

Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust

Inspection report

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The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) works in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prison and Probation and inspects the management and provision of learning and skills for offenders across the whole range of custodial establishments and probation areas. Inspections may include those serving whole or part of their sentence in the community.

Inspectors judge the quality of the provision against the Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills 2009 (Common Inspection Framework 2009) and contribute to the inspection frameworks of Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation.

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PROTECT – INSPECTION

Information about the probation trust

The Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust (the Trust) covers eight local authority areas, with a population of 645,800 inhabitants; a third have a minority ethnic heritage. The area's two approved premises are both in Leicester city. Five prisons are located in the area; Ashwell; Gartree; Glen Parva; Leicester; and Stocken. The Trust's caseload, of some 2,838 offenders, includes 78% who are white; over 88% are men and about 43% are unemployed. Unemployment varies slightly across Leicestershire and Rutland at just over seven percent.

The director of REACH (Regional Employability Challenge) and the ETE (Education, Training and Employment) is supported by a senior probation officer and the REACH project team. Offenders obtain individual support from external organisations including Leicestershire Cares and APEX.

The Trust holds the main contract in the East Midlands region for the European social funded employability programme, and is contracted to deliver employability services in all five probation areas and 10 prisons in the East Midlands. The programme, branded as 'REACH', provides intensive support to offenders with the highest needs.

The Probation Area became a Trust in 2008 and has recently achieved the external Matrix accreditation for information, advice and guidance.

Information about the offender learning and employability providers:

Lead provider	Approximate number of learners on discrete provision	Types of provision
Leicester College 'Move On' and 'Get Ready to Move On'	38 referrals for initial assessments per month as an average	Skills for life Employability skills
Stride (The Learning Café) Working Links Leicestershire Cares Remploy YWCA APEX Turning point Excluded	87 referrals per month for offenders on community sentences and licences	Information, advice and guidance. Job seeking skills Employability skills
The Learning Cafe Square root Set square	15 allocations to vocational training per month as an average	Employability skills

The following text is Ofsted's contribution to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's offender management inspection 2 report. A copy of the published

inspection report can be found on www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspect_reports/

Summary report

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade: satisfactory
Capacity to improve	Grade: satisfactory
	Grade descriptor
Quality of provision	satisfactory
Assessment and sentence planning	
Implementation of interventions	
Achieving and sustaining outcomes	satisfactory
Leadership and management	satisfactory
Equality and diversity	satisfactory
Safeguarding	satisfactory

Overall effectiveness, including capacity to improve

Offenders received a good assessment of their literacy, numeracy and language needs. However, the outcomes of the assessment were not always appropriately used to inform individual learning plans. The well-managed and positive information, advice and guidance sessions focused on encouraging and motivating offenders. Those offenders who found it most difficult to engage in learning and skills activities benefitted from the very good support the REACH programme offered them.

The quality of teaching and learning in the literacy and numeracy sessions was satisfactory. The provision for unpaid work offered a good range of activities for offenders. However, aspects of the education, training and employment provision overall were insufficiently developed to meet the needs of all offenders.

The Trust had met and in some cases greatly exceeded its nationally set education, training and employment targets. However, data were insufficient to make judgements about the quality of progress and achievement of qualifications. Offenders acquired useful knowledge and skills for employment in the unpaid work projects and they made satisfactory gains in skills and confidence in literacy and numeracy although attendance at these sessions was low.

The Trust had a strong strategy for the provision of learning and employability to offenders. Communications between offender managers and the education, training and employment service had been greatly improved in the last year. The Trust had developed very useful partnerships that benefited the offenders. Systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision were underdeveloped. The Trust's capacity to improve was satisfactory.

What does the Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust need to do to improve further?

- Fully develop appropriate quality assurance systems to ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the education, training and employment provision offered throughout all partners.
- Use and analyse data in a systematic way to obtain information about the effectiveness of performance in different programmes and projects across all groups of offenders; set up the appropriate targets to improve education, training and employment outcomes for all offenders.
- Review and extend the education, training and employment provision to provide a wider range of vocational training opportunities and to increase access to literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) across the whole Probation Trust area.

