

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

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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.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Health, public services and care
- Construction, planning and the built environment
- Information and communication technology
- Preparation for life and work
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. Wakefield Metropolitan District Council (WMDC) is located in Wakefield in West Yorkshire. It offers provision in health, public services and care with 624 learners, construction, planning and the built environment with 129 learners, information and communication technology (ICT) with 757 learners, preparation for life and work with 701 learners, business, administration and law with 247 learners and **learndirect** with 165 learners. It also offers provision in science and mathematics; engineering; retail and commercial enterprise; leisure, travel, tourism and sport; arts, media and publishing; languages, literature and culture; education and training; and family learning. WMDC has **nextstep** and Workstep provision, which were not included in the scope of this inspection. Approximately 7,500 learners are currently enrolled. It receives funding from West Yorkshire LSC for its adult and community (ACL) programmes, work-based learning including Train to Gain and **learndirect**. All of its business is funded by the government.
2. Wakefield ranks 54th of 345 local authorities in the national deprivation index. Its minority ethnic population accounts for 2.3% of the total population compared with 8% nationally, with areas of high density scattered through the region. Around 3.53% of the local population are unemployed compared with 3.35% nationally. People with no qualifications make up 39.14% of the local population compared with 28.85% nationally, and the profile for qualifications remains below national averages in all contexts.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

**Work-based learning
learndirect**

**Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2**

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

**Adult and community learning
Work-based learning
learndirect**

**Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2**

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

**Adult and community learning
Work-based learning
learndirect**

**Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2**

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

**Adult and community learning
Work-based learning
learndirect**

**Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2**

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Construction, planning and the built environment

Good: Grade 2

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall, with high success rates in most accredited learning. Progression into employment and further learning is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory overall, and in some cases is good. The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well; it meets the needs of local employers and is conveniently located. Support for learners is satisfactory, and in some cases very good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategies are good, and partnership work is effective, in providing a comprehensive service for the local area. However, use of data is inadequate, and quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners in ACL have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and work-based learners have a better understanding. Provision is well-planned to attract under-represented groups into provision, and young women benefit from a good range of appropriate courses. The provider has had little success in attracting men into provision in most areas, though it continues to implement strategies to do so. Social inclusion is good. The provider has successfully introduced relevant, good quality provision for priority groups, including 14-16 year olds. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of *Every Child Matters*, but lines of responsibility for safeguarding are insufficiently clear.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. WMDC has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Success rates on all types of provision have consistently improved since the previous inspection. Overall success rates are outstanding on apprenticeship programmes, good on **learndirect** provision, and satisfactory on work-based learning and ACL. The current management model is proving to be more effective in providing a coherent management structure and better communication at all levels. Budget cuts and change have been managed well at all levels. The strategy for change has included significant modifications to the curriculum.
5. WMDC has made satisfactory progress in resolving some of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Some weaknesses remain, such as poor success rates in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision and insufficient monitoring and recording of learners' progress. The grades for leadership and management, health, public services and care, ICT and preparation for life and work have declined since the previous inspection.
6. Arrangements for quality assurance and improvement are incomplete. Quality procedures are not followed by all staff. Arrangements to monitor the quality of the learners' experience and to ensure that procedures are implemented are insufficiently systematic.

7. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is generally inclusive and consultative. However, the self-assessment report is insufficiently critical and evaluative. It fails to define many key strengths and areas for improvement. The themes of *Every Child Matters* are not mentioned in the report. Grades for two of the five sector subject areas inspected did not match inspection findings. However, quality improvement plans generated by the self-assessment process are appropriate, and are regularly monitored and updated.

