

INSPECTION REPORT

Workers' Educational Association

19 March 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 – excellent*
- *grade 2 – very good*
- *grade 3 – good*
- *grade 4 – satisfactory*
- *grade 5 – unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 – poor*
- *grade 7 – very poor*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 – very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, **or** leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.

Such provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the inspection report.

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a large adult education provider with provision in every Learning and Skills Council (LSC) region in England. It was founded in 1903 and became a single association comprising of its previous 13 districts and Scottish Association in 1993. The WEA is a registered charity. The association receives 56 per cent of its income through an £18 million national contract with London East LSC. Some districts have additional contracts with local LSCs for co-financed European projects and contracts with local education authorities (LEAs) and other funders of adult and community learning and vocational learning. The association's total income in 2002-03 was £32.3 million.
2. The WEA is currently structured into 12 English districts and the Scottish Association. In August 2004, the English districts will re-organise into nine regions. The WEA is a membership association and many of its learners take an active part in its organisation and governance. The national executive committee (NEC) is the association's overall governing body and its members are the trustees of the charity. The NEC's structure was re-organised in August 2003 and now consists of the full NEC, a policy and resources committee and an audit committee. A recently appointed general secretary is responsible for the overall management of the WEA and reports to the NEC.
3. Each district is managed and led by a district secretary and an elected district committee. Each district manages a range of provision that is planned locally to contribute to the association's overall LSC contract. In each district there are a number of local branches. In addition to its districts, the association has a corporate services office based in London that is managed by the general secretary. These corporate office services have recently been restructured and provide administrative, information technology (IT), education strategy, human resources and finance support. The general secretary, directors of the corporate services, district secretaries and the secretary of the Scottish Association comprise the association management team (AMT).
4. At the time of the inspection, the WEA employed 376 full-time staff and 253 part-time staff and approximately 4,722 sessional tutors.
5. Courses are organised into three programmes, the general programme, which is largely organised by the branches, the community programme of targeted provision aimed at widening participation in learning and the workplace programme. Both the community and workplace programmes are organised by the districts.
6. In 2002-03, there were 150,257 enrolments on 13,194 courses. Of these enrolments, 74.6 per cent were women and 8 per cent were from minority ethnic communities. Twenty-four per cent of enrolments were from addresses with disadvantaged postcodes. Seventeen per cent of enrolments declared that they had no qualifications, while a further 6.6 per

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cent declared qualifications at level 1. Ninety-three per cent of enrolments are funded through the main LSC contract.

7. At the time of the inspection, there were 44,326 learners making up 46,249 enrolments on approximately 3,639 courses funded by the main LSC contract. Two districts have 52 learners attending courses co-financed with European funds.

8. The inspection covered the training provision directly funded and part-funded by the LSC and the leadership and management of the WEA, including the Scottish Association's contribution to them.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Sciences & mathematics

9. The WEA offers courses mainly in science and related areas. Most courses from this area of learning are in the general programme. In 2002-03, the WEA ran 382 courses in sciences and mathematics, of which 98 per cent were in the general programme and six courses were in the community programme. These courses attracted 6,015 enrolments. There is a wide variation in the breadth of the provision. Some districts run only one or two programmes in this area while other districts provide a range of courses, including biology-related topics such as wild flowers, birds, conservation and genetics; physics-related topics, such as astronomy; and chemistry-related topics, such as medicine, geology and wine-making. There are some programmes of local interest. For example, in one region, where there has been a history of mining, there is a programme on mineral extraction. For the current year, 2,072 learners had made 2,125 enrolments on 130 courses by 1 March 2004.

Business administration, management & professional

10. The WEA provides, through the Trades Union Congress (TUC) Education Service, short courses covering areas such as health and safety, employment law and equality of opportunity. These courses, most of which are accredited by the Open College Network (OCN), are designed to assist union stewards, safety representatives and other union representatives to carry out their union responsibilities at work. The courses are organised flexibly to meet particular demand and local need. The association also works directly with other trades unions to organise courses. For example, the lifelong learning advisers programme is provided in conjunction with UNISON, the trades union representing people working in the public services, private contractors providing public services and the essential utilities. In 2002-03, the WEA provided 272 trades union studies courses attracting 2,989 enrolments. Over the inspection period, there were 20 courses operating in five districts, attracting 233 enrolments.

Information and communications technology

11. Information and communications technology (ICT) provision has been a growth area for the WEA in the past three years. The association offers courses in ICT in all three

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programmes. Eighty-three per cent of the ICT provision is in the community programme, 11 per cent in the general programme and 6 per cent in the workplace programme. Most of the courses are run as outreach provision or held in study centres in areas of disadvantage. In 2002-03, the WEA ran 1,954 courses, attracting 15,561 enrolments. In the current year, the WEA has run 490 courses, on which 3,955 learners have made a total of 4,232 enrolments by 1 March 2004. Some courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications in using IT. A wide range of non-accredited introductory courses is also offered, in areas such as internet and e-mail use for beginners, working with images and digital cameras and short courses introducing learners to a variety of computer applications, such as spreadsheets and databases. Many of the community programme courses are targeted at specific groups of learners, such as computing for farmers, computing for visually impaired people and IT use for Urdu speakers. Most of the workplace courses are provided in partnership with UNISON.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

12. Courses in this area of learning are run in the general, community and workplace programmes. Sixty-six per cent of courses are in the community programmes and 33 per cent in the general programme. There is one course in the workplace programme. The community-based courses are negotiated with the association's local partners and other organisations to ensure that they meet the needs of different sections of the community. Such courses include an introduction to cookery for people from refugee communities and an exercise and health-related programme for older people from Asian communities. In the general programme, courses range from general health and fitness programmes and yoga to sugar craft, cake decorating and cookery. Many of the hospitality-based courses are accredited. For the current year, 2,561 learners have made 2,668 enrolments on 212 courses by 1 March 2004. In 2002-03, 187 courses were run, attracting 2,145 enrolments.

Visual and performing arts and media

13. This is one of the largest areas of the WEA's provision. Sixty-five per cent of the WEA's visual and performing arts and media courses are in the general programme. A very small number of courses run in the workplace programme. History of art is the most frequently offered subject, but other topics include music appreciation and various arts and crafts techniques. Most of the courses have no minimum requirement for participation. In the community programme, a number of short, entry-level courses are offered, often in response to an identified local need. These courses are often designed to attract new learners and give them the confidence to carry out practical craft activities, such as working with textiles, ceramics, mosaics and glass painting. A small number of accredited courses are offered, usually in garment making and needlework. By 1 March 2004, 11,601 learners had made 12,902 enrolments on 909 courses. In 2002-03, the association ran 2,576, attracting 33,519 enrolments.

Humanities

14. Eighty-eight per cent of humanities courses are in the general programme. In 2002-03, 1,708 courses ran, attracting 28,000 enrolments. By 1 March 2004, on which 9,994

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learners had made 10,315 enrolments on 609 courses. Courses in the general programme are mostly organised by the WEA's network of branches and volunteers. Course content focuses on history or history-related topics. Topics such as family history and local history are particularly popular. The small number of humanities programmes in the community programme range from those with history-based content, often based around the interests of a targeted group in the community, to personal development courses.

English, languages & communications

15. Eighty per cent of courses in this area of learning are in the general programme and are non-accredited. There are a very small number of courses in the workplace programme and the remaining 20 per cent are in the community programme. A large proportion of courses focus on the study and appreciation of literature and aspects of creative writing. A smaller proportion of courses provide modern foreign languages tuition. Branches and members decide what will be offered in each district and some districts run courses over two or three terms to allow for learners' progression. A few districts offer specialist courses in British Sign Language and lip-reading. The courses in the community programme are often in creative writing or modern foreign languages and are targeted at particular sections of the community. In 2002-03, 1,175 courses ran, attracting 14,410 enrolments. On 1 March 2004, 6,086 learners had made 6,244 enrolments on 493 courses.

Foundation programmes

16. The WEA's foundation programmes operate in all three programme areas. In 2002-03, foundation programmes represented 10 per cent of all courses run by the WEA. The community programme includes courses in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and accounts for 76.5 per cent of the foundation programmes. A number of community learning courses were inspected as part of the foundation programme provision. These courses included women's programmes, complementary therapies and foundation level assertiveness programmes. In 2002-03, there were 1,768 enrolments on 175 courses. The general and workplace programmes comprise 1.5 and 22 per cent, respectively. All literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision and community learning courses are part time and most operate for two hours a week for 10 weeks. There is both accredited and non-accredited provision. Courses on the workplace programme range from short taster sessions lasting for six hours to longer courses lasting for 60 hours. Most courses in the workplace programme are nationally accredited.

17. The community programme aims to widen participation in learning and reach specific groups of learners who have been disadvantaged economically, socially or educationally. The main aim of the association's skills for life activity is to incorporate literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision in other areas of the programme. The skills for life courses in the workplace programme are managed nationally in partnership with the skills for life co-ordinators in the WEA's districts. All of the WEA's districts apart from one has such a co-ordinator, although some work part time or have a number of additional responsibilities. The national skills for life co-ordinator post is currently vacant.

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18. On 1 March 2004, there were 284 courses in this area of learning, attracting 2,374 enrolments from 2,118 learners. These figures include 1,135 learners currently on 111 community learning programmes.

Family learning

19. In 2002-03 there were 680 courses in family learning, attracting 6,042 enrolments. The WEA has subcontracted many other family learning courses to LEAs. The association offers a range of programmes from national initiatives such as the 'Helping in Schools' initiative, to local programmes, such as story sack sessions, sessions for young mothers, pre-school sessions, keeping up with the children courses, playwork sessions, and sessions for carers and parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other courses cover skills for learning about behaviour. For example, one district offers a course about living with a teenager. Ninety-three per cent of the programmes are provided in the community programme, 2 per cent are in the general context and 5 per cent are in the workplace programme. The provision ranges from short taster courses to longer accredited programmes.

Community development

20. The WEA offers a wide variety of programmes across the country that focus on community development. In 2002-03, 78 courses ran attracting a total of 780 enrolments. The courses aim to meet the individual and collective learning needs of targeted communities and to maximise local involvement. For this purpose, 'community' can be defined in many ways. It may be a geographic, socio-economic or cultural community, or it may be defined by the roles of people within it, such as carers. Learners come to community development programmes in many ways and at different levels. Many learners are taking their first step towards community involvement, others are building on skills that they have already gained and others are seeking qualifications that will help them to gain voluntary or paid work in their community. Some learners have moved on from other local community provision and some are referred by partner organisations. During the inspection, a variety of programmes were observed. These included courses for skills for volunteers, teaching adults in the community, introduction to community work, counselling skills, community interpreters' programme, a training initiative for women, and community mediation skills.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	59
Number of inspection days	612
Number of learner interviews/discussions in classes	4,862
Number of staff interviews	555
Number of volunteers interviews	103
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	574

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

21. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the community development programmes are good and science and mathematics, business administration, management and professional, ICT, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, humanities and family learning programmes are satisfactory. The provision in visual and performing arts and media, English, languages and communications and foundation programmes is unsatisfactory. The WEA's leadership and management of the provision are unsatisfactory. The association's approach to quality assurance is very weak. However, the association's approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

GRADES

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= unsatisfactory, grade 5= very weak

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	5

Sciences & mathematics	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

Information and communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

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Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3
Visual & performing arts and media	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4
Humanities	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3
English, languages & communications	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4
Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4
Family learning	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3
Community development	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

22. Learners participating in most of the WEA's programmes achieve their personal goals. For many learners the programmes provide a catalyst for them to attend further courses.

23. Learners on courses in hospitality and sports demonstrate good learning and achievement. In yoga classes there is good development and demonstration of flexibility, improvement in posture, balance and co-ordination. Learners develop good understanding of their subject.

24. On visual and performing arts and media programmes, learners gain significant personal enrichment by participating in a wide variety of additional learning activities.

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For example, learners exhibit art work, perform singing, dance and drama in groups and in public.

25. Learners on humanities programmes develop a good range of skills and knowledge.

In many courses they carry out extensive research outside classes, producing good examples of family history, papers on local industries, photographic evidence and some publications.

26. Learners develop new attitudes to support lifelong learning on English and modern foreign language programmes. Some learners from creative writing groups have submitted their work to publications such as the 'Big Issue'. In the community programme, learners of Arabic and Urdu gain valuable insights into the cultures of those places where Arabic and Urdu are spoken.

27. Learners show measurable increases in confidence and are able to use their learning both within the workplace and in the community. On trades union studies programmes learners use the skills gained from their course in their work as a shop steward or other representative in the workplace.

28. On ICT programmes many learners are able to use their new IT skills in local projects.

For example, to support their children's education, run the family business, produce resources for schools and community groups and to contribute to their communities. In the computing for farmers courses, learners are able to complete examples of standard government forms in preparation for their statistical returns.

29. There is good achievement in non-accredited provision. Learners on visual and performing arts courses produce very good work in three districts. Achievement for learners on creative writing programmes is good. Learners produce a variety of genres of writing, most of which is well written.

30. On family learning programmes there is good development of learners' skills and knowledge through discussion, practical activities and self-reflection. Learners apply their learning when working with children in schools as volunteers and at home with their own children.

31. Learners involved in community development activities acquire relevant skills and knowledge to enable them to participate more effectively in their communities. They learn to become effective group members and to participate in group learning.

32. In 2002-03, accreditation was available on 17.5 per cent of the WEA's programmes, although not all learners on these courses chose to pursue the accreditation. On trades union studies programmes, the WEA's national achievement rates have improved from 77 per cent to 83 per cent, but this masks considerable regional differences. On a short cookery and cake decorating programme there is good development of skills. In one district, learners achieved a 100 per cent pass rate of a short entry-level qualification and all learners progressed to a programme to work towards a level 1 qualification.

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33. On foundation programmes, there is good and improving achievement rates on workplace programmes, all of which are accredited. In 2002-03, 82 per cent of learners achieved an accredited outcome. Out of the five districts which provided workplace programmes during 2002-03, the highest rate of achievement was nearly 95 per cent.

34. On family learning programmes, most learners produce good work and those working towards accreditation achieve well. Most learners work towards short qualifications at levels 1 to 3. Others measure their progress against their planned learning outcomes.

35. Most learners on community development programmes make rapid progress. For instance, they achieved a level 3 qualification in community mediation skills after only two terms.

36. Attainment on foundation programmes is satisfactory. On some courses, there is good evidence of attainment. However, on others, attainment is poor and learners have not made significant progress despite attending for several years.

37. Too much attainment in the literature and modern foreign languages provision is unsatisfactory. Poor attainment in English literature is demonstrated by learners expressing superficial opinions. In modern foreign languages provision, particularly courses in the community programme, those learners with the lowest attainment rely heavily on translation from English. They do not gain fluency levels commensurate with their prior attainment or experience.

38. Retention rates on most programmes are high and show an improving trend. Over all programmes, rates have risen from 86.4 per cent in 2000-01 to 92.9 per cent in 2002-03.

39. Retention rates on trades union courses are excellent. Over the past three years they have improved from 98 per cent to over 99 per cent. **On science programmes the average retention rate is 96 per cent,** with the lowest district having retention over 85 per cent.

40. On ICT programmes, retention rates are high but vary with the context. However, they range from 85 per cent to 98 per cent.

41. Retention rates are also high on foundation programmes, but again vary according to context. In 2002-03, 86.2 per cent of learners remained on courses, an increase of 4 per cent from the previous year. Retention rates were above 80 per cent for 11 out of 12 districts. However, in one district retention was satisfactory at 78 per cent.

42. On all humanities programmes, retention rates are high. In 2000-01 retention rates were 93.7 per cent, which have risen to 96.7 per cent in 2002-03. **On most community development programmes retention rates are over 90 per cent.**

43. Attendance rates vary significantly between programmes. Over the period of the inspection, 78.8 per cent of learners registered on programmes attended the learning sessions observed by inspectors, with the lowest average attendance on foundation programmes at 69 per cent and the highest attendance on humanities and science

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programmes at over 85 per cent. In some visual and performing arts classes in the community programme, attendance was less than 50 per cent.

44. In one district, **attendance of trades union studies programmes by workers from transport unions is extremely poor** with fewer than 50 per cent of the learners being present at some sessions.

45. **There is poor attendance on many community classes in the foundation programme.** In one ESOL class observed during the inspection, only four out of 14 learners were present. Some registers for literacy, numeracy and language courses show good and regular attendance. In others, attendance is erratic. Poor attendance is affecting the continuity of some foundation courses.

46. **Poor punctuality and delayed class start times impact on learning in trades union studies, foundation and visual and performing arts and media programmes.**

47. On foundation programmes punctuality is satisfactory in many areas but varies greatly across classes. Tutors rarely challenge learners' late arrival. Lateness was a feature in 33 per cent of the classes observed in one district and 50 per cent of the classes observed in another.

48. **Learning in visual and performing and arts and media programmes is often delayed and disrupted by insufficient attention to punctuality and attendance.**

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Quality of education and training

Overall Grades awarded to all learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Science & mathematics	1	9	10	6	1	0	0	27
Business administration, management & professional	0	3	2	4	2	0	0	11
Information and communications technology	0	11	41	38	10	0	0	100
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	3	8	9	2	0	0	22
Visual & performing arts and media	2	22	28	20	8	0	0	80
Humanities	4	16	25	19	8	1	0	73
English, languages & communications	0	4	23	22	11	2	0	62
Foundation programmes	1	14	35	52	16	5	1	124
Family learning	0	6	12	6	2	0	0	26
Community development	0	6	2	3	0	0	0	11
Total	8	94	186	179	60	8	1	536
Per cent	54			33	13			

Grades awarded to general programme learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Science & mathematics	1	9	10	6	1	0	0	27
Information and communications technology	0	2	6	5	0	0	0	13
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Visual & performing arts and media	2	14	18	15	6	0	0	55
Humanities	4	15	23	17	7	1	0	67
English, languages & communications	0	4	21	17	9	0	0	51
Foundation programmes	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	8	44	78	62	23	1	0	216
Per cent	60			29	11			

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Grades awarded to community programme learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information and communications technology	0	7	31	32	9	0	0	79
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	3	8	7	2	0	0	20
Visual & performing arts and media	0	8	10	5	2	0	0	25
Humanities	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	6
English, languages & communications	0	0	2	4	2	2	0	10
Foundation programmes	0	12	31	48	14	5	1	111
Family learning	0	6	12	6	2	0	0	26
Community development	0	6	2	3	0	0	0	11
Total	0	43	98	107	32	7	1	288
Per cent	49			37	14			

Grades awarded to workplace programme learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	3	2	4	2	0	0	11
Information and communications technology	0	2	4	1	1	0	0	8
English, languages & communications	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Foundation programmes	0	2	4	4	2	0	0	12
Total	0	7	10	10	5	0	0	32
Per cent	53			10	16			

49. Overall, 54 per cent of learning sessions observed by inspectors were judged to be good or better, 33 per cent were satisfactory and 13 per cent were unsatisfactory. **There is too much unsatisfactory teaching on foundation, English and modern foreign languages, visual and performing arts and media and humanities programmes.** Within the WEA programme areas, the general programme has a greater proportion of learning sessions judged to be good or better than either the workplace or community programmes. Fifty-eight per cent of the unsatisfactory learning sessions observed were found on the community programmes.

50. **On science programmes, the teaching is mostly good or very good and lessons are well planned.** There is some good use of questioning and group work.

51. **Seventy-two per cent of the observed sessions on community development programmes were graded as good or very good** and the rest were satisfactory. Tutors on

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community development programmes have particularly good group facilitation skills. They make good use of learning activities that enable all learners in the group to participate at their own level and to contribute to group learning.

52. An effective range of teaching strategies are used in most sports and hospitality sessions, including individual, partner and group activities. Tutors use effective teaching methods, coaching skills and demonstration techniques.

53. On trades union studies programmes, most teaching is satisfactory, and some is good. Tutors facilitate learning through the use of the course materials. However, in some classes, there is insufficient differentiation to take account of learners' different starting points.

54. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory on family learning programmes. In the better learning sessions tutors are well prepared and use a variety of teaching strategies to motivate and engage learners. The weaker learning sessions are less well planned and learners are not sufficiently involved.

55. In visual and performing arts and media programmes, 61 per cent of teaching in the observed sessions on the general programme is good or better, 27 per cent is satisfactory and 11 per cent is unsatisfactory. However, there are significant variations between districts.

56. Similarly **on humanities programmes, teaching and learning is inconsistent throughout the country.** Twelve per cent of observed classes were judged to be unsatisfactory. However, over 25 per cent of classes observed were judged to be outstanding or very good.

57. On English and modern foreign language programmes inspectors judged 21 per cent of teaching to be unsatisfactory. Modern foreign language tutors use too much English. Thirty-three per cent of modern foreign language lessons seen in the community programme were judged to be weak. In those classes where tutors use English excessively, learners' fluency in the foreign language is unsatisfactory. In most English literature lessons on the general programme, tutors used a limited range of teaching methods.

58. There is much unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses. Twenty-three per cent of teaching in observed learning sessions for literacy and language was judged to be unsatisfactory. Some staff have difficulty in sustaining learners' interest, attention and concentration. The context in which language and literacy skills are taught is not always meaningful to learners.

59. Very good learning takes place in the trades union courses. Learners are highly motivated and hard working. All the programmes include the use of a learning journal and learners quickly get into the habit of reflecting on and recording their learning progress.

60. Sports and hospitality learners experience a wide range of challenging learning activities. Sport related courses, including yoga and other exercise related classes,

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promote health, fitness and lifestyle changes in a supportive manner. Hospitality and food-related courses improve awareness of healthy eating, diet and nutrition.

61. Learners on visual and performing arts and media programmes develop good technical and practical skills. Lively discussions in some art and music appreciation classes extend learning and challenge learners. Learners effectively use a range of techniques and processes in dressmaking, watercolour painting, calligraphy, pottery, guitar, singing and dancing.

62. Tutors and learners in community and general programmes in English and modern foreign languages, collaborate very effectively in order to agree the content of learning sessions. In a few classes tutors negotiated with learners to establish how best to practise and consolidate what they had just learned.

63. There is also good collaborative learning on ICT programmes. Learners are encouraged to negotiate many aspects of their courses, particularly on those which do not lead to qualifications. Learners are able to influence class timings and session length to make it easier for them to attend.

64. On foundation programmes, there is good personal and social skills development. There is good use of discussion and small group work in community learning classes. Learners on the workplace programme are more confident about taking the risk of speaking in public in a wide range of different situations.

65. Volunteers in the lessons on science programmes provide very effective support for the tutor, often arranging field trips and helping in classroom organisation. They are local to their community and help to arrange social activities.

66. On ICT programmes, there is insufficient attention to individual learning needs. The more able learners are not sufficiently challenged by the work they do. Learners often make slow progress. Some learners are unable to transfer their learning to other contexts.

67. There is poor management of visual and performing arts and media learning sessions in some districts. Some sessions are poorly planned and do not focus on learning and others rely too heavily on lists of topics or artefacts to be made. Tutors take decisions about the scheduling of learning sessions, without reference to or consultation with their line manager and arrange social activities in the course hours reducing learning time.

