

Ashton, Wigan and District YMCA

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Ashton, Wigan and District YMCA (Ashton YMCA) is an independent charity affiliated to the national YMCA. Their two premises provide administrative offices, nursery facilities and, at one, a purpose-built training centre. The organisation provides afterschool and holiday clubs, adult and children's health and fitness sessions, cancer support and information advice and guidance for over 65's, as well as collecting for food banks, YMCA charity shops and other initiatives to meet the needs of the local community.

Sixteen learners participate in the study programme and one learner is following a traineeship. Eleven learners are working towards achieving a level two qualification, in the certificate for the children's and young people's workforce. Five learners are aiming for a level 2 certificate in beauty therapy. The Education Funding Agency funds the provision. Ashton YMCA also provides training in early years and playwork for apprentices as a sub-contractor for Wigan Council's apprenticeship programme. This arm of the company trades under the name of Yale Training. The company has a board of trustees and a chief executive oversees all of Ashton YMCA's activities.

Themes

Outcomes

Are all learners achieving and making progress towards their learning goals relative to their starting points?

reasonable progress

Most learners successfully achieved their learning goals in 2013/14 and progressed to higher levels of training, apprenticeships and employment. In the first year of delivering the study programme all learners were White British females. Increasing male participation is an area for improvement recognised by the provider. Currently, the study programme includes two male learners. Half the learners in 2013/14 had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They achieved at a comparable rate to the other learners.

Most current learners are making expected progress. They have all made progress in developing skills relative to their starting points. For example, learners demonstrate recently acquired practical skills and knowledge in planning activities and using resources to assess children's development and identify their needs. Learners gain employability skills and show a good appreciation, for example, of the requirements of placement employers and the need to be punctual and attend regularly. Attendance overall is good.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Does teaching and learning develop mathematics skills to support the achievement of learning goals and career aims?

reasonable progress

Learners benefit from good teaching to support the development of their mathematics skills. In functional skills sessions learners receive good individual coaching and develop confidence in mathematics. They apply mathematical skills, such as calculating and using percentages to achieve set tasks. Learners aiming to achieve GCSE mathematics grade C or above participate well in group sessions and master skills, such as those used in estimation. Learners enjoy these sessions, show determination to succeed and are on course to achieve. They develop confidence to tackle the exercises set for them and appreciate the importance of achievement in mathematics in the context of their career aims. Monitoring, regular reviewing and careful marking of learners' work take place. Learners understand what they need to do to improve. In a few cases, the way tutors use questions to check learners' understanding is not specific enough or directed clearly to an individual learner.

Leadership and management

How well has the provider established a learning programme that meets the needs and interests of learners?

reasonable progress

Learners enjoy and benefit from the study programme, which meets their needs and interests very well. All learners participate and benefit from work experience, English and mathematics sessions and vocational training sessions. They all have clear learning aims and a well-informed understanding of their next step. The vast majority wish to gain an apprenticeship in their chosen occupation.

Leaders and managers have ambitious plans and set challenging targets to achieve high standards in the quality of the delivery of the study programme. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Safeguarding arrangements for the study programme are good. Learners feel safe.

Staff are well motivated and provide good support and guidance. They use their relevant vocational experience and expertise well to develop learners' knowledge and understanding and provide guidance on career progression. Improvement in the provision of information, advice and guidance has taken place over time and recently the provider has achieved an externally recognised national standard. Resources that are fit for purpose and effectively support learning are used in well-planned and organised off-the-job training sessions at the main centre.

The study programme is in its second year of operation and expanding quickly. The number of learners involved is now more than twice that of 2013/14. Management

information systems, particularly to report on destinations of learners, require further refinement to keep up with this expansion. A recent re-structure of the management arrangements has taken place although it is too early to judge the impact of this on the performance of the study programme in 2015.

How well do leaders and managers evaluate the quality of the provision and use the findings to improve it?

reasonable progress

Leaders and managers use self-assessment appropriately to identify areas for improvement and plan actions to sustain high performance. They manage the process well and staff constructively contribute throughout. Regular feedback from learners is analysed and used as part of the self-assessment process together with feedback from employers. The current report identifies areas for improvement accurately and the quality improvement plan sets out detailed actions and timescales to meet them. The quality improvement plan is a working document and is regularly reviewed and updated. Improvements made after the first year of the study programme include, for example, introducing a wider range of vocational areas to meet the needs and interests of learners.

The study programme was part of the provision in 2013/14 but this does not feature sufficiently well as a distinct programme in self-assessment or quality improvement planning. Judgements and the evidence presented are not clearly attributable to specific programmes particularly in judging outcomes. Moreover, the analysis and presentation of data to support judgements are not sufficiently clear.

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