

Warrington Borough Council Community Employment Learning and Skills

Local authority

Inspection dates		14–17 October 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate-4
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Inadequate-4
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Inadequate-4

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is inadequate because:

- key procedures for managing subcontractors' work and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are weak
- self-assessment does not give an accurate picture of the quality of the provision or support improvement sufficiently well
- the procedure for recognising and recording learners' achievement and progression, on community and family learning courses, is neither thorough or applied consistently
- there are gaps in arrangements for safeguarding; the identity of visitors to venues where teaching takes place is not always checked and not all staff have received refresher training
- very few apprentices achieve their qualifications on time
- tutors are not always thorough in assessing learners' starting points and specific learning needs when they join community learning courses
- tutors on vocational and community courses do not develop learners' English and mathematics skills well enough.

This provider has the following strengths:

- leaders have a very clear strategic direction for reducing the gap in equality across Warrington by working with stakeholders to provide courses that benefit the most disadvantaged residents in the community
- teaching in community and family learning is stimulating and motivating, and learners value the high levels of tutor support
- current learners develop good personal and vocational skills, with some progressing to employment or further education, and many contributing to the community through their work as volunteers.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Implement robust arrangements for managing the subcontracted provision to improve its quality and learners' outcomes.
- Improve arrangements to record learners' progress and achievement of learning goals, including English and mathematics, so that learners' achievements are documented fully, their consistency is moderated, and the data are used to evaluate and improve quality.
- Work with subcontractors to make sure they follow safeguarding procedures. As a priority, ensure that staff carry out appropriate checks on visitors' identity and that tutors identified as requiring refresher training receive it as soon as possible.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by making better use of initial assessment to identify precise targets for all learners and use them to evaluate progress.
- Promote the development of learners' English and mathematics skills through classroom activity, tutors' constructive assessment of written work, reviews and work-related tasks.
- Improve procedures to monitor learners' progression when they complete their courses so that the service can evaluate the impact of provision on their life chances.
- Increase the proportion of apprentices achieving their qualification in the planned time by ensuring that all apprentices have clear, specific and challenging targets and they receive regular reviews and assessment opportunities.
- Improve the accuracy of self-assessment using a consistent approach across the subcontracted provision that covers the key criteria for judging quality.
- Develop a quality improvement plan that includes actions and targets that are specific and measurable so managers can measure and monitor the impact of actions to improve standards rapidly.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Inadequate
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- Outcomes for learners are inadequate. The subject areas reported on and graded are community learning for adult learners, comprising about two thirds of the provision, and business administration and customer service apprenticeships, a small proportion of the provision but significant in terms of local and national workforce development. Family learning, forming just under a third of provision, and childcare apprenticeships, the smallest area of provision, were sampled but not graded.
- Managers are unable to provide robust evidence to validate achievement on courses that do not lead to a qualification. Therefore, accurate information about learners' achievement on these courses is not available. Individual tutors' reports and learner case studies provide examples of how learners progress from community learning courses to further learning, to volunteering roles and to paid work but there is no overview on how the provision impacts on learners' future life chances.
- Current learners on the non accredited community and family learning courses are making good progress towards achieving their course objectives although more-able learners are not always challenged sufficiently to achieve their potential. Learners enjoy their courses, develop good personal and social skills, and grow in their confidence to pursue further study. For some, including, for example, those experiencing personal difficulties, unemployment or ill health, participating in learning is an important step towards overcoming social isolation. The majority of learners who start their courses stay until the end of their programmes.

