

Ufi Ltd

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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](http://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](http://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. The report does not include learners' views as the inspection focuses on the way in which Ufi manages and contracts with providers at national level and takes account of evidence from previous inspections of individual **learndirect** centres.

## Description of the provider

1. Ufi Ltd (Ufi) is a private limited company and a wholly owned subsidiary of Ufi Charitable Trust. Ufi's head office is located in Sheffield and it has one other office in London. Ufi was established in 1998 and contracted with regional hubs to manage funding to learning providers. In 2006, following a full review of the organisation, it ceased contracting with regional hubs and established itself to directly manage contracts with providers. A senior management team comprising the chief executive, a deputy chief executive and six senior directors, who report to the Ufi board, manage the company. It has nine regions and an army hub that provides **learndirect** courses nationally and internationally to servicemen and women. A regional performance director manages each region and reports to one of three regional directors. Ufi employs approximately 470 staff, some of whom work remotely within the regions to support centres that provide **learndirect** courses.
2. Ufi's current remit is to use training through technology to improve productivity in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It provides training and qualifications for people without skills for life or level 2 qualifications in order for them to progress to further learning or into work. It has a network of 700 high street, college and community learning centres in England, including 28 Trades Union Congress (TUC) learning centres, 110 army and navy learning centres and 25 centres in prisons. Ufi is funded by the national LSC. Currently 80% of Ufi's budget funds **learndirect** courses leading to qualifications up to level 2, with the remaining 20% used to fund information, advice and guidance services online. Ufi has recently gained funding for Train to Gain from the LSC to provide national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in all the regions where it operates. Ufi also offers a range of full-cost courses and services to employers.
3. In June 2008, there were 526,034 funded enrolments on **learndirect** programmes, of which 78% were in skills for life, 19% in information and communications technology (ICT) and 3% in business and management and other courses. Around 5,000 learners have enrolled on Train to Gain provision. Currently 30% of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 8% of the learners declare a disability. Most learners are aged 24 to 44 years.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Achievement and standards</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Equality of opportunity</b>	<b>Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2</b>

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates have been consistently good in skills for life provision and are now good in business and management. ICT success rates are satisfactory and have improved from a low base in 2006/07. Overall, the quality of provision is good. Of the 41 inspections of providers that have taken place in 2007/08, half graded the quality of provision as good or better. The quality of provision was inadequate in only one learning centre. The range of programmes is good within the **learndirect** provision and is improving. Social and educational inclusion is good. Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are improving in learning centres. Ufi's leadership and management and its approach to equality of opportunity are good.

#### Capacity to improve

#### Good: Grade 2

5. Ufi demonstrates a good capacity to improve. It is an effective and efficient organisation, operating within its LSC budget and reducing costs effectively, while expanding and developing new provision. It has managed the change from contracting provision through regional hubs to becoming a direct contracting organisation very well. Of the 41 centre inspections to date, 93% received satisfactory or better capacity to improve and overall effectiveness inspection grades. Monitoring visits of the regional centres indicate that progress is being made to rectify areas for improvement identified through self-assessment or inspection. Leaders provide strong direction and staff have a clear understanding of the strategic and business objectives of the company. Key performance targets are challenging and staff work well to achieve these. Procurement processes are thorough and ensure that selected learning centres have sufficient capacity to provide at least satisfactory training and education. Many centres are located in areas of high deprivation.
6. Success rates are good and have improved significantly in 2007/08, while withdrawal rates have declined. Reporting of achievement and success rates at all levels of the organisation is regular. Ufi has taken effective actions to develop and change programmes to meet learners' needs and to enable them to have a better chance to succeed. The systems for performance management and quality improvement in the regions are strong and use comprehensive data that managers can access easily in the learning centres. Underperformance is identified quickly and precise improvement targets are set and monitored. Interventions are mostly effective in bringing about improvements. Centres that do not improve within a given timescale are subjected to particular scrutiny for re-contracting purposes. The overall quality and consistency of **learndirect** provision has improved in the learning centres and regions. The use of consultation and feedback from learners is comprehensive. The observation of teaching and learning has improved, but is currently an area for further improvement.
7. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Self-assessment is a new process to Ufi and is still evolving. Train to Gain is self-assessed separately and not yet incorporated into the main self-assessment report. The process leading to the final report involves gathering

information from a range of sources, including regional self-assessment reports. Ufi writes the regional self-assessment reports before the national report and subjects them to a moderation process that challenges judgements and grades. The regional reports are insufficiently critical, but updates in 2008 are more evaluative and are used effectively as working documents to bring about improvements.

