

West Berkshire Training Consortium

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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' monitoring 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:

- Animal care and veterinary science
- Hairdressing and beauty therapy
- Employability training
- Business, administration and law

Subcontracted provision in engineering, construction, floristry, horticulture and accountancy was not inspected.

Description of the provider

1. West Berkshire Training Consortium (WBTC) is a limited company, with charitable status, that has provided work-based learning since 1983. WBTC operates from premises in Newbury. The company is funded by Thames Valley LSC to provide apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes. The LSC funding represents approximately 88% of WBTC's business in 2006/07. WBTC has 20 permanent staff and four freelance staff members. The operations director has responsibility for the company and is supported by a senior team of three operational directors.
2. At the time of the inspection, WBTC had 293 learners. Of these, 90 are on apprenticeship programmes, including 44 learners on apprenticeships for adults, 158 are on advanced apprenticeships and 45 on NVQ programmes. The E2E programme has 19 learners.
3. Apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and NVQ-only programmes have 134 learners in business administration, customer service, management and accountancy. Provision in accountancy is subcontracted to Kaplan. On the hairdressing programmes there are 24 learners on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships.
4. Provision for the 20 apprentices on engineering and manufacturing programmes is subcontracted to Eastleigh College, Thames Valley University, Oxford & Cherwell College and Basingstoke College. Provision for the 31 apprentices on construction programmes is subcontracted to Basingstoke College, East Berkshire College, Thames Valley University, Eastleigh College and West London Training. Provision for the six learners on floristry apprenticeships is subcontracted to Berkshire College of Agriculture. Provision for the 14 learners on horticulture apprenticeships is subcontracted to Berkshire College of Agriculture and Sparsholt College. Provision for the 45 veterinary nursing apprentices is subcontracted to Cerberus Training and Consultancy, the only provider subcontracted by WBTC not inspected in its own right.
5. In 2006 almost 72% of the working age population in West Berkshire were qualified at, or above, NVQ level 2 or equivalent, compared with 68% in the South East and the national average of almost 64%. Unemployment for the area is 3.6% compared with the national average of 5.3%. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the area is 2.6% compared with 9.1% in England.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Animal care and veterinary science	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Employability training	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

6. Overall effectiveness is good. More specifically, leadership and management, equality of opportunity and provision in business, administration and law is good. WBTC's capacity to improve is also good. Provision in animal care and veterinary science, hairdressing and beauty therapy and employability training is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

7. WBTC has demonstrated that it has good capacity to improve. Success rates are good overall and have improved significantly over the previous three years. For those areas of provision previously inspected, standards have been maintained well. WBTC had few areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection and has successfully addressed most of these, but progress with some has been slow. Use of action planning to support learning and progress has improved. WBTC's action plans are now clearly focused on raising achievement. WBTC has worked hard to maintain the key strengths identified at the previous inspection, in particular, good achievement and standards, effective support for learners, good involvement of staff in strategic planning and strong promotion of equality of opportunity.
8. WBTC uses a wide range of carefully selected subcontractors for most of its provision, changing subcontractors when it identified this would improve provision for learners. Overall success rates for the subcontracted provision are good and outstanding in some areas. WBTC manages much of its subcontracting arrangements well to meet the needs of learners and employers. Since the previous inspection, procedures to quality assure subcontractors' provision have improved. However, WBTC does not yet fully apply these procedures to all subcontractors and monitoring is insufficient for some.
9. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory overall. The self-assessment process is good, being thorough and inclusive. Good use is made of learners' views to help develop self-assessment. Staff are involved well and consultation with subcontractors is good. Data is used well to support judgements about successes and completion rates. Self-assessment is carried out on an annual basis. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and broadly accurate. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded in the self-assessment report and most of the strengths and areas for improvement.

