



Analysis of the 2014 London Ofsted report & data annex for Independent Learning Providers & Apprenticeship provision.

LWBLA Briefing Note

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1. Introduction

In December 2014 Ofsted published its annual report. It attracted significant publicity, but alongside the national report Ofsted also published individual annual reports for each of the English regions including London. These reports and the data annexes went relatively unnoticed in the media yet provide a fascinating insight into the distribution of grading and qualitative judgments of London's Post-16 Education and Skills sector.¹

For those of us who have to represent and make the case for supporting independent providers, the Ofsted regional report appears to highlight significant variations and differences between provider types across London's post-16 education sector. So how should we analyse the data and what conclusions can we draw from such work? Is it a reliable way of understanding what is happening at the 'coal face', and are there any 'health warnings' that come from using the data?

The LWBLA has looked through the 63 Post-16 Ofsted Inspection reports (completed in 2013/14) across London, utilising Ofsted's data annex, to produce a set of tables highlighting the relative qualitative performance of the independent learning provider (across the Post-16 sector).

The LWBLA has specifically looked at the grading of providers 'overall effectiveness' as well as those providers that have been specifically graded for the 'delivery of apprenticeships'.

The main point is the grading difference between Independent Learning Providers (ILP's) and Colleges of Further Education. This is significant as the LWBLA estimates that the combined aggregate delivery for ILP's and FE Colleges exceeds 85% of total publicly funded apprenticeship provision in London.

We set out our headline analysis below looking at the overall effectiveness of the Post-16 sector and how three dominant provider types (in-terms of the overall number of inspections undertaken by Ofsted last year) compare in the distribution of grading and then go on to analyse grading of apprenticeship delivery.²

Here are the key headlines and tables with a separate spreadsheet analysis drawn directly from Ofsted data annex.



2. London's Post-16 Education and Skills Sector

Firstly by looking at the 'Overall Effectiveness' across the entire Post-16 sector in London the LWBLA identified the following headlines:

- Ofsted inspected 63 Post-16 organisations across 9 different classifications of provider types. At the 'top end' only 4 providers were graded as 'Outstanding'; a University, a Specialist Independent College, a Sixth Form College, and a 16-18 Free School. Only the University was separately graded for its apprenticeship delivery - West London University (Grade 1). No London based Community Learning provider, FE College, or ILP achieved a grade 1 for both 'overall effectiveness' and the 'delivery of apprenticeships' in 2013/14.
- There was a key grouping of 3 provider types who between them accounted for 49 out of the 63 inspections - circa 80% of all inspections/grades. These provider types were: Adult & Community Learning, Colleges of Further Education, and the Independent Learning Provider. It is the distribution of grades amongst these three provider types that defines the focal point for assessing the relative value, quality and impact of the non academic Post-16 education (vocational offer) in London.

Analysis by the LWBLA, focusing on the "Overall Effectiveness" of the three predominant provider types, were as follows:

Provider Type	Total number of Inspections	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	% Graded 1&2	% Graded 3&4
Community Learning Provider	14	0	10	3	1	72	28
Independent Learning provider	20	0	12	7	1	66	34
General College of Further Education	15	0	6	8	1	40	60
Aggregate of CLP, FE & ILP	49	0	28	18	3	57	43
All Post -16 providers	63	4	34	19	4	60	40



- Independent Learning Providers comprised the largest volume of inspections across the Post-16 sector in 2013/14:
 - 20 out of 63 in total;
 - 12 achieved a grade 2 (good)
 - 7 were grade 3 (unsatisfactory)
 - 1 grade 4 (failing) – see above and table for the complete list.
- 66% of all Independent Learning Providers (ILP's) inspected by Ofsted in 2013/14 achieved a grade 1 or 2 (for 'overall effectiveness') against a London average of 60%.
- Compared with General Colleges of Further Education there is a significant difference in grading for overall effectiveness:
 - only 40% of General FE Colleges achieved a Grade 2 for 'overall effectiveness' - 6 out of 15 Colleges inspected in 2013/14, when compared with the 12 out of 18 ILP's in London. In effect a 40:66 quality gap.

3. Evaluating the quality of London's Apprenticeship provision

For those Post-16 providers with a separate grade for Apprenticeship delivery the headlines are as follows:

- Only 32 Post-16 education providers were separately graded for apprenticeship provision in London.
 - In all cases except one the apprenticeship grade was the same as the overall effectiveness grade (the exception being West Thames College whose overall effectiveness was graded as a 2 - 'good', but the apprenticeship grade was 3 - 'unsatisfactory').
- Across the sector only 56% of all Post-16 providers received a grade 1 or 2 which is below the average for all provider types as shown above: 60%.
 - The key difference between Community Learning Provider's and the ILP is how few were actually graded for the delivery of apprenticeships - only 2 CLP's out of the 14 inspections.
- However 69% of Independent Learning Providers were graded as 'good' compared to 34% in General FE Colleges – one of the widest disparities of subject grading across the Post-16 Education sector in London. FE Colleges drag the apprenticeship grade below the London average.



