

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Warrington Borough Council**

**13 October 2006**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

### Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

## Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

## Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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## Warrington Borough Council

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Warrington Borough Council	3
Grades	3
About the inspection	4
What learners like about Warrington Borough Council	7
What learners think Warrington Borough Council could improve	7

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	10
Quality improvement	10
Preparation for life and work	12
Business administration and law	15
Family learning	18
Community development	21

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Warrington Borough Council (WBC) provides both adult and community learning and work-based learning. The provision is managed in two separate divisions. The lifelong learning service is part of the community services directorate and work-based learning is part of the corporate services directorate.
2. WBC's adult and community learning is entirely contracted out. It has a range of partnerships and subcontractors, including two colleges and an increasing number of voluntary and community organisations. One of the distinctive partnerships provides the Halliwell Jones Learning Centre at Warrington Wolves Rugby League Club. There is a separate budget to promote family learning, and considerable use has been made of neighbourhood learning in deprived communities funding since 2003-04 to develop partnership projects in the most deprived wards.
3. The lifelong learning officer has overall responsibility for the adult and community learning provision. She is supported by an adult and community learning officer who is responsible for family learning, a family learning officer and an administrative assistant.
4. The personal development centre for work-based learning was set up in 1998. Work-based learning provision is managed by a head of training and development and an apprenticeship manager. A centre manager is responsible for the operational and financial aspects of the centre. The centre has four full-time training liaison officers. The work-based learning team works closely with the workforce development team, which provides corporate employee training.
5. In 2005-06 there were 1,523 learners on part-time adult and community learning courses in 10 areas of learning. In 2006-07 there are, to date, 702 learners, including 88 on family learning programmes. The service is moving away from learning for personal development to provision which is targeted at priority groups. There are 40 apprentices on work-based learning programmes in business administration and law.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 3**

6. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** The overall provision in work-based learning is good, while it is satisfactory in adult and community learning. Leadership and management and quality improvement are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is inadequate. The quality of provision in community and community development is satisfactory. The quality of provision in business administration and law and in family learning is good.
7. Achievement and standards are generally satisfactory. There is good attainment of skills and self-confidence in community learning and family learning. Work-based learning success rates are high and improving and many apprentices have been promoted to more senior jobs. Retention is satisfactory overall.

8. **Teaching, training and learning are generally satisfactory and some are good.** Staff are well qualified.

9. **The range of programmes is narrow in adult and community learning.** The programme is largely developed to meet personal and leisure needs. Targeted provision in community development and family learning has started to attract learners from disadvantaged wards. However, the provision is not fully successful in attracting priority groups and those with low levels of prior qualifications. Links with the local and wider communities and with partner and voluntary organisations are good. The programmes taught by the colleges are structured to support progression to further education, but it is not always the intended objective of the programme. The range of apprenticeships available in the council meets local authority needs. However, there are not enough training places to meet needs.

10. Support for learners is satisfactory. Initial assessment is used appropriately to identify additional learning needs. Most arrangements to meet additional needs for literacy and numeracy support are satisfactory. Learners are well supported by tutors. Support and guidance for apprentices is good, and apprenticeships in childcare have recently been made available.

11. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The quality of self-assessment in work-based learning is better than that in adult and community learning. The self-assessment report is thorough and generally accurate. The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process in work-based learning. However, the adult and community learning self-assessment report is not up to date. Although it includes the views of partner colleges, the voluntary and community providers do not fully understand its function. In adult and community learning, self-assessment is not an adequate tool for self-improvement. The adult and community learning report is inaccurate and insufficiently evaluative. However, the overall quality of provision has been largely maintained since the previous inspection. The provider does not make use of data to aid judgements and does not evaluate sufficiently the effect of weaknesses on learners. The grades given by inspectors in some areas matched those given in the self-assessment report.

12. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** It has made good improvements in work-based learning but there are weaknesses in self-assessment in adult and community learning. Since the previous inspection, work-based learning provision has improved and is now particularly good and in a good position for further improvements to be made. Provision in adult and community learning has remained satisfactory, although many of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been rectified. In adult and community learning there are improvements in the monitoring of subcontracted provision, and the quality of learning venues. Attainment is good for adult and community learning learners and apprentices. However, there are weaknesses in strategic planning and equality of opportunity in adult and community learning. The quality of teaching, training and learning is satisfactory.