Key strengths

- Good achievement
- Good support for learners
- Good links with employers and other providers
- Strong leadership and involvement of staff in strategic planning

- Good promotion of equality of opportunity

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient monitoring of some subcontractors
- Insufficient development of systems to monitor learner progress

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

10. Achievements and standards are good. Overall success rates are good, as recognised in the self-assessment. In 2006/07, apprenticeship success rates were good at 75%, improving from 70% in 2005/06 and 54% in 2004/05. In 2006/07 and 2005/06 success rates for advanced apprenticeship frameworks were good at 73% in both years, significantly improving from 36% in 2004/05.
11. In WBTC's main area of provision, business, administration and law, success rates in 2006/07 were good overall and outstanding in all the subcontracted accountancy programmes. Overall success rates were good in WBTC's customer service programmes at 80% and satisfactory for administration programmes at 70%. Pass rates for key skills and technical certificates are good, however, it is too early to judge success rates for learners on management programmes.
12. In 2006/07, success rates for WBTC's hairdressing advanced apprenticeships were satisfactory at 67%, but low for apprenticeships at 50%, however, in 2007/08 achievement in apprenticeships is improving. Progression rates for learners on WBTC's E2E programme are satisfactory. Most learners on hairdressing and E2E programmes achieve an additional qualification in health and safety. In the subcontracted veterinary nursing, success rates in 2006/07 were good at 79% for apprenticeships, but low for advanced apprenticeships at 44%. However, in 2007/08, achievement of advanced apprenticeships is improving.
13. The areas of WBTC's provision not inspected are subcontracted to providers inspected in their own right. Overall success rates were good in 2006/07. In engineering and manufacturing success rates were outstanding at 100% for apprenticeships and satisfactory at 67% for advanced apprenticeships. In construction, success rates are outstanding at 93% for apprenticeships and for advanced apprenticeships at 100%. In horticulture, success rates are good at 79% for apprenticeships. It is too early to judge success rates for learners on floristry programmes.
14. Learners on administration and customer service programmes develop good workplace and personal skills. In veterinary nursing, learners develop good practical skills. On the E2E programme learners make substantial gains in self-confidence and develop useful employability disciplines. On hairdressing programmes, learners develop good communication skills and satisfactory practical skills. Attendance is good in most areas of provision and satisfactory in others. Most learners make satisfactory progress, however, progress is slow in hairdressing apprenticeships, veterinary nursing advanced apprenticeships and for some administration and customer service learners with additional needs.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

15. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning is good overall. On- and off-the-job training in administration, customer service and hairdressing is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in veterinary nursing and the E2E programme. In administration, customer service and hairdressing there are good resources and good links between on- and off-the-job training, however, this training is insufficiently well co-ordinated in veterinary nursing. WBTC's induction programme is well planned and delivered effectively. The involvement of employers in learning is good, particularly in the provision of workplace mentors by some employers which is well supported by WBTC.
16. Assessment is good overall. Assessment planning is particularly effective in administration and customer service. In veterinary nursing, workplace assessment of practical skills and the use of vocational evidence for key skills are good, however, there is insufficient practical assessment for hairdressing programmes.
17. The identification of, and provision for, meeting additional learning support needs are satisfactory overall. The initial assessment process is satisfactory. All learners complete initial literacy and numeracy assessments followed by diagnostic tests when appropriate. All learners are screened for dyslexia, however, additional support is not fully integrated across programmes. For example, on E2E programmes there is insufficient support for learners' literacy and numeracy development as recognised in the self-assessment.
18. The progress review process is satisfactory overall. In administration and customer service progress reviews are thorough and target-setting is effective, but sometimes takes place later than planned. On the E2E programme, workplace reviews are good but the targets do not sufficiently link to other plans in learners' portfolios. The progress review process is insufficiently thorough in veterinary nursing, although individual learning plans and target-setting are generally satisfactory. In hairdressing programmes, target-setting is insufficiently detailed.
19. The range of provision is good overall. The programmes and activities meet most learners' needs well and closely match their aspirations and potential. WBTC takes very good care in matching learners to work-placements. Most learners work in good quality work-placements. Employers' needs are met effectively.
20. Overall academic and pastoral support arrangements for learners are consistently good, as identified in the self-assessment. Information, advice and guidance (IAG) are good, as is the quality of support provided by employers. Learners receive particularly good personal support from WBTC.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