68. Overall, the management of resources for learning is satisfactory. Most tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced. There is particularly good expertise among tutors on science and on humanities programmes. There are insufficient staff with specialist knowledge on the literacy and language programmes. Some modern foreign language tutors have academic qualifications irrelevant to the taught subject and some tutors have no teaching qualification.

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69. There are good learning materials for programmes in trades union studies and family learning. The WEA is involved in innovative projects for the development of e-learning materials. Family learning resources are well designed and effective.

70. Learning materials are poor in the foundation community programmes, particularly ESOL, and tutors have to provide their own equipment for courses in science, humanities, sports and hospitality, visual and performing arts, and for ESOL programmes. There are some poor handouts on ICT and English and modern foreign language programmes.

71. While some accommodation is satisfactory, and on some workplace programmes accommodation is good and well equipped, there is also some poor accommodation affecting the learning on programmes in most areas of learning. Some learning environments are not fit for purpose. Much of the poorer accommodation is cramped with insufficient space for effective teaching sessions or to accommodate all learners. Some venues are not accessible to learners with mobility difficulties. In some sessions, learners are using inappropriate furniture for the activities they are carrying out.

72. Assessment is satisfactory on community development programmes. Where community development practice is particularly sound, community members carry out the assessment of community needs themselves with support from WEA field staff or staff from partner organisations. However, the recording of group and individual learning outcomes is not fully effective.

73. On ICT and hospitality and sports programmes, assessment of learners' progress on accredited courses is satisfactory. On ICT programmes, learners are aware of their progress, and how their work relates to the awarding body's requirements.

74. On hospitality and sports programmes, assessment of the small number of accredited courses is also satisfactory. Good use is made of witness testimony and digital photography to assist learners to gather evidence for their qualifications.

75. In all other areas of learning, assessment practice is inadequate. On science, trades union studies, and sport and hospitality programmes, there is a lack of defined criteria to measure learners' progress. Few records are kept to show individual learners' progress. Learners receive insufficient individual feedback about their progress. Assessment and moderation of the TUC courses are not thorough.

76. On non-accredited ICT programmes there is insufficient use of assessment to plan or monitor learning. Initial assessment on ICT and sports programmes is often perfunctory, and fails to identify learners' individual learning needs, or personal learning goals.

77. On sports programmes, tutors have informal discussions with learners but these are not used effectively as a means of initial assessment. Health questionnaires are not used consistently to identify the learner's suitability for taking part in exercise classes.

78. Similarly, **assessment processes on visual and performing arts programmes are inadequate.** In most cases there is no initial assessment of learners' needs. There is

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inadequate understanding of learners' previous experience. Formative and summative assessment are insufficient and do not provide information about learners' progress and achievement.

79. On humanities programmes, there is insufficient management of learning. Tutors often do not monitor individual learners' progress sufficiently, particularly in large classes where the lecture format is the main teaching method. Learning outcomes for courses are identified at group rather than individual level.

80. Assessment is weak on English and modern foreign language programmes. Initial assessment is rare. The learning outcomes system is insufficiently linked to the skills and knowledge learners need to acquire in order to succeed in their chosen programmes. It is not based on achievement or progression.

81. On foundation programmes, there is poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor learners' progress. Most classes have group learning aims. However, these are not always negotiated with learners. Most learners have an initial and further assessment, but the results of these assessments are rarely used as a basis for planning group or individual learning plans.

82. There is a good range of enrichment activities for learners on science and humanities programmes. Most science courses include fieldwork and visits to places such as museums. On humanities programmes, activities include day schools and theatre clubs, visits to local archive offices, museums, and exhibitions, walks and visits to places of interest.

83. Foundation courses are sited in premises which are convenient and easily accessible to learners. Most daytime community classes aimed at parents provide access to separate crèches.

84. On family learning courses, there is responsive provision for targeted groups. In one district in the previous year, 66 per cent of learners were enrolled from disadvantaged postcodes and 19 per cent were from minority ethnic groups.

85. Similarly on sports and hospitality courses, there is effective targeting of groups to widen participation in learning. Activities are carefully selected to attract identified target groups.

86. The national 'Helping in Schools' programme is well developed and successful. It is effectively monitored. Resources are good. In most classes the teaching is good or better.

87. For visual and performing arts, English and modern foreign language programmes and foundation programmes the curriculum provided is generally satisfactory in most districts. In these districts, courses meet the needs of new and returning learners and targeted groups of learners. However, in some districts the provision is based on that offered historically or is entirely based on the courses learners' request.

88. On visual and performing arts programmes, there are few initiatives in some districts for widening participation in learning. In all districts a narrow range of subjects are provided. For example, there are too few media courses.

89. For English and modern foreign language programmes, the needs of existing learners are met well. The community programme targets learners who would not traditionally be involved in learning. In the general programme, progression opportunities from modern foreign language courses are sometimes made available through local learning partnerships. **There are inadequate opportunities for learners to gain accreditation.**

90. On both humanities and science programmes, there is insufficient provision to widen participation in learning. Many branches have a longstanding tradition of offering humanities courses, but often they do not take into account the interests of all the community when identifying and selecting courses. Districts do not always effectively provide strategic direction in widening participation in learning to some of the branches.

91. Similarly, on general science programmes, the development of courses is largely through learners at branches joining together and deciding what programmes they want. **There is too little effective promotion of science and mathematics programmes to a wider age or socio-economic group.** The marketing of programmes is often poor.

92. Learners receive good advice, guidance and support on community development programmes. The WEA's staff use their extensive networks of contacts to develop a detailed knowledge of the learning opportunities that are available through the WEA, its partners and other providers. **There is also good practical support for learners.**

93. On ICT, visual and performing arts, humanities and English and modern foreign language courses, learners are given satisfactory advice to enable them to select the most appropriate course. In most districts the provision of advice relies on the knowledge of individual tutors. For visual and performing arts classes, this often does not relate to progression routes, whereas humanities and English and modern foreign language programmes do provide information on progression routes.

94. Most learners on family learning programmes receive insufficient information and advice before enrolment on many of the programmes. Learners are often not informed of course aims, objectives, activities used on the courses or the time commitment required before the first session.

95. On visual and performing arts programmes, tutors are responsible for providing support for learners. Support staff are available in some classes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. **Most tutors provide very good individual support for learners and take account of their individual needs and learning goals.**

96. Where tutors identify learners with additional learning needs on ICT courses, they make sensitive use of adaptive technology to allow learners to participate fully in learning sessions. They also adapt learning materials, for example, to meet the needs of visually or hearing impaired learners.

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97. **On foundation programmes in the workplace programme, some learners with additional needs are supported well.** Some community classes have two tutors, and learners are able to benefit from the different expertise and skills of the staff team. Most staff are aware of the learner support fund but only a few learners have accessed it.

98. On humanities programmes, there are significant variations in the use of additional learning support funds between districts to support individual learning needs. Some districts do not always provide appropriate support for all learners. For example, they do not always provide support for learners with hearing or visual impairments. Tutors vary in their ability to respond appropriately to individual learning needs.

99. Many learners on the science course in the general programme do not seek additional learning support. For example, hearing loops are not used for those learners with hearing impairments. Some learners' needs are not met.

100. **On English and modern foreign language programmes, the association pays insufficient attention to identified individual learning needs.** In creative writing classes, learners do not take the opportunities to develop their IT skills and some learners' literacy needs are not addressed.

101. **There is insufficient structured support for learners with additional needs on trades union studies programmes.** Some learners' additional learning needs are not met. Learners on the TUC programmes sometimes have identified literacy support needs but no specialist literacy support is provided.

Leadership and management

102. **Decisive actions have been taken to secure the operational stability of the WEA.** An interim chief executive was appointed in June 2003 to carry out an institutional review. Significant progress has been made in a short period of time on instigating new operational planning, monitoring and reporting procedures. New financial monitoring systems have been introduced which have yet to become fully established.

103. **The WEA's mission and key objectives have been reviewed in a well-formulated three-year framework for corporate development.** It includes a requirement to rebalance the curriculum over a period of three years which will significantly increase the proportions of workplace activity and targeted provision. Provision will be reconfigured into nine regions.

104. During a challenging period of institutional review, involving major changes of personnel at the corporate level, district secretaries and their management teams have played an important role in maintaining the continuity of provision in all three WEA programme areas.

105. **There are particularly well-managed community development projects at the district level.** In this area the curriculum is effectively devised by local co-ordinators to

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meet learners' needs. There is good informal monitoring of progress but a thorough evaluation of projects is not always carried out. Good practice is not routinely shared between districts.

106. The association has well-established and productive working relationships with a very wide range of organisations, particularly on its community and workplace programmes. These partnerships were established to widen participation in learning and are particularly effective in ICT, visual and performing arts, and foundation programmes, community development and family learning. However, only a minority of districts have adequate partnership agreements.

107. There is extensive involvement of volunteers throughout the association. Learners are involved in governance at local levels through branch and regional district committees. Voluntary members show good commitment to the association. A number of districts have made effective use of volunteers from community and workplace courses who have been encouraged by tutors to take part in classes by helping other learners.

108. The association's national self-assessment report, and those of most districts are thoughtful and critical. The process, conducted in the past 12 months has been sound, reviewing all aspects of the provision.

109. The governance of the association is insufficiently secure. The committee structure of the national executive has been streamlined and individual portfolio responsibilities have been assigned to trustees. Scrutiny panels are not yet operational. A scheme of delegation has been drafted but has not been formally approved. The legal status of the association currently remains that of an unincorporated charity with no limits on the personal liabilities of trustees. Learners on the community and workplace programmes are not well represented on the NEC or on district committees.

110. There is insufficient involvement by governors in quality monitoring and evaluating district performance. Some governors do not have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and spheres of intervention. They have yet to receive training to perform their scrutiny role and evaluate their own performance effectively.

111. There is insufficient use of management data to monitor performance or set targets. There have been significant recent improvements in the collection of data at both national and district levels. However, improvements have still to be made in the accuracy of recruitment data, in the timely presentation of data to measure the progress made in the achievement of strategic objectives, and in identifying and implementing remedial actions.

112. Some district management teams are not routinely evaluating management data to monitor progress or to inform curriculum planning. The use of targets is not well established in some districts. There is insufficient focus on monitoring learners' retention and achievement rates.

113. There is ineffective curriculum review to inform planning and development. A comprehensive educational strategy has been devised. Six education strategy managers

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have recently been appointed. These changes are very recent and have yet to have impact on the management of the curriculum. Corporate initiatives in the planning and development of the curriculum have met with a significant variation in interpretation and response at the district level.

114. The development of the curriculum in some areas has not been informed by a systematic needs analysis. The provision of general programmes in some districts does not reflect the cultural diversity and communities of interest represented in the local population.

115. The community programme is not effectively planned and co-ordinated to meet the needs of the target learner groups. The current well-formulated written guidance for the community programme provided centrally is only advisory.

116. Many districts were not able to maintain accurate records of the classes that were running during the period of the inspection. Records of class cancellations are not maintained and there has been no analysis carried out centrally to establish patterns and identify causes.

117. There is inadequate management and support for individual subject disciplines. In many districts, there is insufficient guidance and support available for individual subject disciplines and no formal arrangements for the sharing of good practice. There is insufficient focus on identifying and meeting the professional development needs in individual areas of learning. Tutors are unaware of the resources available to them and an assumed autonomy amongst some tutors has meant procedures are not followed consistently.

118. Assessment practice is inadequate. The current measure of achievements on most non-accredited programmes is by learning outcomes determined by the learner. Self-determined learning outcomes are not related to levels of study. **In many cases, learning outcomes are not measurable and there is no formal review of learners' progress.**

119. There is weak monitoring of health and safety. The current health and safety policy for the association was last updated in 1995. There has been no documented central communication with districts regarding policies, procedures and new legislation for four years. The responsibility for health and safety is delegated to districts. There is no central monitoring of district policies or safe working practices. Districts have developed their own systems for the assessment of venues and for issuing guidance. There is variation in the effectiveness of these arrangements.

120. Management of additional learning support for literacy, numeracy and language is inadequate in most districts. The association's overall strategy for the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills is not adequate. Many courses, for example in visual and performing arts and media, do not sufficiently make an assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs.

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121. Weaknesses in quality assurance identified at the previous inspection conducted by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) are still apparent. The association does not have a quality assurance framework or manual, though work is in progress on these. A number of policy documents are available covering a range of topics, but there are no arrangements for monitoring how effectively they are being implemented, or for reviewing their influence on provision. Observations of teaching and learning are insufficient to assure the quality of teaching and learning.

122. Arrangements for the performance management of staff are inadequate. Arrangements for staff appraisal show considerable variation across the association as a whole. Training needs are clearly identified but there is no formal mechanism to ensure all identified needs and their actions are implemented. Permanent staff are reviewed annually, though recorded actions and outcomes from reviews are often not sufficiently clear. Sessional tutors are not included in the performance review scheme.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- effective recent actions to restore operational stability
- well-formulated three-year framework for corporate development
- good district management of programmes for community development
- productive partnerships to widen participation
- extensive involvement of active volunteers throughout the association
- particularly analytical self-assessment reports

Weaknesses

- insufficiently secure governance
- insufficient use of management data and target-setting to monitor performance
- ineffective curriculum review to guide planning and development
- insufficient management and support for individual subject disciplines
- inadequate assessment practice
- weak monitoring of health and safety
- inadequate management of additional support for literacy, numeracy and language
- insufficiently established quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate arrangements for the performance management of staff
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity

Sciences & mathematics

Strengths

- good retention rates and attendance
- good teaching and learning
- good range of enrichment activities
- well-organised and effectively used volunteers

Weaknesses

- poorly defined criteria against which to measure learners' progress
- poor accommodation and resources in some lessons
- insufficient range of science and mathematics programmes to effectively widen participation
- ineffective quality assurance arrangements

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- excellent retention rates
- some good development of independent learning and vocational skills
- good course design and learning materials
- good equal opportunities awareness on trades union programmes

Weaknesses

- some poor attendance and punctuality
- weak formative assessment
- little structured support for learners with additional needs
- ineffective use of feedback to improve provision
- insufficient monitoring of tutors' performance

Information and communications technology

Strengths

- high retention rates
- good practical use of ICT skills in wider social contexts
- effective involvement of learners in planning their course content
- successful use of partnerships to develop community provision

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Weaknesses

- insufficient challenge for more able learners
- insufficient use of assessment to plan and monitor learning
- inadequate monitoring of the provision

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths

- good learning and achievement
- wide range of challenging learning activities
- good development of wider skills
- effective targeting of learner groups to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment
- poor recording of learner progress
- inadequate attention to health and safety

Visual and performing arts and media

Strengths

- significant personal enrichment
- good development of technical and practical skills
- effective partnerships to promote learning in communities

Weaknesses

- poor classroom management in some districts
- inadequate assessment processes
- ineffective curriculum management
- weak quality assurance

Humanities

Strengths

- very good retention rates
- good development of learners' skills and knowledge
- good range of enrichment activities

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Weaknesses

- insufficient management of learning
- insufficient attention to widening participation
- insufficient use of quality assurance procedures to improve teaching and learning

English, languages & communications

Strengths

- good achievement in creative writing
- significant development of attitudes to maintain lifelong learning
- effective collaboration between tutors and learners to direct learning

Weaknesses

- excessive use of English by tutors of modern foreign languages
- narrow range of teaching methods in literature
- weak assessment
- weak curriculum management
- weak quality assurance

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- high retention rates
- good and improving achievement on workplace programmes
- good development of learners' personal skills and confidence
- good use of partnerships to attract new learners
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses
- some poor attendance on community classes
- insufficient learning materials and equipment on community programmes
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan work and monitor progress
- inadequate curriculum management in many districts
- inadequate quality assurance

Family learning

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills to support children
- wide range of well-designed learning resources
- responsive provision for targeted groups
- well-developed and successful 'Helping in Schools' programme

Weaknesses

- much inappropriate accommodation
- insufficient initial assessment
- insufficient detailed information and guidance prior to enrolment
- insufficient focus on teaching and learning during lesson observations

Community development

Strengths

- very good development of skills and knowledge to aid learners' participation in their communities
- very good retention rates
- particularly good group facilitation by tutors
- close collaboration with partners meeting the needs and interests of learners and communities
- good use of local networks to support learners' progression
- good local management of projects and programmes

Weaknesses

- inadequate evaluation of the effect of programmes on communities
- insufficient sharing of good practice

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION:

- they are able to learn as part of a socially diverse group – 'everyone is friendly and you can have a laugh'
- tutors are skilled and approachable - 'we don't just chat. She teaches us.'
- the provision is local – 'it's on the estate and I don't have to go far'
- the variety of learning activities - 'it's never monotonous or boring'
- courses are mentally stimulating - 'it keeps the grey matter active'
- courses are free or affordable
- the crèche facilities - 'most parents couldn't manage without it'
- they are consulted about course content and the range of courses run
- they learn about themselves and gain confidence
- they can gain recognition of their achievements through credit systems or accreditation

WHAT LEARNERS THINK WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION COULD IMPROVE:

- more information and guidance before starting the course
- less uncertainty about courses running when few learners have enrolled
- more classes
- more learning resources - 'more copies of handouts so we don't have to share'
- better physical resources in some centres - 'the room is too small for the number of learners'
- more follow-up courses - 'a follow-up session after six months would be good, to see how we've all got on and to support each other'
- clearer progression routes
- longer courses on the workplace programme - 'we need more time, particularly for the writing up. This should be a five-day course, not three days'
- more efficient administration of the learner support fund - 'so that payments are sorted out promptly'
- better car-parking facilities

KEY CHALLENGES FOR WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION:

- maintain the impetus of change
- establish effective quality assurance arrangements
- enhance tutors' skills for literacy and language provision
- ensure all tutors share the association's renewed vision
- build on the skills of volunteers and link them to the renewed vision
- provide support for all learners
- rebalance provision towards widening participation in learning, including the workplace programme, and develop governance to reflect this balance and vision
- enhance and effectively establish the scrutiny roles of trustees and committee members
- develop closer monitoring of current provision at district and national level

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- effective recent actions to restore operational stability
- well-formulated three-year framework for corporate development
- good district management of programmes for community development
- productive partnerships to widen participation
- extensive involvement of active volunteers throughout the association
- particularly analytical self-assessment reports

Weaknesses

- insufficiently secure governance
- insufficient use of management data and target-setting to monitor performance
- ineffective curriculum review to guide planning and development
- insufficient management and support for individual subject disciplines
- inadequate assessment practice
- weak monitoring of health and safety
- inadequate management of additional support for literacy, numeracy and language
- insufficiently established quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate arrangements for the performance management of staff
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity

123. Decisive actions have been taken to secure operational stability. During 2002-03, financial management was weak and the association had a growing operating deficit. Relationships between governance and management were inadequate and there was no overall strategy for improvement and future development. The monitoring of the association's work in the districts was ineffective. In June 2003, an interim chief executive was appointed to carry out an institutional review and to instigate new operational planning, monitoring and reporting procedures. Additional funds were provided by the LSC to stabilise the financial position and to support the development and implementation of a recovery plan. Significant progress has been made in a short period of time, which has started to have impact on the operation of the association at all levels.

124. A revised corporate structure has been introduced and recent new appointments made to a senior management team. A new infrastructure to support key business processes is being developed, with additional resources devoted to administration and IT. Corporate management meetings and meetings of the national executive are more purposeful, with clearly recorded decisions. Outcomes are well documented and shared throughout the association. The monthly meetings of the AMT effectively bring together

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district secretaries and corporate managers. There is greater management accountability and an improved clarity of roles and responsibilities for managers. New financial monitoring systems are yet to become fully established. Inspectors matched the association's self-assessment judgement that financial management is currently unsatisfactory.

125. There is a closer working relationship with the local LSC. A representative from the LSC attends trustee meetings as an observer. An agreement is being negotiated that responsibility for the WEA contract will transfer from the local LSC to the LSC national contracting service. A scheduled repayment of the LSC advance has not yet been agreed. The planned transitional phase has been completed with the appointment of a new general secretary, who has recently taken over from the acting chief executive.

126. There is a well-formulated three-year framework for corporate development. The WEA's mission and key objectives have been reviewed. A three-year plan sets out the key principles on which the review was based and which will shape the future development of the association. The plan has been formally agreed by the NEC and, as a three-year development plan, by the LSC. The overall aim of the forward plan is to bring about a better match between the association's aims and objectives and its impact at local, regional and national levels. The plan includes a requirement to rebalance the curriculum over a period of three years to significantly increase the proportions of workplace activity and targeted provision. The plan clearly expresses objectives linked to the association's overall targets, to be achieved over a three-year period. A one-year operational plan for the first year was not developed to accompany the strategy, but an operational plan for the second year, 2004-05, is currently being formulated. An annual cycle of strategic review has been introduced. The rationale for the changes is well understood at the district level. Most staff and branch officials are fully supportive of the national priorities.

127. A key feature of the development framework involves the reconfiguration of the WEA's 12 districts into nine regions, coterminous with the nine government offices and regional development agencies. The new arrangements, which will become operational from August 2004, are intended to facilitate closer links with the existing regional networks of government agencies, including local LSCs. New staffing structures are currently being agreed in each region to support regional and local management functions and to strengthen lines of accountability. No costed plan has been prepared to detail the anticipated costs and benefits of the reorganisation.

128. During a challenging period of institutional review, involving major changes of personnel at the corporate level, district secretaries and their management teams have played an important role in maintaining the continuity of provision in all three WEA programme areas. There are particularly well-managed community development projects at the district level. The projects are effectively devised by local co-ordinators to meet learners' needs. Tutors are carefully selected and have appropriate skills. There is good informal monitoring of progress, but a thorough evaluation of projects is not always made and good practice is not systematically shared between districts.

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129. Overall, the management of resources for learning is satisfactory. Most tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced. There is particularly strong expertise among tutors on science and humanities programmes. However, there are insufficient staff with specialist knowledge of literacy, numeracy and language teaching. Some tutors of modern foreign languages have academic qualifications irrelevant to the taught subject and some tutors have no teaching qualification. Districts maintain records of tutors' qualifications, but the information is being held in different formats. Some records do not give a clear indication of levels of tutors' professional teaching qualifications. Induction for sessional tutors is arranged by individual districts and is generally effective.

130. There are good learning materials for programmes in trades union studies and family learning. The WEA is involved in innovative projects to develop e-learning materials, particularly in the North West district. Learning materials are poor in the foundation community programmes, particularly ESOL, and tutors often have to provide their own equipment for courses in science, sports and hospitality, humanities, visual and performing arts, and for ESOL programmes.

131. The governance of the association is insufficiently secure. The weaknesses in governance identified in a previous inspection report by the FEFC have not been dealt with. The need to clarify governors' understanding of their role and to improve the processes of challenge and scrutiny has been recognised by the association. A clearer distinction has been made in the organisational structure between the governance of the association and the functions of management at national and local levels. NEC trustees have begun a programme of training. The committee structure of the national executive has been streamlined and individual responsibilities have been assigned to trustees. Scrutiny panels are not yet operational. A scheme of delegation has been drafted but has not been formally approved. A constitutional project group is reviewing options for incorporation. The legal status of the association currently remains that of an unincorporated charity with no limits on the personal liabilities of trustees. The general secretary also acts as clerk to the NEC. The NEC has not reviewed the suitability of this arrangement and the potential conflict of interest. Community and workplace learners are not well represented on the NEC or on district committees.