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL:**

- develop an effective strategy for the promotion of equality and diversity in adult and community learning
- accelerate the development of first steps provision
- improve the collection, analysis and use of data to contribute to timely planning and monitoring of the programme
- improve the overall standard of recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement
- improve the quality of adult and community learning programmes
- develop rigorous, inclusive and effective self-assessment in adult and community learning
- improve links with employers to increase the number of apprentices available

**GRADES**

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		4
Quality improvement		3

<b>Preparation for life and work</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Community learning</b>		<b>3</b>	
Adult and community learning	603	3	

<b>Business administration and law</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Administration</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	21	2	
<b>Customer service</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	19	2	

<b>Family learning</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Adult and community learning</b>			
Adult and community learning	88	2	

Community development		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Adult and community learning</i>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	194	3

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

13. Work-based learning and adult and community learning were inspected by a single inspection team. The work-based learning inspected comprised apprenticeships in administration and customer services. The adult and community learning provision covered community learning, community development and family learning. A few classes in the arts and in information and communications technology (ICT) were sampled to gain an overview of the full range of provision, but this provision was not reported on or graded separately. The leisure, personal learning development and full-cost courses subcontracted to two further education colleges, were not inspected. WBC's adult and community learning provision was previously inspected by the ALI in 2003. The provision in work-based learning was previously inspected in 2004.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	37
Number of learners interviewed	154
Number of staff interviewed	30
Number of employers interviewed	10
Number of subcontractors interviewed	57
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	39
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	21

## Leadership and Management

### Strengths

- wide range of accessible learning centres for adult and community learning
- particularly effective collaborative partnerships to promote learning
- good management of work-based learning
- good contract management of subcontracted provision in adult and community learning

### Weaknesses

- poor use of management information to plan the adult and community learning provision
- weak strategic planning for equality of opportunity in lifelong learning

- insufficiently thorough arrangements for improving quality in adult and community learning
- inadequate self-assessment in adult and community learning

## **Preparation for life and work**

### ***Community learning***

#### *Strengths*

- good attainment of skills and confidence
- good teaching and learning

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow development of first steps learning
- insufficiently thorough arrangements to recognise and record learners' progress and achievements

## **Business administration and law**

#### *Strengths*

- significant development of personal and employment skills
- good and improving success rates
- very good on- and off-the-job training
- good support and guidance for learners
- good management of apprenticeship programme

#### *Weaknesses*

- some late introduction of key skills training
- insufficient jobs with apprenticeship training to meet demand

## **Family learning**

### ***Adult and community learning***

#### *Strengths*

- gains in learners' skills, confidence and ability to support their children's learning
- good teaching and learning
- good progression opportunities and support for learners to progress
- good collaborative working at operational level

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient opportunities for parents and children to learn together
- insufficient use of management information for planning and review

## **Community development**

### ***Adult and community learning***

#### *Strengths*

- good initiatives to remove barriers to learning
- good learning resources
- particularly good collaborative working with voluntary and community organisations

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient targeting of leaders and potential leaders in the community
- narrow range of community development learning

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL:**

- the friendly, accessible and supportive staff
- the apprenticeship qualification - 'it's widely recognised in the council and makes it easier to get promotion'
- 'the support from staff and small classes has really built my confidence – I can now ride on buses and sit in the college refectory'
- 'it's got me back into studying - I realise I'm not just a mum, I've got a brain'
- 'the training as a Citizens Advice Bureau adviser is relevant, flexible and good for personal development'
- 'having the class in the local library, the tutor is relaxed and you don't feel under pressure'
- 'the courses which cater for all levels, I don't feel inferior'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:**

- the number of classes they can attend with their children
- the resources - 'a big screen for demonstrations of ICT in a community venue'
- the number of classes in the community
- the programme costs - 'make them affordable for older people'
- the access to learning support - 'it is only available during the day'

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

#### Strengths

- wide range of accessible learning centres for adult and community learning
- particularly effective collaborative partnerships to promote learning
- good management of work-based learning
- good contract management of subcontracted provision in adult and community learning

#### Weaknesses

- poor use of management information to plan the adult and community learning provision
- weak strategic planning for equality of opportunity in lifelong learning
- insufficiently thorough arrangements for improving quality in adult and community learning
- inadequate self-assessment in adult and community learning

14. WBC's lifelong learning service offers learning programmes in an extensive range of accessible venues at times that meet learners' needs. Learners study in the central library and in local learning centres including community centres and schools. They benefit from courses at the Gateway Centre and easy access to the various council and voluntary sector services located there. Provision is targeted at some of the poorest neighbourhoods. Venues are adequately resourced to support teaching and learning.