21. WBTC's leadership and management are good. Managers provide effective leadership to raise achievement and support learners to reach their potential. Strategic planning is strongly focused to meet the needs of learners and their achievement. WBTC very effectively involves all staff in planning, which results in detailed action planning and challenging targets for improvement. Staff development is well planned to support learners' achievements. WBTC manages most of its subcontracting arrangements well to raise achievement. There is insufficient planning and management of the E2E programme.
22. Management of support for learners is good. Resources are well managed and arranged to ensure learners receive good support, care and IAG. WBTC's induction is particularly effective in supporting new learners to gain a good understanding of their programmes at an early stage. Staff are well supported in their work with learners. Outcomes for Every Child Matters are appropriate. Support for learners' personal development is managed well.
23. WBTC's links with other providers and employers are good and it manages the partnerships links with its subcontractors very effectively. WBTC has good links with other providers in the area to share and develop good practice and it actively and effectively promotes training to employers.
24. Resources are satisfactory. WBTC's training centre is well maintained and well equipped, however, WBTC has experienced a period of staff shortages and reduced capacity. This issue has been resolved effectively in most areas, with employment of suitably qualified staff who receive a thorough staff induction. At the time of inspection there was insufficient staff for the E2E programme, although additional staff have recently been appointed.
25. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. WBTC has adequate safeguarding policies and procedures in place with clear lines of responsibility identified. Staff and learners understand the policy and procedures for safeguarding. Appropriate vetting checks have been carried out for all staff. Most staff have undergone recent training and training for other staff is imminent.
26. Use of WBTC's established quality arrangements is weak in some aspects of provision. For example, monitoring of some subcontractors is insufficient, observations of teaching and learning are carried out routinely but are not moderated, and WBTC has been slow to make effective improvements to some aspects of provision.
27. Systems to monitor learners' progress are insufficiently developed. Monitoring is carried out within programme areas, but there is no overall system to monitor progress and easily identify trends across the provision. This was recognised in the self-assessment and plans are in place to improve these arrangements.

28. Promotion of equal opportunities is good. WBTC has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy with a good range of appropriate policies and procedures covering areas such as harassment and bullying, supplemented well by less detailed versions written carefully to cater for the different needs of learners and employers. A recently redesigned induction session engages learners effectively in a well planned set of activities to extend their understanding of topics such as stereotyping and harassment. WBTC has improved the range and type of questions that tutors ask learners at progress reviews to reinforce understanding of equality and diversity.
29. Arrangements for ensuring equal opportunities in the workplace are appropriate. Expectations are clearly established when work-placements are set up, including scrutiny of the employers' policies and procedures.
30. Initiatives to promote training are inclusive. A recent campaign to recruit learners makes very effective use of attractively presented case studies of WBTC learners. It symbolises effectively the strong culture of respect and value for the individual which characterises the treatment of learners at WBTC. Support for learners with specific needs is good.
31. Planning of the promotion of equality and diversity is systematic and well co-ordinated through an equality and diversity committee. Annual equality and diversity plans and accompanying actions ensure good progress. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups in learning at WBTC is more than double that of the local area. Monitoring of progress towards planned objectives is thorough and shared well to staff. Training for staff is good. Equality and diversity training involves all staff and takes place annually with a different theme. This year the training is focussed on staff achievement of the level 2 certificate in equality and diversity.

What learners like:

- ‘Staff make learning interesting and fun’
- ‘Assessors and trainers are top notch’
- ‘Brilliant way for someone with dyslexia to learn’
- ‘Tutors teach you at the right level – they get it right every time’
- ‘Staff give you lots of support and are flexible about workplace visits’
- ‘Everyone’s friendly and willing to help you’
- Very good training
- ‘Very helpful with key skills’
- Good support – ‘they help you with your work and personal problems’
- ‘The targets at the workplace reviews help me concentrate on what I need to do’
- The learning environment at the training centre
- ‘Staff very friendly, helpful, welcoming and patient’

What learners think could improve:

- Regularity of assessment visits
- Amount of information provided during the day – too much
- Provision of learning support for individuals during learning sessions

Sector subject areas

Animal care and veterinary science

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

32. WBTC subcontracts the training and assessment of veterinary nursing to a specialist provider. On the programme are 22 apprentices and 23 advanced apprentices. Learners are employed and are referred to the programme by their employers. Learners complete an induction which includes an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills and learning and working styles. They also participate in an induction for the veterinary nursing qualification with the subcontractor. Learners attend off-the-job training sessions one day each week during each term and advanced apprentices have short block release sessions for laboratory practices. All learners have a work-based assessor.