Key strengths

- Good strategic direction
- Good partnership work
- Improving success rates
- Good progression into employment and further learning
- The apprenticeship programme
- Outstanding information, advice, guidance and support for learners on **learndirect** programmes

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient arrangements for quality assurance
- Use of data
- Insufficiently evaluative self-assessment report
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Planning, monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- Co-ordination of cross-service individual learning support

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

8. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall, and good in work-based learning and **learndirect**. Most learners achieve their qualifications, and success rates are improving across the provision, though they remain low in ESOL. Standards of learners' work are satisfactory overall, and in some cases they are good. Learners acquire satisfactory social and workplace skills, with some learners acquiring very good relevant skills. Learners progress well into employment and further learning. Attendance is satisfactory. Many learners make satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment and potential, but systems for recording and monitoring this in ACL provision are insufficiently established. The self-assessment report makes adequate judgements on achievement and standards, and recognises that results for learners aged 16-18 in ACL are poor. Little difference in the results of other groups exists, though evidence shows that learners receiving support achieve well.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

9. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall and good in **learndirect**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Most tutors use an appropriate range of techniques and resources to aid learning. Initial assessment is good in **learndirect**, satisfactory in work-based learning, but insufficiently informative in much ACL provision. Records of assessment are satisfactory for accredited courses, but are rarely used well in unaccredited learning. Individual learning plans are not well used to plan, monitor and record progress. Target-setting is weak. Progress reviews in work-based learning are satisfactory. Additional learning needs are identified satisfactorily, and adequate support is provided to learners requiring it. However, the co-ordination of individual learning support across the service is insufficiently well structured.
10. Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners very well. Increasing numbers of young women with no or few prior qualifications are using the provision and progressing to employment, self-employment and further learning. The service has attracted a small number of long-term unemployed men into provision, and many have subsequently found work. The provider works closely with employers in the area to focus programmes on local needs. The service provides a good range of programmes to help people into self-employment in an area where permanent, aspirational employment opportunities are limited.
11. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory overall. Vocational and personal support for learners is good on apprenticeship and **learndirect** programmes, and particularly good

for apprentices in construction. Support for learners on ACL and other work-based learning provision is satisfactory. A useful leaflet outlines the good range of assistive technologies available across ACL centres. However, the co-ordination of individual learning support across centres, including the allocation and use of assistive technology, is insufficiently centralised. The process of identifying individual support needs through enrolment is satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance processes are satisfactory overall, and outstanding in **learndirect**. Pre-course information is satisfactory. Tutors and assessors offer appropriate information on most courses.

12. The provider's self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative and judgemental with regard to the quality of provision.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, and good in **learndirect**. WMDC has good strategic direction. Since the previous inspection the service has refocused itself very effectively to respond to the particular needs of the area. It works well with a growing number of employers and external agencies to increase employability skills and prospects in the region. Its current offer is sharply focused on matching local employment opportunities, developing opportunities for self-employment and raising aspirations by developing learners' skills to enable them to progress into further learning. Progression into employment and further learning is good. All teaching staff hold at least an initial teaching qualification and the service gives them a financial incentive to qualify at level 4. The service communicates well internally and externally. Regular and frequent meetings at all levels of the organisation ensure that staff are up-to-date with policy and legislation, and help people to understand their roles and responsibilities. Communication during the service's restructure supported staff well to cope with change and to understand the need to refocus and, in some cases, reduce the provision. During this process of change, strategic managers supported staff particularly well by involving them in a consultation process and keeping them informed. The structure of the service facilitates communication, and lines of responsibility are clear. Staff have individual supervisions to further their development. Newsletters and email are used well to disseminate information, and the new virtual learning environment is starting to be used well to share information.
14. WMDC works very well with a wide, relevant range of partners to meet the needs of the local community. Its provision is co-located with other services and agencies and some local people are attracted into appropriate provision through contact with these external agencies. The service works well with a number of schools in the area to plan and deliver learning for young people and their families. The service has a growing, successful range of provision for young people aged 14-16, and family learning programmes.
15. Use of data in the service is inadequate. Data is available for many purposes, and team leaders know their provision well. However, data is rarely used to provide information on key stages of the learners' journey such as the impact of initial assessment or of additional learning support. Data collection systems are not routinely used to give an overview of the

provision, and results of key processes such as the observations of teaching and learning are not presented as summarised reports.

16. The arrangements for quality assurance are incomplete. A new quality manual containing appropriate policies and procedures has recently been issued. However, these are not implemented by all staff. WMDC has no arrangements for systematic audit to ensure that quality procedures are followed. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. The reports of observations vary in quality. Many are descriptive without clear judgements. Action plans produced following observations are poor. Often actions identified following the observation are insufficiently specific and no record is made of the actions being completed. However, in joint lesson observations conducted during the inspection, inspection findings matched the grades awarded by the provider's observers. WMDC has clear links between the observation of teaching and learning and appraisal.

17. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The service has good inclusion strategies to meet the needs of local communities. The service has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and an action plan identifying relevant areas for development. Premises used by the provider have been audited for compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act, and reasonable adjustment, such as relocating classes, has been made where necessary. The provider has good strategies for sharing adaptive technology among its learners, and has sufficient capacity to meet their needs. Both learners and staff have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Staff receive regular, appropriate training on equality and diversity issues. The promotion of equality in the classroom is satisfactory, and an ethos of equality and mutual respect exists throughout the service. The service meets the requirements of the Race Relations Act. However, the development of teaching and learning materials to promote equality and to raise awareness of issues in learning sessions is not fully implemented. Support arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language are satisfactory. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements, but not all staff have had full training on safeguarding yet, and many have insufficient knowledge of current legislation. Issues have arisen and have been dealt with sensitively and appropriately by staff.

What learners like:

- 'WMDC has helped me take the first step into education'
- Tutors are very good and patient
- All the staff are helpful and supportive
- 'We really enjoy the practical work'
- Getting a good job because of the course
- 'I like working at my own pace, no pressure'
- 'I enjoy getting qualifications'
- 'You're not made to feel stupid if you need to ask a question'
- 'Having lesson material available at home via the virtual learning environment so that we can practise'
- Gaining confidence
- Good advice about the right course

What learners think could improve:

- Staffing levels
- Provide or recommend a book or course manual for every course so that learners can continue to work at home.
- The enrolment process
- The number of places available is insufficient, and no daytime classes are provided
- Too many course levels are taught in one class

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

18. WMDC provides a range of courses in early years and play work, health and social care, complementary health studies, counselling and first aid. The area is predominantly vocational, and the vast majority of courses are accredited, with a limited number of non-accredited first steps courses. Currently WMDC has 624 learners in health, public services and care, of whom 6% are male. Further education and Train to Gain funding supports 166 learners on national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in early years and social care. One part-time adult and community education officer manages health, care and early years programmes. A full-time officer manages complementary therapies alongside beauty therapy programmes. Sixteen part-time and five full-time staff work in nine WMDC centres and five voluntary sector venues.

Strengths

- High success rates
- Good range of provision in response to learners' needs
- Good progression rates into employment and further training
- Good management support for tutors

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of initial assessment and individual learning plans to plan learning
- Insufficient use of management information to monitor effectiveness of provision
- Insufficient development of quality of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

19. Achievement and standards are good. As identified in the self-assessment report, success rates are high with an average for all learners of 83% in 2006/07. Train to Gain success rates are very good at 88% in the first full year of delivery. Success rates on complementary therapy programmes are also high at 88%. Success rates on unaccredited programmes have improved significantly from 40% in 2005/06 to 81% in 2006/07. Learners make good progress towards their qualifications.

20. WMDC has good progression rates into employment and further training. Significant numbers of learners progress from first steps to level 1 or 2 programmes and then to level 3. Introductory care and early years programmes are very successful in supporting unemployed learners to gain employment, for example in residential care homes, and to progress to NVQ level 2 programmes. Many complementary therapy learners progress to other programmes and a number have become self-employed.

Quality of provision

21. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the better sessions, differentiation is effective, and a wide range of approaches is used to cater for differing

learning styles. Assessment is satisfactory, with effective internal verification and standardisation. Alternative methods of evidence are used insufficiently, with reliance on workbooks to provide knowledge evidence for all learners. Resources are satisfactory overall and good at some centres, for example for complementary therapies.

22. Use of initial assessment and individual learning plans is insufficient. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Most learners have an assessment of their literacy and numeracy needs and learning styles. However, in many cases, assessments are not used to develop learning plans, and many lesson plans do not show how individual needs will be met. Support for literacy and numeracy is offered to all appropriate work-based learners and some discrete workplace provision is available. However, co-ordination is insufficient and few links with the vocational part of programmes exist. Literacy support in vocational sessions is very well developed for young people aged 14-16 on health and social care programmes.
23. The range of provision is good. WMDC offers a good range of provision in response to learners' needs from short first steps courses to full level 2 and 3 programmes. A level 1 accredited qualification in early years is very effective in motivating young apprentices aged 14-16 years. Non-accredited programmes provide good progression to vocational qualifications. A good range of courses to support progression is available at most centres. Response to learners' feedback is good, for example, the service replaced one early years qualification with a more appropriate technical certificate. Tutors have good links with employers but co-ordination between the qualification and employers' training is insufficient.
24. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Learners can easily contact tutors and assessors. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory overall and good at some centres.