15. The lifelong learning service has maintained the particularly effective collaborative partnerships that were a strength at the previous inspection. The lifelong learning co-ordinator makes good use of the local learning partnership to test new ideas to promote adult learning. The success of the provision is the product of well-established relationships with the two local colleges. Good collaborative work with voluntary organisations has produced programmes for learners with mental health difficulties, older people and those with basic skills needs. The service is well regarded by its partners.

16. Management of work-based learning is good. Success rates for apprentices are high and improving, and the good collaboration between trainers and learners' supervisors helps to ensure that learners make good progress. The previous weaknesses in assessment and internal verification have been successfully remedied. Progress monitoring and on- and off-the-job training are good. Apprentices are supported well and many have been promoted to more senior roles.

17. Staff training and development are satisfactory. Staff have good access to a comprehensive training prospectus, including regular training in equality and diversity and health and safety. New staff have a thorough induction. The local authority reviews the training of subcontractors' staff annually. College teachers are appropriately qualified and some training is given to staff in the voluntary organisations. Apprentices attend many

additional certificated training events.

18. Management arrangements for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning are mostly satisfactory, but are insufficiently thorough in community learning. Service-level agreements clearly demand that subcontractors recognise and record progress and achievement, and the achievement records maintained by tutors at Priestley College are satisfactory. However, those at Warrington Collegiate are weak. The subcontracted voluntary organisations have made slow progress towards recognising and recording progress and achievement, even though their staff have had initial training.

19. Management arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs are satisfactory. Apprentices receive a thorough two-day initial assessment and their additional learning needs are met during the programme. Most adult and community learning learners are assessed, although the assessments are not always effective. The literacy and numeracy support for adult and community learners at the Gateway Centre has recently been withdrawn, and they now have to attend other venues.

20. Arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are good. The lifelong learning service works well with the children's services directorate to promote children's welfare. Parents and children benefit from the range of family learning courses which promote healthy living and staying safe. These courses encourage positive involvement in all aspects of children's lives. The 'Learning by Prescription' project offers guidance to homeless people. Learners take pride in their achievements. All crèches are registered and inspected and all staff are subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks. Many family learners become active volunteers and some community development learners progress into employment. Measures to involve more fathers in family learning have had some success. WBC encourages looked-after youngsters and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to apply for apprenticeships. There is little separate provision targeted at the needs of vulnerable adults.

21. The lifelong learning service's strategic direction is insufficiently clear. The service plan contains few specific references to lifelong learning. Managers have a general target of locating learning programmes in the most deprived wards, but there has been no analysis of priority groups of learners in these communities. Too little attention is paid to ensuring that family and community learners are on appropriate programmes. There is no plan for how the lifelong learning service will develop community learning and make greater use of voluntary and community organisations.

22. The lifelong learning service makes poor use of management information to plan its provision. The collection and analysis of data is contracted to an external agency. Data is obtained from the returns that subcontractors submit to the agency, and by the time it has been analysed and passed to the service, it is out of date and of limited value. During the inspection, the service did not know how many learners it had, and had to rely on information held by individual subcontractors. Management information is not used to plan the curriculum or to set service targets. There is no accurate information on learners' progression and achievement, or to support the targeting of priority learners, or to identify new learners.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 4**

23. WBC's policies and procedures for equality of opportunity appropriately cover gender, disability, ethnicity, age and harassment. The policies are reviewed regularly and take account of the most recent legislation. The subcontracted colleges have particularly thorough procedures to ensure that learners are treated fairly. Learners with restricted mobility have satisfactory access to all venues. The local authority applies minimum required standards to all venues.

24. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Most learners receive appropriate information about their rights and responsibilities. Apprentices' knowledge of equal opportunities is reinforced during their progress reviews. Many adult and community learning staff have recently attended equality training, but work-based trainers have had no recent training.

25. There are several initiatives to promote community development learning programmes to people from disadvantaged backgrounds. These learners can participate in programmes of negotiated learning. There are a few programmes for learners with mental health difficulties, older people, Asian women, and people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, there are still few men on family learning programmes, and progress in recruiting more learners from minority ethnic groups has been slow.

