

INSPECTION REPORT

Westcountry Training & Consultancy Services Limited (WTCS Limited)

17 February 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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	

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 training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** 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

In those cases 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

This 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 summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Westcountry Training and Consultancy Services Limited (WTCS Limited) was established in 1991 and became a private limited company in April 1999. The two managing directors are based at the company headquarters in South Molton and there are 11 other offices throughout the Southwest. The company specialises in access to employment for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. The company holds a number of contracts with Jobcentre Plus and with other statutory organisations. The inspection focused on the contracts with Jobcentre Plus for Gateway to Work, programme centres and Workstep, which account for approximately 21 per cent of the company's activities. At the time of the inspection there were 29 clients on the Gateway to Work programme for 18-24 year olds, and 14 on the programme for those aged 25 or over. There were 281 clients registered at the programme centres. Seventy-nine clients were registered on the Workstep provision, 19 of whom were in supported employment.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, leadership and management are good. Equality of opportunity and quality assurance are both satisfactory. The provision in foundation programmes is good overall, and also good both in programme centres and Workstep provision.

GRADES

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 18-24	None
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	None
Programme Centres	2
Workstep	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- good strategic leadership of organisational growth and change
- effective operational management
- good external links
- good retention and achievement
- particularly effective support and guidance for clients
- good jobsearch training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- under-developed quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate strategy for literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity
- inadequate target-setting in action plans and progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better promotional materials for clients

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days with West Country Training and Consultancy Services Limited (WTCS Limited) in February 2003. They interviewed 58 clients, 58 staff and four staff from external organisations. Inspectors visited 11 provider sites, five employment sites, and interviewed three employers. Fourteen training sessions were observed and graded. A range of documentary evidence was examined, including 51 individual learning plans, clients' records, training materials, the company's policies and procedures, staff records, minutes of meetings and action plans. Inspectors also studied the first self-assessment report produced by WTCS Limited, which was published in November 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Foundation programmes	0	2	4	5	3	0	0	14
Total	0	2	4	5	3	0	0	14

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. WTCS Limited was established in 1991 and became a private limited company in 1999. The two managing directors are based at the company headquarters in South Molton and there are 11 other offices throughout the Southwest. The company employs 125 staff and specialises in access to employment for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. The company holds a number of contracts with Jobcentre Plus and other statutory organisations. The inspection focused on the contracts for Gateway to Work, programme centres and Workstep, which make up approximately 21 per cent of the company's activities. Most of the company's work is with people with disabilities. The company contracts with the Southwest region of Jobcentre Plus. Gateway to Work learning programmes for learners aged 18-24 and 25+ are provided in Bristol, Bristol South, Bath, and Weston-Super-Mare. The contracts for Gateway to Work have been in operation since July 2000 and have been extended to March 2004. At the time of the inspection there were 29 clients on Gateway to Work learning programmes for learners aged 18-24 and 14 clients on the 25+ learning programme. Programme centres are run from learning centres in Chippenham, Devizes, Trowbridge, Warminster, Cheltenham, Cirencester, Moreton-in-Marsh, and Tewkesbury. The programme centre in Cheltenham is open full time and the other centres are open part time. Programme centres have been in operation since August 2001 in Wiltshire and October 2001 for Gloucestershire. At the time of the inspection, there were 281 clients attending programme centres. The contract for Workstep provision started in July 2002 and operates in Bath, Northeast Somerset, Bristol and Somerset. There are 79 clients registered on the Workstep provision, 19 of whom are in supported employment.

3. The Southwest is a predominantly rural area, and public transport is poor in some areas. Unemployment rates vary considerably throughout the region. The national average for unemployment was 3 per cent in May 2002, and 2 per cent for the Southwest as a whole. However, in parts of Cornwall, Torbay and Gloucestershire the unemployment rate was over 4 per cent in May 2002. In May 2002, the unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds was 24 per cent in the Southwest compared with the national average of 25.3 per cent. Employment in the region comprises agriculture and related industries, distribution, hotels and restaurants, and public administration, education and health. The service industries are the main source of employment. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups in the Southwest is 1.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. The proportion of staff from minority ethnic groups at WTCS Limited is higher than the regional average, at 5 per cent. The proportion of staff with disabilities, as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act, is 30 per cent.

