching and learning. WL&FLS tutors provide an excellent choice of projects that lead to a significant impact on learners' lives. Teachers make demands of learners, irrespective of disabilities. ILT is used effectively to promote learning where appropriate.
- WL&FLS tutors employ innovative approaches to learning and include those learners who have disabilities who would appear to be excluded. The use of differentiation and personalised learning is part of planning. Alternative forms of assessment are used to accommodate disabilities.
- Partnerships are effective. The service works well with different agencies including Social Services for specific learners with disabilities and the Social Enterprise Group that enables learners to develop their work commercially. They also work with the Primary Care Trust enabling classes to form at different venues within the borough and with NLIDC to provide classes in deprived areas.
- Curriculum management is good. Communications between managers, partners, and with teaching staff are good. Staff feel valued and supported. Tutors are paid to attend team meetings and find generic staff development activities

improve their delivery and understanding. They are very positive about working for the Service.

- Staff are well qualified; most have a teaching qualification. Data are analysed and used to inform planning, health and safety, risk assessment and safeguarding which are part of planning and delivery. The self-assessment report is mainly accurate. Equality and diversity are integrated into planning and celebrated; there is much emphasis on positive imagery in several centres.
- There is insufficient rigour in identifying training needs to improve teaching. Though the observation of teaching and learning is essentially sound there are discrepancies in the amount of detail observers are providing. In addition, some observers are reluctant to make judgements concerning areas for improvement. Though many classes are graded accurately internally as 'good' there is insufficient identification of appropriate training needs to raise performance further.
- The range of provision is narrow. The majority of it is focused on digital arts and photography. Apart from Home Recording for Musicians, which has seven learners, there is no provision for the performing arts.
- In one lesson, the accommodation had an adverse impact on both teaching and learning.

What does Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by reviewing procedures and practices for lesson observations so that the training needs of teachers can be identified clearly for further development and training.
- Widen the range of provision by including a greater number of courses in visual and performing arts.
- Improve the accommodation by reviewing current accommodation to determine the requirements of a course group are appropriately met.



## Family learning

## Grade 2

### Context

35. The family learning service offers introductory workshops and short courses in the most socially deprived parts of the Wirral. In 2008/09 there were 654 learners in family language, literacy and numeracy courses, 87 in wider family learning and 64 in new provision. There were some 100 learners on provision such as family information and communication technology and family health and creative crafts. In 2008/09, most learners were women, 3% were from minority ethnic communities and 7.2% declared a disability.

### Key findings

- Learners make good progress and enjoy learning. They develop skills which enable them to communicate more effectively with their children and help them with their school work. A small scale study shows that the children of parents and carers taking part in family works programmes in 2008/09 achieved better than their peers in national tests. They also demonstrated better social skills, co-operation and motivation in school. Learners develop personal and social skills, gaining in confidence and self-esteem.
- Learners' achievement is good. Retention rates are consistently high and so is achievement as measured by RARPA. Pass rates are lower among the small numbers sitting national skills for life tests in numeracy and literacy. Nevertheless, the overall success rate for 2008/09 was 92% with high retention and achievement.
- Learners make a positive contribution to the community and improve their own prospects. Case studies show that many make good progress in taking up further learning, playing a part in the community, for example, by becoming active in the Parent Teacher Association or participating in voluntary work and entering employment. Learners value family learning and describe warmly the difference it has made to their lives.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good. Suitably qualified staff demonstrate a good range of expertise. Lessons are well planned taking into account learners' starting points and their learning styles. Tutors adapt the lessons well to suit learners' needs. Most of the time lessons are lively and tutors involve learners in a variety of well-considered activities. They encourage, support and motivate learners to make progress.
- Occasionally, there is an over reliance on paper-based materials and too little active involvement by learners. The use of information technology to support learning is underdeveloped. Suitable equipment is not always available. The service has 'notepad' computers on order which will help remedy the situation.
- Assessment is good. Personal learning records are used effectively to record progress and achievement. Thorough and rigorous procedures for RARPA are used constructively to accredit learners' progress and achievement. Learners

value the recognition this gives and the celebration of what they have achieved. Tutors give constructive feedback which motivates learners to improve further.

- The range of provision meets needs well. The service has increased recruitment amongst families in areas of deprivation and the proportion of men attending has increased. The service works well with schools, children's centres and the voluntary sector. However, feedback from learners and partners often requests longer courses, or further provision. Learners' support needs are assessed early and are met. For example, if they have a learning difficulty and/or disability, or need an interpreter, this is provided. Tutors encourage learners to take the next steps and advise them about progression.
- Curriculum management is good. Leaders have clear priorities and set high expectations. Demanding targets are set and met. Accommodation in schools and children's centres is good overall and most resources available in schools and those provided by the service support learning effectively.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Learners from areas of high deprivation are extremely well represented on family learning programmes at 63.4%, higher than the figure for the borough. Most learners are women but the proportion of men taking part has almost doubled in the past year to 13.7%. Provision for learners from the Bengali community has been extended. There is little difference in the attainment of different groups.
- Quality assurance is good. Self-assessment is thorough, accurate and leads to improvements. The views of learners and partners are taken into account. Judgements are moderated internally and externally through the Greater Merseyside Quality Improvement Group. Evaluative reports of sessions observed are moderated between teams. Suitable action points are included. Inspectors agreed with the service's judgement that too little teaching and learning is outstanding.

