

MAXIMUS Employment and Training UK - Workstep

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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 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) 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 participants 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:

- Preparation for life and work

Description of the provider

1. MAXIMUS Employment and Training UK (MAXIMUS) acquired Westcountry Training and Consultancy Service (WTCS) in August 2008. MAXIMUS is wholly owned by MAXNetWork Ltd an Australian company, which in turn is wholly owned by MAXIMUS Inc. MAXIMUS Inc has been in operation since 1975 and provides welfare to work programmes in the USA, Canada, Australia, Israel and the UK. MAXIMUS employs around 6000 staff of which 150 are in the UK.
2. MAXIMUS holds 19 contracts, predominantly within the south west of England for a range of provision for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and European Social Funds (ESF). Of the publicly funded contracts it holds, only the Workstep provision was included in this inspection. MAXIMUS is also a subcontractor to the following: A4e, Pertemps, SEETEC, Shaw Trust and Work Directions.
3. The DWP funded Workstep programme accounts for approximately 8% of MAXIMUS's turnover. The contract covers two areas, Somerset and the west of England with an occupancy rate of 65 places. At the time of inspection, 76 participants were on the programme including some on the pre-employment stage.
4. A managing director and four heads of department lead the UK based company. Two employment consultants deliver the Workstep provision in Somerset and two employment consultants, based in Bristol, deliver the west of England provision. These staff report to those business managers running the local offices who report to different area managers.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject area

Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of MAXIMUS's Workstep provision is satisfactory. Achievements and standards and the quality of the Workstep provision are satisfactory. The employment consultants provide good support for participants. The leadership and management of Workstep is satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. MAXIMUS demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. MAXIMUS is in the process of transition, and its policies and procedures are under review. Before the take over four months ago, WTCS restructured the company and down sized. To MAXIMUS has so far implemented improvements in performance monitoring and accountability with regard to contractual compliance and business needs. Further planned changes include the introduction of a new management information system, continued restructuring and refinement of performance management. A clear focus on increased efficiency and effectiveness underpins the changes. Staff are generally positive about the new organisational ethos and MAXIMUS's capacity to improve the provision. It is too early to identify the impact of the new organisation on the quality of Workstep provision.
7. MAXIMUS has maintained the quality of Workstep participants' experience during a period of considerable organisational flux. Employment consultants are strongly committed to working effectively with the participants. Managers have made some progress in remedying the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, inspectors identified the same areas for improvement during this inspection.
8. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The process begins with an internal inspection of each contract. This includes observations of key processes and feedback from participants and employers. This part of self-assessment is thorough. It informs local team self-assessment days, which identify key strengths and areas for improvement. This part of the process is not sufficiently self-critical and many of the strengths identified are normal practice. The process does not include self-assessment activity by the Workstep team as a whole. The final self-assessment report is produced by members of the senior management team, and contains strengths and areas for improvement alongside a description of the provision. Progress against the continuous improvement plans generated by the self-assessment process is monitored monthly. The process is systematic but does not fully identify the actions taken to address areas for improvement or evaluate their effectiveness. MAXIMUS does not effectively monitor the impact of changes on the Workstep provision as a whole.

Key strengths

- Good coaching and training by employment consultants
- Very effective support for participants

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently specific target-setting
- Insufficient focus on literacy, language and numeracy skills for the workplace
- Inadequate monitoring of the quality of provision

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Since the beginning of the contract only 25% of participants have progressed into open employment. Of these, 61% have sustained progression in open employment for at least six months. However, the proportion of participants leaving the programme without progressing into open employment is high. The self-assessment report identified this as an area for review. Progression rates to open employment have varied over time with no clear trend in improvement, as acknowledged by MAXIMUS at inspection. In the period between 2007 and 2008 the number of participants who progressed to open employment improved from 11 to 23, however, this is not as high as in previous years. In the same period the number of leavers who did not progress to employment reduced from 28 to 18. This is part of an improving trend. MAXIMUS does not identify which participants are capable of planned progression to open employment, or when they should achieve this aim.
10. Some participants have achieved qualifications relevant to their employment. As identified at self-assessment, MAXIMUS does not monitor the number of qualifications taken or whether they meet all participants' needs. Some employers provide job specific training within the workplace.
11. Standard of participants' work is satisfactory. Most participants grow in confidence and self-belief, and make good progress in dealing with the public. They make at least reasonable progress in developing team-working, communication and job-specific skills. Most participants are reliable and punctual. A minority of participants continue to experience problems in dealing with difficult situations. Others do not yet understand the importance of their contribution to team work.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