New Deal 18-24

4. Retention and achievement rates are good, and progression into employment is also good at 57 per cent. Clients receive good individual support and guidance. Employers are often involved in the courses and give clients advice about jobs in their occupational sector. Jobcentre Plus advisers give advice and guidance on options at the end of the learning programme. Providers of support services give clients good information on counselling services on a wide range of issues such as debt management, housing and substance misuse. Learning is carefully structured to support the personal individual needs of clients. However, not enough consideration is given to ensuring clients individual learning needs are met. Not all training is well planned.

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults

5. Appointments for the induction at the start of the learning programme do not always run on time. Not all clients complete the first week, but the retention rates are good overall. The course is designed to increase clients' chances of getting a job quickly by developing motivation, teamworking and presentation skills. Personal support for clients is very good. However, appropriate attention to individual learning needs is not adequately developed. Some training is not well planned, and some accommodation and resources are inadequate.

Programme Centres

6. Timetables are negotiated between clients and staff and most clients attend for several hours a week for up to 13 weeks at most learning centres. At programme centres in Gloucestershire, clients can attend until all learning goals are completed or they obtain employment. Clients receive an in-depth analysis of their training needs. They frequently have individual tuition on a range of jobsearch activities and interview skills. Retention and achievement rates are good and job outcomes are higher than the national average. Jobsearch training is particularly good. Good links with local employers have also enabled clients to gain in confidence and many successfully achieve their employment goals. Accommodation and access to resources are not always adequate, especially in those programme centres which are only open part time.

Workstep

7. An employment adviser works with the clients to prepare a personal development plan. Provider staff help the clients with advice and guidance on issues such as benefits and housing. They also secure additional resources or work aids, in order to maintain or secure employment for the clients. Clients who are in supported employment receive help and guidance from a member of the provider's staff who meets with the clients on a planned basis. The frequency of the support sessions is negotiated and related to individual needs. The provision is good overall, and is effective in supporting clients in finding and maintaining appropriate employment. However, individual learning plans are not always well structured. Retention is very good, and only three clients have left the learning programme, all for reasons unrelated to the quality of the provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

8. WTCS Limited was established by the two directors in 1991 and became a private limited company in 1999. Currently there are approximately 125 staff, of whom 11 work part time. Most staff have been employed by the company for less than two years. There are currently 11 staff teams managed by team leaders based in locations throughout the Southwest. Of these, six have been in operation for under three years. Following recent restructuring, a management team which includes contract co-ordinators and operational managers has been established. The three operational managers are regionally based. One is responsible for the teams in Devon and Cornwall, one for those in Bristol and Gloucestershire and the other for the teams in Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset. The operational managers are responsible for provision and performance. The three contract co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring contract compliance for specific contracts. The new structure has been in operation since January 2003. The company appointed a quality assurance manager in May 2002 and a personnel manager in October 2002. There is a clear meeting and reporting structure. A finance manager has been in post since May 1995 and reports monthly to the directors. The budget is planned and reviewed annually and linked to performance targets. There are comprehensive systems to monitor progress and outcomes. The quality assurance policies and procedures were revised in November 2002. There is a policy for equality of opportunity which is updated annually, and was last updated in December 2002. Ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the policy overall lies with the two directors. The company's first self-assessment report was produced in November 2002. WTCS Limited has held the Investors in People award since 1998, which is a national standard for improving a company's performance through its people.