Offender perspective - learning and employability as confirmed by inspectors.

A total of 20 offenders were interviewed as part of the inspection process, individually or in groups. Offenders valued the guidance that they were given at their induction and knew what was expected of them. Some learners did not receive information on developing employability skills or updating their CV. All offenders felt that they were treated with respect. They were clear about the progress they were making but a minority were not aware of their learning plans. They appreciated the increased confidence, skills and qualifications they were gaining in unpaid work and in literacy and numeracy. However, some offenders on unpaid work were unaware of being able to commute 20% of their hours for education, training and employment activities. Offenders valued the good and prompt support they received from their tutors and offender managers. Most offenders described that attending education, training and employment had given them another chance to change their lives and catch up with learning.

Main inspection report

The quality of provision

Grade:
satisfactory

Assessment and sentence planning

The diagnostic assessment of offenders' literacy, numeracy and ESOL needs was good. It was used effectively to identify offenders' individual needs and their priorities for learning. The assessment outcomes were well linked to specific and challenging targets in individual learning plans. Offenders had a clear understanding of their targets and their progress towards them.

On the 'REACH' project, the initial assessment of offenders' needs and barriers to learning and skills development was very effective. However, in the Learning Café, the outcomes of the initial assessment were not used sufficiently to develop individual learning plans.

Education, training and employment advisers provided well-managed, positive information, advice and guidance sessions. They encouraged and motivated offenders to engage in educational activities by focusing on achievement and the development of skills. Action planning was clear and prompt and advisers made appropriate referrals to help offenders acquire the skills and qualifications needed to secure work. However, only those offenders in regular contact with their offender managers or caseworkers had adequate awareness of education, training and employment opportunities. Some offenders were unaware that 20% of unpaid work hours could be used for these activities.

Satisfactory risk assessments were completed for all offenders before starting unpaid work. Managers exercised careful and appropriate placement of offenders to ensure unpaid work placements met the needs of the offenders and the community in terms of potential risk. Supervisors were provided with adequate levels of information on risk in order to manage sessions safely.

Implementation of interventions

Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy sessions were satisfactory or better. In better sessions, tutors were well prepared, clearly understood the needs of individual learners and provided a range of activities that actively involved them in learning.

Provision for unpaid work offered a good and flexible range of activities for offenders. Weekend and evening provision was available for those in employment. The community projects provided meaningful roles with good opportunities to demonstrate practical skills.

The 'REACH' project was highly effective in identifying offenders with multiple needs and providing specific support to promote employability. The project caseworkers provided comprehensive guidance focused on developing offenders' interests and needs. The project was developing well through links and partnerships with external agencies to enhance and extend the provision.

Aspects of the education, training and employment provision were underdeveloped. The weekday Skills for Life provision at the centre in Cobden Street was adequate but limited at other times; no provision was available at the weekends. Insufficient links existed with county colleges to promote the offenders' access to programmes. The range of vocational provision was underdeveloped.

Tutors provided particularly good and individual support that targeted each learner's needs. Some volunteers were used but their time was insufficiently managed to maximise the benefit to learners. Good support and coaching in the literacy and numeracy sessions and in the Learning Café helped learners develop their skills and an understanding of healthy eating.

Achieving and sustaining outcomes

Grade:
satisfactory

The Trust had met and exceeded all its education, training and employment targets set nationally last year. In 2008/09, the Trust exceeded its target of 315 for offenders starting employment by 23% and its target of 205 for sustained employment of four weeks or more by 40%. The proportion of offenders in employment at the end of their order was 47%, three percentage points above the target. Progression onto employment by offenders taking part in the Leicestershire Cares programme was good last year at 47%.

Data available was very limited and it was not possible to make meaningful judgements on qualification achievements. The data provided by the education, training and employment service demonstrated that approximately 1500 units or awards had been achieved by offenders since 2007. According to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's case analysis, approximately 37% of offenders had obtained an accredited award compared to the national average of 18% for probation areas.

Most learners enjoyed sessions and worked diligently and with enthusiasm. They were keen to discuss their work and what they had achieved. Completed written work gave clear indication that learners were improving their skills satisfactorily. In some instances, learners made good progress. Learners gained the confidence to ask questions, discuss issues and to read within the group.