Leadership and management

25. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Management support for tutors is good. The health and social care programme manager and three team leaders are new to their roles but have rapidly established good communication with all staff. Support for new tutors and assessors is particularly good, with a well-planned programme of induction to the service and the vocational area, as well as appropriate shadowing of colleagues. The regular standardisation and staff meetings are well attended. Staff value the good access to training and sessions to update their knowledge of vocational and qualification developments.
26. Arrangements for equality and diversity are satisfactory. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and the complaints procedure. Early years and social care learners have a vocationally appropriate understanding of equality and diversity. Too few male learners are enrolled, but a number of initiatives are in place to attract more, for example through sports massage programmes.
27. Use of management information systems to monitor the effectiveness of provision is insufficient. Data is collected at individual course level for all courses, and managers monitor retention and success at this level. However, the data is not used to monitor performance at qualification level on a yearly basis. WMDC does not analyse data by funding streams such as Train to Gain at sector subject level. Little analysis takes place across groups of qualifications, by centre, or by equality and diversity measures.

28. Development of the quality of teaching and learning is insufficient. Action-planning resulting from observations of teaching and learning is ineffective; some tutors have been assessed as satisfactory for three consecutive years. Observation of teaching and learning occurs once a year and only covers classroom teaching; no observation of reviews or individual teaching or coaching sessions takes place. Observations of assessment practice have only recently been introduced. For some level 3 learners academic challenge is insufficient. Too few tutors have level 4 qualifications and, apart from a financial incentive, WMDC has no plans to resolve this.

Construction, planning and the built environment

Good: Grade 2

Context

29. Currently 129 learners are enrolled on construction programmes. Of these, 13 are female, 42 are advanced apprentices, 18 are young apprentices and 46 adults are on an ACL programme. In addition 23 school pupils are on a schools direct programme. The service subcontracts with two local colleges of further education for the provision of apprenticeship programmes in construction, planning and the built environment. Learners follow programmes in general construction, plastering, plumbing, wood occupations and trowel occupations. ACL learners are on either a plumbing or a multi-skill programme delivered at the provider's premises. Most apprentices are employed by either WMDC or Wakefield and District Housing. Progress reviews for the apprentices are carried out in the workplace every twelve weeks.

Strengths

- Very good success rates
- Good development of practical skills for apprentices
- Very close and effective monitoring of learners' progress
- Good progression for apprentices
- Very good support to achieve goals for all learners
- Very effective work with employers and subcontractors to further learning

Areas for improvement

- Poor practical resources for some ACL learners
- Poor safety standards in one practical workshop

Achievement and standards

30. Success rates for apprentices are very good. Overall success rates in 2005/06 were 70% rising to 93% in 2006/07. Previously many apprentices have made slow progress. This has improved yearly, and current apprentices are making good progress.
31. Achievement and retention rates for ACL learners are good. For 2006/07, success rates for basic plumbing were 82% and 100% for multi-skills courses, continuing a good trend. ACL learners develop satisfactory practical skills. Most apprentices are making good progress with their NVQ.
32. Apprentices benefit from a wide range of construction site experience. They develop good practical skills which enhance their employability. Apprentices are mature and confident. Learners' site experience is closely monitored. They work with skilled craftsmen, who support the learners well. Young apprentices gain valuable work experience on good, well-managed and safe construction sites. Apprentices work in a safe and healthy environment. Good health and safety practices are promoted in the workplace. This is recognised in the provider's self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