12. Quality of provision is satisfactory. Training, coaching and learning are satisfactory. Employment consultants and employers provide good coaching and training, as identified at self-assessment. Employment consultants have a very good understanding of their participants' needs and respond to these flexibly with good individual training on curriculum vitae writing, job seeking and applications. Where necessary, employment consultants work alongside participants starting work or changing roles to coach them in their new duties. Many employers offer good on-the-job training, sometimes with access to qualifications. Large companies operate a well planned, thorough, work buddy system. Not all participants receive sufficient mock interview practice before attending interviews. Too few participants receive detailed training from their employment consultants on how equalities legislation operates at work.

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13. Reviews of progress are satisfactory. They take place regularly and usually involve employers. A thorough discussion of participants' progress generally results in actions to develop skills and address areas for concern. However, equal opportunity and health and safety issues are not always included in review meetings or discussed adequately. Employers or managers under pressure do not always attend reviews as arranged.
 14. Target-setting in development plans and reviews is insufficiently specific. Some participants are not fully aware of their long term goals. Few targets are specific or time-bound. Too often, targets focus solely on one particular aspect of personal development and do not take account of wider training needs, including basic skills development. Targets are often recorded as memory aids for employment consultants rather than tools to enable participants to take fuller responsibility at work. Participants do not always remember or undertake verbal actions agreed in reviews, and do not usually have a written copy for reference. The language and handwriting used for written targets is not always appropriate for participants with poor reading skills.
 15. Staff do not focus sufficiently on promoting language, literacy and numeracy skills' development. Initial assessment is not systematic, and participants' work related literacy, language and numeracy needs are not identified early enough in the programme. Basic skills support in the workplace is not generally available. Many participants do not fully understand the importance of these skills in work situations. Although a few participants attend provision after work, many others are reluctant to undertake further training and perceive it as irrelevant to their current employment. Employers are not always aware of the value of naturally occurring opportunities to use and extend literacy and numeracy skills. Insufficient staff have literacy and numeracy qualifications.
 16. The extent to which the programme meets the needs of participants and employers is satisfactory. MAXIMUS has good relations with disability employment advisors who refer clients with confidence. Meetings with participants are generally held in locations convenient to them. Work environments are generally good and most participants are matched to job roles which suit their skills, aptitudes and aspirations. Where disabilities prevent participants from performing all aspects of the job fully, employment consultants negotiate with the employer, or help to find new jobs. Frequent changes of supervisor inhibit the progress of a few participants.
 17. MAXIMUS provides particularly effective support for participants. Experienced and appropriately qualified employment consultants visit participants frequently in the workplace. They skilfully guide participants towards more realistic job expectations and improved attendance. They accompany participants to interviews, workplace inductions and other appointments. They liaise regularly with employers to resolve such issues as hours, shifts and job roles and clarify misunderstandings over pay and leave entitlement. Interpreters and workplace mentors are used well. Staff use good links with external support agencies to refer participants for counselling on personal issues, and make effective use of additional funding to provide equipment, workplace adjustments and travel to work. Good emotional and practical support on personal matters empowers

participants to develop independent living skills. Support extends well after the end of the programmes for as long as participants need it. Most contacts with participants are well recorded.

