

Ufi London learndirect

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316543

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

This inspection focused on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve, achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. The Ufi London **learndirect** region was established in August 2006 in response to government priorities and funding changes. Fifty five providers are contracted to operate 112 **learndirect** centres and outreach locations. They are managed by eight Ufi performance managers and two senior performance managers reporting to the regional performance director. A network development manager and management information co-ordinator support the region. Two regional partnership managers liaise with five local Learning and Skills Councils in London for planning and strategy.
2. In November 2007, there were 14,927 funded enrolments on **learndirect** programmes; 86% were in skills for life, 12% in information and communication technology and 2% in business and management and other courses. The region has Train to Gain and European Social Fund (ESF) contracts. Around 60% of London region's learners are from Black or minority ethnic backgrounds. A very low proportion of learners declare they have a disability. Most of the region's learners are aged 24 to 44.
3. London's population is 7.5 million. Tower Hamlets' unemployment rate is highest at 13.2 % and Richmond-upon-Thames' is lowest at 3.8%. London's overall unemployment rate is 7.4% compared with 5.3% nationally. Ethnic minorities make up a quarter of the population. There are over 200 languages spoken in London and around 21% of Londoners speak English as their second language. Around 700,000 of its inhabitants have no qualifications and 23% of the population has low numeracy and literacy levels. Just over a fifth of England's most deprived wards are in London.

Ufi London - inspections of learning centres carried out since December 2006	Inspection date
First Contact Training	7 December 2006
Anglo British Academy of Advanced Studies	21 September 2007
The Pembury Digital Learning Ring	26 September 2007
Creative Minds Ltd (West London)	14 November 2007
The Sunrise Academy, Elephant and Castle	22 November 2007
Role Model Consulting Ltd (PC World)	17 October 2007
North Middlesex University Hospital Trust learning centre	12 December 2007

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the Ufi London is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory across all programmes, and success rates in the region are, and have been, broadly in line with national rates. The overall quality of the provision in the region is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. **learn**direct centres are mostly well equipped and provide adequate learning environments; the best centres are modern and particularly well suited to the delivery of **learn**direct courses. Tutors provide effective support for their learners. Pastoral support and guidance is satisfactory. Ufi London region's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and diversity.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. Ufi London has demonstrated that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve. The transition from regional hubs to Ufi regional management in August 2006 was managed well, despite changes in staff at senior level. More recently, a key senior management role remained vacant for three months before being filled in October this year. In the interim and subsequently, a few staffing and operational issues arose which are now in the process of being resolved.
6. Overall, managers provide a strong lead in ensuring a focused and robust approach to performance improvement. Providers' performance is very closely monitored and performance improvement promoted well. There is a close and productive working relationship between most providers and Ufi performance managers. Regional Ufi staff are generally very well motivated and enthusiastic about developing the quality of the learners' experiences. Historically, the region has met or exceeded its national targets but its current performance is below target in a number of key aspects. Managers in the region are taking suitable actions to address this issue. Targets are demanding but providers are responding positively to achieving the improvements required. Good practice is shared regularly at provider network meetings, though to date this is insufficiently systematic.
7. The region is progressively developing a higher profile in London's overall skills development strategy and at local authority levels. The region is effectively expanding and targeting provision for learners in areas with high levels of deprivation.
8. The number of staff in centres who are qualified to Levels 3 or 4 in either literacy or numeracy has risen significantly in the past nine months. For example, the number qualified to literacy at Level 3 rose from 136 in April 2007 to 215 in July. However, despite this increase only around half of all centres have either literacy or numeracy qualified staff. Around 16% of centres have staff with neither qualification.
9. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The most recent report is the result of a wide and inclusive process. Regional and provider staff recognise their contributions. The grades awarded in the Self-Assessment Review (SAR) match those of inspectors, but many of the

judgements were insufficiently judgemental or incorrectly assigned to key questions in the common inspection framework. The report is insufficiently evaluative.

Key strengths

- Effective engagement of learners in areas of high deprivation.
- Good performance management to promote improvements in provision.

