

Waste Management Assessment Services Ltd (WAMAS)

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 55281

Name of lead inspector: Elizabeth Warriner HMI

Last day of inspection: 26 November 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Brook House
Denington Industrial Estate
Wellingborough
Northants
NN8 2QY

Telephone number: 01933 279879

Information about the provider

1. Waste Management Assessment Services Ltd (WAMAS) was founded in 2003, specialising in qualifications for the refuse, waste and recycling industry. Although based in Northamptonshire, its learners work throughout England. WAMAS offers waste and recycling National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) from level 2 to level 4, but only level 2 and 3 qualifications are funded under Train to Gain. WAMAS did not have its own contract until 2008/09 but it had a subcontract from the waste management industry training and advisory board (WAMITAB), the awarding body for waste management, and was included in its December 2008 inspection. Its direct contract still represents only one fifth of its work. The two directors and an administrator are based in the Wellingborough office. Six assessors, who run the programmes in council depots, are employed on part-time contracts but attend regular meetings to review the progress and quality of the programme.

2. WAMAS provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Havering College
 - Oxford and Cherwell Valley College
 - South Devon College
 - The College of West Anglia
 - WAMITAB.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Train to Gain	244 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Grade 1
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	1
Subject Areas	
Health, Public Services and Care	1

Overall effectiveness

- WAMAS's overall effectiveness is outstanding, supported by excellent leadership and management. Nearly all learners complete their qualifications on time, increasing their motivation, self-confidence and pride in their work. They enjoy the programme, particularly the stimulating and informative induction, and improve their working practices in refuse collection and street cleansing significantly to the benefit of their employers and the communities they serve. Assessment is exceptionally well managed, with excellent employer involvement to ensure that business needs are met. Assessors are highly experienced in the waste industry and learners appreciate the clever way they identify opportunities to demonstrate competence. The use of well-designed, informative and helpful workbooks and question banks raise learners' awareness of the complexity of their job, and remind learners about issues such as health and safety. The flexible, efficient programme is exceptionally well run, with a very effective database that enforces rigorous audit procedures. Learners show a particularly well-developed understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard children and vulnerable adults as well as improving their health and safety practices. WAMAS supports many learners to gain their first qualification extremely effectively through engaging large numbers of workers, in the often under-appreciated waste industry, and supporting them to achieve their level 2 NVQ.

Main findings

- Success rates are outstanding at 98% in 2009/10. Learners also develop their self-confidence, aspiration and skills very well. Employers are impressed by the improvement in their refuse services, excellent team working and a significant reduction in accidents.
- WAMAS provides a very enjoyable, informative and memorable induction which is instrumental in motivating otherwise reluctant learners to join the programme. Good materials provide clear guidance that enables learners and employers to understand how the programme works and what they need to do.
- Workbooks and question banks are very well designed and used to develop and test learners' knowledge. Learners find them very informative and helpful, particularly as reminders of best practice in waste management. Although most learners receive good feedback on their answers, this is not consistent.
- Assessment is exceptionally well managed. The intensive schedule ensures learners maintain motivation and concentration so that nearly all achieve. Assessors are very experienced in the waste industry and understand how to use learners' everyday work to maximise opportunities to demonstrate their skills.
- Assessors are exceptionally skilled in using on-the-job discussions to extend and support learning. Comprehensive portfolios use an extensive variety of evidence to capture a wide range of scenarios demonstrating learners' skills. However sometimes assessors miss opportunities to develop knowledge during feedback on assessment.
- Programmes are very well adapted to meet employers' and learners' needs. Employers are delighted with high impact on their workforce and minimum disruption to their business. Assessors work very flexibly to support learners to achieve. However, sometimes initial assessment takes place in unsuitable environments for confidential discussion with learners.
- WAMAS has excellent partnerships with supportive employers, other providers and the awarding body. The programme has a strong impact on the communities where learners work, improving the service to local residents, with significant reductions in accidents and health and safety incidents.
- The strategy to promote equality and diversity is outstanding. WAMAS' clear mission to promote educational inclusion has been very successful, engaging many previously reluctant learners in enjoyable and fruitful programmes which are valued and actively recognised by council leaders who present their certificates.
- Management is highly efficient. A very small management team manages a large group of contract assessors with very good communication. They use a powerful information system exceptionally well to enforce audit mechanisms as well as to report comprehensively on learners' progress and achievement. WAMAS has begun to develop a realistic strategy to continue its provision when Train to Gain ends, using its partnerships with other providers.