18. Advice and guidance are satisfactory. Employment consultants have or are working towards qualifications in information and guidance. They provide adequate advice and guidance to participants throughout the programme about their options and the types of support available. Induction and initial assessment are satisfactory, although discussions on health and safety and equality and diversity are too brief. Exit guidance is not systematically thorough or well recorded. Employers do not receive sufficient information about the Workstep programme, although they are given a simple explanatory leaflet. Staff and employers are not fully aware of other training options available such as Train to Gain.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

19. Leadership and management are satisfactory. MAXIMUS has appropriate recruitment and staff appraisal policies and procedures. New staff receive a thorough induction into the organisation. Work shadowing throughout the first month of employment ensures that staff do not take responsibility for participants until they are familiar with their job role. A schedule of in-house staff development opportunities is supplemented by external training relevant to job roles. However, MAXIMUS does not systematically identify and plan to meet the development needs of new employment consultants. Performance management is under review. Performance management is not currently well developed within the Workstep provision. Basic targets are used for occupancy and progression rates. These are not linked to an overview of participants' potential for open employment.
20. Internal communication is satisfactory, and improving. MAXIMUS has introduced new communication mechanisms. For example, weekly telephone conferences are held for managers to discuss progress in business and contract targets. They increase transparency and accountability, but are not recorded or used to monitor progress systematically. Good news stories celebrating positive outcomes are distributed throughout the organisation through 'That's Gold' bulletins. Communication has improved and staff are kept well informed of developments. The procedures for safeguarding participants meet current government requirements. MAXIMUS carries out CRB checks on all staff. The safeguarding vulnerable groups policy is under review. A programme of staff training on safeguarding is planned.
21. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The quality manager holds responsibility for safeguarding and equality of opportunity. MAXIMUS has clear policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity, including the prevention of bullying and harassment and unacceptable behaviour. Staff training on the policies and

procedures is included in the induction process. . MAXIMUS has good arrangements to meet the specific needs of participants, such as providing adaptive technology. MAXIMUS does not currently hold regular training events to update staff on equality and diversity issues. Each team has an equal opportunities representative who keeps a record of local information and events relevant to equality issues. They complete a quarterly report to the quality manager. MAXIMUS does not use these to develop an overarching strategy for equality of opportunity, or to identify targets and actions for improvement. MAXIMUS collects appropriate data, for example, by age, gender and disability. Regular reports show the distribution of under-represented groups. MAXIMUS does not use these reports to analyse trends or to identify specific actions to address under-representation. An appropriate Skills for Life policy is not always used effectively to ensure that participants' needs are identified and acted upon in a timely fashion. Participants do not always understand their responsibilities in promoting equality of opportunity in the workplace and reviews do not always include discussion of relevant issues.

22. The monitoring of Workstep provision is inadequate. MAXIMUS does not systematically monitor improvements in the Workstep provision as a whole. Day-to-day operational management is the responsibility of business managers who have line-management responsibility for the staff based in the office they run. The two business managers with responsibility for Workstep provision operate differently. For example, one business manager has introduced a daily catch-up meeting with staff. Both hold monthly case conferences with employment consultants to discuss individual participants. These meetings are informal and comparisons are not made of progress over time. The business managers do not have an overview of how appropriately the participants as a whole are progressing. MAXIMUS does not analyse the progress of Workstep participants in terms of their capability for sustained progression into open employment. The use of management information is under-developed for this purpose, as identified in the self-assessment report. Management information is not used to identify and explore trends or to monitor progress effectively. The business managers responsible for Workstep provision report to different area managers. Although the area managers have frequent informal communication they do not systematically compare and monitor progress in improving the quality of Workstep provision. They each monitor progress against their own continuous improvement plan. MAXIMUS does not maintain an over-view of progress across the provision. In spring, all Workstep staff met for a day to share good practice. However, sharing of good practice across the Workstep programme is limited. MAXIMUS does not have appropriate mechanisms to regularly share good practice across the provision.

What participants like:

- 'The door is always open, they understand your individual needs and have a flexible attitude'
- 'Staff are happy to listen to your problems at any time'
- 'Staff intervene with employers and help improve conditions at work'
- 'My confidence has improved so much, I now talk to people and go out a lot more'
- 'I got good support before and after my interview for promotion, though I didn't get the job'
- 'My IT support is pretty good – I use zoom text and a Dictaphone'

What participants think could improve:

- 'Greater knowledge by employment consultants of how DDA rules apply when changing jobs'
- 'Make sure that employers know more about Workstep'
- 'Employment consultants should remember to proof read application forms they prepare for you, as they sometimes make mistakes'
- 'Employment consultants don't always plan visits to the workplace well in advance to fit in with our work schedules'