Strengths

- Good success rate on the apprenticeship programme
- Good workplace assessment and verification of practical skills
- Good use of vocational evidence in key skills portfolios
- Good involvement of employers
- Good learner support

Areas for improvement

- Low success rate on the advanced apprenticeship programme
- Insufficient co-ordination of training
- Insufficiently thorough review process
- Insufficient quality assurance of the subcontractor

Achievement and standards

33. Achievements and standards are satisfactory overall. In 2006/07 the success rate for apprenticeships was good at 79%. Most learners made satisfactory progress. Data for 2007/08 indicate timely success rates for apprenticeships are improving.

34. The overall standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners develop good practical skills and are involved in a wide range of relevant activities at work. Attendance is good.

35. In 2006/07 few learners were on the advanced apprenticeship programme and success rates were low at 44%. Most learners did not complete within the planned time. Progression for some apprentices onto the advanced programme has been slow, as identified in the self-assessment report. Data for 2007/08 indicates improvements in achievement.

Quality of provision

36. The quality of provision is satisfactory. The subcontractor's assessment and verification arrangements are good, being well planned and carried out very effectively by the staff involved. Feedback by the assessor to the candidate is particularly constructive and supports learning well. The discussion between the assessor and verifier to review the quality of assessment is comprehensive and well recorded.
37. Involvement of employers in learning is good, being effectively kept up to date with any qualification changes. The involvement of employers to provide witness testimony is good. Employers understand and support the apprenticeship programme. WBTC communicates well with employers and all parties provide good support for their learners.
38. Key skills are planned to be completed at the start of the training programme. The use of vocational evidence in key skills portfolios is good. Vocationally relevant case studies are used well to produce all the evidence for the portfolios, for example, a detailed case study on a sick animal and a talk given to their peers in the workplace.
39. On-the-job training is satisfactory. Veterinary practices used by the provider have experienced work-based trainers who provide appropriate training for learners. In the better practices training is formal and structured to align with the qualification requirements. In one practice the employer uses different teaching styles to enhance learning, as well as a reward system for the learners.
40. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. A suitable range of teaching activities are used and there is a good rapport between tutors and learners. Good use is made of learner's practical experience and case study work to reinforce learning. Few tutors use documented lesson plans. Resources for off-the-job training are generally satisfactory. However, there is no technology based provision to support learning. Although there is a small computer suite at the venue, learners interviewed were not aware of this resource.
41. The co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is insufficient. The off-the-job training scheme of work is provided to all employers but it is not used sufficiently well to ensure effective co-ordination with the on-the-job training, which is reliant on specialist training staff with emergency responsibilities. Although responsive to the needs of learners, on-the-job training is not always carried out systematically to provide an overall consistent programme.
42. The review process is insufficiently thorough. Learners' progress and performance are not sufficiently considered at reviews. Some employers are unclear as to the purpose of reviews. Some subcontractor staff are unsure of the difference between the roles of verifier and reviewer. WBTC has recognised this and is providing mentor support for reviewers. Development of individual learning plans and target-setting in the review process has improved and are generally satisfactory.
43. The range of provision is satisfactory in meeting learners' needs. The programmes are appropriate to learners' aspirations and potential, and build on their experience effectively. A good range of good quality work-placements is used. Employers' needs are also effectively met.
44. Support for learners is good and they are well supported throughout the programme. All learners receive very helpful weekly tutorials from their work-based trainer. Learners

appreciate the knowledgeable staff and the help provided with their academic work and personal wellbeing. Good individual support is provided during off-the-job training and at work. Some employers provide learners with mentors.