STRENGTHS

- good strategic leadership of organisational growth and change
- effective operational management
- good external links
- effective internal communications
- good staff induction and development
- strong staff commitment to equality of opportunity contributes to client success
- good use of client feedback to improve provision

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate strategy for literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity
- some inadequate access to learning centres and facilities
- under-developed quality assurance arrangements

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better promotional materials for clients
- better monitoring of employers' and service providers' practices

9. There is good strategic management. The growth of the company has been managed well. The company has grown rapidly in the past two years and in addition to its headquarters in South Molton has expanded to 11 operational sites managed by team leaders throughout the Southwest. The range and number of contracts have also grown. The directors have ensured that an effective management team has been formed to maintain successful client outcomes against a background of considerable growth and change. The management team has grown to include the newly appointed quality assurance and personnel managers as well as additional operational managers and contract co-ordinators. The organisational structure is effective and, although new, is understood well by staff. The financial management of the organisation is good. A finance manager who has been in post since 1995 produces monthly reports for the directors, based on income and expenditure by cost-centre. Each cost-centre is accountable for its income and expenditure, and funding arrangements are based on good financial information and forecasting.

10. Operational management is effective. The team leaders are responsible for the day-to-day management of each operational site, which is overseen by the three operational managers. The operational management of WTCS Limited focuses on the needs of the clients, and the requirements of each particular contract. The operational managers provide effective support to their teams and are in regular contact with them. They have a thorough knowledge of the work of each team, aided by their experience of a number of roles and responsibilities within the organisation as it has grown and developed. The contract co-ordinators ensure that the requirements of each contract are fully understood and implemented by the teams responsible for the provision. Both strands of management support effectively the day-to-day activities of the teams to help ensure good learning experiences for the clients.

11. External links are good. The directors work effectively to ensure that the reputation of WTCS Limited is communicated regionally and nationally. For example, one director attends the secretary of state's consultation group on job brokering for New Deal for the disabled. At regional level, WTCS Limited is acknowledged by other relevant groups and bodies as having significant expertise in supporting clients who are long-term unemployed, with particular experience in working with people with disabilities and mental health issues, as well as ex-offenders. WTCS Limited has formalised partnerships with other agencies, such as the Devon and Cornwall Probation Area and the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB). The directors have overall responsibility for bidding for contracts. WTCS Limited consistently meets and exceeds the targets set by most contracts and is successful in having contracts renewed and in gaining new contracts. For example, the Gateway to Work contract for 18-24 year old clients was extended until March 2004 to include courses specifically for clients aged 25+ who are classified as long-term unemployed. The contract co-ordinators work effectively with

Jobcentre Plus to ensure contract compliance. There are very good links between WTCS Limited staff and Jobcentre Plus staff to support the clients on Gateway to Work, programme centre and Workstep provision. At a local level, there are extensive links with many organisations, which are used effectively to support the needs of individual clients. Staff teams work at a local level and are linked effectively to community partnerships.

12. There are effective internal communications throughout the organisation. The directors have good working relationships with all staff. An annual company conference is attended by all staff. A weekly update is sent by the directors to all staff by e-mail, and a company newsletter is circulated quarterly. Regular meetings take place at all levels. Minuted team meetings take place at least monthly, and regular cycles of meetings are held by contract co-ordinators and operational managers. All staff are involved and informed about matters that are relevant to them. Staff also share good practice, both formally during meetings and informally. Informal communications are also effective in supporting the staff training programme and in ensuring that staff develop appropriate skills as required.

13. Staff induction and development are good. All new staff serve a probationary period for the first three months of employment. During this time they shadow other staff and are mentored by specific members of staff. In addition, there is a compulsory programme of core training, which includes disability awareness, benefit awareness and cultural diversity. Monthly meetings with the line manager record the progress of new staff. An appraisal interview takes place at the end of the probationary period to check that the induction process has been successful and to identify any further training needs. This initial appraisal links up to an annual appraisal process. All staff can attend a wider programme of internal training events in order to develop appropriate skills. A programme of internal training is produced every quarter based on staff need and the company's development priorities. This training programme is circulated to all staff. External training is also available for those who identify specific training needs.