26. Managers recognise the weakness in strategic planning for equality of opportunity. The lifelong learning service plan has few references to the lifelong learning strategy for promoting equality of opportunity. The link between the service plan and the council's corporate plan is unclear. There is no clear strategic direction for providing learning opportunities for the diverse communities of Warrington. The provision targeted in the most deprived wards has not attracted the most disadvantaged learners. Some learners have already achieved level 2 or level 3 qualifications and are on inappropriate programmes. The community development programme does not sufficiently target potential community leaders as part of the council's plan to regenerate communities. Too many programmes merely prepare learners for mainstream further education courses rather than community development. There is insufficient strategic targeting of learners from diverse backgrounds. The service does not have up-to-date data on learners' gender, ethnicity and disabilities. The equality and diversity targets are insufficiently challenging and not based on sound statistical information. There is little use of data to set diversity targets on apprenticeship programmes.

## **Quality improvement**

## **Contributory grade 3**

27. WBC sets high standards for its subcontractors. Service level agreements cover all aspects of the learners' experience, including initial assessment, teaching and learning, and equality of opportunity. Contracts are carefully reviewed each year to meet changing priorities. Subcontractors' compliance with the requirements is monitored thoroughly. All subcontractors evaluate programme performance and share good practice at an annual stakeholders' meeting.

28. WBC has made improvements since the previous inspection. Key weaknesses in the apprenticeship programme have been successfully tackled. In adult and community learning, the community learning venues are now satisfactory. Subcontracted provision is carefully monitored. Learners on most programmes achieve good personal or vocational

skills. The quality of provision remains at least satisfactory, and in two areas it is good. However, strategic planning is only satisfactory and there are still weaknesses in equality of opportunity.

29. WBC's arrangements for improving quality are insufficiently thorough. It is unclear how the procedures lead to improvement. The procedure for joint teaching observations with staff from the subcontractors works satisfactorily at the colleges but is ineffective at the voluntary organisations. Observations are arranged to suit staff work schedules rather than to ensure that all tutors are regularly observed. There are not enough staff to carry out the observations required to monitor quality effectively.

30. Learners' feedback is not collected systematically. The learners' feedback from the colleges' surveys does not give enough information that could be used to improve the provision. Additional surveys of learners' views, commissioned by WBC, are infrequent and only occur when there are sufficient funds. WBC does not record the improvements that result from its quality assurance processes.

31. The lifelong learning service's self-assessment progress is inadequate. The current self-assessment report is out of date and there is no associated development plan. The report incorporates judgements on the college provision but there is no supporting evidence for these. The judgements about leadership and management are not derived from an overall assessment of quality in the areas of learning. Few judgements are based on accurate data. Self-assessment is not used to improve quality or to plan future provision. Some of the service's subcontractors do not sufficiently understand the self-assessment process. The lifelong learning service is developing a more rigorous self-assessment process which will include mid-year and annual reviews. The self-assessment report for work-based learning is inclusive, rigorous and largely accurate.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Preparation for life and work

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Community learning</b>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	603	3

32. Adult and community learning programmes in preparation for life and work are subcontracted to Priestley College and Warrington Collegiate. Provision with other voluntary sector partners will start later this year. There are short courses in ICT, creative crafts, creative writing and modern foreign languages, run in schools, local libraries, community centres and specialist learning centres. Approximately 60 per cent of courses are held in the daytime. In 2005-06, there were 1,523 enrolments on courses in community learning and learning for personal and community development, and in 2006-07 there have been 603 to date. The authority does not currently record enrolments in these two learning categories separately.

33. The provision is managed by the lifelong learning manager with assistance from a full-time administrator. Five college curriculum managers and 23 tutors contribute to running the programme.

### **Community learning**

#### *Strengths*

- good attainment of skills and confidence
- good teaching and learning

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow development of first steps learning
- insufficiently thorough arrangements to recognise and record learners' progress and achievements

### **Achievement and standards**

34. Learners' attainment of skills and confidence is good. Learners respond well to the high expectations of their tutors and take pride in what they achieve. Many have little previous experience of the subject or skill area in which they study. They make good progress and rapidly achieve good standards in using tools and techniques such as pattern cutting and tailoring. Learners show a good ear for dialogue and pick up literary conventions to use in their creative writing. They read intensely personal work aloud, expressively and confidently. ICT learners become adept in using computer applications. They marvel at how quickly they lose their initial apprehension. Such gains in confidence to study are widespread and particularly significant for older learners, those with little successful or recent experience of education, and those recovering from mental illnesses. Recently bereaved learners stress the social benefits their learning sessions bring.