Leadership and management

45. Leadership and management are satisfactory. WBTC has established an effective partnership with the subcontractor and communications between both parties are good. WBTC is active in supporting the management and delivery of the provision.
46. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners receive a good induction from WBTC that is effective in raising learners' awareness. However, the reviews and off-the-job training do not sufficiently reinforce learners' understanding of equality and diversity.
47. Quality assurance of the subcontractor is insufficient, as recognised in the self-assessment. WBTC has been slow to provide sufficient support to the subcontractor for the development of its own quality arrangements. However, action planning for improvement is in place, with effective progress in some areas.
48. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified and the grade awarded in the self-assessment.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

49. Currently 14 apprentices and 10 advanced apprentices are on hairdressing programmes. Of these, 4% are male and 12% are from minority ethnic groups. All learners are employed, attending WBTC for off-the-job training and assessment at least once a fortnight. Practical assessment usually takes place once a month in the workplace. Progress reviews are held in the workplace every 12 weeks. There are 19 employer salons, with four in-salon and three WBTC assessors.

Strengths

- Good training
- Good learner support
- Particularly effective induction process

Areas for improvement

- Low success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- Insufficiently detailed target-setting
- Insufficient practical assessment

Achievement and standards

50. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The standards of hairdressing skills that learners' achieve are satisfactory. They develop good communication skills and use these effectively when working with clients. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety procedures in their work. Most learners achieve an additional qualification in health and safety. Learners' attendance is satisfactory.

51. The success rate for advanced apprenticeships in 2006/07 was satisfactory at 67%, significantly improved from the 2005/06 success rate of 25%. The data for 2007/08 indicates that the improvement in success rates is being maintained and learners' progress is satisfactory.

52. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes were low at 50% in 2006/07 and most learners' progress was slow, as recognised in the self-assessment. In 2007/08, achievements have improved significantly and at the time of inspection 61% of current learners have completed their apprenticeship framework.

Quality of provision

53. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good overall. Training is good with learners receiving well structured on-the-job training provided by their employers. Training sessions take place on a sufficiently regular basis to ensure that learners have good opportunities to develop their hairdressing skills. Resources are good. Salons have high specification equipment and professional product ranges. Learners have good access to clients for practice and assessment during their well structured on-the-job training. Training is well planned, with identified learning outcomes. Employers give effective support to learners during the training sessions. Links to previous and future learning are clearly identified in off-the-job training. The interactive learning activities are used well to develop learner understanding, for example, using hair samples to understand the reaction of bleach. Information learning technology is integrated well within theory sessions to support learning. Session planning adequately identifies the relevant health and safety and personal protective equipment requirements.
54. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners receive prompt and accurate feedback, with suitable written feedback on their assignments. Assessment of their performance is recorded accurately. Initial assessment is satisfactory and additional learning needs are identified appropriately. All learners taking key skills undergo appropriate diagnostic assessments and the results are used accurately to establish their targets.
55. Employers are involved well in the review process, are given appropriate targets for training to be completed on-the-job and are kept well informed of learners' progress. As identified in the self-assessment, good links exist between the on- and off-the-job training. WBTC staff have developed very good partnerships with the employers.
56. Target-setting for learners is insufficiently detailed, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Although learners receive regular progress reviews, many individual learning plans do not have sufficiently detailed assessment targets. Targets are often too broad and frequently only refer to unit completion. Most lack clear time frames for completion and sufficiently detailed assessments targets.
57. Learners do not have enough practical assessment. All assessment of learners' practical work is work based. WBTC staff conduct assessment visits at the learner's workplace on a monthly basis. However, this does not provide sufficient opportunities for assessment of learners' practical work. WBTC has recognised this in the self-assessment report and recently employed a peripatetic assessor to increase the amount of work based assessment activity. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this development.
58. The programmes meet the needs and interests of learners well. They are appropriately designed to match learners' aspirations and potential. Most learners work in good quality work-placements and learners benefit from the experience they gain in work activities. Learners enjoy the opportunities to enter internal competitions. The programmes also meet the needs of employers effectively.
59. Support for learners is good. Learners value the support they receive from WBTC staff, benefiting from very good support for personal issues and additional support to help them through any difficult circumstances. Learners' with an identified additional learning support need receive the support they need. All learners have opportunities to attend additional training sessions at WBTC and to arrange additional on-the-job visits to support their learning. Employers provide good support to their learners.