14. WTCS Limited has an inadequate strategy for literacy, numeracy support and support for those who speak English as an additional language. The organisation does not have direct responsibility for improving the literacy, numeracy or language skills of its clients. It has not fully identified the support required by its clients. Staff training in literacy, numeracy or language support has not been identified as a priority. Staff do not have an appropriate awareness of the different learning needs of clients with poor literacy, numeracy or language skills and do not have the skills to provide effective support. Staff provide individual and personal support for clients, but do not sufficiently help improve client skills or confidence in literacy, numeracy or language. Individual learning needs are not sufficiently taken into account when selecting and preparing training materials, planning training sessions or when action-planning or carrying out progress reviews.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

15. WTCS Limited has an open recruitment policy in line with its commitment to promote diversity and human rights issues, as identified in the self-assessment report. Staff come from a wide mix of backgrounds, bringing a variety of previous experience to their delivery of programmes to the benefit of clients. Some have worked as disability employment advisors, some are themselves disabled, some have worked in the police force, some have a history of offending. Some staff have experience of working with offenders and drug users, and some have been in business and industry. Several staff have experienced long periods of unemployment. Staff are committed to removing barriers that may prevent clients from moving into employment and draw on their own experience to help clients understand their situation more clearly and resolve problems. Many clients are helped to employment through individually tailored learning programmes and additional support, equipment and encouragement. Considerable care is taken to ensure that clients are found the most appropriate employment opportunities for their particular skills and needs. Retention in employment, once secured, is good.

16. There is good equal opportunities training for staff, including benefits awareness, disability awareness, drug awareness, mental health issues, dealing with aggressive behaviour, offending behaviour, and cultural diversity. Staff attendance on this rolling programme of training is recorded and monitored by the operations managers, the training manager and the director responsible for provision. This training helps to reinforce the aims and values of the organisation. Staff work well with clients and fully understand their individual needs. Any infringements of the policies of the company result in disciplinary procedures. Equal opportunities is covered by staff through many aspects of the provision. Staff are encouraged to develop their skills in dealing with disadvantaged clients. Many staff provide practical help in getting clients to and from work and interviews. Some staff have individualised training sessions and learning programmes for clients in particularly difficult situations. For example, in the period before being sentenced, a client on a manslaughter charge was supported through a personalised Gateway to Work programme. A disabled client on the Workstep programme was able to take up work of their choice when supplied with a specially adapted lawn mower as well as a personal radio to keep them in touch with the work supervisor.

17. There are not enough systems to monitor and record equal opportunities. There are no formal procedures in place to measure the impact of the equal opportunities policy on client achievement or improvements in provision. There is a well-documented and effective complaints procedure. WTCS Limited does not systematically follow up those clients who do not attend the outlying programme centres. Data on clients' ethnicity are now collected regularly and monthly reports are produced for Jobcentre Plus. These data are not used to help strategic decision-making on reaching under-represented groups. Equality of opportunity is covered during induction but there is not enough documentation in use to ensure consistency of provision across different client groups. Staff refer to aspects of equal opportunities and inclusivity during work with clients and employers but the impact of this is not recorded or evaluated. There is no reference to

equal opportunities issues in the review process or client records. Employers are not required to sign any formal agreement regarding their implementation of equality of opportunity.

18. There is some inadequate access to learning centres and facilities. WTCS Limited keeps a record of the accessibility of all offices and venues used regularly by clients. Two of the 18 learning centres are inaccessible to wheelchair users and 10 have no toilets for disabled people. WTCS Limited does not have a choice about many of the venues that are used, as some are recommended by Jobcentre Plus. Some learning centres are used for short, individual interviews and clients with mobility problems can be accompanied to nearby toilet facilities. Arrangements can be made for clients to be seen on other premises if there are access issues, and in some cases rooms are rented in local community centres. Some clients are seen in alternative venues, if they are unwilling or unable to visit the local learning centre for personal reasons. Where new premises are taken on, WTCS Limited now prioritises access to the full range of services for clients. Interpreters and signers are available if required.