132. There is a consistently high level of commitment from local governors, many of whom have long experience as WEA learners. There are examples in some districts of effective support from chairpersons and committee members. However, overall, governors are not sufficiently involved in quality monitoring and evaluating district performance. Some governors do not have a clear understanding of the extent of their responsibilities. They have yet to receive training to perform their scrutiny role and evaluate their own performance effectively.

133. Management data are not used sufficiently to monitor performance and set targets. There have been significant recent improvements in the collection of data at national and district levels. An analysis and assessment of the overall WEA performance for 2002-03 has been completed and, for the first time, the AMT has conducted a mid-year review of progress this year against contractual targets. However, improvements have still to be made in the accuracy of in-year recruitment data, in the timely presentation of data to

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measure the progress made in the achievement of strategic objectives, and in identifying and implementing remedial actions. The numbers of enrolments on programmes and the demographic profile of enrolments are closely monitored, but the numbers of learners and the proportion of learners that are new have not been routinely reported on. There are no central records of learners' destinations.

134. Overall association targets have been set for recruitment, success rates, achievement on accredited programmes, recruitment to literacy, numeracy and language provision and for rebalancing the curriculum over a three-year period. Individual districts decide on their own targets to contribute to these overall objectives. Once district targets are aggregated, no further revisions are made to ensure individual districts make a fair contribution to meeting corporate objectives.

135. The three-year development plan provides information on the current proportions of learners in each of the three WEA programme areas of general, community and workplace as baseline data against which to set targets for rebalancing the curriculum. The proportion of learners on programmes at the time of the inspection was different from that reported in the plan. There was a significant shortfall in the number of learners on workplace programmes, at 3 per cent compared with an assumption in the plan of 6 per cent. A correspondingly higher proportion of learners were on general education programmes.

136. In addition to the main national LSC contract, local districts hold separate local contracts for LSC co-financed European funded work, for other projects and for subcontracted adult and community learning provision. This work has not been consistently reported on and monitored centrally. There is no comprehensive picture of all the WEA's activity. In the current year, each district has been asked to provide outline financial information on these separate projects. Some districts have not reported on their performance so far and in some cases, there is no indication of the number of learners involved.

137. The collection of data and generation of reports has improved in most districts. Nonetheless, there remain inconsistencies in the way data are collected and some district management teams are not systematically evaluating management data to monitor progress and guide curriculum planning. The use of targets is not well established in some districts. Close attention is given to recruitment, but there is insufficient focus on monitoring retention and achievement rates. Not all field staff are adequately trained to make effective use of the association's management information system.

138. There is ineffective curriculum review to guide planning and development. Corporate initiatives for the planning and development of the curriculum have met with a significant variation in interpretation and response at the district level. In the absence of established national mechanisms for curriculum review, monitoring and compliance, there is an overall lack of consistency in the district planning and management of the curriculum. National initiatives, such as a major public sector union programme, learning@work, and 'Helping in Schools' have been successfully established. Some districts have responded well and others have been slower to make adjustments. For

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example, some districts have set low targets for improvement in skills for life programmes. There are further discrepancies in interpretation and response to strategic objectives between branches and between subregions in individual districts.

139. The development of the curriculum in some areas has not been shaped by a systematic needs analysis. The provision of general programmes in some districts does not reflect the cultural diversity and communities of interest in the local population. General programmes in some districts are not devised with clear indications of levels of study and of progression routes between levels. In some cases, there is a lack of clarity in the relationship districts have with branches in determining the curriculum offered. There are some recent examples where field officers have successfully supported branches to revise the provision offered. The need to attract younger learners has been recognised by the association. There is insufficient monitoring of some courses in the general programme, particularly in visual and performing arts, to ensure that classes last for their full advertised duration and that groups are following an agreed programme of learning at each meeting.

140. The community programme is not effectively planned and co-ordinated to meet the needs of the target groups. The current well-formulated written guidance for the community programme is only advisory and, in the case of the guidance for family learning and for programmes for students with mental health difficulties, is currently only available in draft form. There are good examples of innovative projects in the community programme and effective use of the expertise of local tutor organisers. Good practice is not shared sufficiently between districts and the number of community programmes being developed varies. Of the unsatisfactory sessions observed during the inspection, 58 per cent were in community programmes.

141. The strategy for the growth of workplace provision is not well developed, despite an expectation of growth in this area of work in the corporate forward plan. However, there are some well-established as well as new national contracts, and some innovative local projects, such as the provision of ICT programmes for farmers.

142. Many districts were not able to maintain accurate records of the classes that ran during the period of the inspection. Records of class cancellations are not being maintained and there has been no central analysis to establish patterns and identify causes.

143. Many district management teams cannot meet the responsibilities placed upon them. Because of financial constraints, some key co-ordinating posts are vacant or positions are temporary pending the outcomes of regionalisation. Line management in some districts is unclear. New staffing structures for each region are being formulated to tackle these deficiencies.

144. Weaknesses in curriculum management were recognised in each of the programme area self-assessment reports. A comprehensive educational strategy has led to the recent appointment of six education strategy managers. Each post covers a specific educational management role across the association, together with a brief to improve consistency and support the development of provision in two WEA districts. These changes are very recent and have yet to have impact on the management of the curriculum. The framework for a

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curriculum review has been agreed but not yet implemented. The review is intended to bring about a closer focus on meeting the needs of priority target groups.

145. There is inadequate management and support for individual subject disciplines. District management team members are responsible for geographical areas or for one of the three WEA programme areas. In many districts, there is insufficient guidance and support for individual subject disciplines and no formal arrangements to share good practice. Tutors do not know what resources are available to them and an assumed autonomy among some tutors has meant procedures are not followed consistently. There is insufficient focus on identifying and meeting professional development needs in individual areas of learning. The range of programmes offered within subject areas varies significantly between districts. Districts which have recently introduced management posts with subject responsibilities have seen improvements in support. However, some training events have been poorly attended, particularly by longer-serving tutors.

146. Assessment practice is inadequate. Achievement on most non-accredited programmes is measured by learner-determined learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are not related to levels of study. In many cases, they are not measurable and there is no formal review of learners' progress. The WEA is involved in piloting new procedures for reporting on achievement in non-accredited learning. However, inadequacies in assessment practice, variously relating to initial assessment, formative and summative assessment, and in the formal recording of progress, were identified in nine of the 10 areas of learning inspected.

147. There is weak overall monitoring of health and safety. The current health and safety policy for the association was last updated in 1995. There has been no written central communication with districts regarding policies, procedures and new legislation for four years. The responsibility for health and safety is delegated to districts. There is no central monitoring of district policies or safe working practices. There has been no central audit regarding risk assessment of venues or types of activity. Districts have developed their own systems for the assessment of venues and issuing guidance. These arrangements vary in their effectiveness. Health and safety paperwork is not reviewed annually. Some tutors are not receiving guidance materials. Responsibilities for health and safety are not clear in some partnership agreements. Concerns raised by a health and safety officer in one district which had not been promptly responded to, and some tutors are not routinely informing tutor organisers of health and safety issues. Some tutors are working in isolation in areas of disadvantage, where no formal risk assessments have been carried out. A number of venues are unfit for purpose and other learning environments have a detrimental impact on learners' experiences.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

148. The association has well-established and productive working relationships with a very wide range of organisations, particularly on its community and workplace programmes. These partnerships were established to widen participation in learning and are particularly effective in ICT, visual and performing arts, foundation, family learning and community development programmes. They assist the development of learning

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programmes to meet locally the needs of specific groups of learners. The WEA's involvement in local networks has resulted in programmes run in partnership with local authorities, local health trusts, local authorities and schools. This is particularly the case in the Scottish Association where most funding arises from close partnership working to develop projects designed to reduce educational disadvantage. Some districts have made good use of additional external funding to develop projects and build capacity within communities, and to meet additional support costs. At a national level, workplace learning programmes have gained from close working relationships with trades unions and the TUC, and with private and public sector employers such as the National Health Service (NHS). Programmes have also been introduced in response to national initiatives, for example in relation to ICT and literacy, numeracy and language support. Some districts show a particularly high proportion of community learning activities, at 60 per cent, which is above the target figure for the organisation as a whole published in the three-year development plan, which stands at 45 per cent. Similarly, involvement by association staff in local planning groups is of benefit to the strategic development of provision. For example, in one district, a WEA tutor organiser chairs the literacy and numeracy subcommittee of the local learning partnership. Trades union and community development courses are particularly effective in reinforcing equality of opportunity through the teaching materials.

149. The operation of the WEA is characterised by a participative culture and the strong importance attached to local democracy. Learners are involved in governance at local levels through branch and regional district committees. Voluntary members show great commitment to the association and can describe its value to them. At branch level, volunteers take an active role in the organisation of the general programmes. In one district some class secretaries are effective in developing the provision. Science and mathematics courses make good use of volunteers to enhance participants' learning and social experience.

150. A number of districts have made effective use of voluntary education advisers. These are learners and former learners from community and workplace courses who have been encouraged by tutors to help other learners in classes. Voluntary education advisers enjoy the role and the additional responsibilities associated with it. They provide a useful bridge between learners and tutors and frequently, through their own recent experiences as learners, demonstrate good understanding of the difficulties faced by other learners. They also act as positive role models for adult learners and provide good examples of progression. Many staff are former learners who, as volunteers, became increasingly involved in the association. Some districts organise formal training for volunteers. Where this has taken place it has been effective in enabling volunteers to gain understanding of how best to help other learners. However, volunteer training overall has been sporadic and has not taken place in a planned or co-ordinated way.

151. The association was formed to widen participation in learning and to reduce educational disadvantage. It has a long history of activity in this area of provision. However, secure arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this important work have only recently been introduced and a number of initiatives have not yet begun to take effect. The equality and diversity policy has only recently been updated

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and is not yet sufficiently sharing practice across the association. The association has only recently begun to set targets for recruitment of learners from minority ethnic communities or with disabilities. No targets have been identified for recruiting men, despite their low representation across the population of learners as a whole. The association does not yet monitor achievement by learners from minority ethnic communities or with disabilities. Although districts have organised some training for tutors on equality and diversity, for example on the implications of disability and discrimination legislation, attendance at these events has not been monitored to ensure that all staff receive training, and there have been no measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. Arrangements to monitor staff recruitment across the association have been uneven. Some districts routinely review their staff profile in terms of gender, disability or ethnicity, but there is no overall WEA approach to this.

152. Management of additional support for literacy, numeracy and language development is inadequate in most districts. The association has no adequate overall strategy for the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills. Many courses, for example in visual and performing arts and media, do not assess learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs adequately. Arrangements for initial assessment, where they exist, are frequently determined by individual tutors. The effectiveness of initial assessment is rarely monitored, and the results of assessment are not used to plan future learning activities. Courses that have been designed to develop specific skills in literacy, numeracy or language provision are better in this respect. Some districts have effective methods for improving literacy, numeracy or language skills. Staff and tutors show good understanding of the issues and local needs, and have developed provision with some effective projects. In these districts, staff development has been thorough and staff give good literacy, numeracy and language support in community programmes.

153. In some districts, support funds for learners are underspent, while insufficient use is made of additional learning support. Although a range of information is provided for districts about how to use additional support funds, tutors and learners are unclear about how arrangements for additional learning support operate. There is insufficient monitoring of the use and effectiveness of additional support funds. The association places high priority on the provision of childcare facilities and flexible arrangements ensure that these are readily available for learners and their children.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 5

154. The association's self-assessment reports, nationally and in most districts, have been thoughtful and self-critical. The self-assessment process, conducted over the past 12 months, has been sound, reviewing all aspects of provision. It covered the WEA's various spheres of activity as well as matching judgements against the *Common Inspection Framework*. Consultation with staff and learners was satisfactory overall, but some districts managed the consultative process much better than others. Managers were, for the most part, careful and thorough in scrutinising identified strengths and weaknesses. One district's self-assessment process made particularly effective use of a 'traffic light' grading system, through which managers identified aspects of provision which they judged to be good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The self-assessment process was less secure in a few

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districts. Despite the involvement of tutors and good use of feedback from learners, a number of areas of normal practice were identified as strengths and one area of learning was given a good grade despite the recognition of a number of significant weaknesses. Inspectors graded provision lower than the association's self-assessed grades for leadership and management, quality assurance, trades union studies, visual and performing arts and media, humanities, English language, communications and modern foreign languages and foundation programmes.

155. Weaknesses in quality assurance identified at the FEFC inspection are still apparent. Although progress has been made in some areas, inspectors matched the self-assessment judgement that quality assurance arrangements are insufficiently established. The association has no quality assurance framework or manual, although work is in progress on them. A number of policy documents cover a range of matters, but there are no arrangements for monitoring how effectively they are being implemented, or for reviewing their influence on provision. In trades union studies little use is made of feedback to improve provision. On foundation programmes in one district some useful quality assurance arrangements have been introduced, although quality assurance of foundation programmes across the WEA as a whole is inadequate.

156. Observations of teaching and learning, known as the class visiting scheme, are insufficient to assure the quality of teaching and learning. In some districts, there are not enough staff to conduct visits, while in others the target of visiting 10 per cent of tutors each year, for example in trades union studies and ICT, is not adequate. Some districts focus their classroom observations on new tutors, or new areas of provision. This is helpful to provide early feedback, but means that several years may elapse between visits to more experienced tutors. The class visiting scheme has traditionally been a means of providing support and development for tutors, rather than as part of a quality assurance process. Only one district gives grades for lesson observations. The absence of a grading system for observations of teaching and learning weakens the process. The quality of feedback from lesson observations varies significantly, as does the way in which feedback from visits is used to improve the performance of individual tutors. In family learning programmes there is insufficient focus on teaching and learning in lesson observations. On visual and performing arts and humanities courses the quality of the observation and the subsequent feedback to tutors are not effective. Some districts experience difficulties with paperwork and ensuring consistency of implementation.

157. Across the association as a whole there has been insufficient sharing of good practice. This is a particular area of weakness on community development courses. Examples of good practice exist in all districts and at all levels of management, but much of them are very localised. Some tutors make good use of the association's intranet to discuss matters, keep in regular contact with each other and with local managers, and to share resources. However, many tutors are not aware of the intranet or registered to use it. The recently appointed education strategy managers have, as part of their role, a responsibility to promote good practice across the districts and share identified good practice across the association. Senior managers are clear about the role they will play, although the whole team has not yet begun to operate.

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158. Arrangements for the performance management of staff are inadequate. Staff appraisals show considerable variation across the association as a whole. Training needs are clearly identified but there is no formal mechanism to ensure all identified actions are taken. Permanent staff are reviewed annually, but recorded actions and outcomes from reviews are often not sufficiently clear. The performance review process is not related closely enough to organisational objectives. In one district, performance management of the permanent staff has been weak, with no arrangements for regular appraisals and an over-reliance on informal contact. In another, identified targets and objectives are becoming more effective as the performance review scheme becomes more established. Sessional tutors are not included in the performance review scheme. Their performance is evaluated through lesson observations or through informal contact with their programme area managers. On a number of courses, for example in ICT, the work of tutors is only reviewed in response to complaints or withdrawals from classes.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Sciences & mathematics	
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention rates and attendance
- good teaching and learning
- good range of enrichment activities
- well-organised and effectively used volunteers

Weaknesses

- poorly defined criteria against which to measure learners' progress
- poor accommodation and resources in some lessons
- insufficient range of science and mathematics programmes to effectively widen participation
- ineffective quality assurance arrangements

Achievement and standards

General programme

159. Retention rates in most districts are high, at 96.7 per cent average and falling no lower than 85 per cent, in one district. Class attendance during the inspection was 85 per cent.

160. Many learners achieve their personal goals and the courses enthuse them to attend further courses. Many learners successfully continue their learning outside the classroom. In many classes there are good, supportive relationships between tutors and learners and for many learners the classes are both a social and a learning experience.

161. Learners take great care in practical work, such as examination of flowers, birds or geological samples and develop good practical skills. They purchase textbooks, maps and other learning aids to effectively continue their studies outside of lessons. The standard of note-taking varies. In a few lessons, learners take no notes and there is little evidence of the depth of learning taking place.

Quality of education and training

General programme

162. The teaching is generally good or very good and lessons are well planned. Seventy-four per cent of lessons observed were good or better. Tutors use a variety of activities to encourage learners to contribute and share their ideas with others. Questioning and group work are sometimes used well. For example, in one geology lesson the class worked well in small groups to study maps and put forward reasons for geological events. However, in a few lessons the planning is insufficiently detailed and learners have little opportunity to contribute. For example, in an astronomy lesson the tutor continually showed photo slides with limited explanations and little learner interaction. The enthusiasm of tutors is high and they are knowledgeable. All have suitable academic qualifications and experience and over 50 per cent are qualified teachers.

163. There is a good range of enrichment activities. Most courses include fieldwork and visits to organisations such as museums. In one district, learners had organised a trip to the Greenwich observatory. They successfully linked their theoretical knowledge to a deeper understanding and had the opportunity to meet experts in their field. On many courses, the fieldwork gives learners opportunities to see real world examples, develop practical skills in observation and data collection and to enhance their use of field guides to identify flowers, birds or geological formations. These activities effectively extend and reinforce their studies.

164. Volunteers provide very effective support for the tutor, often arranging field trips and helping in classroom organisation. They are local to their community and help to arrange social activities.

165. Accommodation and resources are poor for some lessons. Tutors often provide much of the equipment, such as projectors and samples for practical work, as the classrooms vary considerably in suitability and resources. Often, the teaching styles used are determined by the resources available. Tutors and learners have become adept at coping with often inadequate resources for practical work. For example, one group examining flowers through hand lenses managed to hold the flowers on textbooks as there were no tables to provide a flat surface. Handouts, when given to learners, are usually of a high standard but some are poorly photocopied and lack detail. In some districts, there is insufficient evidence of the WEA's involvement in checking that accommodation and equipment meets health and safety and disability discrimination requirements. Few of the outdoor activities, such as fieldwork and visits, have sufficient risk assessment. In some districts, the WEA's staff have prepared guidelines on health and safety for tutors, who are required to report any problems to the WEA for action. New tutors in some districts receive an induction which covers health and safety.

166. The criteria against which to measure learners' progress are poorly defined. Few records are kept from week to week to show individual progress. The WEA has recently introduced a pilot scheme to help tutors measure learners' progress, but this is only used in

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a small number of courses. Many learners have been studying with the WEA for many years and when one course is completed they take further related courses.

167. Many learners on the general programme do not seek or have their additional learning support needs met, for example the use of hearing loops for those with hearing impairments.

168. The range of science and mathematics programmes is too narrow to effectively widen participation. The development of general education courses is largely through learners at branches joining together and deciding what programmes they want. The WEA at district level then provides tutors. Within science and mathematics programmes there are few community or workplace programmes. In some areas, staff are allocated time to develop this subject area but the time allocated is insufficient. One subject expert had been developing ideas for an 'everyday chemistry' course but did not have sufficient time or support to complete it. The marketing of programmes is often poor.

169. There is no overall co-ordinated strategy for the development of science and mathematics programmes. There is too little effective promotion of science and mathematics programmes to a wider age, or socio-economic, group.

Leadership and management

General programme

170. Communication between districts and branches varies in its effectiveness. For example, some lessons during the inspection were cancelled by the tutors but the district officers were not aware of this. In most districts, the relationships between programme managers and tutors is good and tutors are well supported. In one district, tutors are being effectively helped to write learning outcomes into their courses as well as assessment criteria and evidence requirements to show success. The historical structure of the WEA ensures that branches organise their own general education programme and manage this with minimal reference to the district staff. The WEA's district staff are responsible for tutor recruitment and training and for quality assurance. They are strengthening the quality of these activities. There is some resistance to change at branch level and in the traditional general programme.

171. The WEA cannot demonstrate clearly how many learners progress to other courses as this information is held at branch level and is often not well recorded. There is no systematic way to determine learners' destinations, either continuing through the WEA or enrolling in other educational institutions.

172. The quality assurance arrangements, including lesson observations and detailed recording of tutors' performance, are ineffective. It will take three or more years to cover most tutors. Tutors are invited to take part in training events, but the take-up varies considerably and there are no open learning alternatives available. Learners complete a satisfaction survey at the end of their course but the usefulness of their comments varies in terms of its help to tutors to identify changes needed or to help develop courses. The

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information from these forms is not used effectively. Equal opportunities is monitored largely by age, gender and ethnicity and each district made data available. There is little positive action resulting from the analysis of this data, although in science and mathematics community programmes, the WEA is able to show some growth from about 3 per cent to 5 per cent of learners.

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Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- excellent retention rates
- some good development of independent learning and vocational skills
- good course design and learning materials
- good equal opportunities awareness on trades union programmes

Weaknesses

- some poor attendance and punctuality
- weak formative assessment
- little structured support for learners with additional needs
- ineffective use of feedback to improve provision
- insufficient monitoring of tutors' performance

Achievement and standards

Workplace programme

173. Retention rates on trades union courses are excellent. Over the past three years they have improved from 98 per cent to over 99 per cent, nationally. Achievement rates have also improved nationally, from 77 per cent to 83 per cent, but this masks considerable regional differences. In the 2002-03, achievement rates varied in districts between 91.6 per cent and 43.1 per cent. In one district, rates are very good and rising while in another, achievement has declined over the past three years, from 92 per cent to 74 per cent. In this district, all learners who attend the TUC stage 1 courses (union representatives and health and safety) are awarded five credits at level 2. Achievement of credits on the other trades union courses and in other districts is more varied, and learners claim and are awarded credits at levels 1, 2 and 3.

174. Learners gain measurably increased skills, knowledge and confidence. The courses are useful for their career progression as a shop steward or other representative in the workplace. In London, some learners on the health and safety programme had the opportunity to practise their skills through a practical risk assessment session at a local underground station.

175. There is some poor attendance and punctuality. In one district, some programmes offered as in-house provision to transport unions have extremely poor attendance, with fewer than half the learners being present at some sessions because of traditionally

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inflexible shift and holiday arrangements. In some sessions for the same industry, punctuality is also poor. On one ICT short course, the session eventually started an hour after the scheduled time. It also finished earlier than planned. Learners' progress on one course was significantly affected by the content of a three-day course being fitted into the equivalent of two days' training.

Quality of education and training

Workplace programme

176. Some good learning takes place in the trades union courses. Learners are highly motivated and hard working. They are aware of how the learning process is boosting their confidence. They want and need the new skills and knowledge they are acquiring, and most work hard both in the sessions and between classes. They are enthusiastic about the learning process, and many speak of the courses they want to progress to, either for career advancement, or personal development, or both. All the programmes include the use of a 'learning journal', and learners quickly get into the habit of reflecting on, and recording, their learning progress.