60. The induction process is particularly effective. WBTC has a well planned induction that all learners undertake. The information, advice and guidance provided are very effective in helping learners to select an appropriate programme. The health and safety and equality of opportunity information provided during induction are clearly remembered and understood by learners. The induction process prepares learners particularly well for their training and qualifications.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. WBTC has recognised the need to develop the programme in the self-assessment report and has made some good progress towards improvements. Staff meetings are held regularly and have a clear focus on learners. The meetings are used well to support the development of action plans which are systematically monitored and reviewed. There is good communication and teamwork. Staff are appropriately qualified and have access to a good range of suitable staff development.

62. WBTC's promotion of equal opportunities is good. Learners' understanding of health and safety and equality of opportunity issues are checked thoroughly and reinforced well during their reviews. All learners are provided with good support to help them achieve their potential.

63. Quality arrangements are satisfactory. Internal verification is thorough. The process supports the assessors effectively and provides useful feedback for improvement. WBTC's staff carry out observations of the off-the-job training and this process provides helpful information to support improvement. WBTC has successfully implemented a pilot scheme to assist salon trainers in their planning of off-the-job training.

64. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified and the grade awarded in the self-assessment.

Employability training

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

65. WBTC has 19 learners on its entry to employment (E2E) programme. Learners are referred from Connexions or apply directly to WBTC. A programme manager has responsibility for the programme, assisted by two training co-ordinators. Interim arrangements are in place to cover two of these roles until newly appointed staff take up their posts. The training team organises most work-placements. Learners receive on-the-job employability skills training in their work-placements for up to three days a week, and other training including health and safety, jobsearch and literacy and numeracy one day a week at the training centre. Most learners attend their programme for 13 weeks.

Strengths

- Good workplace reviews
- Good use of work placements and tasters

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient support for learners' literacy and numeracy development
- Inadequate programme planning and management

Achievement and standards

66. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Progression rates declined from 65% in 2005/06 to 58% in 2006/07, but remain satisfactory at 57% for the first nine months of 2007/08. Since the start of 2005/06, more than half of progressions have been into apprenticeships or further education. Although the proportion of learners completing their planned objectives has declined over the same period, achievement of health and safety qualifications is good. Of the learners entering for level 2 health and safety qualifications in 2007/08, 80% were successful. Achievement of health and safety qualifications in 2006/07 was 77%.

67. Learners make substantial gains in self-confidence while on the programme. In the workplace they develop useful employability disciplines such as punctuality and reliability. Learners in retail settings demonstrate good basic customer service skills and the ability to work well with others. For example, a learner on placement in a bookshop has quickly adapted to work routines and after a brief probationary period has joined the permanent paid staff.

Quality of provision

68. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Progress reviews in the workplace are good, regular and timely. Most learners receive reviews fortnightly. Target-setting for improvement and qualification progression is good and recorded well on review documents. Targets concentrate closely on the development of practical work related skills such as helping customers and following instructions accurately. Supervisors routinely contribute to the reviews, they help to agree relevant targets and assess progress towards targets set at the previous review. Learners respond well to the targets and the role they play in shaping their workplace learning. However, targets set during reviews rarely link clearly to other plans in learners' E2E portfolios. This was recognised in the self-assessment report.
69. Learners do not receive sufficient support for their literacy and numeracy development, although most learners have an identified literacy and/or numeracy support need. Group literacy and numeracy sessions are infrequent. WBTC has only recently started to offer individual support in response to specific requests. The range of learning methods is narrow and is too dependent on computer based test activity and worksheet completion. The content of group and individual sessions does not adequately reflect vocational or employment contexts relevant to learners. Since 2005/06, of 140 learners assessed as having a literacy or numeracy need, only 11 have achieved a related qualification. Currently the training team do not have sufficient expertise to provide the support learners need. WBTC recognises areas for improvement in literacy and numeracy support and has appointed new staff with relevant skills due to take up posts shortly. Plans are in place to better integrate learning into the workplace, and extend and develop provision at the training centre.
70. The extent to which the provision meets the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. The use of work placements and tasters is good. Learners are placed with employers for most of their stay on the programme. Of the 19 learners, 15 were on placements at the time of inspection and a further two have start dates arranged. The range of work placements is appropriate and increasing. Most placements match learners' employment aspirations well, particularly for work in retail. WBTC puts particular emphasis on placements providing an introduction to more substantial work-based learning. It also makes effective use of work placements to help learners who are undecided about career paths, moving them between placements in different sectors where appropriate.
71. Support for learners is satisfactory. External agencies regularly provide sessions at the training centre on topics such as sexual health and healthy living. Learners receive good informal pastoral support from tutors at the training centre and during workplace reviews, supplemented well by occasional, more intensive, support from their local Connexions personal adviser. Employers provide good support. Tutors and other staff offer some useful guidance on progression, particularly to apprenticeships, but this is not sufficiently integrated with target-setting in individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

