

MI ComputerSolutions

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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:

- Health, public services and care

Description of the provider

1. MI ComputerSolutions was established in 2002 as a voluntary organisation to provide educational training and support to disadvantaged community groups in the boroughs of Lewisham and Newham. In August 2007 it gained a contract with London East LSC to provide Train to Gain programmes. MI ComputSolutions became a learndirect centre in 2008. In August 2008 the organisation rebranded its training arm as MI Skills Development Centre (MISDC). MISDC's government funded provision accounts for all of its annual income.
2. MISDC provides training in health, public services and care, engineering and manufacturing technologies, information and communication technology (ICT), preparation for life and work, and business, administration and law. This inspection focused on the Train to Gain provision in health, public services and care. However, inspectors' judgements on the quality of MISDC's other Train to Gain provision and on its learndirect provision, contributed to the judgements in the main findings section of the report. At the time of the inspection there were 29 learners working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) on Train to Gain programmes. A further 213 learners were enrolled on learndirect programmes.
3. A managing director, supported by two directors, manages MISDC. Eleven staff provide training, assessment and administration for the programmes. MISDC works closely with four local partners; Rehobooks, Tower Consultants, Touch of Hope and East London skills for life. It subcontracts some of its Train to Gain provision to these partners. MISDC has centres in Stratford and Deptford. Both centres operate as learndirect centres.
4. Lewisham has a large proportion of working age residents whose qualifications are below level 2. Most its population is White British and the second largest group, some 12% of the population, is Black/Black British. Unemployment is above the national rate and youth unemployment is high by both London and national standards. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the borough of Lewisham is ranked 57th nationally, and 13th in London. Disadvantages in income, health and crime are particularly significant.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Health, public service care	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Train to Gain
learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

5. MISDC's overall effectiveness is good. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high and improving on most programmes. Teaching and learning are good and the extent to which courses meet the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. Guidance and support are satisfactory. MISDC's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

6. MISDC demonstrates good capacity to improve. Staff are highly qualified and experienced and MISDC has sound and effective arrangements for strategic planning and quality improvement. Success rates are high on most programmes and in all cases show a trend of improvement. Although some arrangements for quality improvement are new they are already effective. MISDC's action planning for improvement is particularly strong. Plans are comprehensive and managers clearly prioritise those actions that impact most strongly on the learners' experience. MISDC listens and responds to its learners and employers promptly and effectively. Collaborative work with partners is particularly strong and MISDC has forged a culture of mutual respect and openness where information, good practice and resources are shared willingly and frequently.
7. The 2007/08 self-assessment report is the first produced by the organisation and is highly accurate and detailed. It identified all of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors.

Key strengths

- High success rates on most programmes
- Good development of learners' knowledge and skills
- Particularly effective training
- Excellent approach to meeting the skills needs of learners and employers
- Particularly strong, supportive and collaborative partnerships
- Highly qualified and experienced staff
- Very effective arrangements for quality improvement and action planning
- Highly effective strategies to attract learners into training and widen participation

Key areas for improvement

- Ineffective action to raise timely success rates on some Train to Gain programmes
- Inadequate accommodation for some learners

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Train to Gain
learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

8. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high on most programmes. On learndirect programmes success rates are above the national average at 82%, and 6% above the average for London. In 2008/09 overall success rates on Train to Gain programmes are high, having improved from 85% in 2007/08 to 89% in 2008/09. Overall success rates are highest on skills for life programmes where the success rate was 100% in 2008/09. Success rates are good in health, public services and care and on business, administration and law programmes. About one third of health and social care learners achieve qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy alongside their NVQ. On engineering and manufacturing technologies and ICT programmes, where the number of learners is low, success rates are satisfactory.
9. In 2007/08 many learners made slow progress on Train to Gain programmes. Only about a third of those who achieved their NVQ did so in the planned time. In 2008/09 learners made much better progress, and currently about half of learners achieve on or before their target date.
10. MISDC monitors the success rates of learners by age, ethnicity, gender and disability. The data show that there is no significant difference in success rates for different groups of learners.
11. Learners develop good skills and knowledge while on the programmes. The standard of learners' work is good, and generally above that which would be expected for the level of qualification they are working towards. Attendance and punctuality are good and staff encourage learners to take pride in their appearance and present themselves well.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

Train to Gain
learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

12. Teaching and learning are good. On learndirect programmes tutors record the help they give to learners meticulously, the learners understand what help they have been given and are clear on what they have to do next. Trainers offer particularly good support to learners at the centres. On Train to Gain programmes in accounts, the tutor understands the context in which the learner is working,

and helps make the training and qualification relevant to their individual work situations. In health, public services and care, training and assessment are particularly effective. Training sessions are planned well, taking account of each learners' prior experience, literacy, numeracy and language needs, and the needs of the workplace. Assessors are skilled in planning assessments that provide good evidence of the learner's competence across a range of units. Support provided by trainer/assessors is highly flexible, with training provided at a variety of times and frequencies to meet learners' and employers' needs, and minimise disruption. Literacy and numeracy support is good and provided through the learndirect provision offered in a variety of locations across the area.