177. The courses are well structured, with very good learning materials. Most of the courses have been written and updated by the TUC in partnership with the WEA, and are well established. Course materials are professionally produced, up to date and contain well-devised individual and group tasks for learners. Tutors supplement these with their own materials, which are well selected and current. The course design includes processes, such as the use of committee meetings in the health and safety courses to encourage learners to use the group's experiences as a learning resource. Learners appreciate the quality of the courses, with the exception of a more recently produced course, for union learning representatives, which the tutor and learners found confusing in its structure. The course for lifelong learning advisers, is of a similarly high standard and contains many of the same features, such as the use of the learning journal.

178. Most teaching is satisfactory, and some is good. In most of the courses it is unobtrusive, and the tutors facilitate learning through the use of the course materials. They supplement the standard materials with examples from their own experience. They manage time skilfully, responding to the material brought to the sessions by individual learners for committee discussions. However, the TUC courses run by the WEA have no specific WEA input or badging, and nothing to distinguish them from those provided by any other provider. In some classes, there is little differentiation to take account of learners' different starting points. Some team-teaching with tutors from a partner organisation was ineffective.

179. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. In one district, some non-IT classes are held in an IT room. There is not enough room for learners to carry out group and individual activity in comfort. However, the room used for the lifelong learning advisers programme in another district is spacious, airy and well equipped. In one district, about 20 per cent of sessional tutors have no formal teaching qualification at any level. There is currently no in-house provision for teacher education, although plans to do so are included

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in the district's development plan. In another district, all sessional tutors are either experienced and qualified, or new tutors undergoing tutor training.

180. There is weak formative assessment. Assessment and moderation of the TUC courses lack rigour. The tutor notes which learners have participated in each activity, but there is no system for recording the extent or quality of the participation by different learners. Records of learners' progress are confined to the learners' portfolios. Tutors do not routinely maintain their own records of learners' progress. No central records of learners' progress are maintained at the district office. Moderation meetings are held regularly, but the record-keeping is weak. There is no feedback to tutors after moderation. There is no clear correlation between the criteria for accreditation at different levels of credit, and the activities being assessed. The assessment for the lifelong learning advisers course is more detailed.

181. There is little structured support for learners with additional needs. Although there is a system for contacting learners who say that they have physical or sensory impairments, or learning difficulties, not all tutors have been following this system. Some learners do not have their additional learning needs met. There are no arrangements to assess learners' needs at the beginning of the trades union programmes. The WEA does, however, have a well-developed system for providing a one-hour preliminary session for learners on other programmes, to see if the course seems suitable for them, and to identify any additional help they might need. Learners on the TUC programmes sometimes have difficulties with their writing identified, but no specialist literacy support is offered.

182. There is little individual feedback to learners on their progress. Tutors' comments to the group on its progress focus on whether or not they are on schedule to complete the programme in time. In the lifelong learning advisers course, learners are expected to do written work but there is little evaluative comment from the tutors. Group members rely on the comments from other members of the group to provide reinforcement of what they are doing. In the stage 1 union representatives and health and safety representatives courses, there is less emphasis on written work. None is expected other than the learning journal, although there is a requirement to submit a portfolio at the end of the course. Not all tutors comment on the learning journals, and some learners do not submit their journals before the end of the course. Some learners are completing assignment work mid-way through the programme and having to wait until the end of the programme for assessment.

Leadership and management

Workplace programme

183. Learners on the trades union courses have a good awareness and understanding of equality of opportunity, which is reinforced by the course materials and in group discussions.

184. There is ineffective use of feedback to improve provision. The WEA regularly collects detailed feedback but fails to use it to improve provision. Tutors are required to submit their own and their learners' evaluations at the end of each course. Not all tutors

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meet this requirement fully. Some evaluations are detailed and insightful, while others are cursory. However, there is no system to take action in response to points made in the evaluations. The quality of the programmes is not discussed in any meetings which are minuted, and the system for feeding back comments on the TUC programmes to the TUC is cumbersome and not used. One change has been made to the lifelong learning advisers programme following learners' evaluation of the course, and it is now run for three days over three weeks, rather than for three consecutive days.

185. There is insufficient monitoring of tutors' performance. New tutors are observed, or their work moderated, during their first term. New courses are observed during their first presentation. The course visiting team makes detailed notes on a substantial proforma of every aspect of a course tutor's work. The results are meant to be discussed with the tutor concerned, and extra training provided if appropriate. Sessional tutors are not required to attend this training. There is little observation of established tutors and no programme of planned observations.

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Information and communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- high retention rates
- good practical use of ICT skills in wider social contexts
- effective involvement of learners in planning their course content
- successful use of partnerships to develop community provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient challenge for more able learners
- insufficient use of assessment to plan and monitor learning
- inadequate monitoring of the provision

Achievement and standards

Community and general programmes

186. Approximately 11 per cent of enrolments are on courses in the general programme. Retention rates have increased from 85 per cent to 94 per cent over the past three years. Most judgements made about courses in the community programme also apply to the general programme.

187. Community programmes account for approximately 83 per cent of enrolments. Retention rates have increased from 85 per cent to 93 per cent over the past three years. Attendance is satisfactory on all programmes.

Workplace programme

188. Retention rates on workplace programmes have increased from 94 per cent to 98 per cent over the past three years. There are too few courses on the workplace programme to make separate judgements about the provision.

All programmes

189. Learners value their learning experience in all programme areas, and many begin to develop a positive attitude to lifelong learning. Learners show significant gains in confidence in the use of IT in their everyday lives and community activities. They have often started from a very low level of ICT skills. Many learners have been able to use their new IT skills in local projects, to contribute to their communities, or to help with their

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children's education. For others, greater confidence has enabled them to progress to courses leading to qualifications, and their chances of gaining employment have improved. For many learners, their courses provide the first opportunity to use computers. They develop the confidence to apply their skills to more advanced technologies such as using the internet for family history research, using online services such as reserving library books, following online educational programmes, or online shopping. Other learners are using their new skills to support their children, run their family business, produce resources for schools and community groups, or to reduce their sense of isolation from an increasingly technological world. In the computing for farmers courses, learners are able to complete examples of standard government forms in preparation for their statistical returns.

Quality of education and training

190. Learners are encouraged to negotiate many aspects of their courses, particularly on those which do not lead to qualifications. They are able to influence class timings and session length to make it easier for them to attend. For example, in one course on the workplace programme, learners were unable to be released by their employers for 10 weeks in a row, so they were able to negotiate to attend for two five-week periods instead. Tutors work well to accommodate learners requests. They respond quickly and flexibly to cover particular areas of interest or topics. Learners' views are sought at the end of each course and, in some cases, these are used to influence future curriculum planning. Where tutors identify learners with additional learning needs, they make sensitive use of adaptive technology to allow learners to participate fully in sessions. They also adapt learning materials, for example to meet the needs of visually or hearing impaired learners. Some districts secure additional support funding, but not all districts are as successful in using these funds.

191. Resources are satisfactory, and in a very few cases, they are very good. ICT specialist equipment, such as computers and software, are usually up to date and fit for purpose. However, there is insufficient projection equipment for demonstrations. Many districts effectively use sets of mobile ICT facilities including laptop computers, printers, a scanner, a digital camera and a projector in outreach venues. Most of the equipment is in good condition, and there are generally satisfactory arrangements to maintain it, although these arrangements differ across the districts. Learning resources produced by tutors are usually well designed and produced, but centrally produced materials are sometimes poor and difficult to read. In some venues, different versions of software are used in the same classroom. Peer support is inhibited and tutors' presentations are not always relevant to the software available. Some learning resources are written for older versions of the software than the learners are using. In one centre, software packages used did not adequately support the courses run, despite relevant software being available. Classes are often run in community venues. Most of this accommodation is satisfactory, although some is cramped, with insufficient workspace for learners. Some venues do not comply with guidelines or regulations, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

192. Learners are given satisfactory advice to enable them to select the most appropriate course. In some districts, non-accredited courses are designed so that their outcomes are

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the same as some accredited courses which have recently run. Learners can progress smoothly from non-accredited to accredited courses, and this helps tutors to identify learners' existing skills.

193. The more able learners are not sufficiently challenged by the work they do. Learners enjoy the pace of learning sessions and the responsive technical support they receive from their tutors. However, they often make slow progress. In some cases, poor technical support, equipment failures, or difficulties in printing also adversely affect learning. In the best sessions, learners work on projects of their own choosing, such as reproducing adverts, producing posters for a forthcoming jumble sale or Christmas cards for their community centres. However, in other learning sessions, learners work through standard, repetitive exercises in workshop sessions, which are not relevant to their lives. Learners are not motivated effectively. Some of these learners are also unable to transfer their learning to other contexts. Teaching rarely takes account of preferred learning styles. In many sessions, there is insufficient reference material and learners are not sufficiently encouraged or supported to study independently. Volunteers are used in some districts to support some learners, usually those less able.

194. There is insufficient use of assessment to plan or monitor learning. Initial assessment is often perfunctory, and fails to identify learners' individual learning needs, or personal learning goals. Learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills are not sufficiently identified. Where initial assessment is used, the results are not used sufficiently to plan courses or learning sessions. There is insufficient use of individual learning plans, and those that are used do not contain sufficient detail. Most courses run for 10 weeks, and most learners attend a series of these courses. There is no use of individual learning plans to plan the progression through the courses to ensure that learners' goals are met. There is insufficient use of targets to measure learners' progress.

195. Assessment of learners' progress on accredited courses is satisfactory. Learners are aware of their progress, and how their work relates to the awarding body's requirements. Internal verification and assessment meet the requirements of the awarding body. Internal verification is effective in maintaining the validity of assessment, and in improving some aspects of assessors' performance. However, assessment on non-accredited courses is unsatisfactory. Many tutors do not record progress in sufficient detail. They often record task completion, but not the skills that the learners have developed or the obstacles that they overcome. Too few learners are aware of the progress they have made. In two districts, managers make very good use of learning outcomes recorded in course reviews, for course, programme and tutor development.

Leadership and management

196. The WEA makes good use of a wide range of partnerships to develop its community ICT provision. This includes using the local knowledge of community groups to identify and recruit new learners, making good use of venues and equipment provided by partner organisations and supporting funding bids through joint projects to create new provision. After a period of decline, historical links with trades unions and employers are beginning to be rebuilt to create new learning opportunities. There are good responses to national

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initiatives and projects, such as the IT programme for farmers, which are successful in attracting new learners. Partnerships with local schools provide IT training for parents and classroom assistants. There is particularly effective joint working with health professionals to support learners with physical disabilities, learning difficulties and mental health problems.

197. There is inadequate monitoring of the provision. Managers are beginning to make good use of data from the management information system to analyse recruitment trends and gaps in the provision. However, this is much more advanced in some districts than others. The system for observing teaching gives priority to new tutors. Too few observations are carried out for quality assurance purposes, and there is not enough use of IT specialists as observers. Where observations do take place, they often fail to identify learners' slow progress and poor attainment. Managers in one district analyse the observation reports well, and the ICT curriculum group discusses the findings. All tutors whose teaching is observed receive individual written feedback. However, there are too few opportunities to share good practice where it is identified. Courses are reviewed, and systems for collecting learners' feedback are satisfactory. However, these course reviews are not thorough, and do not include the views of appropriate partners. Tutors are insufficiently critical about the courses they provide. They do not pay enough attention to learners' achievement. For example, two accredited courses had quite different achievement rates, but no attempt was made to explain or investigate this anomaly. Managers analyse course review documents, and a significant proportion are referred back to tutors, highlighting poor achievement. However, there are insufficient arrangements to ensure that corrective action is taken.

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Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good learning and achievement
- wide range of challenging learning activities
- good development of wider skills
- effective targeting of learner groups to widen participation

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment
- poor recording of learner progress
- inadequate attention to health and safety

Achievement and standards

Community and general programmes

198. Only two classes were observed in the general programme. The strengths and weaknesses identified apply to both the community and the general programmes.

199. Learners on hospitality and sports classes demonstrate good learning and achievement. Learners develop good skills. In yoga classes there is good development and demonstration of flexibility, improvement in posture, balance and co-ordination. This contributes to good development and awareness of health and wellbeing. Many learners improve their ability for physical and mental relaxation. Learners develop good understanding of their subject, such as the anatomical names for body parts, as well as traditional yoga terminology. This knowledge is used and learners' understanding of it is monitored regularly by tutors in classes.

200. There is good development of skills in cookery, cake decorating and sugar craft. The cake decorating class in one district achieved a 100 pass rate of a short entry-level qualification with all learners progressing to a programme to work towards a level 1 qualification. In the same district, sugar craft learners make good progress onto level 1 courses.

201. Retention rates on show an improving trend, from 82 per cent in 2000-01 to 91.5 per cent in 2002-03. While the overall retention rates are high, there are significant regional variations with one district's retention rate being 79.3 per cent. Attendance on the courses

observed by inspectors is lower than in other areas of learning, with 74.3 per cent of learners on the register attending the classes.

Quality of education and training

Community and general programmes

202. Learners experience a wide range of challenging learning activities. Yoga and other exercise related classes promote health, fitness and lifestyle changes in a supportive manner. Hospitality and food related courses improve awareness of healthy eating, diet and nutrition. Activities in most classes progress at a good pace and continually challenge learners. These activities are structured effectively to meet individual needs. Tutors focus activities to the needs of specific groups to effectively relieve stress and anxiety. Tutors use effective teaching methods, coaching skills and demonstration techniques. Learners' techniques and skills are corrected to improve their performance. Most programmes have well-structured schemes of work that identify and record a wide range of learning activities. However, lesson plans do not often contain details of the timings of activities, records of the main teaching points or class organisation or layout. The standard WEA lesson planner is not well suited to record this detail.

203. Most learners use the classes to develop a range of personal skills and improve their wellbeing. They recognise their improved confidence and self-esteem. Good individual support is provided to the learners. For example, those learners with mental health problems find these sessions particularly helpful in regaining their confidence. Learners use their exercise regimes to improve their health and quality of life. In classes targeted at older learners there is good discussion of the benefits of exercise in relation to arthritis as well as the prevention of falls. In most classes, tutors effectively correct learners' performance. However, in some there is insufficient emphasis on the quality of the movement being carried out by the learner. There is good peer support. This enhances the development of confidence and esteem. Learners also develop wider social and interpersonal skills. Some tutors or learners organise additional social activities. However, in those lessons judged to be less than satisfactory, there are inadequate learning objectives, ineffective learning outcomes and insufficient attention to learners' abilities and needs. Learning in these sessions is restricted by insufficient attention to health and safety practices.

204. There is effective targeting of learner groups to widen participation in learning. Activities are carefully selected to attract identified target groups, for example, older learners, learners from minority ethnic communities, learners with mental health and/or physical difficulties, learners from rural and isolated locations, as well as post- and ante-natal mothers. Good partnerships have been developed with a range of external organisations, community groups and development workers. The WEA makes effective use of volunteers in the branches to support their widening participation agenda. In one district a very effective project specifically engages older Asians in health and exercise related activities. The project is recognised nationally as an example of good practice. In another district, there is an under-representation on course by learners from minority

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ethnic communities. This has been recognised by the district but not yet resolved. In all districts men are under-represented on most programmes.

205. Schemes of work are satisfactory. Assessment on the small number of accredited courses is also satisfactory. Good use is made of witness testimony and digital photography to assist learners to gather evidence for their qualifications.

206. Resources are generally satisfactory. All tutors are appropriately qualified with recognised organisations. However, some venues are unsatisfactory and in many classes tutors and learners have to provide their own equipment, such as mats.

207. There is inadequate initial assessment of learners' needs at the start of their learning programme. Learners' prior learning and experience are not fully taken into consideration when planning the programme content or the level of the programme. Tutors have informal discussions with learners but these are not used effectively. Health questionnaires are not used consistently to identify the learners' suitability for taking part in exercise classes. Some tutors use their own versions of a health questionnaire, however, there are no records of when this has taken place or if it has been updated. Individual learning outcomes are not determined through initial assessment and are not fully negotiated with individual learners.

208. There is insufficient recording of learners' progress. In some classes learners are unaware of their progress. For example, in one district learners following a short qualification in cookery are unclear about their progress against the specific learning outcomes of the element of the qualification. Learners are unable to complete their own evaluation of their progress against learning outcomes as these are not clearly established. Learners' self-assessment and evaluation is not used effectively to plan their learning or determine future learning outcomes. Learners are encouraged to complete evaluation forms at the end of each programme, however, these are not used effectively to plan future learning. Individual learning plans are not used effectively and there is little formal feedback to learners about their performance.

Leadership and management

209. There is inadequate attention to health and safety. There is no consistent approach across all of the districts. Documents relating to health and safety in class venues vary. The use of risk assessments is starting to occur in some districts but there are no systems in place to monitor or record actions. For example, in one district the health and safety officer completes detailed reports but there is no system to record or monitor actions taken. Health and safety is not a standard agenda item discussed at management meetings. Some venues are unsuitable for the activity, for example, yoga classes take place in rooms that are too small and are overheated. In one session in a central library room, inspectors found builders' and electricians' materials spread around one end of the room. A community cookery course is running in a flat with inadequate equipment.

210. There is insufficient use of learners' evaluation forms. In some districts forms are completed but the information collected is not sufficiently detailed or analysed to improve

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the provision. Curriculum co-ordination is insufficient. The association's staff do not have enough specialist knowledge. In one district, 15 days a year are allocated to one member of staff to co-ordinate the curriculum. There are insufficient opportunities for tutors to meet and share good practice. At a national level there has been a programme review for the health and exercise provision. Recently, a health curriculum group has been established. It is too early to judge the impact of the group and as yet, the action plan lacks details on timescales and responsibilities. In some districts, tutors and staff have inadequate knowledge of national initiatives.

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Visual and performing arts and media	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- significant personal enrichment
- good development of technical and practical skills
- effective partnerships to promote learning in communities

Weaknesses

- poor classroom management in some districts
- inadequate assessment processes
- ineffective curriculum management
- weak quality assurance

Achievement and standards

General programme

211. Learners gain significant personal enrichment by participating in a wide variety of additional learning activities. For example, learners are encouraged to exhibit art work and to perform singing, dance and drama in groups and in public. Working in groups and producing creative work significantly improves learners' self-esteem and confidence. Learners bring previous knowledge and experience to classes. Learners continue to do independent study to find additional facts and information which they relay to the group and the tutor. Some learners successfully combine the skills learnt in more than one class to create innovative art pieces. For example, one learner attended a watercolour class to help illustrate her calligraphic work. In many classes tutors successfully integrated contextual information into the practical content of sessions. Learners often negotiate and organise exciting and relevant field trips locally, nationally and to mainland European destinations for drawing and sketching or to visit galleries, museums, theatres and other forms of performance art.

212. Learners' work is very good in three of the nine districts visited by inspectors. It includes calligraphy, music and textiles. Attendance is good, ranging between 90 and 100 per cent in these districts.

Community programme

213. Many learners with physical or mental illnesses gain significant personal enrichment from courses on the community programmes. Learners in rehabilitation programmes

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successfully regain manipulative skills and an improved ability to concentrate for increasingly longer periods of time. Many learners regain dexterity after illness. Learners produce good work in textiles and pottery in one district.

214. Attendance is poor, often lower than 50 per cent, on some courses. Learners who do not traditionally participate in learning do not always receive the support they require to remove their barriers to attendance and punctuality.

Quality of education and training

General programme

215. Learners develop good technical and practical skills. Many learners gain an increased ability to articulate opinions and evaluate their own work. Lively discussions in some art and music appreciation classes extend learning and challenge learners. Sixty-one per cent of teaching in the observed sessions on the general programme is good or better, 27 per cent is satisfactory and 11 per cent is unsatisfactory. There are significant variations between districts. In one district, 78 per cent of learning sessions observed were judged to be good or better and no learning sessions were graded as unsatisfactory. However, in one district, 66 per cent of the learning sessions observed in the general programme were judged to be unsatisfactory. In the good learning sessions, tutors use a range of teaching methods and projects to engage learners. For example, during practical demonstrations, tutors regularly monitor learners' understanding and consolidate their learning. Tutors maintain pace and learners' interest. For example, in one session the piano was used to demonstrate theme and variation in a piece of orchestral music, while slides and notes were used to illustrate the context. In the poorer learning sessions, there is insufficient focus on learning and an over-reliance on lists of topics. Teaching styles are not interactive and there is too much repetition of activities.

Community programme

216. Learners effectively use a range of techniques and processes in dressmaking, water colour painting, calligraphy, pottery, guitar, singing and dancing. In Asian dressmaking classes, women of all ages are productively learning the traditional skills of making patterns and constructing garments. Learning is significantly enhanced through the bilingual, and in one case multi-lingual, communication between tutors and learners. Most learners gain confidence and develop communication and critical awareness from the experience of collaborative learning where they can share their knowledge and skills with the class. Seventy-two per cent of teaching in the observed community programme sessions was judged to be good or better, 20 per cent was satisfactory and 8 per cent was unsatisfactory. As in the general programmes, there is significant regional variation. For example, in one district 92 per cent of classes observed were judged to be good or better. In the better sessions, tutors set tasks that recognise individual learners' abilities. However, in one class for learners recovering from mental illness, the course was poorly planned and the learning session observed was also poor. The tutor had no record of learners' initial assessment or their progress and had no lesson plan.

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Community and general programmes

217. Resources and accommodation are generally adequate but vary considerably throughout the country. There is one example of excellent resources where learners are provided with textiles and a pottery workshop, print room, drawing studio and performance area, all with supporting facilities. However, many tutors have to bring in their own equipment and materials to facilitate the courses. Some community centres have very good facilities, with many amenities including IT resources and a crèche during the day. Other teaching rooms are too small for the number of learners enrolled on a course. In one pottery class for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there were no pottery wheels or kiln so learners' activities were limited.

218. The programme of courses provided in some districts is satisfactory. In these districts courses meet the needs of new and returning learners and targeted groups of learners. However, in other districts the provision is based on that offered historically or is entirely based on the courses learners request. There are insufficient initiatives in some districts for widening participation in learning. In two districts, the geographical spread of courses is insufficient. In all districts a narrow range of subjects are provided, for example, there are too few media courses.

219. Advice and guidance is satisfactory. In one district, a member of the administrative staff in the central office is trained to provide information on a whole range of provision in the district. However, in most districts the provision of advice relies on the knowledge of individual tutors. Only in a few of the learning sessions observed did the information and advice provided relate to progression routes. Pre-course information is often provided through a flyer produced by the tutor, which contains outline details of the course and its content. These often do not identify the level of the course or the cost of materials for practical classes. Tutors are responsible for providing support for learners. In some classes, support staff are available to assist learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most tutors provide very good individual support for learners and take account of their individual needs and learning goals.

220. Poor management of learning sessions in some districts has a negative impact on learners. Some sessions are poorly planned and do not focus on learning and others rely too heavily on lists of topics or artefacts to be made. Learning is often delayed and disrupted by insufficient attention to punctuality and attendance. Some learners' practices, which are disruptive in a group learning session, are allowed. For example, they answer mobile phones and do not pay attention while the tutor is demonstrating a practical skill. Tutors take decisions about the scheduling of learning sessions, without reference to or consultation with their line manager and arrange social activities during the class time which reduces the learning time. In some classes there is insufficient attention given to safe working practices. A small number of tutors have the necessary subject knowledge for the course, but do not have adequate communication skills or classroom management strategies to deal with disruptive learners. For example, a learner dominated a discussion and the tutor was unable to include other learners.