19. Although much of the content of current promotional material is based on the WTCS Limited policy for equality of opportunity and inclusivity, the language and presentation of this material is difficult to understand for those with poor literacy skills. However, there is some evidence of good practice in the use of clients' quotes in materials promoting the Workstep learning programme. Before they start their learning programmes, clients receive some relevant literature. Clients, however, do not always know what they will be doing every day, or the order in which they will be doing it. There is not enough use of graphics or illustrations to attract clients with poor literacy skills. WTCS Limited is aware of this issue and is including it in its development plan.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

20. A quality assurance manager was appointed in May 2002. Quality assurance arrangements have been in place since the company started in 1991. However, they have not been systematically used to ensure the quality of provision across the organisation. As the company has grown, managers have acknowledged the need for more systematic and comprehensive quality assurance arrangements. A new set of quality assurance policies and procedures was produced in November 2002 and is still in the process of being introduced across the company. The policies and procedures include monthly and quarterly monitoring of key aspects of provision by team leaders, operational managers and contract co-ordinators. Monitoring of provision, and the process of reporting this to the quality assurance manager, is inconsistent. Each team leader has some flexibility in deciding what to monitor and how, and there are brief guidelines on the completion of the forms. The quality assurance manager also carries out quarterly monitoring activities across the organisation. At present, this process is inconsistent. There are plans to review the suitability and effectiveness of the arrangements.

21. The organisation has a long-established commitment to contract compliance. It produces regular and detailed data and reports for each contract. These reports enable the organisation to operate effectively with the funding bodies. However, the commitment to consistency across the whole organisation is not adequate. The annual staff appraisal process is well established, but appraisals are not carried out or recorded consistently. For example, one team leader carries out four-monthly appraisal interviews with staff in addition to the annual appraisal cycle. Peer appraisal is encouraged alongside the process of appraisal by line managers but it is not recorded. A new appraisal process is being developed and will be implemented across the organisation for the next round of appraisals. There is some observation of training and other key activities carried out by staff, but this is not carried out consistently or systematically. There is no planned programme of observations and the outcomes are not linked to the appraisal process or to identify staff training needs. Some internal auditing of client records and other documents takes place, but these are spot checks and there are no clear criteria for recording or dealing with issues raised. Much relevant data are collected but not analysed sufficiently to help with decision-making or to produce comparative reports. For example, data about staff and clients are collected for monitoring clients' ethnicity. These data are not used to identify trends or specific issues to be tackled. WTCS Limited has not identified regular data reports to monitor the provision and to help with the decision-making process.

22. WTCS Limited responds quickly and appropriately to client feedback. Clients provide feedback throughout their learning programme, in particular through individual contact with staff. Staff have good working relationships with clients. Clients also provide formal feedback at the end of each Gateway to Work course or at the end of their period of participation at programme centres or Workstep provision. A feedback leaflet is also available for clients to provide written feedback on an individual basis. The leaflet specifically asks for suggestions on improving the service to clients. There is also a

formal complaints form. All responses are dealt with promptly, and further contact is made if requested.

23. WTCS Limited produced its first self-assessment report in November 2002. This was the result of extensive involvement by all staff, which started in March 2002 at team level. A common template was introduced to improve the consistency of the team self-assessment reports. These reports were used as the basis for the company self-assessment report. Clients and external agencies were not directly involved in the self-assessment process. The process improved staff awareness of the role of continuous improvement, and increased staff commitment to improving the quality of the provision. Development plans are now being reviewed monthly to monitor progress in rectifying identified weaknesses. The report accurately identified the main strengths and weaknesses.