Attendance and retention rates are satisfactory. In 2005-06 the retention rate on adult and community learning programmes was 86 per cent.

### **The quality of provision**

35. Learning and teaching are good. Schemes of work and lesson plans include appropriate learning outcomes. Tutors choose teaching techniques and use language skilfully to match the needs of groups and individuals. They make good use of demonstration to ensure learners understand, and give learners ample time to practise new skills. Learners are industrious in the classroom and in carrying out further work outside the lesson. Tutors manage small-group and individual learning activities well. They effectively adapt their teaching to challenge the most able and support those progressing more slowly. They successfully encourage learners to reflect on their learning. Questioning techniques are used well in most classes to test how well learners understand. Learners receive frequent praise and encouragement and have a high regard for their tutors.

36. Learning resources were a key weakness at the previous inspection, but have improved. WBC and its partners have ensured that learning sessions take place in adequately resourced centres. Some centres have very good facilities such as ICT suites and interactive whiteboards. Community centres are well cared for and welcoming. However, some of the seating for computer users is poor.

37. On most courses, tutors integrate initial assessment into the first session, and there is some screening to identify learners' additional learning needs. However, initial assessment is not used consistently to help identify personal learning goals.

38. The courses match the expectations of the current learners. Classes enable them to develop skills that benefit them in everyday life, such as saving money through making their own clothes or greetings cards. However, too few of the classes attract learners with few qualifications or cater adequately for those needing foundations from which to progress to provision at level 2. Literacy and numeracy classes are rarely available in community venues. Some learners progress to more advanced courses in further education colleges.

39. Tutors routinely offer advice on progression opportunities to learners on leisure programmes. However, too little professional guidance is available in community learning centres for those wanting to enter or move on from first steps learning. Personal support for learners is appropriate and they feel safe and secure.

### **Leadership and management**

40. Tutors are appropriately qualified and some are well-established professional practitioners. Those working for colleges can attend the full range of college staff-development activities.

41. Operational management of the provision is satisfactory and few classes are cancelled. Communication between the local authority, the colleges and voluntary organisations is effective. The authority is strongly committed to celebrating its learners' successes.

42. Learners routinely receive copies of WBC's policies on equality of opportunity, and information about their rights and responsibilities in learning. Recruitment to provision is inclusive, and learners span a wide range of age and interests.

43. Community learning is a new area for WBC, and is not covered separately in WBC's self-assessment report. The area of learning sections in the report are outdated and not relevant to the current service.

44. WBC has been slow to develop first steps community learning provision. Some of the current learners are from priority groups and do not hold level 2 qualifications. The authority does not specify sufficiently its plans for first steps or the actions needed to develop the provision. Although classes are offered in areas of social deprivation, WBC's initiatives to recruit from particular disadvantaged groups are not sufficiently effective. Insufficient data is collected on learners from these groups, or whether they progress to further learning.

45. Arrangements to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement are not sufficiently thorough. WBC provides good guidance in this area to its subcontractors, and helps them provide practical training to tutors. However, some tutors have a poor understanding of how to recognise and record learners' progress achievement, and where good practice exists it is not sufficiently disseminated across the authority. The recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement is not sufficiently established to provide useful data on learners' progress and achievement.

**Business administration and law****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	21	2
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	19	2

46. Of the 40 learners in business administration and law, 21 are following programmes in administration, 15 are in customer service, three are in ICT and one is in team leading. Fourteen are apprentices and the rest are advanced apprentices. Around 90 per cent of the learners are employed by WBC and the rest by partner organisations. Learners are recruited through contact with employers or Connexions, or by personal recommendation. Provision is managed by the head of training and development, an apprenticeship manager and a centre manager. The four full-time training staff are qualified assessors and three are qualified as internal verifiers. All learners receive an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. They attend the training centre every three weeks.

*Strengths*

- significant development of personal and employment skills
- good and improving success rates
- very good on- and off-the-job training
- good support and guidance for learners
- good management of apprenticeship programme

*Weaknesses*

- some late introduction of key skills training
- insufficient jobs with apprenticeship training to meet demand

**Achievement and standards**

47. All learners develop very good skills and knowledge. Workplaces offer a positive learning environment, a supportive environment for personal development, and good assessment opportunities. Many learners are given challenging responsibilities in workplace teams. They quickly learn to deal successfully with customers' needs, in person and on the telephone. Many learners are promoted as they gain the necessary skills, and the rate of progression to higher positions is outstanding. Eighty-six per cent of the 180 learners who started on the scheme are still employed by WBC, and 70 per cent of these hold higher-grade posts.