- Learners who take on volunteering roles benefit at a personal level as well as making a valuable contribution to the wider community. They acquire good employability skills through the training they receive to prepare them for voluntary work. For example, they learn how to assess clients' needs and how to behave appropriately when working with vulnerable families in their homes. They also learn how to identify boundaries to their role as volunteers.
- Learners on vocational and community courses make insufficient progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. Learners on discrete English and mathematics courses improve considerably their language and number skills and their knowledge of technical language.
- Family learning courses equip parents and carers well with the confidence and skills to support better their children's education, health and well-being.
- Apprenticeship success rates are inadequate. The achievement of apprentices was poor in 2012/13. Success rates for business administration apprentices improved in 2013/14 but remain low. Success rates for childcare apprentices are high. Apprentices currently completing their programme produce work to the required standard or better. They take pride in their work but inconsistent assessment practices and infrequent reviews are hampering their progress. The majority of apprentices progress to sustained employment, often taking on roles of greater responsibility. The service has taken action to close a gap in the performance of adult male learners on the apprenticeship programme.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Learners enjoy their courses and through good individual tutor support, many progress well in their lessons. However, the significant weaknesses in assessment practices and monitoring of learners' skills development are hampering too many learners' progress to achieving their potential.
- Tutors use stimulating methods and topics of study to motivate learners. Family learners on a 'keeping kids calm' course, participate enthusiastically in activities designed to promote deep breathing as a preliminary step towards meditation. Learners on a healthy eating course chop vegetables rhythmically with increasing confidence to prepare new recipes to extend the range of fresh nutritional foods that their children will eat. Trainee volunteers benefit from tutors' good knowledge and use of real-life scenarios to help them understand the challenges they will face when working as volunteers.
- Tutors and trainers work hard to ensure that learners participate well in sessions and develop skills to improve their life chances. A fitness tutor successfully uses roller balls and hoops to engage a group of elderly people with mental and physical disabilities in physical exercise and teamwork, even though some are non-communicators and find it difficult to concentrate for even short periods.
- Learners appreciate the blend of learning styles and activities that tutors and trainers use to sustain their interest, including paired and group work, independent study, practical and written work. However, community tutors do not always provide enough additional learning activities to challenge learners who are more able. In many community learning centres, tutors make too little use of interactive learning technologies to deepen learners' understanding.
- Apprentices develop good independent study skills and make effective use of electronic portfolio systems outside the classroom to complete their work for assessment. Childcare apprentices are making quicker progress now that they use the electronic portfolio. Business administration apprentices benefit from well-structured training sessions which help them improve their theoretical knowledge. However, the time between reviews is far too long and, consequently, learners' progress is too slow.
- Too many learners and apprentices are unaware of their progress. Community tutors give constructive oral feedback to learners to help them understand how to improve. However, written feedback does not always make clear what learning has taken place and comments too

often refer only to enjoyment or the completion of tasks. Some assessors fail to explore in sufficient depth learners' progress and their understanding of equality and diversity.

- Tutors and assessors are not always sufficiently thorough in identifying and recording learners' starting points. Except in English and mathematics courses, too many tutors do not use the outcomes from initial assessment well enough to plan learning. Consequently, learners do not have precise personal targets and managers are unable to measure accurately learners' progress and success.
- Good information, advice and guidance ensure that prospective learners join the right course. The provider collaborates with external partners to provide appropriate pre-course information. An effective induction prepares apprentices well for their course. Learners with additional support needs are identified through initial assessment. Tutors steer learners on short courses to consider further learning on courses that reflect their interests. A few receive advice and guidance on progression opportunities from the National Careers Service.
- Through good teaching, learners on English and mathematics courses significantly improve their language, number skills and knowledge of technical language. However, vocational and community tutors do not sufficiently identify opportunities to develop learners' skills in English and mathematics.
- Many learners with little prior experience of using computers develop a good range of basic skills. However, in some classes, tutors allow too little time for less confident learners to keep up and complete the tasks.
- Learning partners successfully target provision at harder-to-reach groups and communities. Tutors support all individual learners very well and try to meet their particular needs. Tutors and assessors actively promote a deeper understanding of equality and diversity where this is part of a course such as in child development or health. In other areas of the curriculum, this is not developed well enough. Managers and tutors emphasise strongly the importance of ensuring safe working conditions for learners.

Community learning

Require improvement

19+ Learning programmes

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. On too many courses, tutors do not use initial assessment effectively to set precise learning goals. The process of identifying learners' starting points lacks rigour and does not focus enough on the skills and knowledge learners already have. As a result, tutors are unable to monitor learners' progress from their starting points accurately.
- Tutors enable current learners to develop confidence, good personal skills and the motivation to further their learning. Learners on courses designed for existing or prospective volunteers develop good skills to work with members of the public. On other courses, learners make good progress, for example, in developing their self-esteem and personal confidence.
- Tutors understand the needs and interests of their learners well, and use this knowledge to plan engaging and motivating sessions and to provide additional support for individual learners where appropriate. They make skilful use of a variety of effective methods such as group and pair work to enthuse learners, and to help them identify the impact of learning on their lives. Tutors encourage independent learning to build learners' confidence and capacity for future learning. In the less successful sessions, activities do not challenge the more able learners sufficiently well.
- Tutors draw on a range of relevant experience and expertise to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. For example, on volunteer training courses, tutors frequently use real life examples and scenarios from their own voluntary work as advisers on welfare to prepare learners well for the challenges they will face as volunteers.