What does Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by raising the proportion that is outstanding.
- Enrich teaching and learning by developing the use of information technology in the classroom.

## Preparation for life and work

## Grade 2

### Context

36. Currently 355 learners are enrolled on courses ranging from pre-entry to level 2 in literacy, numeracy, ESOL and employability. Courses are provided in three main centres plus children's centres, community venues and council workplaces. Non-accredited courses are followed initially for many programmes, with progression to accredited courses. Programmes include Train to Gain and Employability Skills. The manager for this provision is responsible for a team of 13 tutors, the majority of whom are sessional.

### Key findings

- Achievement rates are good and consistently improving, and in 2008/09 were 94%. Overall success rates are satisfactory, although they have declined by six percentage points to 74% in 2008/09. Success rates for literacy and numeracy Train to Gain learners are good at 84%. Success rates on the employability skills programme are too low at 48%. Retention rates are low on long courses.
- Learners enjoy their learning programmes. They are keen and motivated and make good progress in personal learning goals. Many gain the confidence and skills to progress from non-accredited to accredited programmes. Learners increase their self-confidence and self-esteem, and benefit from the social interaction which they value.
- Learners develop good literacy, numeracy and employability skills which increase their contribution to family life, improve their employability prospects and support career progression.
- Teaching and learning are good. The better lessons are well paced and tutors use a good variety of activities and methods to challenge and engage learners. Information technology is used well. In the less effective lessons the range of learning methods used is too narrow and are too 'tutor-led'. The pace of lessons is sometimes too slow and some lesson plans are insufficiently detailed about learning.
- Resources are generally satisfactory. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Worksheets are of good quality, providing learners with interesting and varied activities. Many tutors use imaginative games and well-prepared interactive materials. However, learners' access to computers and the internet varies depending on the venue. In some sessions, worksheets are over used and tutors make too little use of the technology available.
- Most learners benefit from good progress records. They are clear about what they have achieved and what they need to do to progress. However, some learners do not have sufficient detail about their progress and development needs to be of value.
- The good range of provision is highly responsive. WL&FLS provides a wide choice of courses at a range of levels and in a variety of locations to widen

participation. Many of these are in areas of high deprivation. Learners value the convenience and informality of the local learning centres. However, learners would benefit from access to evening classes at more of the venues.

- WL&FLS responds very effectively to the needs of particular groups of learners. Learners who are not usually involved in education and training are encouraged to enrol. Good links with social services enable learners with learning difficulties and disabilities to take advantage of literacy, numeracy and employability skills training. Train to Gain provision has been developed with union learning representatives and benefits staff from Council departments.
- Partnership working is good. The provider works effectively with the Greater Merseyside Curriculum Improvement Group and Peer Exchange Group as well as community and voluntary organisations to develop the provision and benefit learners. Volunteers are trained as 'literacy buddies' to support pre-entry level learners in their reading.
- Learners benefit from particularly effective support. Tutors provide good individual support in lessons and learners are positive about the impact in promoting their achievement. Support is particularly good for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and support workers make a valuable contribution. Initial and diagnostic assessment is thorough, systematic and informs individual learning programmes well. Learner induction is satisfactory.
- Curriculum management is good with good attention to planning and development based on national and local priorities. The department provides good staff development in how to combine skills for life, to support vocational tutors from within the service and partners. Communication is good and staff are well supported and informed.
- Staff are well qualified. All tutors have or are working towards qualified teacher status. Four hold a literacy or numeracy qualification at level 4, one has an ESOL qualification and two are working towards literacy or numeracy specialist qualifications. The information technology and employability skills specialist tutors are trained in 'embedded' literacy and numeracy. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

What does Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve learner success rates by increasing retention on long and employability skills courses; for example, through monitoring individual progress much more rigorously and ensuring all tutors are skilled in setting measurable objectives in learners' personal learning reports.
- Improve teaching and learning further so that there is more outstanding teaching; for example, by increasing the variety of tasks, broadening the range of teaching and learning methods used, planning effectively for differentiated needs and providing sufficient challenge to learners.
- Make better and more consistent use of technology in teaching and learning to make lessons more visual and interesting.

## Community learning

## Grade 2

### Context

37. The service provides training and support for adults with low or no qualifications or who come from deprived communities across the Wirral, to help them progress through adult learning, developing skills to increase their employability or involvement in community development projects. Currently, 529 learners are working towards accredited and non-accredited learning outcomes at 32 venues. Of these learners, 11.9% are from ethnic minority backgrounds, 16.6% have additional learning needs and/or disabilities; and most learners are adults and are female.