13. The extent to which courses meet the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. MISDC has an excellent approach to meeting the learners' and employers' needs. It plans its courses to offer learners the best prospects of gaining employment or promotion. Programmes are planned carefully to address the skills for life needs of learners, at the same time as providing them with training and assessment relevant to their career aspirations. MISDC opened the Deptford Centre specifically to provide a training centre in an area easily accessible for learners living in areas of high deprivation. learndirect programmes include courses on employability and personal development. This provides a more rounded programme which meets the wider skills needs of learners. Assessors on Train to Gain programmes are particularly careful to plan training and assessment at times which best suit both the learners and the employers. MISDC has made good use of the recent extension of Train to Gain to charities and not for profit organisations. It has used its links with local voluntary co-ordinating agencies in north and south London to provide accounts training to many small charities, which meets the charities' needs particularly well.
14. Guidance and support are satisfactory. One member of staff has a qualification in providing initial advice and guidance at level 3. Learners receive both advice from subject specialists and guidance sessions to address their wider needs. The Stratford Centre has a crèche, childcare is provided while learners attend guidance interviews or complete initial assessments. However, the Deptford site is small and there is no private room for interviews or guidance sessions. MISDC focuses strongly on the welfare of its learners and uses its links with external agencies very well to refer learners for specialist advice and support.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Train to Gain
learndirect

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

15. Leadership and management are good. MISDC has forged particularly strong, supportive and collaborative partnerships. It has effective arrangements to monitor the quality of its subcontracted provision and provides an excellent level

of support to its partners. Between them partners actively identify and share good practice, often pooling resources to the benefit of the learners. MISDC sets high standards for its subcontractors and monitors their work closely. Managers share data and information freely with partners. All subcontractors have a clear understanding of how their performance compares with that of other partners. A good range of useful meetings provides excellent opportunities to update partners, offer support and monitor progress with planned actions for improvement. MISDC is continuing to develop its partnerships effectively to extend its geographic coverage and increase opportunities for its learners.

16. MISDC staff are highly experienced and skilled. Directors and senior managers have a wealth of relevant experience in strategic planning and quality improvement. MISDC places a strong emphasis on staff development. The board of directors receive reports on finance, performance and quality which they use well to make timely decisions about expansion, capacity and future requirements for resources. MISDC is growing in a planned and well managed way. Senior managers identify opportunities for growth and are realistic but ambitious for the organisation. For example, MISDC planned its move to new facilities in Stratford partly to enable expansion, but also to site MISDC near an area of rapid development due to the 2012 Olympic Games.
17. Staff in teaching and training roles hold, or are working towards, appropriate teaching qualifications. MISDC 's arrangements for staff development are good and well established. Each year staff choose from a range of good quality external training courses. New partners undergo a three-day training course provided by MISDC followed by regular updates which include individual training for their staff.
18. MISDC has particularly effective arrangements for quality improvement and action planning. The 2007/08 self-assessment report is MISDC's first self-assessment and it is highly accurate and perceptive. The report's findings agree closely with those of inspectors. Staff and learners participate in the self-assessment process and MISDC supports its partners to contribute through their own self-assessment. For many of its partners this process is new and MISDC provides very good support to help them arrive at meaningful, accurate and useful judgements about the quality of their provision. MISDC has a good framework for quality improvement and although many of its policies and procedures are new they are already proving effective. For example the new procedures and guidance for the observations of teaching and learning are helping observers to focus clearly on the learning that is taking place rather than just the teaching practices. Senior managers focus strongly on raising success rates and improving the quality of provision. MISDC collects feedback from learners and employer and acts promptly and effectively to remedy any concerns. Learners have a high level of satisfaction with their programmes and with the responsiveness of staff.
19. MISDC's action planning is very good. Action plans are comprehensive and actions are prioritised clearly. Quality improvement action planning focuses strongly on the experience of the learner and on raising success rates. Senior

managers monitor progress with the implementation of the plan thoroughly and regularly. Although some aspects of quality improvement are new, for example joint observations of partners' teaching and learning sessions, clear plans are in place to implement the remaining parts of the quality framework in a timely way.