24. WTCS Limited does not subcontract provision, but buys in services or works in partnership with other agencies that provide specialist input into learning programmes, for example, on debt management. The company has not formalised its arrangements with external service providers and does not monitor the appropriateness or quality of the provision. WTCS Limited does not have any formalised arrangements with employers, who play a significant role in the success of the Workstep provision. For example, the company monitors the health and safety arrangements of the employer before clients start their employment, but does not monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements on behalf of the clients. There are no formal arrangements to monitor equality of opportunity in employment.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Foundation programmes

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 18-24	29	None
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	14	None
Programme Centres	281	2
Workstep	79	2

25. There are 29 clients are on the mandatory Gateway to Work course, which is primarily for 18-24 year olds who have been in the New Deal Gateway for four weeks. Fourteen New Deal 25+ clients have also been referred to WTCS Limited by Jobcentre Plus. The two-week course is designed to increase clients' prospects of getting a job through the development of their motivation, teamworking and presentation skills. There are separate Gateway to Work programmes for both client groups in Bristol, Weston-Super-Mare and Bath. In Bath and Weston-Super-Mare, the 18-24 year-old clients are able to attend an extra two-week course covering personal development, soft skills and jobsearch, after they have completed the Gateway to Work course.

26. There are currently 281 clients attending eight programme centres in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, at which attendance is voluntary. The aim is to develop employability skills with supported jobsearch relevant to the needs of the local economy and sustainable employment. Timetables are negotiated between clients and staff. Most clients attend several hours a week for up to 13 weeks at most learning centres. At programme centres in Gloucestershire, clients can attend until all learning goals are completed or they gain jobs. Clients receive an in-depth analysis of their training needs. They frequently have individual tuition on a range of jobsearch activities and interview skills.

27. Workstep programmes are provided in Somerset, Bristol, Bath and Northeast Somerset. Clients are referred to WTCS Limited by Jobcentre Plus following an initial interview and assessment. Eighty-two clients have registered for the learning programme since it began. Following referral WTCS Limited holds an initial meeting with the client and agrees a programme of action and intervention to assist the individual. There are 21 clients at the initial assessment stage, 16 clients who have a development plan completed, and 23 clients whose development plans have been agreed. Nineteen clients are in supported employment, six in Somerset and 13 in the Bristol and Bath and the North East Somerset area. An employment adviser, who engages the clients in the preparation and reviewing of a personal development plan, supports each Workstep client. The WTCS Limited team assists clients with advice and guidance on aspects that may impact upon their ability to find a job. This includes advice on benefits and associated issues such as housing. Staff also secure additional

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resources or aids and adaptations where required, in order to maintain or secure employment for the clients. Clients who are in supported employment receive help and guidance from a WTCS Limited member of staff. The support worker meets with the clients on a planned basis, the frequency of the support sessions is negotiated and related to individual need.

28. The tables for New Deal provision relate to Gateway to Work courses only. Figures for 2002-03 are low because they only provide a partial account of the provision for the year. The table for programme centres refers only to clients at programme centres in Wiltshire, as the contract with Gloucestershire is open-ended and therefore figures are not comparable.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	199		637		683		75		
Retained*	129	65	443	70	472	69	60	80		
Planned learning completed	114	57	381	60	368	54	48	64		
Gained job	44	22	245	38	372	54	34	45		
Still in training	29	15	0	0	0	0	0	0		

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	115		177						
Retained*	106	92	138	78						
Planned learning completed	102	89	136	77						
Gained job	11	10	34	19						
Still in training	14	12	0	0						

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

Programme Centres										
Programme Centres										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	147		337		17					
Planned learning completed	55	37	292	87	17	100				
Gained job	8	5	129	38	3	18				
Still in training	89	61	0	0	0	0				

STRENGTHS

- good retention and achievement
- particularly effective support and guidance for clients
- good links with external partners
- good jobsearch training
- effective initiatives by programme centres to meet local needs
- good health and safety training in Workstep provision

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate recording of initial assessment and literacy, numeracy and language support
- inadequate target-setting in action plans and progress reviews
- some poorly planned training sessions
- some poor resources

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better identification of clients' previous learning and experiences at WTCS Limited

29. Retention and achievement are good on most learning programmes, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. In the Wiltshire programme centres, the average retention rate for 2000-01 and 2001-02 has been 94 per cent. On the Gateway to Work programmes retention rates are good on the New Deal 25+ programme at 92 per cent. The job outcome rate for Gloucestershire programme centres for 2001-02 is 55 per cent, which is above the national average of 45 per cent and the highest in the area. Progression into jobs from the Gateway to Work programmes is good at 57 per cent.