## Key strengths

- High success rates on skills for life programmes
- Very effective development of new learning materials and resources
- Strong strategic leadership and planning to meet government strategies and initiatives
- Strong management of performance and quality
- Good promotion of equality of opportunity
- Very effective strategies to recruit learners without qualifications to participate in accredited training courses
- Good use of consultation and feedback

## Key areas for improvement

- The insufficient use of individual learning plans to set targets and plan learning
- The underdeveloped process for the observation and evaluation of teaching and learning
- The time delays for some decision-making to have a positive effect on learners

## Main findings

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Good: Grade 2**

8. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates for skills for life courses are consistently good at around 74%, as identified in the self-assessment report. Success rates for offenders on the rapidly growing provision in prisons are good at 76%. Success rates are now good in business and management, and satisfactory in ICT, having improved from a low level in 2006/07. Withdrawal rates have improved significantly in ICT and business and management. In skills for life, withdrawal rates are consistently low. No significant differences exist in success rates for different groups of learners, but some

variation is evident in the success rates between regions. The East Midlands region is the highest performing area with an overall success rate of 78.1%, Yorkshire and Humberside is the lowest performing area, with a success rate of 72.1%, compared with a national average for Ufi of 74.5%. Success rates for learners on the recently introduced Train to Gain programmes are low, but are improving.

9. Learners on skills for life courses gain confidence and improve their workplace and employability skills. Progression to other **learndirect** courses is good. Ufi is currently participating in a national pilot to monitor learner progression to other courses outside **learndirect** and to employment.

## Quality of provision

### Good: Grade 2

10. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better in most learning centres. In the better centres, good coaching and support help learners to achieve their learning goals. Ufi monitors and manages internet access to **learndirect** courses effectively, providing learners with reliability and flexibility in how, and when, they study. Ufi develops **learndirect** courses to meet stringent specifications, which ensures consistency of quality for all learners. In the better learning centres, learners benefit from a wide range of good quality learning materials to supplement and extend **learndirect** course materials. Not all tutors are qualified to an adequate level, as identified through self-assessment. In 2007/08, Ufi has invested funds to enable 300 tutors to achieve a level 3 qualification or higher. More than 80% of tutors are now qualified or are working towards the necessary qualification for their role.
11. Ufi does not use individual learning plans to set targets and plan learning in many of the learning centres. This area for improvement has been consistently identified at inspection and in Ufi's own self-assessment report. Individual learning plans lack detail. Short-term target-setting is inadequate and progress is not always adequately recorded following reviews. Ufi has invested substantial development activity in devising a new individual learning plan, guidance for tutors in the learning centres and a training package, but has not yet implemented any of these new initiatives. It has issued guidance to learning centres on ways of using session targets with learners.
12. The range of provision in skills for life, ICT and business and management is good. Ufi has carried out an effective review of its learning materials and course offer recently to meet the evolving needs of learners and to expand the range of provision. It has evaluated the full range of **learndirect** training materials and many have been revised and rewritten. New products have been introduced since August 2008, and more are currently in development. Clear consultation takes place with learners, tutors, employers and awarding bodies to ensure products meet their combined needs and the business needs of Ufi. Learner satisfaction ratings of new materials are high, but minor revisions to materials are still taking place. Ufi has improved the **learndirect** e-learning platform significantly and learners report that it is now much easier for them to use. The platform improves learners' access to their learning and supports their interaction with tutors and their completion and progression rates. An increasing range of NVQs are available through the Train to Gain initiative. Some providers of Department for Work and Pension funded programmes use **learndirect** courses well to help clients overcome barriers to employability. Specific



employer-funded courses are an established part of the Ufi portfolio and the offer of higher education courses and qualifications, in partnership with a number of universities, is well established and increasing.

13. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners receive good support to improve their confidence and achieve their learning goals. Staff use initial assessment effectively for skills for life learners to identify barriers to learning and place learners on appropriate courses. As identified in the regional self-assessment reports, initial assessment for other programmes is underdeveloped. Many centres make good use of support agencies to help learners overcome any social barriers that they may face and which may prevent them achieving their qualification aims. The development of information, advice and guidance services is good. The Ufi call centre provides effective support and guidance for learners at all times of the day and the week.

## Leadership and management

**Good: Grade 2**

### Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

14. Leadership and management are good. The strategic leadership and planning to meet government strategies and initiatives are strong. Ufi's directors and leadership team work effectively with board members to set a clear and well-articulated strategic direction, which meets local regional and national priorities. The board is very experienced. Ufi selects its board members carefully for their expertise, which it then uses well to lead the business. The leadership team directs strategic and operational planning for the business nationally. The strategic and business plans set clear key targets to meet government priorities to improve skills and qualifications up to level 2. Learning centre staff influence decision-making through participation in Ufi working and project groups. The management of change is effective. The review of contracting processes which resulted in Ufi directly funding learning centres was a well-conceived and executed strategy. Ufi has made good efficiency savings through the changes with little negative impact on learners or learning centres. It is using this experience well in planning for future change.
15. Managers identify new business opportunities and developments which will benefit the business and improve the learners' experience effectively. Ufi's preparation for the introduction of Train to Gain provision was thorough and included extensive staff training and capacity building of the provider network. The quality of some Train to Gain programmes is poor. The use of new technologies to communicate improvements is much improved and Ufi implements business changes quickly. But the structure of the business means a time delay exists in implementing some improvements to the quality of provision, which affects learners in the learning centres. Ufi can only implement some changes during the contracting and annual re-contracting processes.
16. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Ufi is well prepared to implement safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable adults and these are now included in new contracts with centres. It has approved safeguarding policies and made centres aware of their obligations. Ufi carries out Criminal Records Bureau checks for those centres already involved with young adults and vulnerable adults, such as prisons and plans to have full procedures in place by 2009.