- For too many learners, the use of learning technology is very limited or not available at all. As a result, opportunities to enliven learning by, for example, offering access to online resources or games during sessions are limited. A minority of learners have good access to a virtual learning environment and make productive use of this to carry out internet research, to gain quick access to tutors' notes, or to carry out practical work based on case studies.
- On community courses, tutors take too few opportunities to develop learners' mathematics and English skills to achieve their personal goals. On English and mathematics courses, tutors set very precise targets for learners that link clearly to their learning needs and use these well in regular reviews of learners' progress. The good practice in discrete English and mathematics courses is not shared across the provision.
- Learners participate well in sessions and are highly motivated to learn. During sessions, they support each other's learning but also work effectively on their own. They value the confidence, knowledge and skills they gain from their courses, often from a very low starting point. For example, one learner had never used a computer before enrolling but quickly gained the confidence to use a keyboard.
- Tutors provide good oral feedback to learners about the quality of their learning. As a result, learners can identify and describe what they need to improve. The quality of written feedback varies considerably. The best written feedback from tutors is constructive and clearly identifies areas for improvement but this practice is not shared or used consistently. Too often tutors focus their comments on learners' enjoyment of learning or completion of tasks rather than on an evaluation of their learning.
- Learners receive good information about progression routes, and have a clear sense of what they want to do next either with their education or into employment. They receive effective guidance about what they can do to further their learning once they have finished their courses.
- Courses are inclusive and reflect individual needs and interests. Tutors are sensitive to the needs of particular learners such as those with additional needs. In courses such as those delivered by organisations that specialise in training volunteers, distinct sessions on equality and diversity are key elements of the course. However, on other courses, there is little evidence of planning to promote equality and diversity. Tutors take sufficient account of safeguarding and health and safety when planning sessions.

Business administration and customer service

Inadequate

Apprenticeships

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate as reflected in poor success rates. Apprentices wait too long between reviews, their learning plans are not updated regularly and assessment feedback is not sufficiently detailed. Consequently, their progress is too slow. Successful apprentices wait too long to progress to an advanced programme.
- Staff encourage apprentices to produce high quality work. Learners take pride in their work and standards are good. Apprentices' job roles help them gain confidence and develop administrative skills. However, assessment practices are inconsistent and tutors do not distinguish enough between training and assessment.
- Trainers and assessors give learners frequent additional personal support between visits. However, they do not identify additional support requirements sufficiently well or evaluate its impact on learners' individual development. Initial assessment does not take account of personal, emotional and social development needs.
- Regular, well-structured training sessions help learners acquire the necessary theoretical background knowledge they need and develop their communication skills. For example, they deliver presentations to their peers on topics such as awareness of discrimination in the

workplace and minimising waste in the office. Learners receive specific training to deepen their knowledge of equality and diversity, and confidently share their experiences from the workplace.

- Learners follow safe working practices when using the internet for research. Resources are professional and of a good standard. However, staff do not make full use of learning technology to model good practice or to encourage learners to use technology when making presentations.
- Trainers carry out comprehensive initial assessments of learners' skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and use these well to plan training through regular contact with apprentices and by providing homework. In some instances, staff inaccurately credit learners with functional skills exemptions. Learners are unaware that they need to complete these aspects of the framework and do not have a clear understanding of their progress.
- Targets on learners' action plans are not precise enough to help trainers and apprentices plan the next stage of their learning. The feedback assessors give learners on their written English skills, particularly spelling and punctuation lacks sufficient detail.
- Too many learners do not receive regular reviews, delaying their progress. Staff have reduced the number of late reviews since the previous year but this poor practice has not been eliminated. Review records do not consistently capture enough detail about progress made and subsequent assessments planned and so learners' progress is too slow.
- Learners develop effective skills to help them learn independently, increasing their ability to complete the work set out in their action plans. Learners are highly confident in the use of the electronic portfolio system, regularly uploading evidence for assessment and viewing their progress. Learners use internet-based learning materials well to develop their skills in English, mathematics and ICT. One learner with no prior experience of using ICT very quickly developed the skills needed to achieve the qualification. Another learner made good use of newly acquired ICT skills to incorporate social media into their employer's marketing strategy.
- Apprentices are prepared well for their studies through a comprehensive induction programme. The service provides effective advice and guidance on progression into employment through employability days. The majority of apprentices on fixed-term contracts with the council receive further support to help them find employment elsewhere. A significant proportion of learners employed by the council progress to higher grade posts with increased responsibility.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
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- Leadership and management are inadequate. Arrangements to address staffing issues during 2013/14 have not been effective, and this affected adversely learners' outcomes. The management of subcontractors, the vast majority of the provision, is weak. The staffing situation has now been resolved and the team is working hard to catch up and implement all the incomplete quality assurance procedures.
- Increasing equality among Warrington residents is at the core of the provider's vision, mission and objectives. The provision is focused on engaging with people from areas of high deprivation and improving their employability and life chances which is strongly supported by the Council. Whilst the Council have a good oversight of the courses offered they do not have a clear understanding of recent declines in learners' achievements.
- The service works closely with subcontractors and other stakeholders, including the local enterprise partnership, to shape the curriculum. For example, close working with a social housing organisation successfully targets apprenticeship provision for young people who are currently not in education, training or employment. The use of wage incentives enables small employers who would not otherwise be able to do so to recruit an apprentice.
- Procedures for managing subcontractors incorporate a range of quality measures. However, these procedures were not fully implemented from January 2014 due to staffing issues.

