

# **Warrington Borough Council Community Employment Learning & Skills**

## **Inspection report**

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**Unique reference number:** 55268

**Name of lead inspector:** Shahram Safavi HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 15 October 2010

**Type of provider:** Local Authority

**Address:** People and Improvement Directorate  
3rd Floor Quattro Building  
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## **Information about the provider**

1. Warrington Borough Council Community Employment Learning & Skills (the service) offers courses for adults where the main aim is personal and social development and work-based learning. The service offers all the provision for personal and social development through its subcontractors. It secures funds from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).
2. The service is part of the Employment Learning & Skills division within the People and Improvement Directorate. A manager oversees the development and delivery of the provision. A family learning coordinator, an adult and community learning coordinator, and a work-based learning manager support the service manager. There are a further five staff with administration responsibilities and two work-based trainers/assessors.
3. The specialist provision inspected represented approximately 42% of provision for all learners. The areas, that were not directly inspected and graded were family learning and work-based provision.
4. The Adult Learning Inspectorate inspected the provision in 2006, and the service received a monitoring visit by Ofsted in April 2008.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the service:
  - Priestley College (family learning, community development)
  - Warrington Collegiate (community development)
  - Workers' Educational Association (community development)
  - Citizens Advice Bureau (community development)
  - Creative Possibilities (community development)
  - Creative Support (community development)
  - Dallam Day Centre (community development)
  - Home-Start (community development)
  - Lymm Lifelong Learning (community development)
  - MRHMC (family learning)
  - Volunteer Centre (community development)
  - Walton Lea (community development)
  - Warrington Council for Voluntary Service (community development)
  - Warrington Disability Partnership (community development)
  - Warrington Wolves Foundation (community development)

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of learners in 2009/10</b>
<b>Employer provision:</b>  Train to Gain Apprenticeships	  35 learners 52 apprentices
<b>Adult learner provision:</b>  Learning for social and personal development	  1,932 part-time learners

## Summary report

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2

<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Learning for social and personal development</b>	
Community development	2

## Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of the service is good. Most learners progress well towards what they wish to achieve, increase self-confidence, improve self-esteem and learn good skills. Learners enjoy attending their courses and value the improvements which learning makes in their lives. Parents and carers on family learning courses enjoy learning together with their children and significantly benefit from this experience. Work-based learners succeed well and the majority complete their qualifications within the agreed time. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Learners significantly benefit from the variety of stimulating activities during the sessions. In work-based learning, learners find the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) background knowledge sessions very informative.
7. Tutors monitor learners' progress appropriately and have a good knowledge of their personal learning objectives. However, the quality of the assessment of learners' achievement of their personal goals is not consistently reliable in all subcontractors.

8. The service very effectively meets the interests and needs of the community. It has developed good subcontracting partnerships with providers to offer a good range of provision at venues and times convenient for learners.
9. Tutors are supportive and very sensitive to the learners' personal difficulties and anxieties. However, not all learners receive sufficient information, advice and guidance before, during and at the end of their courses.
10. Leadership and management of the service are good. Following a period of significant change, the council has recently completed the restructuring of the service, which includes a new management team. Learners feel very safe and the service's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The service recruits a large number of learners who are vulnerable and promotes equality and diversity well.
11. The service has recently increased the pace of improvements and knows what it needs to do to improve further.

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## **Main findings**

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners make good progress towards achieving their learning objectives. They significantly improve their confidence, self-esteem and skills. Parents and carers on family learning courses report that they improve their contributions to family life. They learn how to help their children better to enjoy learning and support them in their schoolwork.
- Success rates are high for apprentices and for Train to Gain learners. Most work-based learners complete their qualifications within the allocated time. Progression into positions of higher responsibilities is good. Data are not sufficiently reliable to evaluate achievement and retention rates of learners on social and personal development courses, which are all non-accredited.
- Learners enjoy learning. They report that they lead healthier lives, eating healthier food and exercising more. Learners contribute to their communities well by helping other disadvantaged groups in a range of settings.
- Learners benefit from good teaching sessions, which help them to gain new knowledge and acquire and practise new skills. Tutors use a variety of activities including effective use of information learning technology (ILT) to make the sessions more interesting.
- Learners are generally clear about what they have achieved. However, this information is not always recorded. Tutors in subcontractors do not sufficiently use learners' personal goals as the basis for assessment.
- The range of provision meets the needs of learners and communities well. The service works well with a range of partners from the public, private and voluntary sector to develop a wide range of courses at foundation and intermediate levels in a variety of convenient locations.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Staff at all levels are very sensitive to learners' needs and support them well. The availability of childcare is effective in helping parents and carers to access the provision. However, not all learners receive sufficient information, advice and guidance before, during and at the end of their courses.
- Leadership and management are good. The council has reviewed and restructured the service well to improve further its ability to respond to the council's strategies and priorities. The service has developed good subcontracting arrangements, which promote partnership working and collaboration. The council has reviewed and established good supervisory arrangements to challenge and monitor the development of the service.
- Arrangements to safeguard learners and staff are satisfactory. Policies and procedures are comprehensive. All staff, including subcontractors' staff, are suitably vetted and trained. However, the service does not clearly define and systematically monitor the information on safeguarding which vulnerable learners, of whom the service has many, should receive from subcontractors.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The service recruits a significant proportion of its learners from vulnerable groups. The courses considerably improve the life chances of these learners, including those with physical and/or mental health disabilities.
- Quality systems are satisfactory overall. However, arrangements for monitoring the quality of all aspects of training are inconsistent. The service does not sufficiently use course reviews, observation records of teaching and reliable data to inform improvements. The post inspection action plan is satisfactory but progress in improving a few aspects has been slow.
- Two self-assessments for 2008/09 provision in work-based learning and social and personal development were used as the basis for this inspection. The service used two different self-assessment processes for each provision. These processes are satisfactory overall. However, the self-assessment report for social and personal development provision is too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative.