20. MISDC's action to raise Train to Gain timely success rates has been ineffective on some programmes. Timely success rates have improved significantly on business, administration and law programmes. Learners on skills for life programmes make particularly good progress. However, on programmes in care at level 2, although timely success rates have improved they remain low. In some cases learners are set unrealistic targets for completion which do not allow any delays in progress due to vacations or sickness. In other cases subcontractors' arrangements for monitoring and use of data is not yet sufficiently robust. MISDC has recognised this and is currently planning further action to address these areas of poorer performance.
21. Accommodation is cramped for some learners. The learndirect training rooms are small and lack privacy when learners are receiving advice and guidance. On Train to Gain programmes training sessions sometimes take place in small rooms. MISDC has recognised this and plans to extend its training facilities at the Stratford Centre to provide more spacious teaching accommodation.
22. Equality of opportunity is good. An appropriate range of policies and procedures set out MISDC's arrangements for, and commitment to, equality. MISDC has highly effective strategies for attracting learners onto its training programmes. MISDC has planned strategically to target those learners who face multiple barriers to entering training and education. With an initial focus on lone parents, MISDC now works hard to reach learners from diverse local communities, whose needs are often complex. Senior managers have developed strong partnerships with community groups and worked hard to break down barriers. The directors recruit staff specifically for their diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnic heritage, as well as their other job-related skills. Many staff speak several languages and use this ability well when supporting and training learners. Staff act as excellent role models, often using their own experiences to encourage and motivate more anxious or unconfident learners. MISDC takes care to meet specific cultural needs, such as providing a female Somali trainer to work with a group of Somali women. Staff and managers have a strong ethos of sharing resources and skills and use this effectively to build mutually beneficial partnerships with local housing associations, lifelong learning groups and local jobcentres. These partnerships allow the provision of training in the community, avoiding the need for learners to travel, arrange childcare, or leave their local community. In many cases MISDC provides training not only for community residents but also for the leaders and volunteers of community groups, thus building their capacity. Senior managers have targeted those community groups with links to employers, and to learners who have been reluctant to take up Train to Gain opportunities. In this way it has significantly increased the number of men on care Train to Gain programmes, for instance by working with residential care homes in a local

Indonesian community. Around 70% of MISDC's learners have a minority ethnic heritage.

23. Managers collect and thoroughly analyse data on the recruitment and performance of different groups of learners. They share the results with staff and display them prominently in the training centres. Managers scrutinise any differences in performance and plan action to address any concerns.
24. Learners receive suitable information on equality and diversity, including the complaints procedure, during induction. Assessors on Train to Gain programmes develop and check learners' understanding appropriately during reviews and assessments. MISDC monitors the equal opportunity practices of all of its subcontractors. Learners' evaluations of their induction indicated that they did not always understand the wider aspects of diversity, so induction now includes a pictorial test to allow assessors to evaluate their learning.
25. MISDC meets current government requirements for safeguarding. An appropriate policy and procedure sets out MISDC's arrangements for safeguarding. All staff have had appropriate vetting checks. Staff have either received training or have training planned as part of their personal development for the current year. MISDC's service level agreements with its subcontractors include a requirement for appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures.

What learners like:

- Helpful tutors who understand the learners and the employers' businesses
- Being able to access the tutor and assessors easily - 'they are really quick to return calls and emails'
- Flexible provision
- Gaining new knowledge, skills, and a career path
- Having no pressure and enough time to learn
- Being able to apply the learning in the workplace
- Opportunities for progression
- Exceeding their expectations
- Cultural diversity and respect in the centre

What learners think could improve:

- Number of books to be available for reference
- Size of the training centre – 'the training centre would be better if it was bigger'

Sector subject areas

Health, care and public services

Good: Grade 2

Context

26. MISDC offers NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4 in social care, early years and playwork. At the time of the inspection 19 learners were working towards an NVQ in social care; 15 at level 2 and four at level 3. One learner was working towards an NVQ at level 4 in early years. Learners are employed, and on average about one third complete a literacy and/or numeracy qualification alongside their NVQ. MISDC provides training, either in the workplace or at one of its centres, through workshops or individual sessions. Assessors carry out progress reviews every 10 to 12 weeks.

Strengths

- High success rates
- Good development of work related knowledge and skills
- Particularly effective training and assessment
- Good arrangements for monitoring of subcontractors

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently focused targets set for learners at review
- Insufficient access to resources to support learning

Achievement and standards

27. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high at 87% overall in 2008/09. Success rates on health and social care programmes rose from 80% in 2007/08 to 87% in 2008/09. In 2008/09 childcare learning and development success rates were particularly good at 94%, with a timely rate of 41%. About one third of learners achieve qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy alongside their NVQ.

28. Learners demonstrate good development of work related skills and knowledge. They produce a good standard of work, with many level 2 learners working at a level beyond what is expected. Learners are able to articulate their understanding of care principles and give good examples of how theory and practice is linked. They demonstrate the ability to reflect on practice and identify actions they can take to improve the care of clients/children.

