

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Wolverhampton Adult Education  
Service  
Date of visit: 28 May 2008

### Context

Wolverhampton Adult Education Service (WAES) contracts with the Black Country Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to deliver adult and community learning in the area. In 2006/07, 6617 learners were enrolled on courses. Roughly half the provision consists of accredited further education programmes and half of non-accredited adult and community learning.

The major structural changes in progress at the time of WAES' reinspection in 2006 are complete. The head of service is now supported by three senior managers, each with particular functions. Curriculum service managers are supported by specialist curriculum co-ordinators. At the reinspection, overall effectiveness, including leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality improvement, were found to be satisfactory. Provision in the reinspected sector subject areas was also satisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

Are there any identifiable improvement trends in achievement and standards?	Reasonable progress
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Overall success rates in 2006/07 for accredited and non-accredited programmes improved to above the regional average, with the exception of information and communications technology (ICT). Following a number of changes in the provision of ICT, considerable improvements have been made in in-year retention. The service's definitions of retention, achievement and success rates in non-accredited provision are thorough and produce valid and reliable data.

Good health and social benefits for older learners in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel was identified as a strength at the reinspection. This strength has been maintained. Older learners report favourably on the social benefits and also on the physical and mental health benefits of the programmes offered.

## Quality of provision

How well are individual learner needs met through effective use of individual learning plans and in the planning of resources?	Reasonable progress
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There were still several weaknesses in this area at reinspection: insufficient planning of resources to meet learner needs in hospitality, sport and leisure, ineffective use of individual learning plans in visual and performing arts and media and insufficient focus on individual learning needs in foundation programmes. Since the restructuring, the service has focussed more carefully on the learner journey and on individual learners' needs. All learners now have an individual learning plan, which appropriately reflects initial assessment findings, course core objectives and negotiated individual objectives. The standard paperwork is amended to reflect the characteristics of individual courses but complies with the service's overall requirement for rigorous recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement. Individual learning plans are amended as required during the course and used appropriately at reviews and for the end of course assessment. Where appropriate, and especially in foundation programmes, tutors are careful to avoid complex language in the individual learning plans. Learners are encouraged to keep learning diaries and create portfolios to demonstrate the use they have made of the new knowledge or skills acquired.

How well has e-learning been implemented?	Reasonable progress
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WAES has established a new network of learning centres in community venues that provide learning opportunities for groups identified as a priority in Wolverhampton. Learning facilities at these centres have been upgraded through close partnership working. The centres offer local learners the additional opportunity for self-supported study in a variety of subjects, but particularly in literacy, numeracy, English language and ICT. This is a significant improvement in the curriculum offer. E-learning champions have been established to introduce and use information learning technologies to promote learning in different curriculum areas. Staff are well supported by training and support activities.

How has WAES improved support for people with severe disabilities?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection, support for learners with disabilities in visual and performing arts was insufficient. WAES has since made many improvements across the organisation. It has focused on establishing and improving methods to obtain feedback from people with disabilities, for example, improved liaison with focus groups and better interventions with organisations that work specifically with this learner group. It carried out a review to establish whether learning venues were

accessible for all learners. The service has devised and evaluated a learner feedback questionnaire presented in a format that enables learners to engage with the process. Feedback to learners is now disseminated in a more easily understood format, such as visual images and through the use of voice software. Increased teaching support is now available and the use of this resource is better planned and organised.

## Leadership and management

How well is management information used to inform development and management decisions?	Significant progress
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Inadequate use of data was a weakness at the last inspection. The service now makes much more and better use of data. Performance data is a standard agenda item at weekly, fortnightly and monthly staff meetings at all levels and is closely monitored. Data are used effectively to set departmental targets. The management information system is used to produce bespoke reports to help managers make decisions. Registers and other documents are regularly scrutinised and data amended to ensure that in-year data is accurate. Comprehensive performance data is presented graphically and in tabular form. This helps managers to monitor the service's overall performance and to identify and tackle differences in performance between curriculum areas and groups of learners.

How have the quality improvement processes improved since the last inspection?	Significant progress
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At the last inspection WAES demonstrated that it was in a good position to make improvements, although quality improvement measures were not fully implemented. Since then, a thorough observation of teaching and learning scheme has become fully established across the provision. It has detailed performance criteria by which staff are observed, a clear grading structure and is carefully moderated. The scheme, which was judged to be unsatisfactory at the inspection in 2005, has supported the service to make improvements in the quality of teaching and learning over the last three years. Much work and staff training has been carried out to establish a performance management system which is closely linked to the various stages of the learner's journey. These stages are routinely discussed at curriculum team meetings. Since the last inspection, tutor course files have been established and a thorough review is carried out for each course twice a year.

## Self-assessment and improvement planning

What improvements have been made in self-assessment and improvement planning?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection the self-assessment process and development planning were judged to be satisfactory. However, the self-assessment report was judged to be too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative. Self-assessment is now fully established in sector subject areas. Curriculum staff are required to make use of firm evidence to produce a sector subject area self-assessment report. Senior managers monitor the evidence base closely to ensure that judgments made by curriculum staff can be tested. A grading system is in operation which judges the accuracy of the evidence collected and the judgments made. A moderation panel reviews the sector subject area self-assessment reports and the head of service carries out the final moderation. WAES is shortly to introduce a cross-service self-assessment process to cover all aspects of its provision in addition to its adult and community learning. Cross-organisational areas will further enhance the process, for instance in health and safety and administrative functions. The development plan is a comprehensive document which is well-monitored by curriculum and senior managers. A three-year plan and an annual plan is included in the self-assessment report. The annual plan is regularly updated. It contains clear objectives and targets and identifies who is responsible for particular actions, with review dates. An assessment is made of each aspect of the plan using a traffic light indicator system.