- Safeguarding, health and safety are promoted particularly strongly. Learners' good knowledge of keeping themselves and others safe is enhanced measurably through the programme. WAMAS also shows exceptionally good awareness of its responsibility to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults.

What does Waste Management Assessment Services Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Identify further opportunities to share good practice in learning and assessment.
- Ensure that learners always have an opportunity for confidential discussion during initial assessment.
- Develop learners' understanding further by improving the quality and consistency of feedback they receive on written answers and after practical assessment.
- Further develop its strategy to ensure that learners can access accreditation when Train to Gain ceases and ensure that systems are updated to accommodate new qualifications.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the pride they feel in achieving a qualification for the first time
- feeling valued by their employer and proud of their work
- the stimulating and enjoyable induction
- approachable assessors who really understand learners' jobs
- non-threatening assessment that doesn't require an exam
- improving their job prospects with a recognised certificate
- relevant and useful learning that makes them think more deeply.

What learners would like to see improved:

- nothing (most learners)
- the feedback they receive on underpinning knowledge questions
- a chance to do more courses.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- how the programme changes the culture of their business
- the way WAMAS energises their teams and improves self-esteem

- accidents and incidents reduce significantly when staff have gone through the programme
- the surprising number of employees who come forward to participate
- valued qualifications that professionalise the workforce
- the excellent way WAMAS fits the programme to their needs
- assessors who have great rapport and a deep understanding of their industry.

What employers would like to see improved:

- nothing.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

4. WAMAS' capacity to improve is outstanding. Ofsted has never inspected WAMAS in its own right. The company operates a very efficient and flexible delivery model. It has formulated realistic strategies to survive in a rapidly-changing environment.
5. WAMAS sets and achieves very high targets for learners' success. Its strong mission to promote educational inclusion engages many previously reluctant learners in enjoyable and fruitful programmes. In 2009/10 more than 98% of learners achieved their qualification on time, improving on 96% the year before, and well above the sector's national average. A very close, productive relationship with employers enables WAMAS to improve other outcomes for learners, in particular teamwork and safe practices, while contributing measurably to improving the environment in communities they serve. Quality improvement processes are managed very efficiently. WAMAS maintains a close relationship with the awarding body and all staff attend training events to update vocational knowledge. Regular and productive team meetings discuss all aspects of learners' programmes and propose improvements which are promptly implemented. Internal verification is rigorous and well organised. A well-designed, intuitive and comprehensive custom-built database imposes tight audit controls with clear rules that force cross-checking at each programme stage. Managers use an effective range of reports to monitor performance and select verification samples. Learners' views are routinely collated, regularly discussed at meetings, and generate programme improvements.
6. The self-assessment report is WAMAS' first; it is evaluative and critical. Inspectors' findings confirmed the accuracy of the self-assessment. The report matches the Common Inspection Framework closely, although not covering all aspects fully. Appropriate actions are allocated against each judgement. Although some actions are insufficiently specific, it is clear that WAMAS has very good quality improvement processes which quickly identify problems and implement improvements.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

7. Success rates are outstanding. Since 2008, more than 96% of learners achieved their qualification on time. Only 4 of 244 learners did not achieve in 2009/10. Learners' development of confidence, aspiration and skills is outstanding. The programme makes learners think more deeply about their practice and its impact on others. Employers report better teamwork and improved self-esteem and motivation. This improves the delivery of council services and compliance with policies because learners understand the reasons for them and take a pride in their work and professionalism. Many learners find an unexpected appetite for learning and progress into other programmes. Some achieve promotion.

8. Learners feel safe and work more safely. Employers consistently report better health and safety practices. In one employer, accidents reduced by 30% following the programme. Learners develop enhanced client service skills, including excellent awareness of safeguarding, which makes a contribution to the community. One crew saved the life of an elderly resident through checking on why a bin was not ready for collection.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