72. Leadership and management are inadequate. Although a major initiative to restructure the programme in the previous year has effectively raised the level of employment skills learners acquire, the planning and management of the programme is poor. Staff shortages and interim management arrangements have restricted the development and general management arrangements for the programme. Provision for learners waiting for, or between, placements is inadequate. They follow the same training at the centre as those

with placements for one day a week, with the other three days on their timetable described as homework. While planning of individual learning sessions is satisfactory, the programme as a whole does not consistently ensure learners receive sufficient jobsearch, personal development or literacy and numeracy learning. Learners are often unclear about when their programme or work-placements are scheduled to end. Monitoring of leavers' destinations is not sufficiently systematic to ensure accuracy of key data on progressions. New staff have been appointed and are due to take up their posts shortly.

73. Promotion of equal opportunities is good. WBTC has clearly written and appropriate policies and procedures, including for harassment and bullying. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is developed well at induction and effectively reinforced at progress reviews. Arrangements for ensuring equal opportunities in work-placements are satisfactory.
74. Staff and learners' views contribute appropriately to the self-assessment process. While grading of the provision matched that of inspectors, some strengths identified in the self-assessment report were inaccurate or exaggerated, and some areas for improvement were not clearly identified.

Business, administration and law

Good: Grade 2

Context

75. WBTC provides programmes for 68 apprentices, 40 advanced apprentices and 26 learners working towards an NVQ. Accounting programmes, which are subcontracted to a specialist provider, have 49 learners, the rest are on programmes with WBTC. These include 45 learners in administration, 2 learners in management, 6 learners in team leading and 35 in customer service. Adult apprentices account for 42 learners. All learners are employed. Administration and customer service apprentices attend training sessions at WBTC's centre, for skills development and tuition for the technical certificate. Assessors visit learners in the workplace at least once a month.

Strengths

- Outstanding achievements in accounting
- Good achievement of apprenticeship frameworks in customer service
- Good development of personal and work skills
- Good individualised off-the-job training
- Good matching of learners to jobs
- Good learner support

Areas for improvement

- Slow progress in administration and customer service for some learners
- Insufficient monitoring of aspects of the programme

Achievement and standards

76. Achievements and standards are good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Overall success rates in accounting are outstanding. In 2006/07, achievement of apprenticeship frameworks was 90% and in advanced apprenticeship achievement was 84%. NVQ achievement was 88%. Most learners complete within the planned time. Pass rates in individual subjects of the AAT exams are outstanding and in most cases are 100%.

77. Customer service success rates are consistently good. In 2006/07 overall success rates were 80%. Administration success rates are satisfactory at 70%. Pass rates for key skills and technical certificates are good, with most learners passing on the first attempt. Timely completion rates have risen significantly, however, in 2006/07, 11% of administration and 20% of customer service learners did not complete their apprenticeship framework within the planned time. Most of these learners had additional learning needs. Advanced apprenticeship enrolment numbers have been small over the last three years and success rates have been low. In 2007/08, numbers increased and achievements are improving.

78. Learners develop good workplace and personal skills. Learners quickly become confident when communicating with customers and colleagues and develop many technical skills

appropriate to the job. Employers value their contribution to work teams as they take on greater responsibility and show capacity for working on their own initiative. The standard of work in portfolios is generally good. Evidence clearly reflects job roles and is well presented. Learners progress well between levels of programmes and some progress to other apprenticeships.