221. Assessment processes are inadequate. In most cases there is no initial assessment of learners' needs. There is inadequate understanding of learners' previous experience in the subject or the level from which they are starting. Insufficient formative and summative assessment does not provide information about learners' progress or achievement. Learners are provided with insufficient critical feedback to enable them to identify what they need to do to improve. The project for recording achievement and progress is being piloted in some learning sessions, however, this is still in the first phase and it is too early to judge its impact on learners. In one class the system is being used well to record learners' progress and to provide regular feedback regarding their progress.

Leadership and management

Community and general programmes

222. Effective partnerships in the community programme promote learning in geographical communities and communities of interest. Statutory sector partnerships with Social Services, Primary Care Trusts, Probation Services, Youth Services and schools are successful in providing learning activities for single parents, people who are mentally and physically ill and other groups of socially excluded people. Voluntary sector partnerships provide valuable community-based accommodation. For example, classrooms and studios to facilitate courses that link learning with rehabilitation from drug and alcohol misuse, and the motivation of disaffected young men. There are drop-in centres for learners with learning difficulties. Partnership working promotes widening participation in learning and celebrates diversity. For example, successful creative learning opportunities in Asian womens' centres have been developed in two districts.

223. The management of the curriculum is ineffective. Curriculum planning at district level is insufficient. The range of courses in this area of learning is limited and is not cohesive. Poor market research does not provide adequate information to be used as a basis for district and local curriculum planning. Courses are often planned in response to requests from other organisations. Learners' and tutors' course reviews are not used for curriculum planning. Information and communication, particularly regarding course changes and class cancellations, are poorly managed. There is insufficient opportunity for tutors to share good practice through meetings or to engage in professional development events in their own subject area.

224. Quality assurance is weak. The quality of teaching and learning is insufficiently monitored. Learning session plans and specific learning outcomes for sessions are also insufficiently monitored. The lesson observation scheme is insufficiently used throughout the association and does not schedule sufficient observations of teaching staff. Lesson observations are not conducted by subject specialists. Feedback comments only on generic areas and is not sufficiently evaluative. Feedback often contains no recommendations for improvement and action points are unclear. Problems relating to accommodation and teaching are not identified or remedied. Learners' evaluations and tutors' reports are inappropriately timed. They are often collected only at the end of a 30-week course. These documents are analysed and the results collated at district level, but often they are not then used to identify actions for quality improvement.

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Humanities	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good retention rates
- good development of learners' skills and knowledge
- good range of enrichment activities

Weaknesses

- insufficient management of learning
- insufficient attention to widening participation
- insufficient use of quality assurance procedures to improve teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

Community and general programmes

225. Inspectors observed 73 sessions, of which 67 were in the general programme and six in the community programme. Judgements apply to both programmes.

226. Retention rates are very good and improving. In 2000-01, retention was 93.7 per cent across all humanities programmes and this had risen to 96.7 per cent in 2002-03. The high retention rate was found on 20-week courses as well as those of shorter length. Over the inspection period, attendance in the observed classes was 85 per cent.

227. Learners develop a good range of skills and knowledge. On many courses they carry out extensive research outside classes, producing good examples of family history, papers on local industries, photographic evidence and some publications. Learners who had not used computers previously are now confident in using the internet for research. Some have been introduced to local archive offices and are now regular users. In most classes learners work collaboratively and effectively, and some are able to share particular expertise. They are articulate and well informed in asking questions. Many older learners identify the importance of continuing learning in keeping their minds active. In most districts, over 50 per cent of learners progress to other WEA courses.

228. The community programme includes a limited number of humanities courses targeted at particular groups such as women from minority ethnic backgrounds and older people in day centres. Learners on these courses develop more self-confidence.

Quality of education and training

Community and general programmes

229. Many humanities courses contain a good range of enrichment activities. Some of them are organised by the local branches, such as day schools and theatre clubs. Many develop from the courses and take part at weekends and other times outside classes. They include visits to local archive offices, museums and exhibitions. Many of the local history, archaeology and geology tutors and learners organise walks and visits to places of interest. One district holds residential schools, with some financial support available for learners who need it.

230. The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the country. Twelve per cent of observed classes were unsatisfactory, including one session judged to be poor. However, over 25 per cent of classes observed were judged to be outstanding or very good. Many tutors have particularly good academic knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm for the subject, which stimulates effective learning. The learning environment is often challenging, and sometimes inspirational. However, in the weaker sessions, tutors used an inadequate range of teaching strategies to ensure that all learners were fully engaged. Most classes rely on one of three methods, the lecture with questions and some discussion, the slide show with commentary or the structured discussion. In the better classes, tutors used a combination. In weaker classes, the method of structured discussion is ineffective. It relies too heavily on the learners identifying topics. Some learners do not have enough knowledge to do this effectively, and the absence of structure and supporting relevant materials means that they gain very little. Tutors vary in the use of directed questions to check understanding. In one slide show presentation there were few opportunities for learners to question or discuss. Tutors vary in their ability to deal with equality of opportunity. Some tutors are skilled and sensitive in challenging racist or sexist statements, others are less confident in doing so.

231. Overall, the resources are satisfactory. Most accommodation is fit for purpose, but some is less than satisfactory. The learners value the use of local venues but not all these venues are accessible for learners with mobility difficulties. The WEA districts have carried out accommodation and risk assessment audits, but these are not always acted upon. In some local venues, tutors, and sometimes learners, regularly move furniture before the class can begin. Many tutors provide a good range of interesting resources, drawing extensively upon their personal collections. This is particularly the case in aspects of local history. In the better classes, tutors provided appropriate handouts and materials, some of which are challenging. Teaching staff are well qualified academically. The extent to which they also have teaching qualifications varies between districts. In two districts, most tutors have recognised teaching qualifications.

232. Advice and guidance for learners are generally satisfactory. Tutors often provide appropriate information and guidance to develop learners' awareness of progression opportunities. Learners identify their own additional support needs at the beginning of a course. There are significant variations between districts in the way that additional learning support funds are used to support individual learning needs. Some districts do not

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always provide appropriate support for all learners, for example those with hearing or visual impairments. Tutors vary in their ability to respond appropriately to individual learning needs.

233. There is insufficient management of learning. Tutors often do not check learning sufficiently to enable them to confidently monitor individual learners' progress. The WEA has recognised this and is carrying out a pilot as part of the recognising and recording progression and achievement initiative. However, it is too early to identify the impact of this development. Initial assessment is not carried out in a way which enables tutors to identify individuals' learning needs or prior achievements. Learning outcomes for courses are identified at group rather than individual level. In many courses it is difficult for the tutor to monitor the progress of individuals, particularly in large classes where the lecture format is the main teaching method. However, some tutors have devised activities such as learner presentations and photographic competitions which allow them to assess progress. The self-assessment report recognises that there is insufficient initial and formative assessment in these programmes.

234. Tutors on the community programme are sensitive to individual needs. Initial and subsequent assessment is much further developed than in the general programme. The choice of local venues, such as primary schools, and family-friendly hours helps learners, such as women from minority ethnic backgrounds, to attend.

235. Very few general humanities programmes have been developed to widen participation. Some attempts have been made to recruit more men by providing courses such as military and railway history. Learners are involved in negotiating the content and topics of courses and regard this as an important aspect of their involvement in the WEA. Many branches have a longstanding tradition of providing humanities courses, but often they do not take into account the interests of all the community when identifying and selecting courses. This is particularly the case where further courses develop from those offered previously by a tutor. Districts are aware of this, but do not always effectively provide strategic direction in widening participation to some of the largely autonomous branches. This is particularly the case in two districts.

Leadership and management

236. There is insufficient use of quality assurance procedures to improve teaching and learning. The frequency of class visits varies between districts, as does the amount of evaluation. The WEA is aware that some tutors do not focus sufficiently on learning and use a limited range of teaching materials. However, there has been little intervention to encourage tutors to use a full range of teaching strategies to ensure that all learners take part. There is no systematic approach to the sharing of good practice, whether in terms of teaching or subject expertise. Some districts have appointed subject specialists to support tutors in humanities, but this is relatively new and has not yet had an impact on the experiences of learners.

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English, languages & communications	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement in creative writing
- significant development of attitudes to maintain lifelong learning
- effective collaboration between tutors and learners to direct learning

Weaknesses

- excessive use of English by tutors of modern foreign languages
- narrow range of teaching methods in literature
- weak assessment
- weak curriculum management
- weak quality assurance

Achievement and standards

Community and general programmes

237. Inspectors observed 62 sessions, of which 82 per cent were in the general programme and 16 per cent were in the community programme and one session was in the workplace programme.

238. Achievement in creative writing is good. Learners produce a variety of types of writing, much of a high standard. For example, in classes from the community programme, many learners write their first poetry and fiction, developing their skills as courses progress. Much of this work shows that learners have made good progress. In general programmes, learners' writing is critically discussed with tutors and other learners. Good discussions give rise to reflection and significantly improved composition. Learners also develop analytical skills which enable them to give effective feedback.

239. Some achievement is good in English literature and modern foreign languages. In the best literature lessons, learners are very much at ease using the language of literary criticism to develop their responses to texts. Learners who achieve most highly in modern foreign languages speak in the language they are studying with commendable fluency about a range of topics, sustaining conversations for long periods of time.

240. Learners effectively develop new attitudes to support lifelong learning. Several learners from creative writing groups have submitted their work for publication, for instance in the Big Issue. Writing is now part of the lives of these learners. Similarly,

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others have had work performed on the radio, and some have won writing competitions. In literature groups in the general programme, learners read more widely than before and tackle challenging texts which they would once have found daunting. In the community programme, learners of Arabic and Urdu gain valuable insights into the cultures of those languages.

241. Too much attainment in literature and modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory. Lowest attainment in English literature consists of learners expressing superficial opinions. Learners describe rather than analyse events, characters and themes. They do not understand the craft of writing. In modern foreign languages, particularly in the community programme, the lowest achieving learners rely heavily on translation from English. They do not gain fluency commensurate with their previous attainment or experience.

Quality of education and training

242. Tutors and learners on community and general programmes collaborate very effectively to agree the content of sessions. Modern foreign language tutors frequently consult learners about the number of times they wish to hear recorded extracts on tape. In two classes, one from the community programme, the other from the general programme, tutors negotiated with learners to establish how best to practise and consolidate what they had just learnt. In creative writing classes, tutors allow learners to take decisions about the best ways of presenting their work to other learners.

243. Resources are satisfactory overall. Many tutors are academically and professionally well qualified. Many have substantial experience in their fields. Most tutors of modern foreign languages are native speakers of the languages they teach, others speak them to near-native standards. However, some of these tutors have academic qualifications irrelevant to the taught subject. Some tutors have no teaching qualification. Some accommodation, often in university or school premises, is of very good quality. However, it is not always used to best effect. For example, in a literature class held in a very suitable room, furniture was not organised to promote discussion. In a lip-reading class, learners were unable adequately to see the tutor. Far too much accommodation is unsatisfactory. It is sometimes inaccessible to people with disabilities. It is too often cramped. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. The best resources are found in modern foreign languages. For example, a tutor on the general programme used a video camera to demonstrate learners' progress and enliven learning sessions. Other modern foreign language tutors show videos with commentaries in the foreign language. In creative writing and literature classes, from both community and general programmes, tutors sometimes use images to stimulate writing or to illustrate and explain points. In all subjects, tutors rely too heavily on handouts. Sometimes these are of good quality, but too often they are not. Handouts are often poorly exploited in lessons. In some literature classes, tutors did not explain how learners should use the information in the handouts.

244. Overall, the curriculum provided is satisfactory in both the community and the general programmes. The needs of existing learners are well met. The community programme targets learners who have not traditionally taken part in learning. For instance,

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community programmes for Asian women include classes in literature, Arabic and Urdu. Good partnerships with other voluntary organisations result in a variety of literature, creative writing and modern foreign language classes. In one district, a distance learning creative writing course in the general programme meets the needs of a diverse range of learners, including prisoners. In the same district, extensive provision of lip-reading and British Sign Language provides learners with essential vocational and life skills. In the general programme, the association considers the need for progression opportunities in modern foreign languages. Curriculum planning decisions are sometimes made through local learning partnerships. Progression planning for literature courses on general programmes too often involves a change of topic rather than a change of level. There are too few opportunities for learners to gain accreditation.

245. Guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Learners and potential learners who contact district offices receive good advice and guidance. Many publicity materials about individual courses on the general programme are attractively and helpfully presented. Tutors give good information about progression routes within the WEA and through other local providers. However, the association has no arrangements for advice and guidance for learners who do not contact the district office. The association pays insufficient attention to the diagnosis of individual learning needs. In creative writing classes, learners do not take the opportunities to develop their computer skills and some learners' literacy needs are not met.

246. Twenty-one per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. Thirty-three per cent of modern foreign language lessons seen in the community programme were weak. Twenty-three per cent of modern foreign language lessons observed in the general programme were unsatisfactory. In these sessions, tutors used excessive amounts of English. Sometimes they gave explanations in English rather than examples in the foreign language. In all lessons where tutors used English excessively, learners' fluency in the foreign language was unsatisfactory. They translated their thoughts from English rather than using the foreign language they have acquired in a natural way.

247. In most English literature lessons in the general programme, tutors used a narrow range of teaching methods. Some sessions were dominated by the tutor, allowing insufficient opportunities for learners to contribute ideas and respond to texts. Limited strategies to stimulate discussion, debate and analysis are used. Discussion is sometimes superficial. However, in approximately 8 per cent of English literature classes, teaching was very good. Tutors used a range of methods to cater for different learning styles and challenged learners to support their opinions by detailed reference to the text.

248. Assessment is weak. Although many tutors give learners effective written or oral feedback, this is not done as part of an assessment strategy. Initial assessment is rare. The learning outcomes system is insufficiently linked to the skills and knowledge learners need to acquire in order to succeed in their chosen programmes. It is not based on levels of achievement or progression. One district is at a very early stage of developing more subject-specific learner outcomes in modern foreign languages but these have not yet had any impact. The recording achievement and progress project is based on the same

principles as learning outcomes and is not fulfilling the need to provide skills-based formative assessment.

Leadership and management

249. Curriculum management is weak. Many districts have a developing awareness of the curriculum management needs of the area of learning. Most districts have identified that there is insufficient assessment. However, even the most realistic self-assessment reports fail to identify some weaknesses, particularly those related to quality assurance. Strategic management of curriculum planning is based on geographical districts and programmes rather than the skills learners need on courses in the area of learning. There is no shared understanding of what constitutes achievement on non-accredited courses. There is no secure overview of the area of learning in any district. There are very few subject-specific professional development opportunities for tutors. One district has identified the need to support sessional tutors of creative writing and literature. It has allocated 120 hours to a support tutor. However, attendance at the four meetings for tutors held so far has been about 20 per cent. In another district, a small number of hours have recently been allocated to a member of the field staff to support modern foreign languages. She has organised one meeting. Attendance was less than 50 per cent of those invited at the one meeting organised so far. Tutors of weaker sessions in this district had not attended the meeting. Curriculum management does not yet adequately influence the work of sessional tutors.

250. Quality assurance is weak. Much quality assurance relies too heavily on feedback from learners who complete courses. Management information data are not used to link unsuccessful practice with subjects. One district was unable to provide the correct success rate for its only accredited course. There are too few lesson observations of longstanding staff. Lesson observations are graded in only one district. Some grades were accurate reflections of comments made in the observation reports. In others, grades were inconsistent with the comments. One tutor of a conversational modern foreign language class was inappropriately advised to consider giving more written work. Tutors' planning is inadequately monitored. Potentially useful planning templates are available to many tutors. Districts vary in the extent to which they require tutors to use them. Even when the requirement is firmly expressed, it is not always complied with. In one district, 50 per cent of lessons observed were poorly planned. Quality assurance practices did not identify this shortcoming. Learners' experiences on theoretically similar courses vary to an unacceptable extent.

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Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- high retention rates
- good and improving achievement on workplace programmes
- good development of learners' personal skills and confidence
- good use of partnerships to attract new learners
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses
- some poor attendance on community classes
- insufficient learning materials and equipment on community programmes
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan work and monitor progress
- inadequate curriculum management in many districts
- inadequate quality assurance

Achievement and standards

251. There are high retention rates on all foundation programmes. In 2002-03, 86.2 per cent of learners remained on courses, which is an increase of 4 per cent on the previous year. Retention rates were above 80 per cent for 11 out of 12 districts. However, in one district retention rates for 2002-03 were satisfactory at nearly 78 per cent. There was particularly good retention of learners on courses in the workplace programme, with 96 per cent of learners remaining on their course. These courses run for either six, 30 or 60 hours. Eighty-eight per cent of learners were retained on literacy, numeracy and numeracy courses.

252. There is good achievement on courses in the workplace programme, all of which are accredited. In 2002-03, 82 per cent of learners achieved an accredited outcome. In 2000-01, 70.8 per cent of learners achieved an accredited outcome and in 2001-02, this proportion was 76.7 per cent of learners. Out of the five districts that provided foundation programmes on the workplace programme during 2002-03, the highest rate of achievement was nearly 95 per cent. However, not all learners on workplace programmes opt to pursue the accreditation. There is no system for recording these learners' non-accredited achievements.

253. Punctuality is satisfactory in many areas but varies greatly across classes. Tutors rarely challenge learners' late arrival. Lateness was a feature in 33 per cent of the classes

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observed in one district and 50 per cent of the classes in another. In two districts, many learners were 30 minutes late for a two-hour class.

254. Attainment overall is satisfactory. On some courses, there is good evidence of attainment. However, on others attainment is poor and learners have not made significant progress despite attending for several years.

255. Accreditation is available to many learners on community programmes although not all learners are made aware of this. Some classes provide learners with the opportunity to take literacy and numeracy tests at levels 1 and 2.

256. There is poor attendance on some community classes. Some registers for language, literacy, numeracy and language courses show good and regular attendance. In others, attendance is erratic. In one ESOL class observed, only four out of 14 learners were present. Attendance on community learning classes averaged 69 per cent. Poor attendance is affecting continuity of courses.

Quality of education and training

257. There is good development of learners' personal and social skills. Tutors provide a range of different kinds of group activities which encourage an atmosphere of learning. There is good use of discussion and small group work on general community classes. Learners are encouraged to develop practical skills by working with peers to practise skills in subjects such as complementary therapies. Courses link well with community events, such as international women's week, to help raise funds for charities by demonstrating skills gained in lessons. In one district learners attending community health courses increase their knowledge of wider community health services. Learners' confidence increased and their communication skills improved. Successful links are made between the course subject and everyday life. Learners apply the learning they acquire to their family and their work. Courses meet learners' interests and in some classes learners feel challenged. There is some good use of reflective evaluation in community learning sessions and learners are able to recognise their own progress.

258. On workplace programmes, learners are enthusiastic about their gains in confidence. Many learners interviewed now view themselves as people who can learn and wish to go on to do further study. Many learners in low paid care work feel able to request from their employers access to national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes at levels 2 and 3. Other learners are now determined to progress onto nursing degrees. Learners feel more confident in their jobs. For example, learners feel able to speak to their patients more clearly. School midday supervisors can manage children's behaviour better. Workplace learners feel more confident about taking the risk of speaking in public in a wide range of situations.

259. There are good partnerships to attract new learners. The association is flexible and sets up responsive provision by working either with existing partners or as a result of requests from community organisations. Good partnership working meets the needs of local communities and targeted groups, particularly those that do not have confidence or

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that are not attracted to other kinds of learning organisations. Effective partnerships have been set up with local organisations including local probation services, schools, libraries and communities such as the Yemeni women's project in Sheffield. In many places, there is effective and close liaison with neighbourhood learning workers. In two districts effective partnerships exist with centres for children under the age of five. These centres assist in the recruitment of learners while providing essential crèche facilities. In another district, classes are run in partnership with day centres for people with disabilities while in two other districts there are good partnerships with mental health organisations. One of these districts has distinctly separate management roles to effectively develop this provision. Courses in this area are well promoted through partnerships and links with general practitioners. In some districts, links with other organisations enable effective support to be made available to learners with additional support needs, such as dyslexic learners.

260. There are good partnerships at a national level with National Health Service trusts, unions and pilot projects with the armed forces, to create learning opportunities for employees. Workplace projects with other employers include work with, for example, Manchester's merging universities to provide a programme of courses for ancillary staff and with schools to run courses for midday supervisors.

261. However, only a minority of districts have adequate partnership agreements. Staff roles and responsibilities, the supply and maintenance of facilities and resources and responsibility for risk assessments are not clear.

262. Courses are held in premises which are convenient and easily accessible to learners. Many are in areas close to where people live or in buildings and rooms already familiar to learners. For example, adults recovering from mental illness attend courses in the familiar surroundings of their day centre and parents enjoy classes which take place in the school that their children attend. Many learners and their families appreciate learning activities located in premises where they feel comfortable. They also appreciate premises that are culturally acceptable, such as women only centres. Many venues have good and easy access to other facilities and activities where learners can gain information about other services, such as libraries, IT, welfare and benefits advice. Most daytime community classes aimed at parents have access to separate, crèches allowing learners to take part in classes.

263. Workplace courses are located to ensure easy participation of employees and are normally situated in employers' training rooms or trades unions' premises or, for midday supervisors courses, in one of a group of neighbouring participating schools.

264. Overall, accommodation is satisfactory, however, the standard is variable. On community programmes, some teaching rooms are well decorated, furnished to a good standard and well equipped. However, a few are cold, do not comply to health and safety regulations, are too small for the numbers of learners attending the course and are not fit for purpose. In workplace programmes, accommodation is satisfactory. Tutors adjust and adapt resources in some venues that are not wholly appropriate. On some workplace programmes accommodation is good and well equipped.

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265. Most districts provide a satisfactory range of courses in community and workplace learning. Courses are developed in response to learners' interests and in conjunction with community and employer partners. Existing courses are adapted to produce learning programmes to cater for learners' continued interest. Courses are mostly held during the working day, at times convenient for parents and carers. There is insufficient provision outside morning and afternoon classes. Some districts run very few community courses and there are seven districts in which there is no workplace programme. However, one district runs a good range of workplace programmes, with courses from entry level 1 to level 3.

266. In community provision, mostly informal information advice and guidance is provided by tutors. These arrangements rely on tutors' local knowledge about what is available, which is variable. Learners are not advised about accreditation and progression opportunities in most ESOL groups. In some districts the links with specialist information, advice and guidance networks are weak. In one district, however, initial advice and guidance is strong. This district benefits from 15 support workers providing advice and guidance services. Here, study centres have dedicated resources for guidance.

267. In the workplace programme, most courses are linked into a range of other NHS or union learning opportunities. Most learners have a clear understanding of progression routes available to them. A successful information, advice and guidance pilot project has raised employees' interest to consider further courses.

268. On workplace programmes, some learners with additional needs are supported well. For example, one learner is provided with a support tutor and assessment tasks are being amended so the learner can tape record responses rather than writing them down. Some community classes have two tutors. Learners benefit from the different expertise and skills of the staff team. Most staff are aware of learner support fund but only a few learners have accessed it.