### Key findings

- Success rates are high on many courses. Over the last three years, success rates have remained high and ranged from 66% at the Multi-Cultural Centre where learners studying ICT also have ESOL needs, to 100% for short introductory taster courses where the learners are encouraged to progress to further study. Substantial short to long courses have an average retention rate of 85% and achievement rate of 94% over the last three years.
- The development of learners' employability skills is good. All lessons observed indicated good development of learners' theoretical knowledge and practical skills. In addition, those on community development courses and projects gain skills in team work, networking and negotiation. Learners from more challenging backgrounds are helped with their rehabilitation or to raise their confidence to apply for work. This has led to many of the learners progressing to further study or to gain employment or voluntary placements with local agencies.
- Learners express a high level of satisfaction and enjoyment with their courses. Courses provide them with confidence, empowerment and help build their self-esteem. They also develop good personal and social skills. Parents from the Park High project recognise how their project had helped them develop communication and parenting skills that improved their family life, bringing them closer together in shared experiences. The project is effective in drawing together the Asian and British communities.
- Learners are making a very positive contribution to community cohesion. Learners at Wirral Environmental Network are on a community project course that links development of employability and key skills with that of horticulture and community regeneration. The Ferries project brings families together to deal with and support their children, and for vulnerable adults, helps reduce isolation and depression.
- Teaching and learning are good. 'Active' learning methods are used effectively to engage and interest learners. Discussions helped learners to increase their understanding. Questioning was used to check learning but not always directed at individuals. The detail and quality of planning and preparation varies between lessons. Some lessons included differentiated outcomes to provide challenge for able learners. There was very good rapport and mutual respect between

teacher and learners. Praise is a major feature of lessons and helps build confidence in the learners.

- The assessment of learners' work and progress is satisfactory. Tutors produce group profiles and tracking records as an overview of learners' abilities and their progress. However, in some lessons these are not completed or recorded in learners' individual learning plans (ILP's).
- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners. Learners express high levels of satisfaction and enjoyment in their programme, in particular their friendly and supportive environment. There is a wide range of subjects available. Many gain a qualification for the first time. By participating in these courses learners develop more commitment and employability skills and/or skills that benefit the community.
- Partnerships with users and other bodies are good. WL&FLS works closely with many outside agencies, voluntary and faith groups or other education providers to develop courses and projects to attract learners who would not attend traditional colleges. The service is very effective at supporting innovative projects that engage hard-to-reach learners. They provide the community with a series of courses and funded projects in 32 venues.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners express a high level of satisfaction in the friendly, supportive environment that provides good opportunities to develop skills and be part of a team. Support is individualised and learners acknowledge that this helps them achieve their targets in a timely manner. Initial assessment identifies support needs at an early stage in a learner's programme. The better lessons included references to individual's learning needs in lesson plans and included differentiated outcomes to address those needs.
- The co-ordination of programmes and projects is good. Communications between centre staff, tutors, managers and subcontractors are good. Managers provide good support to teams in outreach venues. They organise courses resulting in widened and enhanced access and opportunities for learning across the Wirral, particularly for hard to engage learners and those from deprived areas. WL&FLS works closely with social services, hearing and sight impaired services and substance misuse services plus social projects for particular community initiatives.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Initiatives to widen participation are very effective for many learners, including those with diverse backgrounds. For example, hard to reach groups, and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. All learners are treated equally, encouraged and supported to realise their potential. There are 11.9% of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds and 16.6% diagnosed with learning or emotional needs reflecting the diverse and deprived communities many learners come from. There is a need to further develop courses that encourage participation by male learners.
- Quality assurance systems are satisfactory. The curriculum manager ensures a standardised approach across the whole provision in relation to teaching materials and developing courses. Projects are delivered and monitored appropriately, meet set criteria and provide an equal learning experience

regardless of location. Staff are suitably qualified. The self-assessment report reflects judgements made during the inspection.

What does Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing further staff development to raise the quality of planning and preparation in lessons that takes account of the different abilities within groups.
- Improve how learning is assessed by teachers in lessons by developing a wider range of techniques to check and confirm learning.
- Review how teachers are using ILPs and tracking records to improve the monitoring of learner progress and highlight where and when additional support may be needed.
- Improve the choice of courses available to learners by increasing the range of courses available at the Multi-Cultural Centre.
- Improve participation rates by males by continuing to develop and promote courses that meet their needs.

## Information about the inspection

38. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Principal Manager Lifelong Learning, 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 or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
39. 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, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.



<p>Record of Main Findings (RMF)</p> <p>Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council</p> <p>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. Social and personal development: all adult safeguarded provision</p>
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Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	0	0	0
Part-time learners	2343	62	2281
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2		
<b>A. Outcomes for learners</b>			
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2		
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
A3. Do learners feel safe?	2		
A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2		
A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2		
<b>B. Quality of provision</b>			
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
<b>C. Leadership and management</b>			
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	n/a		
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1		
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2		
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2		
C7. 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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