### **What does Warrington Borough Council Community Employment Learning & Skills need to do to improve further?**

- Further improve the reliability and use of data, by ensuring that the policies and procedures for recording learners' attendance, retention and achievement are systematically implemented in all subcontractors and reported in a timely manner.
- Ensure that learners' personal learning goals are accurately recognised, assessed and recorded, to provide a full record of their achievement and progress.
- Ensure that relevant information, advice and guidance are provided to all learners at the start, during and end of their courses and record them appropriately.
- Monitor all aspects of the learning process and use this information, such as that from course reviews and observations of teaching and learning, to develop action plans; implement these actions well and monitor their impact effectively.
- Produce a clear, succinct and evaluative self-assessment report; improve the pace of implementation of the inspection recommendations.

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

### **What learners like:**

- the courses which help them to improve their confidence and self-esteem
- the good support from friendly tutors who encourage them well
- the convenient locations of training venues
- the opportunity to meet and learn with like minded learners
- the range of different activities in French language lessons.

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

- the opportunity to discuss progression to higher level courses and courses to improve career prospects.

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

### **What employers like:**

- the very good communication and support
- the improving confidence and skills of apprentices enabling them to take additional responsibility.

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

- no areas for improvement identified.

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## **Main inspection findings**

### **Capacity to make and sustain improvement**

**Grade 3**

12. The service has a satisfactory capacity to make and sustain improvements. Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates for work-based learners are high and well above national rates. Learners on social and personal development courses significantly improve their confidence and self-esteem. The quality of provision and teaching and learning are good.
13. Leadership and management are good. The new management structure and the council's revised supervisory arrangements are increasing the pace of improvements. The new management team is very focused, determined and clear. The service has improved many aspects of its provision in a period of significant change. However, the service, until recently, has been slow in sufficiently improving a few significant issues identified at the previous inspection and the monitoring visit. Although improvements in the collection and use of data have been made, it is still not sufficiently accurate and reliable. Inspectors could not evaluate learners' retention and achievement rates or the trend of these rates since the previous inspection or monitoring visit. The quality arrangements are still not fully developed and the systems for assessing achievement in all subcontractors remains an area for improvement.
14. The service has two self-assessment processes. The process for work-based learning is good and for social and personal development is satisfactory. The self-assessment report for social and personal development provision is not sufficiently evaluative and does not clearly focus on the quality of each of the subject areas which the service offers. Managers are very clear about the actions for improvement and acknowledge that the pace of improvement must be further increased.

### **Outcomes for learners**

**Grade 2**

15. Outcomes for learners are good. Most learners on social and personal development courses make good progress towards their personal learning and social goals. They improve their confidence and self-esteem. Community development courses have given learners the ambition to achieve and progress. Many looked after children in the service gain employment. Parents and carers on family learning courses significantly benefit from their learning. They improve their literacy and numeracy skills, gain a better understanding of how their children learn, and are better able to support their education. A significant proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities considerably improve their confidence in dealing with others in team work and a few become good role models. A few of these learners overcome adverse personal circumstances to improve the quality of their lives. There are strong indications that the performance gap between vulnerable learners and all learners is narrowing. However, the arrangements for assessing achievement are not

sufficiently reliable in all subcontractors. The quality of information on retention and achievement rates is not sufficiently reliable to evaluate.