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33. The quality of provision is good, as stated in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and off-the-job training is good. Learners' progress is very closely and effectively monitored. Subcontracted colleges have sufficient qualified assessors, tutors and internal verifiers. Assessment practice is satisfactory and learners have good assessment opportunities. Onsite assessment meets awarding body requirements. Learners are well supported to make timely progress and to complete units early. Apprentices are aware of their progress. Progress reviews are good. Individual learning plans and other monitoring documentation accurately records learners' progress, but they are insufficiently individualised. Timescales recorded in the individual learning plan are generic rather than reflecting individual learners' needs and abilities. They do not identify timescales for achievement of short-term targets. Resources, including tutors, for apprentices in subcontracted colleges are good. Employers' resources are very good. Learners use a good range of tools and equipment which meet current industrial standards. Employers support apprentices very well and are aware of the progress that they are making towards their NVQ. They have sufficient information to support learners' progress and co-operate effectively to make relevant assessment opportunities available to them.
34. Courses meet the needs and interests of learners well as recognised in the self-assessment report. Progression opportunities for apprentices are very good. Many learners progress onto higher national or degree courses. Former apprentices have progressed to senior roles within the Council. Some 35% of WMDC's building workforce is made up of former apprentices. Current and past apprentices have won various national and regional awards.
35. Practical resources for some ACL learners are poor. Some practical training areas are cold and bare. No wall displays or examples of learners' work are exhibited. Physical resources for construction training in one area are poor. For example, wooden rigs are used for mounting plumbing components, giving learners insufficiently realistic practical experience.
36. Support and guidance for learners are very good. All apprentices receive a good initial assessment to identify their additional learning support needs, and most learners who have been identified as needing support accept it. Learners receive good initial advice and guidance about their chosen courses and understand what they need to do to achieve. Induction is good. Learners receive good information about employment rights and responsibilities. Apprentices have a dedicated telephone number for support outside normal hours and this is used well to support them. For example, one young apprentice complained of being bullied, and effective, immediate action was taken to resolve the situation to the learner's satisfaction. Support for learners is recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management of construction are good. Communication with the subcontracted colleges is very good. Information relating to learners' progress is shared, and staff are well aware of the progress that learners are making at college.
38. WMDC staff work very effectively with subcontractors and employers to further learning. Management of the learning process is very good. Planning of assessment and training is satisfactory. However, too little co-ordination of work-based activities and off-the-job training and assessment takes place. Individual learning plans are complete and are regularly updated. Monitoring of learners' progress is very good. Employers' risk

assessment processes are monitored regularly and effectively. This is recognised in the self-assessment report.

39. Some safety aspects for ACL learners are poor. Two machines are not adequately guarded and interlocked and do not comply with current legislation. Some learners are wearing inadequate footwear in an area where foot protection should be worn. The provider is aware of this, and is taking appropriate action to remedy the situation. These issues were not recognised in the self-assessment report.

40. Equality of opportunity arrangements are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate information about equality and diversity during their induction. Appropriate policies are in place to tackle bullying and harassment. Effective action was taken with two recent incidents of racial harassment. Apprentices understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work is good. Support arrangements for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory.

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

41. ICT represents 18.4% of WMDC's provision. During 2006/07, 2,026 learners enrolled on 198 courses. Of these, 32% were male, 5% were from minority ethnic communities, 29% were over 60 and 14% declared a disability. Currently 757 learners are enrolled on 67 classes. Courses range from one to forty weeks' duration of two to six hour sessions. Courses run during the daytime and evenings but not on weekends. Some 40% of the programme is non-accredited. In addition to office software applications, courses are offered in digital imaging, uses of the internet and web design. Accredited courses are provided at levels 1, 2 and 3. Sessions are offered at the WMDC's four centres, seven major partner centres and at seven secondary schools. Some provision is delivered at employers' premises. The provision is delivered by five full-time and 14 part-time tutors. One of the full-time tutors is a senior tutor and another is a team leader. They assist the full-time programme area manager.

Strengths

- Good range of courses and centres in response to learners' needs
- Particularly good provision of assistive technology

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently effective observation process to improve quality of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

42. Achievements and standards are satisfactory overall, though the self-assessment report describes them as good. Retention is satisfactory at around 85% over the last three years. Success rates on accredited courses are satisfactory at 70% over the last three years. On non-accredited courses, the system for assessment is only slowly developing, and accurate judgements on success rates cannot be made.
43. Attendance at classes is satisfactory at 87% during inspection. The system for following up unexplained absence is good.
44. Learners make satisfactory progress in sessions and much of their work is good. Their confidence improves rapidly, and beginners quickly learn basic techniques. As they progress, they show confidence in using the relevant software applications as well as increasing independence and willingness to experiment.
45. Some progression is good. In a survey of a complete cohort from one course, 71% of some 350 learners progressed to another course. In the current year, 69% of learners from first steps courses enrolled on next steps.