269. There is much unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses. Twenty-three per cent of teaching in the literacy and language sessions observed was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teaching grades awarded range from excellent to very poor. Forty-five per cent of teaching was judged to be satisfactory and 32 per cent was judged to be good or better.

270. However, on community learning programmes, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is much less at 8 per cent. A much higher proportion of teaching was judged to be good or better at 54 per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in three districts.

271. There are insufficient numbers of staff with specialist teaching skills in literacy and language. Many teachers do not have the skills or subject expertise to further develop learners' literacy or language skills. Tutors spend insufficient time on improving the accuracy of learners' language, and learners' mistakes are not corrected. There are insufficient activities in which learners can develop their skills and understanding of

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language structures, grammar and pronunciation, in both oral and written work. There is insufficient focus on the practice of oral and aural skills. The pace of learning is often too slow.

272. In ESOL and literacy classes, there is some poor teaching. Learning activities are not clearly staged and are not summarised before moving onto the next task. In a few classes, learning sessions are not evaluated. In the weaker ESOL classes, there is insufficient monitoring of learners' understanding of the tasks that have been set. There are insufficient opportunities to practice and use new language structures in a real life context. Some staff have difficulty in sustaining learners' interest, attention and concentration. The context in which language and literacy skills are taught is not meaningful to learners. For example, learners were being taught about the use of 'should' and 'must' in the context of a dinner party, when their learning goal was 'being able to speak to my child's teacher'.

273. On weaker courses in the workplace programme, course delivery is not flexible and the course is not meeting learners' needs. On these courses, tutors fail to customise the standard course materials. The pace at which courses move is too fast for most learners. Employers often require additional course content to be introduced into the very short timescale of most of the courses in the workplace programme, which further impedes effective learning.

274. Some tutors carry out thorough lesson planning, incorporating different teaching methods and staging of learning. In the good teaching sessions, tutors provide an interesting range of learning and extension activities. Learning is active and enjoyable.

275. There are insufficient learning materials and equipment on community programmes. The association provides very few teaching and learning resources for tutors. Books, dictionaries and work packs are scarce. One district established a good resource base for tutors almost a year ago. This has so far only been used six times. The WEA relies too much on tutors to produce and provide their own resources, which are satisfactory or good. However, there is no quality assurance system to ensure that this is always the case. Not all tutors have or are using the association's skills for life materials. Most centres are equipped with some general equipment and resources such as pens, flip charts and markers. There are whiteboards, but these are often very small. This means that there is no way of keeping board work needed by learners for reference. Audio-visual aids are insufficient for ESOL learners. Where there are tape recorders, they are usually provided by the tutor and have variable sound quality. Some do not have counters or have the facility to be able to attach earphones for individual or small group work. Tapes are not often used to support speaking and listening activities. Very few classes have access to video and many ESOL classes have no access to laptops or other computers. Not all staff have good access to photocopiers or facilities where copies can be made easily. There are some good ICT resources in some classes but these are not available or used in all groups, particularly in ESOL classes. Some districts experience problems with the storage of their resources. While access to resources in one district is good, not all districts have access to central resources. One district does not have access to ICT. Access to ICT in this district is restricted to workplace programmes. Links with libraries in another district is increasing access to ICT.

276. There is poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor learners' progress. Most classes have group learning aims. However, these are not always negotiated with learners. Most learners have an initial and further assessment, but the results of these assessments are rarely used as a basis for group or individual learning plans. There is insufficient attention to recording individual learning needs and learning plans are not used during learning sessions. Many learners are unaware of the existence of individual learning plans. Learning plans are rarely used to set personal learning targets which are clear and achievable. Learning plans vary considerably in quality and there are often no timescales identified for the achievement of targets. There are no routine reviews of individual learners' progress. Neither tutors nor learners understand the purpose of completing and using learning plans to design learning programmes which meet learners' needs and interests. Learning plans are not seen as useful or used in the monitoring of progress.

277. There is inadequate initial assessment for learners on workplace programmes. As accreditation is offered at three levels on many courses, initial assessment has not been thought necessary by employers. Learners with the greatest needs struggle on courses.

Leadership and management

278. Curriculum management is inadequate in many districts. Data used as a basis for decision-making are unreliable. Districts are unable to provide lists of classes showing accurate timings, locations and cancellations. Data systems are not always updated regularly to show where changes to classes have taken place, such as cancellations or changes to courses. Systems to record all details of staff qualifications are incomplete. There is no accurate means of monitoring staff attendance at training events. The distribution of resources and their availability is variable. Some tutors are unaware of resources available to them or how to access them. No national strategy exists to ensure that all districts have access to the same range of resources. Monitoring of learners' progress and destinations is not sufficiently thorough. There is poor follow-up to class observation visits. In one district, the centre manager supports staff through regular formal meetings. However, many other tutors in other districts feel isolated.

279. On the community programme, there is insufficient analysis of where the WEA's provision fits in with that of other providers. The association does not identify effectively which learners' needs it is seeking to meet.

280. The workplace programme is incomplete in some districts and there is no clear strategy for the provision. However, in other districts which have had little workplace provision in the past, skills for life co-ordinators are working hard to establish workplace provision in partnership with primary care trusts and trades unions.

281. On the workplace programme, learners are better informed about diversity and social inequality. These topics are covered on the courses. Learners feel more able to critically evaluate the content of popular newspapers. In one district, not all staff providing

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the workplace programme are confident delivering courses on diversity topics, particularly in relation to race, cultural and linguistic diversity.

282. Quality assurance arrangements are ineffective. There are some clear and well-documented quality assurance procedures in several districts. However, in most districts they are not fully developed or implemented. There are national procedures for observations of teaching and learning. However, these are not always followed in all districts. Where accurate observations take place, it is unclear whether actions identified are followed up. Systems to monitor if this has taken place are weak.

283. Systems for monitoring and recording learners' achievement are incomplete. There is no clear system for monitoring progress and achievement against group goals. In some districts, course feedback is not fully evaluated. There is some informal sharing of ideas and good practice across districts. However, there is insufficient guidance, direction or systematic methods of doing this. Many districts develop their own documents, such as learning plans and diagnostic materials.

284. Internal and external moderation takes place satisfactorily on workplace programmes. However, there is insufficient internal moderation of non-accredited achievement in some districts. In others, there is no established moderation system. There is some poor monitoring of staff's competence and confidence to deliver information on diversity.

285. The overall judgements in the self-assessment report for this area of learning are accurate, however, a significant weakness concerning teaching and learning have not been identified. The WEA's report included a judgement about effective lesson observations that inspectors did not identify.

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Family learning	3
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills to support children
- wide range of well-designed learning resources
- responsive provision for targeted groups
- well-developed and successful 'Helping in Schools' programme

Weaknesses

- much inappropriate accommodation
- insufficient initial assessment
- insufficient detailed information and guidance prior to enrolment
- insufficient focus on teaching and learning during lesson observations

Achievement and standards

Community programme

286. There is good development of learners' skills and knowledge through discussion, practical activities and self-reflection. For example, in one learning session expectant young mothers explored their responsibilities as parents, shared experiences and planned carefully, with the guidance of their tutor, for the birth of their child. In 'Sewing for Parents' classes, learners developed their literacy, numeracy and language skills as well as their sewing skills. Learners take an active part in family learning programmes, developing their confidence and their knowledge of child development, the education system and the importance of play in learning. Learners apply their learning when working with children in schools as volunteers and at home with their own children. They develop skills to support children's reading, homework and to help them to deal with poor behaviour. In one class a range of games were developed by learners to help support their own and their children's literacy and numeracy skills. Some parents reported that in one term their children's reading had significantly improved and that they had improved their own writing skills. Many learners work towards short qualifications at levels 1 to 3. Others measure their progress against their learning outcomes. Most learners produce good work and those working towards the accreditation achieve well. Some learners on the accredited courses progress into paid or voluntary work with children and many take further qualifications.

Quality of education and training

Community programme

287. There is a wide range of well designed nationally and locally produced learning resources. Some of these are professionally produced and attractive to learners. Many have been developed for national programmes such as 'Helping in Schools', 'Helping your Child with Maths and Literacy' and 'Practical Parent Helpers'. Materials are comprehensive with a range of learning activities, handouts, discovery exercises, writing frames to support evidence collection, work and self-reflection diary frameworks. These well-prepared materials are adapted to suit the needs of local learners. Some locally developed courses, such as 'Busy Babies' and its progression route 'Messy Monkeys', 'Mums to Be' and 'Time out for Parents' have innovative materials and activities. Learning materials are often context sensitive. A story sacks course works well with the local library and through external funding had access to a wide and interesting range of children's books and visual aids. Some books are translated into other languages, some emphasise disability issues.

288. There is responsive provision for targeted groups. In one district in the previous year, 66 per cent of learners who were enrolled were from disadvantaged postcodes and 19 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. There are successful and strong partnerships with schools in areas of deprivation. A strong link with South East Sheffield Action Zone has enabled successful course provision which meets local needs. The courses have a positive impact on pupils and families. For example, some learners have become school governors and others have become tutors on the community programme. There are a range of excellent links with local learning partnerships and LEAs. There are strong partnerships with Sure Start, churches and voluntary organisations. The WEA investigates what courses are needed through project workers and volunteers who consult local residents, attend local community group meetings and organise taster sessions to engage new learners. Many new learners have not achieved qualifications at level 1 nor accessed education since school. In one district, there is good provision for some parents from minority ethnic communities where an ESOL support worker contributes to the learning session. A system of fee remission and free crèches in most areas enables learners to attend courses.

289. The National 'Helping in Schools' programme is well developed and successful. All tutors are provided with a very good tutor guide which contains aims, objectives, schemes of work, lesson plans and handouts. The guide is regularly updated. National meetings to support tutors are led by the national co-ordinator for the programme. The co-ordinator effectively monitors and improves the programme. At district level, a specific member of staff has the responsibility for co-ordinating the programme, recruiting staff and monitoring learners' progress on the course. There is a useful guide to support tutor organisers and tutors to approach schools. It provides advice on publicity, funding, partnerships and developing relationships with LEAs. An informative guide for head teachers is supplied to the targeted schools. This identifies the school's responsibilities and criteria for learner selection. In most learning sessions the teaching is good or better. There is good use of the standard materials and planning documents. Overall there is 93 per cent attendance and attainment is generally high on the programme. However, in two districts, the

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attainment is lower. This has been identified through good analysis of retention and achievement data. A well-formulated and well-monitored action plan is now in place.

290. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better learning sessions tutors are well prepared and use a variety of teaching strategies to motivate and engage learners. These sessions are well managed. Learners share experiences during discussions. Tutors provide effective individual support. Learning is well monitored and learners are given supportive feedback about their progress. The weaker sessions are less well planned. Learners are not sufficiently involved and there is not enough monitoring of their understanding.

291. There is much inappropriate accommodation, some of which is not fit for purpose. Some centre rooms are too small for the size of class. Tutors cannot easily monitor learners' understanding. Some venues have poor access and limited facilities for the disabled. Some facilities are inaccessible for people with restricted mobility. Accommodation survey forms are used to assess suitability of new venues. These forms do not effectively assess health and safety risks in learning accommodation. Some health and safety concerns are not reported. The districts rely on tutors informing them of any health and safety hazards in the learning venues or any changes to the provision. This information is not always provided and is unreliable. All new tutors receive a health and safety briefing, however, guidelines are not always implemented consistently. In some school settings only infant furniture is provided, which is inappropriate for parents using sewing machines in sewing classes.

292. There is insufficient initial assessment across the provision. Most courses rely on the tutor's expertise to identify learners' abilities and possible learning difficulties. On some courses there is insufficient background information collected on learners' previous educational experiences at the start of the course. The enrolment form is used for assessing learners' educational level and, in some cases, self-assessment is used. Often the introductory session is used for informal assessment of learners' skills and abilities. In some cases these informal methods are inadequate. For example, in one session some learners did not understand a numerical explanation and there was insufficient awareness on behalf of the tutor. In another learning session, three learners with many learning difficulties were enrolled on a course at a level which was too difficult for them. There is very little additional support for learners with learning difficulties or numeracy and literacy needs. Tutors do not always identify learners' language needs at an appropriate time in the course. There is insufficient use of additional support funds. There are some examples of formal initial assessment which have then impacted on the tutor's planning and support arrangements. One district has recently carried out a pilot project on initial assessment. The results of this pilot project have not yet been evaluated or reviewed.

293. Many learners receive insufficient information and advice before enrolment on many of the programmes. Most programmes have inadequate recruitment and selection procedures. Most learners are recruited through partner organisations and do not receive detailed information about the course before they attend the first session. For example, a delay in processing applications meant that learners missed the first two sessions of the course. Other learners were not aware of the amount of written work required on their course before it started. Attendance on a range of accredited courses, other than 'Helping

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in Schools' is erratic and sometimes low. Learners are often not informed of course aims, objectives, activities used or the time commitment required before the first session. On one course the need to share confidential information was not made explicit before enrolment and attendance dropped dramatically following the induction on to the course. At two centres, where recruitment was the responsibility of the centre, learners with learning difficulties were inappropriately recruited on to level 1 and 2 courses. One district has recognised the limitations in its pre-course guidance and a local website which is in early development, aims to provide information about family learning courses.

Leadership and management

Community programme

294. There is insufficient focus on teaching and learning during lesson observations. The monitoring system is inconsistently applied across the districts. Some districts observe most of their staff who deliver family learning while other districts observing only 10 per cent of experienced tutors. All new tutors are observed. A new system has recently been introduced where the focus is on teaching and learning, however, much of the feedback is not judgemental or critical. Observations are often carried out by non-specialists and there is no grading of lessons. In most of the lessons observed there are no action plans focused on teaching and learning. Many comments are related to operational issues. There are few action plans resulting from the observations and there is no evidence of these action plans being monitored.

295. There is effective curriculum management of the 'Helping in Schools' programme in all the districts. Areas of weakness and inadequate performance are identified and action plans are developed to remedy these issues. New programmes are currently being developed to address emerging needs, such as 'Helping in Schools' for carers and parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

296. The WEA has developed an effective national network for its family learning practitioners. Regular events take place that enable training, exchange of information and the sharing of good practice. For example, events have included training on the introduction of the child protection policy.

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Community development	2
Contributory grades:	
Adult and community learning	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good development of skills and knowledge to aid learners' participation in their communities
- very good retention rates
- particularly good group facilitation by tutors
- close collaboration with partners meeting the needs and interests of learners and communities
- good use of local networks to support learners' progression
- good local management of projects and programmes

Weaknesses

- inadequate evaluation of the effect of programmes on communities
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Achievement and standards

Community programme

297. Learners develop relevant skills and knowledge to enable them to participate more effectively in their communities. They improve their speaking, listening and language skills. They learn to become effective group members and to participate in group learning, often overcoming many barriers to do this. Learners go on to develop more advanced skills, such as presenting information, reaching consensus, analysing a problem and negotiating a way forward. On some programmes, learners gain skills in group organisation, recruitment of new members and fundraising. Many learners make rapid progress, for instance, achieving level 3 qualification in community mediation skills after only two terms. Learners progress into roles that benefit their communities. There are many examples of learners producing outstanding work. For example, a learner who took part in the community interpreters' programme has gone on to initiate ESOL classes for his work colleagues. Learners often progress to paid employment in social enterprise or community development, often with the WEA's partner organisations or with the WEA itself. Many of the tutors who work on community development projects and programmes have progressed from being learners with the WEA themselves.

298. Retention rates are very good. For example, in one district the community interpreters' programme had a retention rate of 96 per cent in 2002-03. On most

programmes retention rates are above 90 per cent. This is particularly significant as learners often overcome many barriers to maintain their involvement in the programmes.

Quality of education and training

Community programme

299. Tutors have particularly good group facilitation skills. They make good use of learning activities to enable all learners in the group to participate at their own level and to contribute to group learning. In the best learning sessions, tutors use methods that build learners' confidence and accelerate learning through 'learning by doing'. Learners' life experiences are used as a valuable learning resource. Many learning sessions make good use of case studies and role-play. Some programmes include project work outside of the learning session. There is particularly good group learning in relation to equality of opportunity. Many groups have ground rules which emphasise the importance of mutual respect and non-discriminatory behaviour. Barriers within communities, for example, between different ethnic groups, are overcome as group members learn to work together. Tutors provide powerful positive role models, encouraging learners to develop cultural awareness and demonstrating how to challenge discrimination. On the more advanced programmes there are specific modules on equality of opportunity which enable learners to develop the skills and knowledge to promote equal opportunities when performing roles such as counsellor, mediator, interpreter or community activist. In the best learning sessions, literacy, numeracy and language skills are developed as an integral part of the programme. Seventy-two per cent of the observed sessions were graded as good or very good and the rest were satisfactory.

300. The WEA's staff collaborate closely with partner organisations to ensure the curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners and communities. The WEA does not only respond to partners' requests, but is also active in formulating the local learning agenda. In some cases, the WEA's staff serve on the management committees of partner organisations where they act as advocates for learning. In the best programmes, there is close collaboration with partners to develop relevant and realistic learning materials. Courses sometimes have two tutors, one from the WEA and one from the partner organisation. For example, on the community mediation programme in one district, the WEA tutor provides expertise in teaching and learning while an experienced community mediator contributes practical knowledge about their job and the problems they have to deal with. There are many examples in all districts of tutors and field staff working very effectively as a team with staff from partner organisations.

301. The WEA's staff use their extensive networks of contacts to develop a detailed knowledge of the learning opportunities that are available through the WEA, its partners and other providers. Field staff and tutors provide good guidance to learners on the relevance and suitability of these opportunities. Staff encourage learners to enhance their learning through new and challenging experiences, such as residential courses at an adult education college. There is also good practical support for learners. Many learners on community development programmes take advantage of the learner support fund and receive help with the costs of childcare, equipment and travel.

302. Resources are satisfactory overall. Some venues are excellent while others are barely adequate. Some learners receive excellent resource packs while others receive poorly photocopied handouts. Some learners have insufficient access to tools for independent study, such as reference books or the internet. In one group, the needs of two learners with disabilities were not fully met, but access to aids and adaptations is generally satisfactory. In one group, the needs of a hearing impaired learner were well catered for by a tutor with excellent skills in lip-speaking and the use of gesture.

303. Assessment is satisfactory. Where community development practice is particularly sound, community members carry out the assessment of community needs themselves with support from WEA's field staff or staff from partner organisations. In the best programmes, tutors use various tools to help learners assess their own starting point and learning needs. Many tutors are striving to record group and individual learning outcomes, but this is not fully effective. There is insufficient depth and detail. The community development context is often neglected. For example, learners often join programmes to increase their community involvement, but their precise objectives in relation to this are not captured. Learners benefit from good opportunities to gain accreditation on many programmes. Fifty to 80 per cent of learners are working towards accreditation. Marking of written work, where this is appropriate, is mostly good or satisfactory. However, there are a few instances of marking left until the end of the course. On the best programmes, a range of assessment tools is used, including self-assessment, group assessment, peer assessment and tutor assessment. On most programmes there is insufficient time for effective individual tutorials. Learners on all programmes are encouraged to reflect on their learning during group discussions.

Leadership and management

Community programme

304. At a local level, projects and programmes are well managed by field staff. They have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve in and with communities. Field staff are guided by their understanding of community development work and the needs of communities, rather than by formal community development objectives. They form strong relationships with their counterparts who work for other organisations, based on shared aims and a collaborative approach to community development. They make sound decisions about which partners to work with, these range from small community associations to local authorities. They understand how to identify and develop future tutors from the communities they work with and in. Tutors are well matched to groups. Many carry out good informal monitoring of courses. Field staff have good networking skills and many have good skills in carrying out direct contact work and assessing community needs. However, these skills are not explicitly recognised by the WEA. Staff development is focused on teaching skills, while community work skills are given little attention. Most field staff feel well supported by their line managers. However, there is no formal process to ensure field staff receive community work guidance. Supervision and line management arrangements are weak.

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305. There is inadequate evaluation of the effect of the programmes on communities. Each district has a different approach to community development. In some districts, there is a strong sense of the WEA's role in community development. In other districts, community development is not seen as a specific component of the WEA's work, but more the concern of partners. Other districts operate in an environment where there are many community development organisations, so they have focused their resources on particular programmes, for example, the community interpreters' programme. In all districts, the WEA's community development aims and objectives are implicit, rather than explicit. The WEA does not have clear objectives against which it can evaluate the impact of its work. Managers are not sufficiently aware of the need to set clear objectives and monitor the association's progress towards them. Field staff do not specify the community development objectives of individual courses. Tutors are not always aware of how their work fits into a wider community development agenda. Some staff are aware that data about learners' progression and destinations can illustrate the impact of the association's programmes, however, they only collect anecdotal evidence. Many of the WEA's partners conduct evaluations of the impact of community development projects, but these do not focus sufficiently on the contribution made to these projects by the WEA.

306. Good practice is not sufficiently shared either within districts or across districts. The WEA is not clear about how good practice should be defined in relation to community development learning. Even in districts where the WEA sees community development as central to its role, there is not sufficient clarity about what constitutes good practice in this context. In all districts, staff have insufficient understanding of the benefits of sharing good practice and how it might be facilitated. There are many examples of tutors duplicating effort and there is one example of a district not being aware of how another district has approached a similar problem. However, there are national projects emerging around citizenship and community interpreting where the sharing of good practice is an important component.

Reports on WEA districts:

Cheshire, Merseyside and West Lancashire

The Cheshire, Merseyside and West Lancashire District covers the southern Lake District, Lancashire, Merseyside and about half of Cheshire and encompasses 11 local authorities. The district is one of contrasts as it has some of the wealthiest and some of the most deprived areas in the country. The district office is located in Liverpool. There are 703 members in this district.

The district is currently going through a time of change. The retirement of senior staff, redundancies and the reorganisation of the WEA's districts have had a major impact on the Cheshire, Merseyside and West Lancashire district. Changes to the management and staffing structures were agreed in November 2003 and were implemented in December 2003. The management team comprises the district secretary, the targeted funding manager, the senior finance officer, the administration team leader and three field staff who each represent one geographical area in the district. The management team meets once each month to consider key educational and financial data and a range of organisational topics. The district currently employs 208 teaching staff.

There are eight branches in the district, in which there are 103 active volunteers. The active volunteers are involved in discussions about the curriculum and publicity and they help with venue selection.

Tutor organisers plan and deliver the provision throughout the district. In 2002-03, the district ran 555 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 52 per cent were in the community programme, 42 per cent in the general programme and 6 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 6433 enrolments, representing 47.8 per cent on the community programme, 47.6 per cent on the general programme and 4.6 per cent on the workplace programme.

The general programme offers accredited and non-accredited courses in areas including visual and performing arts, creative writing, English literature, modern foreign languages, history, philosophy and astronomy. Most learning sessions last for two or three hours and the course duration varies between 14 and 40 hours. Most of the general programme is offered during the day, although there is a small proportion of evening and weekend provision.

There are accredited and non-accredited courses in the community programme, in areas including art studies, practical crafts, literacy, numeracy and language, key skills, English literature, modern foreign languages, British Sign Language, community interpreting, history and astronomy. The district operates a targeted disability programme on which learners can work towards accreditation in art techniques and practice, music appreciation and performing arts. Most learning sessions last for two or three hours and the course duration varies between three and 120 hours. Most of the community programme is provided during the day, although there is also a small proportion of evening and weekend provision.