16. Success rates are high for apprentices and for Train to Gain learners who are all employed by the council. Almost all apprentices complete their courses within the planned timescale. Some complete early and win prizes. Success rates have continued to improve in recent years, and are well above national average. Progression into positions of higher responsibilities is good.
17. Learners improve their economic well-being considerably. The standard of their work is good overall. Work-based learners improve their prospects for promotion. Apprentices have improved motivation to share their technical skills with other work colleagues. Attendance is satisfactory and improving.
18. Learners feel very safe attending sessions. Careful risk assessments are made of all subcontractors venues. Most learners have a good awareness of how to protect themselves including safe practices when using computers. Work-based learners have a good understanding of safe working practices, often reinforced through induction and reviews.
19. Learners make a good contribution to the communities in which they live and work. Parents and carers participate in volunteering in schools to assist teachers. A few learners volunteer to help other learners who are facing personal difficulties. Learners report that they lead a healthier life as the result of their courses.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

20. Teaching and learning on all programmes, including off-the-job training for work-based learners, are good. On-the-job training and progress reviews are good and involve work supervisors. Tutors make satisfactory use of an increasing range of ILT to improve teaching and learning. Tutors and assessors are appropriately qualified or working towards improving their teaching skills and qualifications. Assessors use their relevant occupational experience and skills well. Apprentices make highly effective use of electronic portfolios and make good progress towards their qualifications.
21. Learners receive an appropriate initial assessment. Tutors make good use of formative assessment to promote learning in non-accredited provision. However, tutors do not always take into account the needs of the more able and experienced learners when planning lessons; these learners wait too long for others to complete their work. The service has improved the systems for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement, but the standard and the quality of the assessment of personal goals are variable across subcontractors as they do not moderate and audit the process of assessment sufficiently well.

22. The range of provision is good and meets the needs and interests of the communities and learners. All users speak very highly of the range of provision, easily accessible venues, convenient times and the responsiveness of the service to establish new courses or adapt the current ones.
23. Partnership working is good. The service works closely with a range of partners from the public, private and the voluntary sector. Good coordination through partnership meetings results in improved referrals, support and an increased range of opportunities for learners. The service plans the provision thoroughly with its partners to improve the skill base of the residents and regenerate the borough. All subcontractors and partners work in an atmosphere of mutual trust providing coherent progression routes and little duplication of provision.
24. Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral support, including the availability of childcare is very effective. Most tutors take careful steps to include sensitively vulnerable learners in their classes. Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly good. However, not all learners receive sufficient information, advice and guidance before, during and at the end of their courses. The service has recognised the need to improve this and has taken steps to implement a clear set of processes and procedures in all subcontractors to improve this aspect of provision.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

25. The strategic direction and development of the service is good. Following a detailed and well considered review of the service and its provision, the council has finalised the restructuring of the service which started in 2008. The service now operates from one directorate rather than three. A new management team has recently taken responsibility for developing the provision further and meeting the council's strategic priorities. The council has also reviewed and improved its own supervisory arrangements for overseeing the development of the service. Its new arrangements, which include close monitoring of the service's performance by a portfolio holder, are good. The service has developed good working relationship with its subcontractors which has significantly improved collaborative planning of the provision.
26. The service has experienced a significant period of change, and worked hard to improve its provision during this phase. Management of work-based learning is good. The quality of provision in family learning and community development is good. However, as the service acknowledges, the pace of implementation of a few improvements identified at the previous inspection and monitoring visit has been slow. The improvement in the management and analysis of learners' performance data for social and personal development provision is still not sufficient and the data are not always reliable. The arrangements for assessing achievement in this provision are still not reliably implemented in all subcontractors.

27. Arrangements to safeguard learners and staff are appropriate. Policies and procedures are comprehensive. All staff including subcontractors' staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks and have received appropriate training about how to safeguard learners and themselves. Two of the managers in the service are designated officers who liaise with the regional safeguarding board. The service, through its subcontractors, provides training for vulnerable adults, many of whom have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although subcontractors have a strong ethos of providing a safe environment for these learners, the service does not sufficiently define and monitor the safeguarding information which learners should receive and their awareness of how to contact the service if they have any concerns.
28. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The service is subject to the council's equality and diversity schemes. Its own policies are up-to-date, comprehensive and demonstrate the service's commitment to equality and diversity. The service appropriately considers the impact on equality and diversity of any changes to its other policies and procedures. The service very effectively recruits marginalised and vulnerable learners, including those with physical or mental health disabilities. Subcontractors provide a strong culture of inclusivity and some use good role models for vulnerable learners. The service's and subcontractors' staff are well aware of the challenges which learners may experience, and use their expertise well to ensure that learners progress. The service is fully aware of the need to close the gaps in performance between learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the rest of its learners. In some sessions there is little active promotion of equality and diversity.
29. The service consults users satisfactorily to improve the provision. It makes effective use of learners', employers', partners' and subcontractors' views to improve many aspects of the provision. In work-based learning ways of consulting users, particularly learners, to review the provision are good, for example through learners being involved in detailed evaluation of the provision. However, the arrangements to share good practice are not fully developed.
30. The work-based learning provision self-assessment report is appropriately detailed and evaluative. In social and personal development programmes, subcontractors' self-assessments contribute to the service's self-assessment report. The quality improvement plans which have recently been reviewed, are effective in bringing about improvements. The service has a range of quality monitoring activities but the quality arrangements are not fully developed. For example, course reviews are not sufficiently used. The service does not sufficiently use the records of observation of teaching and learning to inform staff development for subcontractors.
31. The service offers good value for money. It uses its funds to support work with vulnerable groups. The quality of subcontractors' resources for use by learners is good.