Quality of provision

79. The quality of provision is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. Off-the job training is good. Staff use the results of the thorough initial assessment to plan varied activities and approaches which suit individual learning styles and cater for particular learning needs. Learners enjoy the fortnightly training sessions for administration and customer service, which complement the excellent training in the workplace. Valuing the chance to share their business experiences and group work they often take ideas back to the workplace to improve their own working practice. Equality and diversity issues are reinforced well throughout training and learners observe safe practices. Resources are good. Accommodation is appropriate to learners' needs, computers and software are up-to-date and there is ready access to the internet. Paper resources are professionally produced and handouts are adapted to meet individual needs such as literacy or dyslexia. Key skills are an integrated feature of the training programme. Learners who are unable to attend group sessions receive effective individual coaching by assessors during visits to the workplace.
80. Assessment planning is particularly effective. Assessors provide extensive opportunities for assessment which is flexible, taking account of workplace schedules. Portfolios contain a good variety of evidence including observations, questioning, witness testimonies and professional discussions. Initial assessment arrangements are satisfactory. All learners complete initial literacy and numeracy assessments followed by diagnostic tests when appropriate. All learners are screened for dyslexia.
81. Progress reviews are thorough and effective, and include reinforcement of equality and diversity and health and safety. The employer is usually involved. Target-setting is effective. However, reviews sometimes take place later than planned.
82. The extent to which the provision meets the needs and interests of learners and employers is good, as recognised in self-assessment. WBTC takes great care in matching learners to work-placements, screening learners effectively before sending them to an employer for interview. Employers value this service, as it helps the learner settle in quickly and reduces early leavers. The learner and employer are both involved in choosing the most appropriate qualification to match the job requirements. Assessors consult employers on every visit to the workplace and involve supervisors fully in assessment planning. Employers are well informed about learners' progress.
83. Support, advice and guidance are good, as recognised in self-assessment. Learners receive much individual guidance during training sessions at the centre. Induction is comprehensive and helps prepare learners well for the programme. Assessors visit learners frequently at work. The availability of staff to learners is good. Staff give particularly good support to learners with any additional specialist learning and social support needs. The support and specialist software given to learners with dyslexia has enabled many to gain qualifications for the first time. Particularly good use is made of workplace mentors

to explain NVQ terminology and check evidence to see it meets the criteria before being assessed. Group sessions on sexual health and drugs awareness are included in the programmes to promote healthy lifestyles.

Leadership and management

84. Programmes are well managed. Staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. Communication is good. Teams meet regularly to discuss learner progress and share good practice. Staff development is good and there are good participation levels by staff. New staff are particularly well supported and receive a thorough induction.
85. All staff receive training in equality and diversity, which results in a level 2 qualification. Equality and diversity are regularly reinforced through learners' programmes. Learners have a good understanding of the issues involved and many receive additional training in the workplace. Programmes are socially inclusive.
86. Aspects of the programmes are not monitored effectively. During recent months progress reviews have not always been held when planned. Aspects of internal verification for administration and customer service have lapsed because of staffing issues. Insufficient meetings have taken place with the accounting subcontractor to review provision or monitor reviews or teaching, which is recognised by the provider.
87. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and areas of improvement identified, although found some of the strengths to be no more than normal practice.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by West Berkshire Training Consortium

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	28	39%	48%	36%	34%
		timely	26	31%	31%	27%	22%
	05-06	overall	55	73%	53%	73%	44%
		timely	57	70%	34%	70%	27%
	06-07	overall	48	77%	64%	73%	58%
		timely	59	46%	43%	44%	37%
Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	80	56%	51%	54%	39%
		timely	93	26%	29%	24%	22%
	05-06	overall	99	74%	58%	70%	52%
		timely	96	45%	38%	42%	34%
	06-07	overall	134	75%	65%	75%	61%
		timely	123	58%	47%	58%	44%

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'. Provider's overall success rates for apprenticeships in 2006/07 adjusted with revised LSC data.

Outcomes on **Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes** managed by West Berkshire Training Consortium

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate*	Progression rate**
2005/06	48	28 (58%)	31 (65%)
2006/07	55	17 (31%)	32 (58%)
2007/08 YTD APRIL 2008	58	16 (28%)	33 (57%)

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

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms of learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period

*** From start of LSC Contract year i.e. August