Quality of provision

46. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, though the self-assessment report reports them as good. In most lessons, tutors give clear instructions backed up with good hints and tips. In

better lessons, tutors use question and answer sessions skilfully to check and consolidate learning. They respond well to learners' differing needs. In less effective sessions, tutors do not enable all learners to progress at their own pace, and instead keep the whole class working together.

47. The service provides a good range of courses in a good range of centres to meet learners' needs. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Accredited courses are provided from entry to level 3. The service recognises and responds appropriately to the local need for basic ICT literacy courses as well as providing some courses in new, relevant fields. The service is very responsive to local needs and priorities, and provides bespoke courses in schools and employers' premises.
48. The provision of assistive technology is particularly good. A wide range of hardware and software is available, some held centrally and some distributed around centres. The location of all equipment is well publicised in a leaflet available to all learners and tutors and on a poster which is displayed in all computer classrooms.
49. Use of a well set up virtual learning environment is developing. The learning materials for many classes are available through it, and learners benefit from being able to access these materials at home to practise and consolidate their learning between lessons. Some tutors use the communications facilities in their classes effectively to enable learners to ask for assistance and to give mutual support to each other.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, though the self-assessment report failed to make a clear judgement on their quality. Support for tutors from the management team is good. Training for recognising and recording progress and achievement is useful and well focused on tutors' needs. Tutors all have a particularly helpful summary sheet showing this process and the service is updating individual learning plans to reflect this. The service has halved enrolment numbers in the last two years; this has been successfully managed, and tutors are still highly committed and motivated. Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced in both ICT and teaching.
51. Resources are satisfactory. Hardware is up-to-date and software is to industry standard, although not at the most recent version level. The service has plans to upgrade to a more up-to-date version of the software in response to demand from learners. Most rooms have a data projector and some have an interactive whiteboard. However, only a minority of these are used interactively; more often they are just used as projectors.
52. Managers use data to make operational decisions about courses which may be causing concern. They continuously monitor enrolments and attendance, and use the internal verification system to monitor learners' progress in those accredited courses which use periodic assessment. However, little evidence exists of strategic analysis of data, such as the effect of gender, ethnicity or postcode on retention and achievement.
53. The self-assessment report is broadly judgemental. However, the overall grade is higher than inspection findings. The self-assessment process is insufficiently inclusive and not used enough as a tool for improvement.

54. Equality of opportunity is broadly satisfactory. Learners are treated well, and staff have adequate training to support all learners. Arrangements for language, literacy and numeracy support are adequate.
55. The process for observing teaching and learning is insufficiently effective. Reports do not make clear judgements, particularly about learning and attainment in sessions. In some cases, they fail to identify underlying issues.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

56. WMDC offers 29 literacy courses, 21 numeracy courses and 16 ESOL programmes through its 3 main sites and 15 community venues. This includes provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Courses range from pre-entry to level 2. They run over 36 weeks on average, and take place mainly in the daytime. The service offers short courses to improve employment prospects, for example for trainees on health and social care courses. Employees have access to classes on employers' premises, for example in construction and waste management. Many family learning courses provide training in literacy, numeracy and language.

57. Currently 607 learners are enrolled on literacy, numeracy and ESOL qualifications, of whom 278 are on literacy, 248 are on numeracy and 160 are on ESOL courses. Additionally 633 learners are enrolled on family language, literacy and numeracy courses. In 2006/07 the service enrolled 2,031 learners, of whom 67% were female.