Consequently, the provider has an incomplete view of the quality of subcontracted provision during most of 2013/14.

- Arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Managers have not completed any observations since December 2013. In 2012/13, detailed internal lesson observation records include an appropriate emphasis on the learners' experience and indicate that teaching, learning and assessment were good. However, managers have not monitored the effectiveness of subcontractors' processes to assure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Joint observations carried out during the inspection indicate that managers can accurately identify the strengths and areas for development in sessions.
- Self-assessment is well established; the report incorporates the self-assessment judgements provided by subcontractors and makes appropriate use of learners' views. However, the quality of subcontractor' self-assessment reports varies significantly and the evidence to support their grades is not always clear.
- The targets and actions in the quality improvement plan are insufficiently specific and measurable to promote rapid improvement. Many of the targets in the 2013/14 plan have not been achieved or are postponed to a future date. The planned introduction of learner forums has not yet taken place.
- Managers select subcontractors and venues carefully to span a wide range of specialist expertise and to locate courses in the areas of highest deprivation. As a result, participation by the target groups is good with one third of learners residing in the most severely disadvantaged areas and over one quarter having a disability or learning difficulty.
- Managers do not monitor the progression and achievement of learners on community learning sufficiently well. This is largely because the internal procedures for validating and recording achievement are applied inconsistently across subcontractors.
- Apprentices benefit from good training to raise their awareness of equality and diversity. The service also offers training to the subcontractors' tutors. Staff improve learners' understanding of bullying and harassment during the induction process. The learners' handbook includes procedures for reporting any concerns. However, the language used in the handbook is not appropriate for those community learners with lower levels of literacy. Arrangements to manage complaints are appropriate.
- Safeguarding requires improvement. Although the provider takes safeguarding seriously and has done much to ensure that learners are kept safe, further action is needed to ensure that this approach is sustained. During visits to community venues, inspectors were not always required to show any proof of identity before gaining access. Several tutors employed by subcontractors have not received up-to-date safeguarding training. Council staff benefit from additional training covering aspects such as suicide prevention, e-safety and cyber-bullying.
- The service follows safer recruitment good practice and requires its subcontractors to do so. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the reporting of any safeguarding concerns, allegations, disclosures or suspicions of abuse. Safeguarding is included in learners' induction, although coverage of e-safety in the learner handbook is too brief. Staff check subcontractors' safeguarding arrangements during quality support visits and learners confirm that they feel safe.
- Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of learners lead to action for improvement where needed. However, the provider does not routinely receive copies of risk assessments carried out by subcontractors on new venues.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Warrington Borough Council Community Employment Learning and Skills

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	3
Outcomes for learners	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Community learning	3
Administration	4
Customer service	4

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,734							
CEO	Professor Steven Broomhead							
Date of previous inspection	October 2010							
Website address	www.warrington.gov.uk/communitylearning							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	15	37	2	17	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	1,655							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MRHMC ▪ Warrington Collegiate ▪ Workers' Educational Association ▪ Citizens Advice Bureau ▪ Walton Lea and Long Lane ▪ Homestart ▪ Warrington Voluntary Action ▪ Warrington Disability Partnership ▪ Priestley College ▪ Parenthesis 							

Contextual information

Warrington is located in the North West of England on the banks of the River Mersey and has a population of about 203,000. It is a borough of considerable contrasts, with areas of relative affluence to the south, and significant deprivation and high unemployment around the centre. Warrington Borough Council provides community and family learning through subcontracted partners as part of its mission to bridge the equality gap across the borough. It also delivers directly a small amount of apprenticeship training mainly for its own employees. Other post-16 providers in the town are Warrington Collegiate, a general further education college, and Priestley Sixth Form College.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Jan Smith HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Principal Manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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