29. In 2008/09 timely success rates improved significantly to 39%. Although still low this figure reflects unrealistic target dates for learners rather than genuine slow progress.

Quality of provision

30. Teaching and learning are good with particularly effective training and assessment. Assessors manage the training and assessment very well. They plan training and assessment in negotiation with the learners and their employers, taking account of each learner's prior experience, literacy, numeracy and language needs and the needs of the workplace. Support provided by trainer/assessors is highly flexible, with training delivered at a variety of times and frequencies to meet learners' and employers' needs and minimise disruption to clients and/or the children who use the services. Trainers plan their sessions well and focus on the knowledge required by the NVQ. Learners participate in good interactive group work to explore how the theory they are learning underpins practice. They are actively encouraged to work collaboratively, solve problems and share good practice from different settings effectively. Assessors are skilled in planning assessments that provide good evidence of the learners' competence across a range of units. Assessors make good use of a broad range of diverse evidence such as expert witness statements, reflective accounts, questions and answers and recorded discussions to confirm learners' understanding. Learners develop a good understanding of how the evidence they collect can be matched to the NVQ standards. Literacy and numeracy support is very good and provided very effectively through the learndirect provision MISDC offers at a variety of locations across the area.
31. Assessors link targets clearly to NVQ units during reviews. However, the targets themselves are broad and generic. Assessors do not agree sufficient detailed and focused targets relating to specific and time bound activities. In some cases learners are unclear about what they have to do to complete the qualification.
32. The extent to which courses meet the needs and interests of learners is good. MISDC offers training that provides very good progression opportunities and is provided flexibly to best meet learners' and employers' needs. The Train to Gain programmes provide good opportunities for learners to improve their literacy and numeracy skills through learndirect courses. MISDC provides Train to Gain programmes to both employers and learners who would not otherwise be able to access training. Strong links with a wide range of community groups ensure that MISDC reaches learners and employers who face multiple barriers to entering training.
33. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessment, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners complete a literacy, numeracy and vocational skills assessment. The findings from this influence the level of NVQ and the choice of optional units, and assessors consider the findings when planning training and assessment. Learners receive advice on opportunities available on completion of the NVQ, such as progression to higher level NVQs or nurse training. The induction process is satisfactory and adequately prepares learners for the NVQ programmes.

Leadership and management

34. Leadership and management are good, with good arrangements for the monitoring of subcontractors. MISDC has developed and implemented a very comprehensive and detailed application process to vet potential subcontractors. Managers monitor subcontractors regularly through well planned monthly review visits. These meetings address both contract compliance and quality processes. MISDC produces detailed reports with identified actions which are followed up on or before the next meeting. MISDC uses the findings from these monitoring meetings effectively to compile a self-assessment report that is evaluative and accurate. Senior managers share development plans with subcontractors and discuss the improvements needed at regular partnership meetings. Subcontractors benefit from some very good collaborative working arrangements. For example, one subcontractor has been supported in achieving direct claims status from the awarding body.
35. Staff have a good range of vocational qualifications and experience. Many hold higher level professional qualifications and degrees. MISDC provides very good support and induction for new members of staff.
36. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. Most learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity issues as they relate to care practice, with many having a good understanding. Staff have appropriate vetting checks and MISDC are providing support for subcontractors to develop safeguarding procedures.
37. Learners and assessors have insufficient access to resources to support learning. Training centres are small and cramped for the numbers of learners attending the workshops. MISDC has developed an interactive website for care learners. Currently this is only available to a small number of learners, although plans are in place to share the resource with the subcontractors. Some learners working at level 2 are reluctant to use the internet and a small number do not have access at home or in the workplace. However, trainers do provide pre-prepared handouts and some employers have purchased NVQ text books.

Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the MISDC 2007 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2007/08	overall	82	85
		timely	93	30
	2008/09	overall	372	89
		timely	439	51

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

- * 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
- ** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider before inspection

Outcomes on learndirect programmes 2008 to 2009

Learning type	Year	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	2008/09*	711	537	82	3
ICT	2008/09*	108	63	82	5
skills for life	2008/09*	571	450	81	3

Note: 2008/09* data is at Q4 of the Ufl contract year

Equality and diversity

2008/09	All Ethnic Groups	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese/ Other	Mixed	Not Known	White	White other
Enrolments	711	132	374	38	12	0	31	124
Completion rate (%)	97	96	96	100	100	0	91	100
Achievement rate (%)	76	78	76	74	50	0	67	78
Success rate (%)	81	80	82	82	50	0	67	90
Withdrawal rate (%)	3	5	4	0	0	0	9	0