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There is a very small workplace programme in the district. Courses are accredited by the OCN or by an external organisation. Each learning session lasts for two or three hours and course duration varies between 30 and 40 hours.

Leadership and management, visual and performing arts and media, humanities, English and modern foreign languages and foundation programmes were inspected in this district. Inspectors did not observe sufficient foundation sessions to include judgements on teaching and learning in this area.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 1,542 learners had made 1,627 enrolments on 149 courses in Cheshire, Merseyside and West Lancashire District. This represents 3.47 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- effective introduction of new management arrangements
- good recent use of enrolment data and management information to plan curriculum
- good partnership working to attract new learners for most programmes
- particularly analytical self-assessment report
- good negotiation with learners on modern foreign language courses
- high retention rates on foundation and humanities programmes
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- good involvement of the management team in the skills for life agenda
- significant personal enrichment on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- good development of technical and practical skills on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- effective incorporation of learners' prior experience and learning on humanities programmes
- good range of enrichment activities on some humanities programmes

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements for review and appraisal of tutors
- limited use of the learner support funds
- insufficiently robust quality monitoring (but grades teaching observations)
- insufficient use of quality assurance procedures to improve teaching and learning on humanities programmes
- weak quality assurance on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- inconsistent standards of teaching on modern foreign language programmes
- unsatisfactory curriculum management for modern foreign languages
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan and monitor learners' progress on foundation programmes
- inadequate assessment processes on humanities, visual and performing arts and media and English and modern foreign language programmes

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- insufficient checks on learning and insufficient strategies to develop learning on humanities programmes
- insufficient attention to widening participation on humanities programmes

East Midlands

East Midlands District works across Leicestershire, Rutland, most of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire and some two-thirds of Derbyshire. The district office is in Nottingham and the WEA owns another property in Leicester that provides an adult education centre with two ICT suites. Elsewhere, courses are run in premises owned by other providers.

The district is currently headed by a district secretary, supported by two district managers. Eleven field staff and 34 fractional workers co-ordinate the educational work of the district and carry out some teaching. Most teaching is given by part-time tutors, drawn from an approved panel of about 1,000, of whom some 450 teach for the district in any one year. Six administrative staff work with a finance manager at the district office, where they take care of financial, management information and personnel matters. Field staff work out of offices based in adult and community education centres across the district. These offices provide bases for the local support of branches and tutors and the furthering of partnerships with other providers across the district.

An interim management team has been set up pending the outcomes of the national staff review. This team, led by the district secretary, meets monthly and provides advice and recommendations to the governors of the district committee. Since January 2004, all administrative and academic staff have met once a term on a county basis to consider and implement policy at a local level.

Active volunteers are mainly recruited from the WEA student body. The voluntary infrastructure is made up of 57 branches, drawn together in five area committees on a regional basis. District voluntary members and staff also serve on national committees and working groups.

In 2002-03, the East Midlands district ran 1,155 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 41 per cent were in the community programme, 55 per cent in the general programme and 4 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 13,530 enrolments, representing 30.3 per cent on the community programme, 66.6 per cent on the general programme and 3.4 per cent on the workplace programme. Courses were run from about 200 venues across the district.

The general programme offers a broad liberal studies curriculum, with most courses falling in the visual and performing arts and media, humanities, health, social care and public services, and sciences and mathematics areas of learning. Courses range from six to 20 meetings in length and some branches offer day, half-day or single lecture sessions to widen the choice for learners. Branch committees, consisting of local members, negotiate a programme of courses for the coming year.

The community programme is made up of provision targeted to meet the needs of people who are socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged. Programmes are designed to reach various groups of traditional non-participants in education and to increase community activity in education. These areas of work have grown considerably in recent years, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the district's provision. The biggest

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growth has been in ICT provision, much of which provides the option of accreditation. Essential to the district's success in widening participation are its partnerships with a wide range of other statutory, voluntary and charitable organisations. Learners and their advocates are able to shape curriculum development to meet local or specific needs.

The workplace programme is delivered primarily through partnerships with UNISON and two regional NHS Workforce Development Confederations. The programme draws heavily on the nationally developed package of OCN accredited courses, but these are increasingly complemented by local initiatives. The programme currently makes up only about 4 per cent of the district's work, but the number of short courses that form part of the NHS's Learning Account Scheme is growing rapidly. Pilot work on developing workplace skills for life programmes has been adapted to the NHS and is continuing.

Leadership and management, ICT, humanities, English and modern foreign languages, family learning and foundation programmes were inspected in this district. Inspectors did not observe sufficient family learning sessions to include judgements on teaching and learning in this area.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 4,682 learners had made 4,951 enrolments on 421 courses in East Midlands District. This represents 10.7 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- effective leadership and management at district level
- successful partnership working to widen participation
- effective sharing of good practice at local level
- recent improvements to the staff performance and review system
- clear strategic planning for targeted groups for foundation programmes
- high retention rates on ICT, humanities and foundation courses
- good development of personal skills, confidence and knowledge for ICT, humanities and foundation learners
- significant development of attitudes to maintain lifelong learning on English and modern foreign language courses
- effective collaboration between tutors and learners to direct learning on English and modern foreign language programmes
- good and well-used computer resources
- good range of entry level ICT courses
- good use of volunteers on ICT courses
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- good range of enrichment activities on humanities programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficiently rigorous self-assessment
- weak management of equality and diversity developments

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- weak action-planning
- ineffective use of class visit system to improve teaching on humanities and foundation programmes
- inadequate quality assurance on foundation programmes and English and modern foreign language programmes
- weak curriculum management on English and modern foreign language programmes
- weak initial assessment on ICT programme and some humanities courses
- weak assessment on English and modern foreign languages and humanities programmes
- weak analysis and recording of ICT learners' progress on non-accredited programmes
- unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor learners' progress on foundation programmes
- insufficient staff with specialist teaching skills in literacy and ESOL
- insufficient checks on learning in some humanities classes

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Eastern

Eastern District works across seven local LSCs and nine LEA areas, taking in the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Northamptonshire and most of Essex and Hertfordshire. Its district office is in Cambridge. Courses are held on premises owned by other providers or organisations. The Eastern District has over 3,000 members, accounting for some 20 per cent of the national total.

The district management team is led by a district secretary. Four other managers cover areas such as finance, management information, programme management, learning technologies, student support and quality assurance. Eight staff carry out financial and administrative functions at the district office. Eleven home-based staff are responsible either for programme management of the community and general courses on an LSC basis, or management of the workplace programme and basic skills courses across the district. The district draws on approximately 350 sessionally paid tutors each year, from an approved panel of 650. Between 20 and 30 experienced tutors are employed on sessional contracts each year in development roles such as working with targeted partners or developing curriculum areas.

Across the district, 175 branches form the voluntary infrastructure and these branches are drawn together in federations in each county. Active volunteers are involved in running branches, organising courses, supporting fellow learners and assisting with ICT and literacy and numeracy support.

In 2002-03, the Eastern District ran 976 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 41 per cent were in the community programme, 52.4 per cent in the general programme and 4.6 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 16,455 enrolments, representing 20.2 per cent on the community programme, 77.6 per cent on the general programme and 2.2 per cent on the workplace programme. Information, advice and guidance are offered in all programme areas and specialist support is available for learners on community and workplace programmes. The district gained Guidance Accreditation Board (GAB) accreditation in 2001.

The general programme offers mainly non-accredited courses in sciences and mathematics, humanities, and visual and performing arts and media. Branch committees select courses for the coming year in consultation with the learners. The subjects remain fairly constant from year to year, with history always the most popular.

The community programme, which is managed and developed by the district's 11 field staff, consists of targeted courses designed to reach traditional non-participants in adult education and meet the needs of local people who are socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged. Central to the district's efforts to widen participation is its work with WEA partnerships. Specific courses are selected by a partner and its client group from a community programme prospectus and often adapted to meet the needs of a particular group of learners. The curriculum includes practical arts, ICT and personal development. Recent project developments have focused on family and community learning and healthy living. Progression is planned through both accredited and non-

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accredited routes. A programme of skills for life courses is offered through partners that work with a range of target groups. All courses are referenced to the national curricula for literacy and numeracy. The district offers Basic Skills Agency assessments and diagnostic assessments. Tutors and volunteers are offered regular training. The ICT curriculum is developed through outreach work using partners' or WEA's computers as well as courses at the WEA's IT centre in Suffolk.

The workplace programme has been developed in conjunction with UNISON. In employer partnership work, the employer decides which part of the programme will be offered. Course content of internal UNISON courses is negotiated with the learners. Workplace skills for life courses are becoming a more prominent part of the programme.

Leadership and management, science, ICT, humanities and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 5,982 learners had made 6,084 enrolments on 320 courses in Eastern District. This represents 13.49 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- effective local management during period of change
- effective involvement of volunteers at branch and district level
- some good initiatives to support information and guidance
- good support for tutors from basic skills co-ordinator
- high retention rates on ICT, science, humanities and foundation programmes
- good development of learners' skills, knowledge and confidence on science, ICT, foundation and humanities programmes
- high-quality teaching resources for humanities programmes
- good use of partnerships to reach target groups for foundation and ICT programmes
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- good attainment of basic computer skills on beginners' courses
- well-designed and extensive community programme meeting ICT learners' needs
- good ICT and science teaching
- good support for staff on ICT programmes, often 'virtual'
- good understanding of equality and diversity on ICT programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of management information to guide target-setting and action-planning
- incomplete quality assurance monitoring procedures
- insufficient management of resources
- insufficient monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity
- insufficient use of the classroom observation system
- limited widening of participation on science programmes
- insufficient setting and measuring of learning goals on humanities programmes

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- some poor accommodation for humanities and science programmes
- narrow range of humanities courses
- low and falling achievement rates on ICT accredited courses
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor learners' progress on foundation and ICT programmes
- weak assessment practices on ICT programmes
- inadequate quality assurance on foundation programmes and science programmes
- insufficient opportunities to share good practice for ICT and science tutors

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London

The London District covers London, Middlesex and Surrey and parts of Essex and Hertfordshire. The district office is in London. The London district has 3,783 members.

The district management team is led by the district secretary, who was appointed in January 2002. The management team also comprises the partnerships manager, the finance manager, the data manager, the systems and reports manager, three programme managers and the district secretary's personal assistant. During 2002, the district's activities were reviewed, in response to changes to the LSC's funding methodology. Following this review, the WEA's management functions and reporting systems were restructured, which involved the appointment of most of the key members of the management team in December 2002. The management team meets every month to discuss standing agenda items, which include finance, planning and achievement. During 2002-03, the district employed 386 sessional tutors and 12 part- or full-time tutors or tutor organisers.

There are 275 active volunteers in the London District's 55 branches.

In 2002-03, the London District ran 791 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 24 per cent were in the community programme, 53 per cent in the general programme and 23 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 10,010 enrolments, representing 20.6 per cent on the community programme, 62.3 per cent on the general programme and 17.1 per cent on the workplace programme.

The general programme is mainly delivered in suburban areas of London. The WEA plans to maintain the current level of provision in this programme area over the next three years. Growth in this programme area will focus on widening participation in learning, in line with the association's development plan.

The community programme is delivered throughout Greater London, but mostly in central and east London. The community curriculum covers community interpreting, family learning, helping in schools, basic and key skills and ESOL. The WEA works in partnership with a number of external organisations, including local authorities and local community groups, to provide these courses. The WEA also provides a small amount of provision outside the curriculum areas listed, to meet partners' requests. Local demand for the WEA's community programme courses exceeds the provision that the WEA can supply.

The district works in partnership with trades unions and employers to deliver the workplace programme.

Leadership and management, science, trades union studies, ICT, visual and performing arts, humanities, community development, English and modern foreign languages and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

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As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 4,368 learners had made 4,503 enrolments on 313 courses in London District. This represents 9.85 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- effective leadership and management of recent changes
- significant recent improvement in the accuracy and use of data in the operational management of provision.
- wide range of staff development opportunities for ICT tutors
- good retention on humanities, science, ICT, trades union studies, English and modern foreign language, community interpreters and foundation programmes
- good use of partnerships to reach target groups on foundation and ICT programmes
- good achievement on foundation workplace and family learning programmes
- flexible humanities programmes
- good range of enrichment activities for humanities and science programmes
- some good practice in the induction, training and monitoring of new staff on humanities programmes
- effective use of volunteers on science programmes
- good development of independent learning and vocational skills on trades union studies programmes
- good development of personal skills and confidence on foundation and ICT programmes
- good course design on trades union studies programmes
- good equal opportunities awareness on trades union studies programmes and good development of equal opportunities skills and knowledge on community development programmes
- good development of attitudes to maintain lifelong learning on English and modern foreign language courses
- significant personal enrichment on visual and performing arts and media courses
- very good development of technical and practical skills on visual and performing arts and media courses
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- good teaching and learning on community development programmes
- good access to accreditation on community development programmes
- good curriculum management of family learning programmes
- good arrangements for ICT course review and evaluation
- some good ICT resources
- some well-structured progression routes for workplace ICT learners

Weaknesses

- unco-ordinated approach to curriculum planning and development
- inconsistent use and development of quality assurance arrangements
- poor development of the use of targets in organisational management

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- insufficient attention to widening participation on humanities, science, visual and performing arts and media and English and modern foreign language programmes
- insufficient staff development opportunities for trades union studies tutors
- some poor classroom accommodation for trades union studies, ICT, humanities and science programmes
- some inadequate resources on science, English and modern foreign languages and trades union studies and foundation programmes
- limited range of teaching methods on humanities programmes
- lack of defined criteria to measure learners' progress on science and English and modern foreign language programmes
- some weak communication between branches, tutors and WEA district staff on science programmes
- some poor attendance and punctuality on trades union studies programmes
- weak formative assessment on trades union studies programmes
- inadequate assessment processes on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- ineffective sharing of good practice on visual and performing arts and media and ICT programmes
- inadequate recording of learners' progress on trades union studies programmes
- poor completion of course evaluation on trades union studies programmes
- lack of progression routes for English and modern foreign language programmes
- unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor progress on foundation programmes
- some poor attendance on foundation programmes
- some unreliable management information data for ICT programmes
- ineffective measurement of the impact of learning on performance at work in workplace ICT programme

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North Western

North Western District covers Greater Manchester and parts of Lancashire, Derbyshire and Cheshire. The district office is in Manchester. The WEA uses 150 venues across the district for its courses. There are 599 members in the district.

In 2002-03, the North West District ran 861 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 72.36 per cent were in the community programme, 24.3 per cent in the general programme and 3.4 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 8,675 enrolments, representing 64 per cent on the community programme, 33.7 per cent on the general programme and 2.3 per cent on the workplace programme.

The general programme offers learners a range of non-accredited courses in art studies, art techniques and humanities, including history, local history and literature. Most courses last for 20 hours. The general programme is organised by volunteers, who receive support from community education managers who are responsible for the management and quality assurance of the programme. Of those learners on courses in this programme area in 2002-03, 73 per cent were women and 8 per cent had a disability.

The community programme covers curriculum areas including arts and crafts, health and care and ICT. Courses are held at a wide range of venues in the district which are owned by other organisations. Seventy-six per cent of courses are non-accredited, and the remaining 24 per cent are accredited through the OCN. Most courses last for 20 hours. The provision is organised by the district's community education managers, development workers and project staff. Those staff involved in the community programme work in partnership with local voluntary and community groups on a range of projects to involve socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged people in learning. For example, the district has a targeted disability programme and has projects to involve members of minority ethnic communities in learning. In 2002-03, 39 per cent of learners on courses in the community programme were from minority ethnic communities, 53 per cent were from disadvantaged areas in the district, 81 per cent were women and 28 per cent had a disability.

There is a small workplace programme in the North Western District. Ninety per cent of courses are accredited. For most of the provision, the WEA works in partnership with either UNISON or the NHS Confederation. These courses are developed in collaboration with the WEA's partners and are provided throughout the district. A range of other courses, including food hygiene, health and safety and first aid, are designed and delivered in collaboration with smaller employers. The district also has a discrete, non-accredited literacy and numeracy programme which has been developed in line with the national standards for literacy and numeracy.

Leadership and management, ICT, community development, visual and performing arts and media, community development, English and modern foreign languages, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and foundation programmes were inspected in this district. There were insufficient hospitality, sport, leisure and travel observations to comment on the quality of teaching and learning in this area.

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As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 3,259 learners had made 3,407 enrolments on 298 courses in North West District. This represents 7.35 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- good understanding of corporate changes and the forward plan
- effective development of targeted provision
- good use of management information to monitor performance
- significant personal enrichment on visual and performing arts and media courses
- good development of technical and practical skills on visual and performing arts and media courses
- high retention rates on ICT, community development and foundation programmes
- good development of personal and social skills, and confidence on foundation programmes and English and modern foreign language programmes
- good use of partnerships to reach the target group on foundation, community development and ICT programmes
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- some good workplace foundation provision
- good teaching and learning on community learning programmes
- good induction by tutors for ICT learners
- some good information and guidance for ICT learners
- rigorous ICT course reviews
- effective collaboration between tutors and learners to direct learning on English and modern foreign languages and ICT programmes
- very good development of skills and knowledge through community development programmes to aid learners' participation in their communities
- good progression from community development programmes
- good integration of language, literacy and numeracy support into community development programmes
- good use of accreditation on community development programmes

Weaknesses

- inadequate curriculum management
- underdeveloped workplace provision
- inadequate management of additional learning support
- insufficient use of learner support funds
- insufficient representation from learners on community and workplace programmes in governance
- insufficient observations of teaching and learning
- inadequate assessment processes on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- weak quality assurance on visual and performing arts and media programmes

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- unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language and English and modern foreign language courses
- excessive use of English by modern foreign language tutors
- insufficient resources on foundation, ICT and community development programmes
- poor attendance on foundation community programmes
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor progress on foundation programmes
- inadequate quality assurance on foundation programmes
- insufficient overall strategic direction for the development of skills for life provision
- some poorly planned ICT sessions
- some ineffective use of assessment on ICT programmes
- weak assessment on English and modern foreign language programmes
- insufficient review of group or individual learning objectives on community development programmes

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Northern

The Northern District covers part of Cumbria, Northumberland, Durham, Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley. The district office is located in Gateshead.

District field staff develop and manage the provision. They work with learners to plan the programmes. Branch committees, which include student members, select provision for the next year. There is a basic and key skills co-ordinator. Some European Social Fund (ESF) and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding for the community programme.

There are 30 branches in the district. Volunteers have a vital role on the general programme in supporting tutors, facilitating courses and encouraging learners into the WEA membership scheme. On the community and workplace programmes, partner organisations provide staff and learners with similar support.

In 2002-03, the Northern District ran 938 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 63.3 per cent were in the community programme, 33 per cent in the general programme and 3.7 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 10,089 enrolments, representing 58.4 per cent on the community programme, 38.4 per cent on the general programme and 3.2 per cent on the workplace programme.

The general programme is managed by the tutor organiser, the area organiser and a development worker. However, the courses are organised locally by volunteers, with some guidance from the programme managers. Two part-time curriculum support tutors work to help with the development of the provision and to advise the programme managers. Most courses are non-accredited, although a small proportion of the courses which are run in partnership with local projects are accredited. Some branches work very closely with partner organisations, which include local libraries and community schools. There is a focus on the provision of humanities courses in this programme area, although other courses include alternative therapies, increasing confidence, talking about books, and crime and detection. Most courses last for less than 20 hours.

The community programme courses cover areas including health and care, ICT, practical crafts, schools and parenting, and languages. Most courses are non-accredited. The provision is developed and managed by district field staff. The community programme is designed and planned to meet learners' needs. Courses are located in local venues. A number of targeted outreach projects are run to meet the needs of socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged people. These projects are designed to widen participation in learning and are run in partnership with LEAs, social services, health services, voluntary organisations, further education colleges and schools.

The workplace programme is essentially split into two areas; the union representatives programme and the learning at work programme. The union representatives programme operates in partnership with the TUC and the learning at work programme is run in partnership with UNISON. These courses are primarily aimed at trades union members, although non-members can participate in the learning at work course. Learners are recruited through the WEA's partnership with organisations such as health trusts. Seventy-

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five per cent of learners on these two programmes are men. There is also some literacy, numeracy and language provision for learners in this programme area.

Leadership and management, sciences and mathematics, ICT, English and modern foreign languages, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, visual and performing arts and media, community development and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 1,480 learners had made 1,507 enrolments on 135 courses in Northern District. This represents 3.33 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- effective development of provision to widen participation for most areas of learning
- clear strategy to meet identified needs for skills for life provision
- good learning and achievement on hospitality and sport programmes
- some good teaching and learning on hospitality, and sport, English and modern foreign languages and science programmes
- good achievement of learning goals on ICT courses
- high retention rates on ICT, science and foundation programmes
- good research skills of science learners
- good creative writing programmes
- effective collaboration between tutors and learners to direct learning on English and modern foreign language programmes
- very good development of skills and knowledge through community development programmes to aid learners' participation in their communities
- good progression from community development programmes
- well-planned community development programmes
- particularly good group facilitation by tutors on community development programmes
- well-managed community development programme at a local level
- good development of personal skills and confidence on foundation programmes
- good use of partnerships to reach the target group on foundation programmes
- significant personal enrichment on visual and performing arts and media programmes

Weaknesses

- inadequate curriculum management
- weak monitoring of skills for life strategy at area level
- financial management not yet fully addressing identified problems
- inadequate quality assurance
- weak communication between local level and district on community development and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- some unsatisfactory venues and resources on ICT, science, and hospitality and sport and foundation programmes
- some lack of detail on lesson plans for hospitality and sport programmes

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- insufficient initial assessment of learners' needs and abilities on hospitality and sport programmes
- insufficient curriculum co-ordination of hospitality and sport programmes
- ineffective use of learner evaluation forms on hospitality and sport programmes
- some poorly planned outcomes of teaching and learning on ICT courses
- insufficient attention to health and safety on ICT programmes
- insufficient use of assessment to plan and monitor learning on ICT programmes
- insufficient development of science programmes to widen participation
- weak assessment on English and modern foreign languages and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- lack of data on progression on community development programmes
- poor use of data to analyse trends on ICT provision
- insufficient focus on community work skills in staff development of community development tutors
- poor attendance on foundation community programmes
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor progress on foundation programmes
- poor classroom management in some visual and performing arts and media sessions

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South Eastern

South Eastern District covers Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, Surrey and the London boroughs of Bexley and Bromley. The district office is in Rochester, Kent. The district has 1,721 members.

Approximately 200 volunteers work in this district. These volunteers are members who are active in the branch, doing tasks such as recruitment and enrolment, booking venues and attending branch committee meetings. Most volunteers in the South Eastern District are involved in the general programme. A district basic and key skills co-ordinator liaises with tutor organisers in the three programme areas to ensure learners receive the support they require.

In 2002-03, the South East District ran a total of 706 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 21.7 per cent were in the community programme, 55.5 per cent in the general programme and 22.8 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 8,200 enrolments, representing 15.7 per cent on the community programme, 67.9 per cent on the general programme and 16.4 per cent on the workplace programme.