48. Success rates are high and improving. Since 2003, success rates have remained significantly higher than national averages, rising from 80 per cent in 2003-4 to 89 per cent in 2005-06. Timely completion rates are also higher than national averages, improving from 26 per cent in 2003-04 to 46 per cent in 2005-06.

49. Learners are encouraged to complete work quickly, although some still make slow progress. Target-setting and progress monitoring are rigorous. Line supervisors are kept fully informed of learners' progress. The standard of work is good and portfolios are well presented. Learners' success is widely celebrated.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	18	94	49	72	28
		timely	12	50	30	25	16
	2004-05	overall	6	67	51	67	34
		timely	7	57	34	57	22
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	25	92	54	84	41
		timely	19	16	24	16	18
	2004-05	overall	39	87	57	85	48
		timely	37	35	33	32	28

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

### The quality of provision

50. Training is very good. The induction prepares learners well for their programme and their job role. They have access to a wide variety of additional technical training, including training in specialist computer and legal packages, and in the administration of housing benefits. All apprentices attend certificated courses in equality and diversity, manual handling, and presentation skills during their day-release training. Learning methods are varied and learners make good use of information learning technology for presentations, research and portfolio-building. Training resources are good. The training suite has attractive displays of learners' work and photographs celebrating achievement. There are ample computers, and specialist technology including digital projectors, a subject library for apprentices and easy-to-read information on key skills topics. The local authority website offers online access to learning materials designed by one of the ICT apprentices. Back-up notes are readily available for learners who miss a training day.

51. Learners receive particularly good support and guidance and have fast access to trainers, a workplace buddy, and a counselling service. Trainers and workplace supervisors work well together to support learners through assessment and progress reviews. Workplace supervisors advise on learners' training needs. Trainers give learners additional support to prepare them for key skills tests. Deaf awareness courses help improve learners' communication skills. Most learners are given time at work to develop their portfolios.

52. Assessment practice has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Learners increasingly use an e-portfolio, enabling them to import work products at source, e-mail them to the assessor and get prompt feedback. They have quick access to their portfolio at their workstation and in the training centre.

53. Key skills training has started late for some learners, and their framework completion has been delayed. A few learners have failed key skills exams repeatedly because of exam phobia or numeracy needs. Support for key skills is satisfactory once needs are identified.

54. There are too few jobs with apprenticeship training to meet demand. Eighteen young people have been accepted as suitable for apprenticeships, but are having to wait until suitable employment becomes available. WBC has been slow to deal with the decline in apprenticeship opportunities within the council. Attempts to interest local external employers in offering jobs with apprenticeship training have met with little success. The apprenticeship programme has not been sufficiently promoted in schools or colleges.

### **Leadership and management**

55. The apprenticeship programme is managed well. It is integrated well with workforce development to meet business needs. Resources are managed efficiently. There is good team-working among staff. Equality and diversity is promoted methodically to learners throughout their training. Learners have a good understanding of equality issues, although most staff have had no equality training since 2003. There is insufficient use of data to analyse the performance of different groups or to market provision to under-represented groups.

56. The focus on quality improvement is good and the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection have been remedied. There are effective systems for monitoring learners' progress, and internal verification practice meets required standards. Training and assessment are observed regularly. Feedback from learners and workplace supervisors is used to improve the programme.

57. Initial assessment and support for literacy, numeracy and language are adequate to meet the needs of the learners. Staff are appropriately qualified. Learners are referred to another specialist provider if they need intensive training.

58. The self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths found at inspection, but failed to recognise the weaknesses.

**Family learning****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning	88	2

59. The provision includes family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN), and wider family learning offered through contracts with two colleges. Family learning is managed by a local authority officer and takes place at 32 venues. Courses are targeted at learners from the most deprived wards. FLLN includes short, intensive literacy and numeracy courses, and practical programmes, such as card craft with a numeracy focus. Wider family learning courses include ICT, parenting skills and languages. Parents, carers and children attend the intensive FLLN courses together. Other courses are for adults only. Learners on the intensive FLLN programmes can take national tests in literacy and numeracy, and some short courses offer accreditation through the National Open College Network.