The table and analysis of Apprenticeship grades awarded by Ofsted in 2013/14 by provider classification is as follows:

Type of provider	Grade 1&2	%	Grade 3&4	%	Total
University	1	100	0	0	1
ILP	11	68	5	32	16
Community Learning	1	50	1	50	2
Employer	2	50	2	50	2
FE College	3	40	6	60	9
Total	18	56	14	44	32

4. Where are the 'health warnings' to this type of Analysis?

If there were a health warning to this analysis the LWBLA would suggest the following:

- The extensive use of subcontracted provision in London.
- Providers who deliver extensively in London but are based elsewhere.
- Classifying the provider type.

The scale and volume of subcontractors is significant across London but remains largely invisible. The LWBLA estimates that over 50% of all providers operating in London are subcontractors.

There is no simple way of easily identifying whether the provider's inspection grades are neutral, 'pushed up', or 'pulled down' by outsourced delivery. At the end of the day this is the commercial risk/performance return that the SFA contract holder takes when they choose to outsource apprenticeship delivery to a third party.

A number of national providers are based outside of London, but their main focus of delivery can be within London itself. The geographic location of the head office function influences where the provider is listed within the regional Ofsted data tables. For example QA Limited one of the UK's largest providers of



IT apprenticeships was graded as 'outstanding' and is based in Slough but has a significant/large volume of apprentices within the London area. In effect, London's good performance is captured elsewhere, and the extent to which Ofsted grades attributed to providers outside of London act to inflate or deflate qualitative performance remains unknown.

The final issue is the subtlety of how Ofsted define and classify the provider. For instance City Gateway was inspected and achieved a Grade 1 for all areas of provision. It was classified as a Free School – because it is, but it also sees itself as an independent learning provider with a rich tradition of apprenticeship delivery that predated the establishment of the Free School. Yet it wasn't graded for its apprenticeship provision in this inspection, so doesn't appear in the table above (it was inspected by Ofsted in 2010 and achieved a grade 1 for apprenticeship delivery). You would have to unpick all the tables and check every classification to see what is happening if you want to form a complete picture on the status of London's providers and the aggregate qualitative performance of the classification of providers. This isn't easy because you have to know who everyone really is, what they deliver, and how they choose to describe themselves. If there is any relevance to classifying provider types within the Ofsted methodology then it probably acts to inflate the overall grading performance of Community Learning providers.

I attach a set of spreadsheets identifying every provider delivering Post-16 education in London subject to inspection over the past 12 months.³

4. A question for Ofsted

Why do so many ILP's get inspected as a % of the overall total when this provider type accounts for the some of the fewest volumes of learners and probably the lowest proportion of public funding in Post-16 education? Shouldn't the institutions with the biggest volume of learners and the largest allocations of public/tax payer's funds be subject to most inspections?

5. Overall

Firstly, congratulations to West London University; they were the only HEI to be inspected in London and to achieve an outstanding grade for all areas of learning including apprenticeship delivery (the total volume for apprenticeship delivery at West London University at the time of inspection were under 100).

Secondly if policy makers want to see the most consistent spread of 'good' apprenticeship provision across London that covers the overwhelming majority of provision then this is found amongst Independent Learning Providers. This is a positive outcome particularly when compared across the Post -16 sector to other provider types.



2013/14 was an important year with the new Ofsted inspection format /regime in place to demonstrate how ILP's delivered significant quantitative and qualitative value.

The LWBLA's long-term strategic goal is to shift provision up at least a grade across all grade boundaries with a specific ambition to increase the overall number of grade 2's and 1's. 2013/14 was an important reference point for the Post-16 sector as a whole in London.

How effective are London's independent learning providers (ILP's) when subject to an Ofsted inspection?

This question is often referenced by stakeholders and policy makers when trying to analyse why the overall number of apprenticeships volumes in London are relatively low when compared to the other English regions. One inference is that a performance problem exists within the supply chain, and criticism/blame can be laid at the door of the providers who deliver the apprenticeship programmes of learning.

The analysis from Ofsted is very clear: if you want the best spread of good apprenticeship provision in London to deliver apprenticeships use an Independent Learning Provider. They achieve above the benchmark for both overall effectiveness and specific apprenticeships grades.

If any member wishes to discuss the detail please feel free to contact me.

Victor Farlie
Executive Chair LWBLA
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Footnotes

1. [Ofsted London Report](#)
2. [Ofsted Data set](#)
3. [LWBLA Tables – Post 16 overall effectiveness by provider type, Ofsted Apprenticeship grades by provider type, All ILP Ofsted grades, Copy of the complete Ofsted data set 2013/14.](#)