17. Ufi's approach to equality of opportunity is good. It has a comprehensive equality scheme and reports on progress against equality targets every year. Ufi has implemented thorough equality and diversity impact measures for all learning centres and regions. Ufi and learning centre staff receive good training in equality and diversity, and in impact assessment. Useful equality and diversity support materials are available on the provider website for learning centres. The success rates of different groups of learners are analysed closely and show no discernible differences in the achievements of different identified groups.
18. Ufi has developed very effective strategies to recruit learners without qualifications to participate in accredited training courses. Ufi has a clear remit to enable adults with low skill levels to gain the skills and qualifications they need to find a job, progress to further learning or to achieve and progress at work. Strategies to attract learners from unemployed and minority ethnic groups have been effective. Learning centres are deliberately located in areas of high deprivation. Ufi offers a wide range of courses, which meet the needs of learners. Course development has a clear focus on providing accessibility to people with a wide range of disabilities. Ufi has worked with the Royal National Institute for the Blind to provide increased access to courses for learners with visual impairment. Ufi is particularly effective at identifying and working with key partners to improve inclusion for their identified target groups. Work with the prison and probation services increasingly enables offenders and ex-offenders to develop employability skills and gain qualifications. Success rates for these learners are high. Ufi is working with a wide range of businesses and charities that support vulnerable, unemployed and employed people to offer skills for life training to their clients.
19. The management of the performance and quality of provision in learning centres is strong. Ufi sets out its requirements of providers clearly and in detail in the contract. Performance data is comprehensive and Ufi staff and managers use it effectively. Managers in the learning centres can access data easily to assess their own performance and quality improvements. Ufi staff carry out a review of each providers' performance and quality four times a year, using a range of measures. They identify any underperformance quickly and set and monitor precise improvement targets. Ufi assists any learning centres with poor quality provision and/or poor performance to improve, using action-planning and substantial support. If they fail to do so, centres may lose their contract. This action has contributed to the improvement in success rates and reduction in withdrawal rates during 2007/08. Ufi shares good practice effectively at regular provider network meetings and training sessions.
20. Ufi makes good use of consultation with, and feedback from, learners and employers. Ufi takes careful account of learners' views in all areas of its work, including the design of learning materials, performance management of learning centres and the management of the telephone and online support. In addition to a learners' satisfaction survey three times each year, Ufi uses focus groups and online and telephone questionnaires with callers extensively and analyses complaints and support requests thoroughly. It uses sophisticated techniques to analyse the information collected and to identify improvements which benefit all learners.
21. The observation of teaching and learning is underdeveloped, as identified by Ufi in its national and regional self-assessments and in its development plans. Ufi has trained staff

in learning centres in observation methods and monitors the use of observation during performance management visits. Almost half of the learning centres have implemented a satisfactory observation process, but it is too early to identify improvements to teaching and learning.

## Annex

**Learners' achievements**

England

**Outcomes on learndirect programmes 2006 to 2008**

Learning type	Year	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	2006/07	678,023	578,080	68.6	9.4
	2007/08*	526,034	453,780	74.5	6.1
ICT	2006/07	157,290	116,451	50.1	18.5
	2007/08*	100,782	77,182	68.8	12.1
Skills for life	2006/07	503,435	451,717	73.8	6.9
	2007/08*	409,373	366,262	75.7	4.6
Business and administration	2006/07	15,345	9,579	50.3	15.7
	2007/08*	10,586	7,906	75.6	4.6

**Equality and diversity**

Q2 2007/08	All Ethnic Groups	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese/ Other	Mixed	Not Known	White
Enrolments	526,034	48,146	45,799	12,618	11,330	5,080	403,061
Completion rate (%)	94.2	95.1	94.1	95.3	94.1	89.6	94.1
Achievement rate (%)	75.9	73.3	70.5	74.1	72.8	75.4	77.0
Success rate (%)	74.5	73.5	70.1	73.3	72.1	69.7	75.3
Withdrawal rate (%)	6.1	5.2	6.2	4.9	6.2	10.7	6.1

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