## Learning for social and personal development

**Other learning for social and personal development considered as part of the main findings but not separately graded:** family learning.

### Community development

**Grade 2**

#### Context

32. The service offers this provision through 10 subcontractors. In 2009/10, there were 970 learners. Of these 5.2% were from minority ethnic groups and 23% had a disclosed disability. The service offers this provision at entry and intermediate levels in: health, public services and care; information and communication technology; retail and commercial enterprise; leisure, travel and tourism; arts, media and publishing; languages, literature and culture; education and training; preparation for life and work; and business, administration and law.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners make good progress towards their personal learning objectives. Learners use their new practical skills in their families or communities well. Data on achievement and retention rates are not reliable. Until recently, learners who left their courses too early were not always withdrawn from the registers. Learners' achievement is not always reliably assessed.
- Learners feel very safe at the venues and in the teaching sessions. Most learners have a good knowledge of safe use of information technology and safe practices when using computers or the internet.
- Learners make good, informed choices about their own health and well-being. The Warrington Wolves 'Wolf-It Up' project focuses well on helping families to develop healthy eating habits. Learners are making a positive contribution to the communities, through volunteering in a range of settings.
- Learners benefit from good teaching sessions with clear aims and objectives. In the best sessions, tutors are sensitive to the different needs of learners, and use varied and interesting activities to maintain their interests. In a hostel for the homeless, tutors are particularly sensitive to the personal development needs of their learners and meet them well.
- Learners have an appropriate initial assessment relevant to the topic that they will study. However, tutors do not always consider learners' existing skills when planning lessons. The more experienced learners sometimes have to wait too long for other learners to complete their work. The assessment of learners' personal learning goals is not reliable in all subcontractors.

- The provision meets the needs and interests of users well. The range of provision has increased since the previous inspection. The service has also planned the provision for 2010/11 to increase further participation by vulnerable groups. There are good opportunities for enrichment at Creative Possibilities.
- The service uses its partners productively to improve the provision. It plans the provision well to meet the council's priorities. Managers liaise with other providers and subcontractors well to provide coherent progression routes for learners. Partners value the contribution that the service makes to their wider aims by offering provision to marginalised groups.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Tutors are very sensitive to the age, anxiety levels and well-being of learners, and support them well. The effectiveness of policies, procedures and practices for advice and guidance in subcontractors varies significantly. On a few courses, too many learners leave early without achieving. The service has acknowledged this area for improvement.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Provision is effective in contributing to local and regional priorities. The collection and use of data have improved but the data are not yet sufficiently reliable to evaluate the performance of learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learning opportunities are extended to many disadvantaged and hard to reach groups of learners. Although improving outcomes for many learners, there is insufficient promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum. Safeguarding is satisfactory.
- The service monitors the quality of most aspects of the provision during monitoring visits of subcontractors. However, the quality standards and the service's expectations are not sufficiently defined. The service has a detailed development plan; however, it does not always ensure that subcontractors' implementation of the plan is timely.
- The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is too descriptive. The report evaluates the impact of different funding streams rather than clearly evaluating the quality of community development provision.

### **What does Warrington Borough Council Community Employment Learning & Skills need to do to improve further?**

- Use information from learners' initial assessment more effectively to ensure that all learners, including those who are more experienced, are benefiting from the sessions.
- Ensure all learners have good information about the courses before they start and offer clear advice about how and where they can progress to different or higher level courses.
- Improve the reliability and use of data to improve the performance of subcontractors.

### **Information about the inspection**

33. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors, assisted by the services' manager as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment reports and development plans, comments from the funding body and data on learners and their achievement over the period of the contract.
  
34. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed about 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.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**

**Warrington Borough Council Community Employment Learning & Skills**

**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 <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive	Social and personal development
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>			
Full-time learners	0	0	0
Part-time learners	790	44	746
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>A. Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</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. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*</i>	2		
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2		
<b>B. Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</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>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2		
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?	2		
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
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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