Attendance at literacy and numeracy sessions was low. Typically, attendance was approximately 50%. Poor attendance seriously disrupted learning, and offenders who frequently missed sessions were promptly removed from the programmes.

Offenders acquired a range of knowledge and skills useful for employment as part of unpaid work. Community projects equipped offenders well for future employment. Personal effectiveness was improved, especially reliability, punctuality, ability to act on instruction and team working. However, opportunities for offenders to achieve accredited qualifications on unpaid work were limited and the numbers achieving qualifications were low. The ASDAN awards, provided through schemes run by G&S Services, were particularly valuable to offenders. For example, when compiling portfolios of evidence, they also gained literacy and information and communication technology skills. Much of the work in the portfolios had been word processed by offenders who had no previous experience in using computers. However, only six offenders had gained the award in the past year.

The standard of learners' work overall was satisfactory. The portfolios completed for unpaid work offenders on ASDAN programmes were good; offenders took pride in the work completed. Some work was marked with helpful comments from tutors. However, attendance records indicate high drop-out rates; tutors were not always clear about offenders' reasons for early leaving.

The development of literacy and numeracy skills overall was satisfactory. In the Learning Café, offenders worked towards nationally recognised qualifications at entry level 3 or level 1 in food preparation. The cafe placed a good focus on developing communication, customer skills, team working, and health and safety. Offenders gained food hygiene accreditation at the induction stage. On the 'REACH' project, offenders developed work-related skills such as updating their CV, or increased their motivation. Five offenders had achieved outcomes relating to employment and further education since the recent start of the project.

Leadership and management

Grade:
satisfactory

The strategic direction of the education, training and employment service was very good. The robust strategic plan for the service reflected clearly the Trust's priorities and a particularly good understanding of local needs through the recent creation of local delivery units. Strategic targets had been translated into team performance targets and funding arrangements for the future had been considered well in advance.

Particularly good actions had taken place in the last 12 months to improve the education, training and employment provision. A major review of the service had led to a re-energised service that was much more focused on meeting the needs of its users and offender managers. Good consultation with stakeholders helped in decisions about how the service should be organised. In consequence, processes were simplified and communications greatly improved. Accommodation was satisfactory in relation to learner numbers. Staff were appropriately qualified and experienced. The service had recently achieved the Matrix award.

The education, training and employment department had developed very strong partnerships that supported offenders effectively. Partnerships had been established and consolidated. The broad range of community-based agencies were enthusiastic and committed towards supporting offenders into employment. Often, partners presented individual solutions to meet the very specific needs of offenders.

Data were not sufficiently used and analysed to inform managers adequately about the quality of the performance of the education and employment provision. The education, training and employment service received regular information from the main education provider on learners' achievements of literacy and numeracy qualifications. However, the provider's performance was not measured against set targets for retention and achievement according to different levels of programmes and different groups of offenders.

Managers did not monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision in a systematic way. Insufficient quality assurance processes were in place to evaluate the quality of teaching and training being delivered by the provider. Formal arrangements for observing unpaid work or information, advice and guidance sessions were being developed. No audit of learning processes had taken place. The collection of user feedback had begun recently to obtain more information on the quality of learning. The process of self-assessment of education, training and employment was under-developed.

The arrangements for the promotion of equality and diversity in learning and skills activities were satisfactory. The education, training and employment service met the government requirements for safeguarding offenders as vulnerable adults. Staff and learners received adequate information about equality and diversity matters during induction. Appropriate policies for the college were displayed in the classrooms. Subcontractors were required to have appropriate policies and procedures for equality and diversity, health and safety and safeguarding. The education, training and employment service was in the initial stage of analysing progress and achievement of different groups of learners in order to set up improvement targets.

Information about the inspection

1. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one AI, additional inspector, assisted by the Trust's senior probation officer in the Employ-Ability service as co-ordinator, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of provider's most recent development plans, comments from the local Skills Funding Agency or other funding bodies, previous inspection reports, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
2. Inspectors used a range of methods to gather the views of learners including group and individual interviews. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the Trust. They also visited learning and information, advice and guidance sessions. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

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