There has been a particularly high success rate in securing open employment for Workstep clients, with 23 per cent placed with employers in six months against a target of 30 per cent over two years. A special project involving jobsearch for 290 clients facing large-scale redundancy had a 100 per cent retention rate.

30. Staff provide very good individual support and guidance for clients, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Some staff have qualifications and experience in counselling and guidance. They give clear initial information about the learning programmes to clients, and are particularly sensitive to clients' individual needs. For example, at the initial interview and induction, they do not press clients for personal information unless the client is ready to give it. However, they monitor vulnerable clients for signs of not coping as the course proceeds. Staff are willing to spend additional time with clients. Several clients made redundant from local companies were provided with good individual support to help them improve their self-confidence and to search for further jobs. Workstep clients identify the support provided by staff as an important aspect of their increased confidence and self-esteem. Following work by staff, funding was provided to enable a Workstep client to participate in a programme of anger-management training. Staff have also negotiated working times and support sessions for individual clients to help them remain in employment and develop improved work practices.

31. The provision of dedicated equipment and adaptations to mechanical equipment have assisted one Workstep client, who has a medical condition, to extend the range of work tasks that he can carry out and provide opportunities for him to complete practical elements of an national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 that were not possible before provision of adapted equipment and two-way radio communication units being put into place. WTCS Limited staff provide effective one-to-one support and guidance concerning health and safety in the workplace for Workstep clients. The training is very well taught, and the language used enables clients to understand important facts and their responsibilities for health and safety.

32. Staff have good links with Jobcentre Plus, employers and service providers, as acknowledged by the company in its self-assessment report. There is daily contact between WTCS Limited and Jobcentre Plus staff to discuss clients' progress and monitor attendance. This ensures that issues are dealt with promptly. Effective links with disability employment officers enable smooth support arrangements to be made for Workstep clients in the workplace. Jobcentre Plus staff regularly visit WTCS Limited learning centres to give advice and guidance on options for clients at the end of Gateway to Work if they have not obtained a job. Employers are often involved in Gateway to Work courses to give advice about jobs in their occupational sector, and provide realistic interview practise for clients. Providers of support services provide information on counselling services on a wide range of issues, such as debt, housing, and substance misuse, particularly on the Gateway to Work programmes. These support services are used by many clients.

33. There is good jobsearch training for most clients. Training is provided in groups or

individually. Staff help clients to identify whether they have the right experience, understand the work they wish to apply for, and check whether job goals are realistic. Learning methods are varied and stimulating, and include both individual and group activities. There is an effective range of resources, including up-to-date computers and access to the Internet, a number of trade journals, local and national newspapers, resources for careers, and clear information on defining job goals. There are good examples of different types of curriculum vitae as well as effective prompt lists to help learners to formulate personal profiles and key strengths. These lists help clients to recognise and expand on their own list of personal skills as well as social and leisure activities. There are thorough checklists for writing curriculum vitae, which ensure clients focus on all basic details, skills, job targets and employment history. There is a wide range of examples of good practice available to clients, including completed application forms, covering letters for employers and detailed guidelines to prepare them for interviews. Clients are able to borrow at any time resources to support jobsearch activities at work and at home. WTCS Limited has organised executive jobsearch modules in two programme centres to focus on options for career changes and to give clients the opportunity to network more effectively.