Tutor organisers are each responsible for a defined geographical area in the district manage the general programme. The everyday management of the courses, including room bookings, recruitment and record-keeping, is done by members of the branch committee. Most courses on the general programme are not accredited. Courses cover humanities, visual and performing arts and sciences. Courses are for two hours a week and last for six to 20 weeks. Learners can attend courses during the day, in the evenings or on Saturdays.

The community programme is managed by tutor organisers. They are responsible for the strategic management and development of the community programme, developing partnerships, identifying and securing funding and quality assurance. Tutor organisers also manage teams of project workers who are responsible for the everyday management of the community programme. The community programme includes ESOL, women and health, helping in schools, IT and family learning courses. Literacy and numeracy programmes are developed in conjunction with local community contacts and local learning needs. There are accredited and non-accredited courses available. The district is using the community programme to widen participation in learning and has targeted the provision at adults who are socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged in areas of significant deprivation, such as the North Kent/Thames Gateway, Thanet, Hastings and Brighton and Hove. Currently, courses to widen participation in learning account for 23 per cent of the district's community programme. The community programme has developed in line with the strategic objectives of the local LSCs, learning partnerships and LEAs. The district's community programme fills many of the gaps in the existing community learning provision in the region.

The workplace programme is managed by two full-time tutor organisers who are based in the district office and who have responsibility for the provision throughout the district. One of these has responsibility for trades union activist education and ICT programmes and the other is responsible for the district's partnership with UNISON to provide the

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learning at work programme. The trades union activist education programme and the learning at work programme are planned in discussion with the WEA's partners. The learning at work programme is accredited through the OCN. Workplace literacy and numeracy is provided in partnership with UNISON.

Leadership and management, English and modern foreign languages, visual and performing arts and media, humanities and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 3,012 learners had made 3,109 enrolments on 230 courses in South Eastern District. This represents 6.79 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- some effective new outreach developments in general programme
- good involvement of learners in programme design
- good partnership working
- some well-planned and well-researched new projects
- good retention rates on humanities and foundation programmes
- good development of learners' skills and knowledge on humanities programmes
- good range of enrichment activities in some branches on humanities programmes
- significant personal enrichment on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- very good development of technical and practical skills in visual and performing arts programmes
- some good teaching on visual and performing arts programmes
- good creative writing programmes
- good achievement of personal and social goals on English and modern foreign languages and foundation programmes
- good and improving achievement rates on foundation workplace programmes
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- some successful information, advice and guidance on workplace foundation courses
- effective use of class secretaries on humanities programmes

Weaknesses

- unclear future role and identity of the district
- weak quality assurance
- no strategic planning for the general programme
- incomplete target-setting and monitoring
- insufficient monitoring of staff training for equality of opportunity purposes
- insufficient attention to widening participation on humanities, and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- insufficient attention to individual learners' needs on humanities programmes

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- some inadequate resources and accommodation on humanities and foundation programmes
- narrow range of teaching methods in literature
- weak assessment on English and modern foreign languages, humanities and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- insufficient sharing of good practice on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor progress on foundation programmes
- little use of the learner support fund on foundation programmes

Thames and Solent

Thames and Solent District covers the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Its district office is in Oxford, where most of the financial and administrative activity is focused. It also maintains small premises to support work in Aylesbury and Slough. The district's longstanding partnerships with other organisations have led to the establishment of teaching centres in Portsmouth, Reading and Southampton. There are 1,275 members subscribing through the national membership scheme.

The district management team is led by a district secretary, who is supported by two education managers and an administration manager. At operational level, an administration officer plans and monitors the work of the administrative team. Each of the three programme areas is co-ordinated by a member of staff who is responsible for ensuring that local provision reflects national policies, practices and standards. The approach to programme planning varies across the programme areas: in the general programme, branches and groups of voluntary members take the lead in determining a curriculum to best fit local demand. In the community and workplace programmes, the development of courses often stems from the partnerships between the district and community/employer groups.

Most of the district's voluntary activity takes place in the general programme, through a network of 55 branches. Branch committees, with over 400 active members, play an active part in developing and running new courses. A structure for democratic participation provides a conduit from branch level through county level to the governing district committee and district council. In the community and workplace programmes, 60 active volunteers in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire are involved in recruiting learners and supporting other learners.

In 2002-03, the Thames and Solent District ran 678 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 33 per cent were in the community programme, 49.4 per cent in the general programme and 17.6 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 8,912 enrolments, representing 22.1 per cent on the community programme, 63 per cent on the general programme and 14.9 per cent on the workplace programme.

The general programme consists mainly of non-accredited courses in humanities, visual and performing arts and media, and English and modern foreign languages. Most of the humanities courses are history related, including some on research techniques. These courses are planned by the branches. The English courses mainly focus on the study of literary works; some run over two terms to allow for progression. Over 80 per cent of the visual and performing arts courses are in art history, the rest are in music.

The community programme courses, many of which are planned by tutor organisers in response to local need, are mainly non-accredited courses. A few accredited courses in ICT are offered. Over 60 per cent of the ICT courses take place in Portsmouth. A small number of short, practical courses are offered under visual and performing arts, mostly based around gaining craft skills. In English, there are targeted courses in creative writing

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and some in languages such as Spanish and Arabic. A few courses in personal development run under the humanities title. In foundation studies, the skills for life courses centre around English as an additional language for women from minority ethnic communities.

The workplace programme includes literacy and numeracy in the workplace, where the emphasis is on accreditation. The district has developed a programme that meets the requirements of the WEA's three-year development plan. Most of the workplace courses are offered in partnership with UNISON.

Leadership and management, ICT, visual and performing arts and media, humanities, English and modern foreign languages and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 1,728 learners had made 1,823 enrolments on 138 courses in Thames and Solent District. This represents 3.89 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- good planning to widen participation on community and workplace programmes
- effective partnerships to promote learning in communities
- effective staff recruitment procedures
- some good ICT teaching on workplace and community programmes
- significant personal enrichment on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- good development of technical and practical skills on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- high retention rates on humanities, ICT, English and modern foreign languages and foundation programmes
- good creative writing programmes
- good achievement of personal and social learning goals on ICT and English and modern foreign language programmes
- some good collaboration with learners on course design of humanities programmes
- good and improving achievement rates on workplace foundation programmes
- good development of personal skills and confidence on foundation programmes
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners

Weaknesses

- weak performance management of permanent staff
- ineffective curriculum management
- weak target-setting and poor use of national management information system
- inadequate quality assurance on ICT programmes
- limited range of teaching methods on literature programmes
- weak assessment on English and modern foreign languages, and visual and performing arts and media programmes

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- some weak resources on foundation, English and modern foreign languages and ICT community programmes
- some weak management of ICT community and workplace provision
- some limited teaching methods on humanities programmes
- ineffective measuring of attainment on humanities programmes
- insufficient attention to widening participation on humanities programmes
- insufficient challenge for more able learners on ICT programmes
- unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses
- poor attendance on foundation community programmes
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor progress on foundation programmes

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West Mercia

The West Mercia District covers the West Midlands and part of south Cheshire. The district encompasses six local LSCs and 14 LEAs. The West Mercia District office is based in Birmingham. The WEA also has seven local learning centres in the district, each with an IT suite, teaching room and local support staff. The district focuses its training provision on meeting the needs of disadvantaged people and areas.

The office in Birmingham is the administrative and management centre for the district. The district secretary leads the management team which comprises the finance and administration managers and the programme area managers. A programme area manager manages the staff teaching team for each of the LSC areas. Currently, the district employs 35 full-time equivalent staff, 450 part-time tutors, a basic and key skills co-ordinator and an ESOL tutor. The basic and key skills co-ordinator and the ESOL tutor provide support through the programme area managers.

There are 21 branches in West Mercia District. Thirty-five voluntary educational advisers provide support in community and workplace learning programmes.

In 2002-03, West Mercia District ran a total of 858 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 71 per cent were in the community programme, 24.5 per cent in the general programme and 4.5 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 9,642 enrolments, representing 62.7 per cent on the community programme, 33.6 per cent on the general programme and 3.7 per cent on the workplace programme.

The general programme offers mainly non-accredited courses in humanities. The branches focus their work on the provision of humanities courses, and in particular historical studies, which are particularly popular with learners. Courses run for one to three hours each week for 10 or 20 weeks. The district also has an active retirement programme in Telford and Wrekin, which it provides in partnership with the LEA.

The community programme covers community learning, women's health, complementary medicine, ICT, family learning and literacy, numeracy and language. The district works in partnership with local primary schools, LEAs and voluntary and community organisations to deliver this provision. Courses last for two or three hours each week over six to 10 weeks. Approximately 33 per cent of courses are accredited by the OCN. The district has recently piloted an examination-based qualification in IT.

The workplace programme operates in partnership with UNISON and other trades unions. However, the WEA is diversifying to tailor provision to meet the needs of smaller employers. Most of the provision is accredited by the OCN. Literacy, numeracy and language support is provided for learners on workplace programmes.

Leadership and management, sciences and mathematics, ICT, hospitality and sport, humanities, community development, family learning and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

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As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 3,290 learners had made 3,423 enrolments on 252 courses in West Mercia District. This represents 7.42 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- effective leadership to promote the aims of the association
- particularly effective self-assessment
- good use of partnerships to widen participation on most programmes
- high retention rates on science, ICT, community development and foundation programmes
- good collaborative learning on foundation and humanities programmes
- good development of personal and social skills on ICT, hospitality and sports, humanities and foundation programmes
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- good range of enrichment activities on humanities programmes
- particularly good development of skills and knowledge in equal opportunities for community development learners
- good teaching and learning on science, community learning and community development programmes
- some good progression opportunities from stage 1 to stage 2 ICT courses
- good support for ICT tutors
- good learning and achievement on hospitality and sports programmes
- particularly good group facilitation by tutors on community development programmes
- good local management of community development projects
- wide range of challenging learning activities on hospitality and sports programmes
- good development of learners' skills to support children on family learning programmes
- wide range of well-designed family learning resources
- very good tutorial support on some family learning sessions
- strong information, advice and guidance on foundation programmes

Weaknesses

- inadequate training for volunteers and governors
- insufficient integration of financial and course data for monitoring and planning purposes
- insufficiently developed quality assurance arrangements
- ineffective learner evaluation on science programmes
- insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning on ICT programmes
- inadequate curriculum management of foundation programmes
- insufficient range of science programmes to effectively widen participation
- insufficiently developed strategic planning for skills for life work
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan learning and monitor progress on foundation programmes

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- some unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language courses
- poor attendance on foundation community programmes
- insufficient checks on learning in some humanities classes
- insufficient attention to health and safety at sport, hospitality and some humanities locations
- some poor accommodation for ICT programmes
- ineffective assessment on humanities, ICT and science programmes
- insufficient attention to the aims of some community development programmes
- inadequate evaluation of the effects of community development programmes
- insufficient detailed information and guidance before enrolment on family learning programmes

West South West

The West South West Region is a new combination of the WEA's old Western and South Western Districts. The transition to the new region will be completed by the end of July 2004. The region covers a large geographical area, from Cornwall in the west to Wiltshire in the east and takes in six local LSC areas. Much of the area is rural, with Bristol, Plymouth and Swindon being the main conurbations.

An interim regional management team operated with four other teams while a new organisational structure was being developed. The new structure allows for local teams in each LSC area where there is more than one member of staff. Currently, this means that three teams will be formed. Four development teams, drawn from a cross-section of staff, will meet termly to discuss curriculum management, quality assurance, marketing and publicity, and finance and administration. All tutor organisers, co-ordinators and managers meet once or twice termly. This group is responsible for bringing together the work of all the teams and making recommendations to the regional management team. The regional management team implements decisions on policy and strategy.

A regional secretary and three managers will be based at the new regional office in Exeter, with finance and administrative support staff. Tutor organisers and co-ordinators of basic skills, guidance, special learning needs, tutor training and class visiting work all over the region, some in offices and some based at home. There are WEA local offices in Truro, Plymouth, Bristol, Gloucester and Swindon. The region has approximately 485 hourly-paid teaching staff. All new teaching staff attend a WEA induction or are briefed by a tutor organiser.

Across the region there are approximately 850 members and about 480 active volunteers. Most volunteers are active at branch level and are involved in planning and publicising courses. A few voluntary education advisers assist learners on workplace programmes. A new regional committee has been set up as the main voluntary committee for advising on regional development.

In 2002-03, the combination of the previous districts ran 1,076 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 40.2 per cent were in the community programme, 51.5 per cent in the general programme and 8.3 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 12,637 enrolments, representing 31.9 per cent on the community programme, 60.8 per cent on the general programme and 7.3 per cent on the workplace programme. The curriculum offer across the region shows wide variation, with many subjects being offered in only one or two locations. A particular feature of the region is the provision of some longer accredited courses.

The general programme offers short courses in humanities, most of which relate to history. These are usually selected by volunteers, as are courses in music appreciation and history of art. Courses in creative writing are often targeted at particular groups of learners. Literature appreciation groups select their future programmes.

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In the community programme, many practical arts and crafts courses are targeted at specific groups of learners. These courses are often selected in discussion with linked organisations and set up according identified local need. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses are also usually targeted and based on negotiation and needs analysis; around 16 per cent of these courses are accredited. About 90 per cent of the small number of family learning courses are also accredited.

The workplace programme mainly consists of standard length courses in literacy and numeracy, mainly offered in partnership with UNISON.

Leadership and management, English and modern foreign languages, visual and performing arts and media, humanities and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 3,155 learners had made 3,269 enrolments on 282 courses in West South West District. This represents 7.11 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- good management of the restructuring process
- positive commitment to effective financial management
- effective involvement of volunteers at branch, regional and national level
- effective partnerships to promote learning in communities on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- significant personal enrichment on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- very good development of technical and practical skills on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- high retention rates on humanities and foundation programmes
- good and improving achievement on foundation workplace programmes
- good development of personal and social skills on foundation, humanities and English and modern foreign language programmes
- effective collaboration between tutors and learners to direct learning on English and modern foreign language programmes
- constructive written feedback on distance learning creative writing course and in classroom based course
- effective use of the learning support funds on English and modern foreign language programmes
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- effective monitoring of progress and achievement on foundation programmes
- effective sharing of good practice on foundation workplace programmes
- good range of enrichment activities on humanities programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of management data for performance monitoring and target-setting

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- inadequate implementation of quality assurance procedures
- weak quality assurance on humanities, English and modern foreign language programmes
- insufficient curriculum planning and development
- no clear strategy for the development of the foundation programmes
- weak curriculum management on English and modern foreign language programmes
- insufficient management of resources
- some poor resources and accommodation on English and modern foreign languages and humanities programmes
- excessive use of English by tutors of modern foreign languages
- narrow range of teaching methods in literature
- weak assessment on English and modern foreign languages, humanities, and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- some poor progression on workplace foundation programmes
- little sharing of good practice on English and modern foreign languages, and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- insufficient checks on learning and insufficient strategies to develop learning on humanities programmes
- insufficient attention to widening participation on humanities programmes

Yorkshire North

The Yorkshire North District covers all of North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, York, most of Humberside and parts of the North and Northeast of Lincolnshire. The district office is in Leeds. All the premises used for training are owned by other training providers or organisations.

The district management team comprises the district secretary, the administration and systems manager, the curriculum manager, the learning support manager and the quality and training manager. The district employs 13 administration staff and 23 field staff. In addition, 473 tutors are employed by session.

There are 62 branches in the district and 1,898 volunteers. Volunteers plan and organise courses, predominantly in the general programme area. Sixteen voluntary educational advisers work in the district to support learners who require help in learning sessions.

In 2002-03, the Yorkshire North District ran 1,484 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 61.1 per cent were in the community programme, 30.4 per cent in the general programme and 8.8 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 14,347 enrolments, representing 48.6 per cent on the community programme, 44.4 per cent on the general programme and 7 per cent on the workplace programme.

The general programme offers accredited and non-accredited courses in subjects including literature, art, creative writing, music, science, local history, philosophy and politics. Local branch volunteers plan and organise the provision. They work with local training providers to avoid duplication of provision. At the start of each course, the tutor agrees learning outcomes to meet the group's learning needs.

The community programme includes a high proportion of ICT and family learning courses. There are accredited and non-accredited courses available in this programme area. The community programme also includes some targeted disability provision. Courses are tailored to meet the needs of their target groups. In this programme area, local venues are used in areas of social and economic disadvantage. The provision is organised by field staff in collaboration with a number of external partners. There is no one member of staff with overall responsibility for this programme area. One tutor organiser disseminates information to and from the national association.

Many courses on the workplace programme are offered in partnership with UNISON and the TUC. The workplace programme offers accredited and non-accredited provision in subjects including literacy, numeracy and language, ICT, communications and pathways to the future, health and safety at work, industrial relations and employment law. Courses are delivered in the workplace, during work hours, to public sector workers who have not had the opportunity to learn previously. Most learners work for the NHS or in local government, although the programme has recently been extended to the independent sector. Many venues used for courses in this programme area belong to hospitals, colleges and local government.

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Leadership and management, trades union studies, ICT, hospitality and sport, visual and performing arts, English and modern foreign languages, community development, family learning and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 5,712 learners had made 5,988 enrolments on 479 courses in Yorkshire North District. This represents 12.88 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- good internal communications
- effective local management
- good partnerships to promote learning in communities and workplaces
- effective staff training on trades union studies courses
- good retention on trades union studies, ICT and community development programmes
- good attainment by learners on community development programmes
- good integration of equal opportunities into community development sessions
- wide range of challenging learning activities on hospitality and sports programmes
- some good development of independent learning and vocational skills on trades union studies
- good course design and learning materials on trades union studies and family learning programmes
- good equal opportunities awareness on trades union programmes
- good and improving achievement on workplace foundation programmes
- good development of personal skills and confidence on foundation and visual and performing arts and media and yoga and relaxation programmes
- some good individual additional support in literacy and for ICT learners
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- good development of technical and practical skills on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- good practical use of ICT skills in wider social contexts
- good use of volunteers on ICT programmes
- some good progression on workplace ICT programmes
- effective involvement of learners in the planning of ICT and English and modern foreign language courses
- effective internal verification on ICT accredited programmes
- significant development of attitudes to maintain lifelong learning in English and modern foreign language programmes
- good development of learners' skills to support children on family learning programmes
- well-developed and successful 'Helping in Schools' programme

Weaknesses

- insufficient observation of teaching and learning

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- insufficient monitoring of tutors' performance on trades union studies programmes
- inadequate curriculum management on foundation and on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- weak quality assurance on foundation programmes and on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- ineffective use of feedback to improve provision on trades union studies programmes
- inadequate evaluation of the effect of community development programmes on communities
- unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language programmes and some visual and performing arts general courses
- narrow range of teaching methods in literature classes
- insufficient challenge for more able ICT learners
- lack of clarity for learners on progress or objectives of community development programmes
- some inadequate resources on ICT, foundation and community development programmes
- much inappropriate accommodation for family learning courses
- poor recording of learners' progress on hospitality and sports programmes
- some weak lesson planning on hospitality and sports programmes
- inadequate initial assessment on hospitality and sports and family learning programmes
- inadequate assessment on trades union studies, English and modern foreign language programmes, ICT, and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- declining achievement on trades union studies programmes
- little structured support for learners with additional needs on trades union studies programmes
- some poor attendance on foundation community classes
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan work and monitor progress on foundation programmes
- poor classroom management on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- insufficient detailed information and guidance before enrolment on family learning programmes

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Yorkshire South

The Yorkshire South District covers the four local authority areas of South Yorkshire, North East Derbyshire, North Nottinghamshire and North East Lincolnshire. There are 1,926 members in this district.

The district is managed by a district management team. Restructuring across the district has led to area-based units for planning, delivery and monitoring. Fifty-five tutors are paid monthly and there is a bank of 400 course tutors who are paid sessionally.

In the district's branches there are 130 volunteers.

In 2002-03 the Yorkshire South District provided courses for 11,521 learners. General programme courses accounted for 46 per cent of the provision and 53 per cent of enrolments in the district, community programme courses accounted for 52 per cent of the provision and 45 per cent of enrolments and the workplace programme accounted for 2 per cent of the provision and 2 per cent of enrolments.

In 2002-03, the Yorkshire South District ran 2,094 courses on the main LSC contract. Of the courses, 49.3 per cent were in the community programme, 49.2 per cent in the general programme and 1.5 per cent in the workplace programme. The courses attracted 21,491 enrolments, representing 43.4 per cent on the community programme, 55.3 per cent on the general programme and 1.3 per cent on the workplace programme.

Leadership and management, science, ICT, hospitality and sports, visual and performing arts and media, community development, family learning and foundation programmes were inspected in this district.

As at 1 March 2004 on the main LSC contract, 6,116 learners had made 6,558 enrolments on 622 courses in Yorkshire South District. This represents 13.79 per cent of the WEA's current learners.

Strengths

- good internal communications
- effective local management of financial crisis
- recent development of quality assurance systems, although not effectively implemented yet
- good partnerships to widen participation in most areas of learning
- high retention rates on science, ICT, foundation, family learning and community development programmes
- good development of personal skills and confidence on foundation, hospitality and sports and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- good use of experiential learning on community development programmes
- well-sited foundation courses conveniently located for learners
- good collaborative learning on foundation programmes

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- very good development of skills and knowledge to aid learners' participation in their communities through community development programmes
- good progression opportunities for community development learners
- good local management of community development projects and programmes
- effective use of volunteers on science and ICT programmes
- some good teaching and learning on science and family learning programmes
- good learning and achievement on hospitality and sports programmes
- wide range of challenging learning activities on hospitality and sports programmes
- excellent attendance on hospitality and sports programmes
- good development of technical and practical skills on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- effective enrichment activities on visual and performing arts and media programmes
- wide range of well-designed family learning resources
- good practical use of ICT skills in wider social contexts
- effective involvement of learners in planning their ICT course content
- some good additional support for learners on ICT programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficient strategic overview of curriculum areas
- ineffective system of teaching and learning observations
- ineffective use of data to improve provision
- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities
- insufficient sharing of good practice except on ICT programmes
- inadequate curriculum management on foundation and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- weak quality assurance on foundation and visual and performing arts and media programmes
- inadequate take up of community development programmes by male learners
- insufficient attention to widening participation on science programmes
- some unsatisfactory achievement on accredited family learning programmes
- some poor attendance on foundation community classes
- slow progress in achievement on vocational ICT courses
- too much unsatisfactory teaching and learning on literacy and language and ICT courses
- insufficient learning materials and equipment on science and foundation community programmes
- some poor-quality teaching venues
- weak maintenance arrangements for ICT equipment
- poor use of identified learning needs to plan work and monitor progress on foundation programmes
- inadequate initial assessment on hospitality and sports, and family learning programmes
- poor recording of learners' progress on hospitality and sports programmes

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- some weak planning of learning on hospitality and sports programmes and in many visual and performing arts and media sessions
- poor classroom management on visual and performing arts and media and foundation programmes
- inadequate assessment on visual and performing arts and media and ICT programmes
- insufficient detailed information and guidance before enrolment on family learning programmes