Strengths

- Good progression for learners on skills for life programmes
- Good use of resources
- Good responsiveness to learners' needs
- Good partnership working
- Well-planned strategy to establish skills for life support on vocational programmes

Areas for improvement

- Poor retention and success rates on ESOL courses
- Insufficiently thorough assessment and recording of learning
- Ineffective learning in many multi-level classes
- Insufficiently effective observation of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

58. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Progression between skills for life levels is good, with many learners moving from entry level to level 2 and beyond. For example, learners progress to GCSEs and teaching assistants' training. Learners develop literacy, numeracy and language skills. Around 40% of learners on family learning courses progress onto skills for life provision. WMDC cannot provide data on learner progression from skills for life onto mainstream programmes.

59. Retention and success rates for literacy and numeracy on externally accredited courses are satisfactory and have improved over time. However, retention and success rates in ESOL are 61% and 44% respectively, which is poor. The service has a programme in place to remedy this. Of the 494 learners whose skills were not externally accredited, 83% were assessed as having achieved all their learning targets. Standards of work and attendance are satisfactory. The self-assessment report fails to make a precise judgement on achievement and standards.

Quality of provision

60. The quality of provision is satisfactory, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Many tutors make good use of resources in the classroom. They use games and interactive whiteboards well and create imaginative electronic presentations. Tutors and learning support assistants work well together. Partnership working is good. The service has established good partnerships with a wide range of organisations. They work well with schools, employers and job-centres to promote uptake of learning and to provide sessions either on partners' premises or at one of the centres. Links with the local authority are strong, both at a strategic level and with individual departments.
61. The service responds well to learners' needs. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. Progression opportunities are well-established within skills for life provision, and the course offer for numeracy is good. The family learning programme is extensive, and literacy, numeracy and language forms an important part of the course offer. The range of provision delivered in the vocational training and employment context is well-developed. However, learning objectives, lessons and materials relate insufficiently to relevant vocational processes and applications.
62. The assessment and recording of learning is insufficiently thorough. A process of initial, diagnostic and formative assessment is in place, but tutors do not assess their learners consistently. The results of initial assessment are not well used to plan learning.
63. Tutors rarely record specific individual literacy, numeracy and language needs in course files, personal learning plans and session plans. The recording of progress and target-setting is insufficiently specific. WMDC cannot easily make a judgement on the learning of those learners who do not take external accreditation.
64. In many classes and workshops the range of needs is too wide to achieve effective learning. Less advanced learners are unable to cope with tasks, while others finish quickly without any further work to do. Learners have to wait for a long time to get help.
65. Advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners receive satisfactory general advice from their course tutors. Learners who need advice on courses other than skills for life are satisfactorily referred to staff based at the main centres.

Leadership and management

66. A well planned skills for life strategy is in place to implement language, literacy and numeracy support in vocational programmes. WMDC has made a good start in collecting data on existing practice. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of the strategy.
67. Communication is good and senior tutors provide good professional support and guidance. Staff are well qualified and are well supported in their daily duties. The service sponsors tutors who need teacher-training. It provides a wide programme of general in-service staff training but the focus on subject-specific training is insufficient.
68. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The service has just introduced a bilingual family learning course to meet the needs of language learners with young children. However,

learners who work during the day have insufficient opportunity to attend classes, as very little evening provision is available.

69. A process of observation of teaching and learning is in place, and the observation reports feed into appraisals and staff training. However, many reports are descriptive and contain insufficient evaluative comment. Observation reports focus on teaching and rarely make judgements on the quality of learning. Action plans often do not reflect weaknesses identified in the report.
70. While managers use data to monitor provision by class and centre, they do not use management information effectively at a strategic level and to monitor provision over time. The self-assessment report for the area is insufficiently evaluative and too generic to describe the provision accurately, and contains too few specific action points. The grade proposed by WMDC did not match inspection findings. Teaching staff have too little direct involvement with the self-assessment process.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

71. WMDC provides business and administration courses in ACL and work-based learning. Currently 159 learners are enrolled on ACL courses and 58 on work-based learning. Additionally 18 advanced apprentices are studying business administration, and 12 Train to Gain learners are studying customer service and team leading. ACL courses include qualifications in book-keeping and accounts at levels 1 and 2, and qualifications in business administration at levels 2 and 3. Three full-time and three part-time tutors train, assess and verify work-based learning, and seven part-time staff teach on ACL courses in eight community sites. Staff also teach on the technical certificates for the apprenticeship programme.