60. In 2005-6, 413 adult learners and 44 children attended 76 family learning courses. There were 574 adult enrolments, a significant increase from 377 enrolments and 50 courses in 2004-05. In 2005-06, 92.6 per cent of learners were women, around 2 per cent of learners were from minority ethnic groups, and 3.6 per cent were identified as having a disability. Around 60 per cent of learners were aged under 40 and 10 per cent were over 60. Currently 88 learners are attending 12 courses.

***Adult and community learning****Strengths*

- gains in learners' skills, confidence and ability to support their children's learning
- good teaching and learning
- good progression opportunities and support for learners to progress
- good collaborative working at operational level

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient opportunities for parents and children to learn together
- insufficient use of management information for planning and review

**Achievement and standards**

61. Learners attain good skills and become more able to support their children's learning. They acquire good literacy, numeracy, ICT, crafts, and parenting skills. They are better equipped to help their children with homework and more confident about visiting schools to talk to teachers. Some take on voluntary roles in schools. Learners produced book bags for a local museum, had their achievement celebrated through an adult learners' award and a gift of information technology (IT) equipment for the school. Parents at a special school have become an events and fundraising group. Families gain enhanced parenting skills and are able to help their children improve both their behaviour at school

and their reading skills. Attendance and retention rates are satisfactory.

62. WBC recently introduced opportunities for learners to take national literacy and numeracy tests but the take-up was low. Thirty-nine of the 43 learners who took the tests, achieved a pass. Sixty-three learners attained Open College Network units, mainly in literacy and numeracy. In most classes, learners make good progress, although a few are not sufficiently challenged by the tasks.

### **The quality of provision**

63. There is much good teaching and learning, with enjoyable participatory activities that motivate learners. Learners enjoyed getting wet while measuring the buoyancy of different shapes of boats. Tutors make good use of role-play to teach first aid learners how to cope with an emergency and to give cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. Learners improve their numeracy skills through practical activities such as card making. In a few lessons, the small number of learners adversely affects group dynamics and limits the range of learning opportunities.

64. There are good progression opportunities, and WBC offers good support that enables learners to benefit from them. Learners can progress from tasters and short programmes to intensive learning. Tutors regularly remind learners about the progression opportunities. Many learners move on to further courses, or to work. Success stories include learners who become receptionists in Sure Start centres, learners who train as classroom assistants, or learners who work as midday supervisors in schools.

65. The recognition and recording of learners' progress and achievement is satisfactory, although the quality of records varies. Initial assessment is carried out in a particularly supportive way for learners who have had negative experiences of education. Tutors set learning objectives, although these are largely for the whole group. Learners are aware of their progress and tutors give constructive feedback during and at the end of the course. Diagnostic assessment is not yet offered.

66. Learners have satisfactory access to college and learner support services. They identify their additional learning support needs and support is usually built into courses.

67. There are insufficient opportunities for parents and children to learn together, and learners have asked for more such courses. Apart from intensive literacy and numeracy courses there are only one-off taster sessions for parents and children to attend together. There are no non-accredited courses for parents and their children, and WBC has no initiatives to close this gap in the curriculum.

### **Leadership and management**

68. Good collaborative working and links at operational level enhance the quality of the provision. Good practice is shared at meetings between tutors from different colleges and the family learning officers. Working relationships with schools are effective. Head teachers are extremely positive about the benefits of family learning. There is effective liaison with Sure Start. Good-quality childcare is available including for small babies. A collaborative project with Warrington Wolves Rugby League Club and the library service has successfully encouraged more fathers to read to their children and led to an increase in men joining and using the library. Learners are encouraged to discuss equality matters

as part of the taught curriculum.

69. Tutors are well qualified and several have completed level 4 skills for life training. Many subject tutors have specialist skills for life qualifications. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. There is good support and training for tutors and family learning ambassadors.

70. WBC makes insufficient use of management information for planning and review, and data is not readily available. There is no accurate information to support the targeting of priority learners, or to identify new learners or learners' qualifications level at entry. The service has recently improved its monitoring of attendance. Information about learners' progression and their achievement on accredited courses is not readily available.

71. Recruitment onto some courses is low, with an average of fewer than six learners attending the courses observed. Some head teachers identified the difficulty of recruiting learners. A few learners in literacy and numeracy programmes already have level 2 qualifications.