34. WTCS Limited has implemented effective initiatives to meet local needs, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. It has worked with several large, well-known organisations that have made a number of their staff redundant. Jobsearch activities have been tailor-made to suit individual employers' needs in order to help individuals change careers or find other suitable employment in the area. One project involved providing jobsearch and curriculum vitae activities to over 290 employees. One client was well supported by WTCS Limited and subsequently obtained a job in Derby. Another recent project has involved effectively supporting employees from another large employer in the programme centre, with a range of activities such as mock interviews and helping them to create letters to employers. This has helped the clients to regain confidence and improve their self-esteem.

35. There is inadequate recording of initial assessment and literacy, numeracy and language support. WTCS Limited does not systematically receive initial assessment results or results of basic skills courses. WTCS Limited provides help with all aspects of jobsearch but there is no structured support or help for literacy and numeracy. There are no clear roles and responsibilities for staff in order to help clients improve their basic skills. It is often left to tutors to identify needs and provide support when working with individual clients without clear guidelines. Some clients are referred to local colleges for basic skills support, but this is not recorded on individual action plans. Progress made as a result of support provided is not monitored.

36. Target-setting is inadequate in action plans and progress reviews. Comments recorded for short-, medium- and long-term targets are general. For example, clients are required to develop confidence, conduct mock interviews and continue browsing the Internet and industry newspapers, without specifying how and when these actions will be achieved. Some individual actions have clear timescales and others do not. Actions on progress reviews are not always specific and can include general targets, such as

requesting clients to send their curriculum vitae to a number of companies, without giving clear guidelines or details. Clients are unsure of some completion dates. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Workstep clients are not always effectively engaged in the development of targets for their work. Some targets are too general. Some staff do not understand the difference between basic skills and work skills targets. Clients do not always receive effective feedback on their progress with targets.

37. Some training is not well planned. On one Gateway to Work course, some clients were kept waiting for individual induction and initial assessment for over an hour despite appointments having been made. On one course where there were two staff available, only one member of staff gave individual help with action-planning. Some clients did not receive help. Other clients could not follow the instructions for an exercise on motivation and there were insufficient copies of handouts. Training does not always take account of the diverse needs of clients. Issues relating to equal opportunities and motivation are not always explored adequately. Tutors do not always reflect the gender balance of clients. On the Workstep programme, individual learning plans are not well structured. One client, who was moved into a new role within the workplace, was not fully aware of the reasons for the change of role and was anxious about the different nature of the work he was asked to carry out. The action plan that was drafted did not tackle any of the concerns expressed by the client and targets set were poor. For another client, tasks were set that were dependent upon the weather and the ground conditions. The support worker was not aware of these important factors, and their impact on the achievement of the targets. Staff do not always effectively develop client awareness of barriers to employment, such as the impact of poor personal hygiene on potential employers.

38. Some resources are poor. At some learning centres there is not adequate space in training rooms. For example, when one group of Gateway to Work clients was split into three teams, they did not have sufficient room to carry out the activity. In one learning centre, there is no interview room available for confidential discussions. Most programme centres have good resources and are situated in local Jobcentre Plus offices. Rooms are of adequate size and are well lit. However, two programme centres are too small to accommodate more than one client for interviews. It is not possible to carry out the range of jobsearch activities provided at other learning centres. Some initial interviews with Workstep clients are carried out in open areas. This setting is unsuitable for confidential interviews.

39. Some clients have previously attended learning programmes with WTCS Limited. This is not always acknowledged by WTCS Limited, and its records are not always available to staff at the beginning of the new learning programme. Some clients have to repeat some aspects of the training programme unnecessarily.

Good Practice

Clients on the personal development course attend Outward Bound activities to develop teambuilding and communication skills. They are required to make a presentation about the experience to local employers, Jobcentre Plus staff and WTCS Limited staff. One group recently made a video of their presentation, which is now shown to new Gateway to Work clients to help motivate them and to provide information about the Outward Bound course.

Poor Practice

During a weekly session with the tutor, a Workstep client was encouraged to include incorrect information in a job application.