Key areas for improvement

- Ineffective observation scheme.
- Too few trained literacy and numeracy tutors in centres and outreach locations.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. This judgement matches the self-assessment grade. During 2006/07, Ufi London success rates for all programmes were around national rates, ranging from 73% in skills for life to poor success rates for ICT courses at around 50%. Business administration courses, an extremely small part of the total provision, achieved a success rate of 69%, 19% better than the national rate. Withdrawal rates were high on skills for life and ICT, but similar to national rates, and exceptionally high on business courses, at nearly 22%. The aggregated data for success and withdrawal rates for the period masks significant variations in performance across the region.
11. In the first quarter of 2007/08 success rates have improved but remain in line with national rates. Skills for life courses continue to represent most provision, at 82% of enrolments. Skills for life success rates have improved by only 1.3%, and are slightly below the national rate of 76%. Aggregate success rates on all courses have risen from 68.6% in 2006/07 to 74.4%.
12. Around 70% of White British, Chinese and Asian learners succeed in their courses. The success rates of Black or Black British, dual heritage and learners whose ethnicity is unknown or unstated are between 4% to 10% lower. The region is unable to identify why this variance occurs. Two thirds of learners are female. There is no disparity between male and female success rates.
13. Most learners are well motivated, progress well through their programmes and onto further levels. Some learners work through from entry Level 3 standards to a Level 1 national qualification in six weeks. Standards of learners' work are satisfactory. Learners on skills for life courses typically gain confidence as they achieve individual elements of their programmes together with workplace and employability skills.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. This matches the overall and related grades awarded in the self-assessment report. The quality of teaching and learning ranges between satisfactory and good in centres inspected to date. In the better teaching and learning environments tutors provide effective individual coaching focused closely on learners' needs and skill gaps. Learners and tutors make good use of additional learning materials to reinforce learning. Tutors plan exercises and assignments well to consolidate learning. They undertake effective and regular assessments of assignments and practice papers. Where learners have files, work is corrected quickly and the comments made by tutors are helpful and encouraging.
15. Learners are given a thorough induction. Feedback from learners on this aspect of their programme is generally very positive. They receive good information on what is expected of them and what their programme will offer.

16. Learners' initial assessment is satisfactory. The information gained is generally used well to plan the approach to, and duration of, an individual's learning. In some cases, plans lack detail with too few short-term targets. Some learners are not involved sufficiently in negotiating their targets or evaluating their progress. Learners generally benefit from good support. Group work is used well to encourage confidence and to enable learners to improve their speaking and listening skills. Reviews take place regularly, but recording of learners' progress varies in quality.

17. The range of courses is satisfactory and meets the needs of learners. Effective action is taken to engage with learners in areas of high deprivation. Learners have access to a broad range of courses and progression routes to suit their needs and individual circumstances. An increasing number of centres are open for extended hours in response to learners' needs. Effective links have been developed in four custodial settings to increase **learn**direct online accredited provision. Train to Gain and ESF funded programmes are providing learners and employers with a broader range of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training options, but take-up of these programmes is currently below targets.

18. Support for learners is satisfactory overall. Of 112 centres, 82 have nationally recognised accreditation in information, advice and guidance. If a centre is unable to provide an appropriate course it will refer to another agency for specialist advice and support. Good efforts are made to ensure all learners feel welcome and comfortable. In feedback questionnaires, learners record their appreciation of the opportunity to work at their own pace. Practical support for learners with a physical or sensory disability is good. Any adaptive technology required is provided promptly. However, many learners have language support needs and this is only available in some centres.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

19. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. A good performance management system promotes improvements in provision at provider and centre level. Ufi managers have very good systems to monitor performance and good processes to promote actions to improve. Regional performance managers are now required to increase the frequency of their visits to centres and providers from quarterly to around monthly or as often as an individual risk assessment of each provider dictates. Whereas quarterly visits were primarily audit and compliance focused, more frequent contact is encouraging developmental partnership working. Good performance management is underpinned by extensive and up to date data which is used well and promptly by managers and providers to identify aspects of under- or over-performance. Some under-performing providers have had their contracts terminated and new providers have been contracted. There are currently five fewer contracted providers and 11 fewer centres in the region compared with June 2007.
20. Strategic and operational planning in the Ufi London is satisfactory. Staff understand key strategic themes, operational targets and current issues, such as under-performance against some targets. The arrangements for management communication internally with staff and externally with providers are satisfactory. Opportunities for staff development and training are satisfactory. Most providers and Ufi staff have attended a good range of training but some sessions, notably on observations and SAR development, have not been universally effective.
21. The region is developing satisfactory links with, and representation on, many of London's strategic and local authority bodies. It is increasingly working with colleges and employers, and brokers on Train to Gain programmes. Ufi London region's relationships with Jobcentre plus are generally good, but where they exist at provider level the links, while generating many new learners, are frequently fragile.
22. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The most recent report is the result of an inclusive process. Good efforts have been made to increase understanding of and contributions to self-assessment. Regional and provider staff recognise their contributions. The grades awarded in the report match inspectors', but many of the judgements included normal practice or were incorrectly assigned to key questions in the common inspection framework. The report is neither sufficiently evaluative nor well written. The format, layout and methodology used have been ineffective in helping Ufi London to form clear judgements.
23. Arrangements for equality of opportunity and diversity are satisfactory. Ufi London has a satisfactory equal opportunities policy, with a detailed statement of aims. There is appropriate reference to current legislation, the learning context and all aspects of behaviour, including harassment and bullying. The policy is monitored and updated regularly. External funding and partners have been used well by the region to host a disability awareness workshop for their provider network.

24. Induction in equality of opportunity for learners is effective. The centres attract people with a range of disadvantages and learners are recruited from the most deprived wards in the region. Access to facilities for learners with disabilities is good. Provision for the support needs of learners with disabilities is satisfactory. Appropriate equality of opportunity training is provided for all staff.
25. Ufi London monitors the outcomes for different groups effectively. An analysis of the 2006/07 data indicates that retention and progression is significantly lower for some groups, and the action plans to rectify this are variable. Ufi London does not reinforce equality of opportunity sufficiently in learning sessions. Learner reviews are not used well to highlight issues or reinforce understanding.
26. The teaching and learning observation scheme is ineffective. A very few performance managers undertake observations and use these well either to compare to centres' own observations or to identify aspects for discussion during reviews, but this is the exception. All regional staff and providers have undergone training in observation techniques but it was neither sufficiently detailed nor ultimately effective. The observation process focuses on learning and not on teaching or learners' attainment. There is no structured way to identify how well differentiated teaching meets learners' needs. Most centres have a scheme in place but only two thirds of providers are judged by their regional performance managers to be competent in the process. Some performance managers are better at gauging such competence than others. Many providers are unclear about how observations can be used to promote improvement, or fear they may upset tutors. Evaluations of observations frequently lack detail or developmental outcomes.
27. There are too few trained literacy and numeracy staff across the region. Over the past six months there has been a significant increase in the number of staff trained to Levels 3 or 4 in literacy and numeracy but the distribution of these tutors is uneven. Only 51% of centres have literacy tutors at Levels 3 or 4 and only half have numeracy tutors trained at Levels 3 or 4. Sixteen % of centres have no trained literacy or numeracy staff at all.

Annex

Learners' achievementsOutcomes on Ufi London **learndirect** programmes 2006 to 2008*

Q1-4 2006/07	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	93, 017	79, 428	70	7.1
ICT	14, 466	10, 658	50.2	17.2
skills for life	76, 300	67, 986	73.1	6
Business and management	1, 660	681	69	21.7

Equality and diversity

Q1-4 2006/07*	All Ethnic Groups	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese/ Other	Mixed	Not Known	White
Enrolments	93, 017	17, 305	25, 057	6, 118	3, 394	994	40, 149
Completion rate	92.5	94.1	92.2	92.4	92.1	83.4	92.2
Achievement rate	73.6	74.0	69.5	74.1	70.8	71.6	76.1
Success rate	70	72.1	66.3	70.5	67.2	61.5	71.7
Withdrawal rate	9.4	6.1	8.1	7.8	8.1	17.1	8.0

Note: 2007/08* data is 'part year' only and is representative of the three months or greater of the Ufi Sheffield contract year