**Community development****Grade 3**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	194	3

72. There are three established projects funded by the local Learning and Skills Council through the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities initiative, and three new contracts with local voluntary bodies. Most learners attend the three projects which started in 2003. 'Learning by Prescription' targets people with mental health issues or chronic health conditions. 'More Routes to the Past' offers local and family history, in partnership with the library service and Priestley College. The 'Wireworks' project has six drop-in computer suites in community locations attracting an average of 110 learners each week, including one in a leisure centre. The three projects attract mainly learners over 50.

73. For 2006-07, WBC has new contracts with the Warrington Volunteer Centre, Warrington Council for Voluntary Service and the Citizens Advice Bureau. These offer accredited learning opportunities in volunteering and community development skills up to level 2. About 50 learners, from a range of backgrounds and ages, attend this provision. A weekly drop-in tutored group is attended by 14 residents and ex-residents of a resettlement hostel. This group, in existence since 2001, is run by a small independent provider.

***Adult and community learning****Strengths*

- good initiatives to remove barriers to learning
- good learning resources
- particularly good collaborative working with voluntary and community organisations

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient targeting of leaders and potential leaders in the community
- narrow range of community development learning

**Achievement and standards**

74. Learners develop satisfactory skills that increase their capacity to become active citizens. They gain confidence and improve their skills in communication, working with others, valuing diversity and making choices. The standard of learners' work is generally good. Men at a resettlement hostel produce some very good creative writing and photography. Many learners progress to further education or improve their job prospects. A few are active in community groups but very few take on leadership roles in their communities. Learners on the Certificate in Community Development course work to national standards. They gain the skills and a thorough understanding of the principles of community development. Some learners train to become advisers for the Citizens Advice Bureau and use their skills to empower adults to act for themselves. Learners' attendance

and retention rates are satisfactory.

### **The quality of provision**

75. Learning opportunities are designed creatively to remove barriers to learning. Programmes are offered flexibly at times to suit learners, and take place in welcoming venues. Learners benefit from opportunities for individual tutoring. Learners are encouraged to negotiate their own learning programmes. They learn practical ICT skills that they can use in the home or to meet community needs. One learner used ICT to publicise opportunities for voluntary work with homeless people. Learners develop good skills in working together and discover the importance of deciding their own futures. Nine learners have developed sufficient IT skills to become mentors for new learners. Learners receive high levels of individual support from tutors and mentors.

76. Learners benefit from well-designed learning resources and learn in some very good venues. The Gateway Centre, where there are several voluntary organisations under one roof, encourages effective networking in a stimulating atmosphere. ICT resources are widely available to learners and access to library and museum resources is good. Staff take artefacts to sessions to stimulate learning in local venues. Learners benefit greatly from borough-wide access to a family history website, funded by the local council. The well-qualified tutors are committed to regenerating people's lives in local communities.

77. Learning sessions are generally satisfactory and some are good. The accredited courses taught by voluntary organisations are particularly well planned, and tutors use a good range of teaching and assessment methods. These courses focus well on the importance of equality and diversity in community work and on the development of literacy skills. Most tutors know how well their learners are progressing, although the progress records are of uneven quality. A few lessons are marred by inappropriate teaching methods.

78. Not enough attention is given to developing the skills of community leaders and potential leaders. WBC does not have enough people on the ground to mobilise local people who might stimulate the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods. Projects focus too much on learning programmes that cater only for adults' personal goals. Programmes taught by the colleges focus too much on progression to mainstream college courses, rather than on enabling learners to progress to leadership roles in their own communities. The certificate in community development is targeted at potential leaders. A few adults have progressed from family learning courses to supporting other learners in their role as family learning ambassadors.

79. The community development curriculum is too narrow. There is too much concentration on provision for first steps into learning, and not enough opportunity for learners to progress to higher levels. Too little attention is given to promoting active citizenship skills or building the skills of local people willing to act as community tutors. The voluntary sector has identified the need for level 3 learning opportunities. Some community activists and volunteers cannot get access to the higher-level learning they need. The providers do not understand sufficiently well the distinction between personal and community development learning programmes.

## **Leadership and management**

80. WBC's staff are particularly good at collaborative working with voluntary and community organisations. They respond well to new ideas, and provide good training to voluntary organisations to help prepare them as subcontractors. Partnerships are effective and result in prompt action to remedy problems.

81. The overall strategy for community development is not sufficiently developed. There is no reliable data that can be used to measure the effectiveness of individual projects. There is evidence of a greater sharing of practice between projects but not enough attention is paid to how initiatives will be sustained once funding ceases, and at times the projects lose their focus. The participants in projects pay appropriate attention to equality of opportunity.