Strengths

- High success rates on NVQ level 2 and level 3 programmes
- Good development of learners' workplace skills
- Effective review and evaluation of learners' progress
- Good range of work-based learning courses to meet the needs of local employers
- Effective management of change by managers

Areas for improvement

- Low retention rates on text and word processing courses in some centres
- Narrow range of courses in adult and community learning
- Insufficient information, advice and guidance at some centres
- Insufficiently effective quality assurance and self-assessment
- Inadequate use of management data in course review and evaluation

Achievement and standards

72. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Success rates in work-based learning are high, in particular on customer service and business administration at level 2. Success rates for advanced apprentices are satisfactory. In 2006/07, 75% of learners completed the framework. Learners currently on work-based learning, including those enrolled through Train to Gain, are making good progress. Learners develop a good range of workplace and social skills through dealing with customers and other members of staff, and confidence levels increase. The standard of portfolios is good.

73. In ACL success rates are high on the level 3 certificate and diploma in business administration, and GCSE law. Retention and success rates are low on text and word processing courses in some centres. Success rates on other programmes are satisfactory. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory, and most learners make the progress expected of them. Learners develop their self-confidence, learn new skills, and make new friends. Progression into education and employment is satisfactory. Many advanced apprentices progress into employment with WMDC. This is broadly recognised in the self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

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74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In ACL, lessons are well-planned, with clear aims and objectives. Tutors provide effective support to individual learners, help learners to plan their time sensibly, and create a good learning atmosphere. Tutors also encourage learners to work independently, but some learners are too reliant on staff for support. In some lessons individual learning plans are used only as a record of completed work, and are not adequately used to review individual learners' progress and to set targets.
75. The review and evaluation of learners' progress in work-based programmes is effective. Assessors use their knowledge well to support and advise learners on how to present their portfolios of evidence, and meet learners regularly to review their progress. Work-based learners receive good support from their employers. An advanced apprentice studying for an NVQ level 3 in business administration is being informally mentored by a work colleague who has previously completed the programme, allowing the learner to develop a good understanding of the requirements of the framework and to start compiling a well-organised portfolio of evidence.
76. In work-based learning the range of courses to meet national targets and the needs of local employers is good. NVQ courses are offered in customer service at levels 1 to 3, and in business administration and team leading at levels 2 and 3, providing learners the opportunity to progress to higher levels and into employment. The team works with the corporate learning and development team within WMDC in organising the apprenticeship programme, and links are developing with primary care trusts and other employers.
77. The range of courses at entry level and level 1, including non-accredited, is narrow, and restricts the capacity of the team to engage learners with lower skills levels in some areas of the city. The range of qualifications for learners in ACL is dispersed thinly across the service, and provides too few opportunities for learners to progress to higher level courses.
78. Support for learners on ACL and work-based learning provision is satisfactory. Arrangements to identify individual support needs are appropriate. Enrolment and induction in work-based learning, in particular the apprenticeship programme, is thorough. In some ACL centres, learners have insufficient access to initial information, advice and guidance. The provider's self-assessment report makes insufficiently clear judgements on the quality of the provision.

Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The management of change by managers is effective. A senior tutor was recently appointed to oversee the transfer of responsibility for managing and delivering work-based learning to the team, and co-ordinate a more thorough approach to quality procedures. The team has managed the NVQ programme through a rapid expansion while maintaining high success rates.
80. Internal verification is satisfactory. Assessors and internal verifiers have standardisation meetings on a regular basis, and the assessment of work-based learners is now observed as part of the wider observation of teaching and learning carried out across the service. Appropriate steps are taken to promote the well-being of learners and ensure equality of opportunity for learners across all centres. Reference to equality and diversity in teaching, training and learning materials is insufficient. Learners on ACL have access to an appropriate range of equipment, and centres offer a safe and secure learning environment.

Quality assurance and self-assessment arrangements are insufficiently effective. The use of individual learning plans, observation of teaching and learning, and other elements of the quality framework is inconsistent, and focuses insufficiently on raising standards in teaching and learning. The self-assessment report identifies some areas for improvement, but is insufficiently evaluative. The use of management data in course review and evaluation is inadequate, for example in setting targets or analysing performance of particular cohorts.