9. Learners receive good information about the programme at enjoyable, memorable induction sessions. Comprehensive, accessible and informative introductory packs reinforce this. WAMAS has developed good information about further qualifications and progression since its Matrix inspection in 2008. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of their programme and the benefits it brings to them and their managers.
10. Teaching, training and learning within the scope of the programme are excellent and meet the needs of learners and the requirements of the awarding body. Assessment practice is rigorous and effective and commences promptly after induction. It is well planned and managed, offering a robust structure with sufficient flexibility to fit around learners' busy work patterns. An extensive range of diverse evidence is assembled and stored in individual portfolios. Assessors make good use of work-place evidence. Digital recording is used particularly effectively to record direct observations of practice during waste management activities. Assessors are appropriately qualified, very good communicators, and possess extensive experience in all aspects of waste management. They make effective use of structured questioning techniques to identify learners' understanding and awareness. Well-structured discussions take place on the job between learners and assessors to support and underpin learning.
11. The qualification meets the learners' needs exceptionally well and helps to motivate them towards further progression. Assessment is well managed to ensure that learners can demonstrate their competence and skills in a non-threatening way. Many of the learners have little prior academic achievement and are very proud to succeed on the qualification. A comprehensive bank of appropriate questions is used well to reinforce learning and understanding where workbook sessions are impractical. Learners enjoy the opportunity to respond to the questions and receive prompt responses from the assessor. The provision makes a high impact on the workforce and focuses on the needs of the business while, at the same, time improving the learners' attitude towards learning and performance. The improved understanding and focus on health and safety has reduced accidents.
12. Partnerships with employers are excellent. Many view the programme as a key driver for business improvement through professionalising their workforce. They are extremely supportive and many hold prestigious and widely-publicised awards ceremonies when certificates are formally presented and learner success is celebrated. Employers often provide opportunities for additional

literacy, numeracy and language courses. A good relationship with the awarding body enabled WAMAS to develop their excellent workbooks which are fully referenced to language, literacy and numeracy standards and have been integrated with these courses in some authorities. WAMAS also supports speakers of other languages appropriately with mentors or translations of key elements. Assessors provide good support for all learners to enable them to complete the programme. Local collection, cleansing, landscaping and sweeper teams provide good mutual support in covering for assessment. Teams support colleagues well in the event of vehicle breakdown or other collection problems. However, initial assessment does not always take place in an environment suitable for learners to disclose private information.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

13. A small management team works very efficiently to manage a large and dispersed part-time assessor workforce. Communication is excellent. Meetings are regular, well attended, and scheduled in different parts of the country to enable all assessors to participate. WAMAS maintains a close relationship with the awarding body, ensuring all staff maintain their knowledge of qualifications. Through good partnerships with other providers, WAMAS is developing a realistic strategy to continue its provision when Train to Gain ends.
14. WAMAS promotes safeguarding, health and safety particularly strongly. The waste industry is a dangerous environment. The programme ensures that all learners understand their responsibilities, making a significant impact on working practices, accidents and injuries in their workplace. Inspectors were impressed by learners' good understanding of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. One refuse crew showed particular sensitivity when a bystander objected that a child was in shot while an assessor was photographing a learner working.
15. WAMAS' outstanding mission to broaden access to accreditation in the waste industry strongly promotes educational inclusion. People with low language, literacy and numeracy skills and demotivating previous educational experiences overcome their fear of failure, developing into enthusiastic, successful learners. These often under-appreciated workers gain recognition from senior council staff. Most employers provide training in respecting others and dealing with abuse which the NVQ reinforces effectively. Employers and WAMAS take strong action when incidents occur. Learners show good awareness of equality and diversity, assisted by clearly-written training materials. Staff regularly review WAMAS' comprehensive equality and diversity policies and procedures. At one meeting, an assessor led a wide-ranging workshop to heighten awareness of discrimination and bullying. The company actively discourages stereotyping through a diverse workforce that promotes participation to workers of all ages. Managers regularly monitor the performance of different groups; nearly everyone is successful.
16. Arrangements to consult employers and learners are good and lead to improvement. WAMAS uses a range of methods, including questionnaires and

individual interviews, to collect learner feedback. Employers and partners are closely involved in planning programmes, and WAMAS works flexibly to ensure their needs are met.

17. Processes for monitoring and evaluating performance are excellent. A very well-designed database drives quality assurance processes, enforcing strict audit rules and providing a useful range of reports. WAMAS has employed all its assessors for a long time, making formally-recorded observations once a year, but more frequent informal checks. Colleges who subcontract to WAMAS also carry out quality assurance. Internal verification and standardisation meetings are rigorous. A well-organised network of team meetings ensures that all aspects of provision are regularly reviewed and updated. The self-assessment report is concise, accurate and honest. Although it does not cover all inspection framework aspects fully, its recommendations for improvement are clear and its judgements closely match those of inspectors.

Information about the inspection

18. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and data on learners and their achievement.

19. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They 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)

Waste Management Assessment Services Ltd (WAMAS)

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Leamer 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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	60	60
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	1	1
Capacity to improve	1	
Outcomes for learners	1	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1	
How well do learners progress?	1	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	1	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1	
Quality of provision	1	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	1	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	-	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	1	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk