

# Choices 4 All

## Reinspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 51152

**Name of lead inspector:** Karen Adriaanse HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 11 January 2012

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## Reinspection Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

### Context and focus of visit

Choices 4 All (Choices) is a private limited company and registered charity operating mainly in the London Boroughs of Brent and Harrow. It provides Foundation Learning programmes for young people and adults with moderate to severe learning difficulties to improve their independence and help them gain employment.

Choices currently has 30 learners on government-funded Foundation Learning programmes. Fourteen learners are funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and sixteen learners are funded by their local borough council.

At the last inspection, Choices was judged to be inadequate overall, with inadequate capacity to improve. Outcomes, leadership and management and safeguarding were inadequate; quality of provision and equality and diversity were judged to be satisfactory. The subject area, preparation for life and work, was inadequate. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

**What progress has been made in ensuring that quality improvement and self-assessment monitor and evaluate the impact of all aspects of learners' programmes to bring about improvements?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, Choices' processes for quality improvement and self-assessment did not draw on a thorough evaluation of the provision. The board of trustees provided insufficient scrutiny of the provision to guide managers or identify where additional support would be beneficial. Senior staff have now developed a well-structured quality improvement programme that focuses clearly on each aspect of learners' programmes. The adoption of a whole-organisation approach has moved the culture of the organisation to one of inclusivity and transparency; a major step forward from the previous management structure. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and the resulting report also takes good account of the views of learners and parents and carers. The quality improvement plan has already led to improvements in the provision, although staff need more time to implement the full quality improvement programme.

Board members have successfully taken on responsibilities for key aspects of the provision, such as safeguarding and the use of data. They previously used target setting for little more than checking contract compliance and now they routinely monitor retention and achievement and take a wider interest in all aspects of learners' programmes. The board members and managers recognise the need to develop target setting further for quality improvement.

## Outcomes for learners

### **What progress has been made in improving learners' achievement of qualifications?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

At the last inspection, learners had not improved their literacy and numeracy skills sufficiently. Progress towards qualifications that recognised learners' skills was slow and qualification success rates were very low. Achievement of qualifications has increased and is currently satisfactory overall. Between December 2010 and December 2011, 26 of the 33 learners achieved at least one qualification and 5 of the 7 leavers progressed to further training or employment. Achievement was good in information and communication technology (ICT), satisfactory in numeracy, but low in literacy. Choices is currently developing procedures to accredit learners' development of employability skills and to record learners' development of personal and social skills.

## Quality of provision

### **What progress has been made in developing and implementing procedures to support learners' development, review their progress and improve their overall outcomes?**

**Insufficient  
progress**

Learners' reviews were unsatisfactory at the last inspection as they did not provide sufficient information on learners' progress. Individual learning plans were weak and targets set for learners were too general. Staff are working to improve the procedures for planning learning and involve learners in selecting their learning activities. Learners enjoy using the recently introduced individual pictorial timetables that also identify their levels of learning in functional skills and the qualifications they are working towards.

Choices is trying out different models of individual learning plans. In the current version, individual learning targets are not linked sufficiently to practical contexts that are meaningful to learners or to other aspects of their overall programme. Progress reviews are currently a regular six-weekly feature of the provision and staff are working towards four-weekly reviews. Staff are beginning to use team meetings to share agreed targets for each learner and review their progress. Choices has also recently introduced a personal tutor scheme to provide each learner with a personalised overview of their progress. This is early in development as two tutors have started within the last six weeks. It is therefore too soon to assess the impact of these measures, in terms of improving outcomes for learners, as they are at such an early stage of development.

**What progress has been made in ensuring that all teaching and learning sessions are well planned, motivate learners and meet their needs?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

The last inspection report stated that, although the vocational sessions were mostly well planned, vibrant and imaginative, some sessions were insufficiently planned and were lacklustre. Tutors did not always share best practice sufficiently and no tutor was qualified in teaching functional mathematics. Session planning has improved and the learning sessions observed on this inspection included a good range of practical learning activities. Learners enjoyed using some very good ICT equipment.

Choices has reintroduced its system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The records of recent observations provide useful feedback on the teaching. However, the process does not focus sufficiently on evaluating the impact of the teaching on developing learners' skills and supporting learners in achieving group and individual goals. Staff are beginning to use tutor meetings to share good practice and the managers are currently arranging training for tutors on peer observations. A numeracy tutor with good experience in teaching mathematics to learners with learning disabilities started in September 2011. The number of learners with very diverse abilities and support needs currently attending the numeracy class is too high.

**What progress has been made in widening learners' experience and increasing their employment opportunities through work placements?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

Although work placements at the last inspection were prestigious and well resourced, too few learners had the opportunity to attend them. A new job broker took up the post a week before this reinspection monitoring visit. Seven learners currently have work placements; an increase from four at the last inspection. Learners make good progress in developing their confidence and job-related skills at work. Employers provide good support to ensure that learners have roles that are suitably challenging and motivating. The job broker is building on the work of the previous post holder well and has good plans to support learners in work and to develop the employability skills of all learners so that more of them are ready for a work placement. Links with new employers are developing well so that learners should have a wider choice of vocational options.

**Leadership and management**

**What progress has been made in safeguarding all learners?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

Since the last inspection, safeguarding has been a key area of development and a member of the board with significant experience of safeguarding has taken responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding continues to be a high priority.

Choices has now fully addressed all of the recommendations made by the Harrow Adult Safeguarding Team to the satisfaction of the local authority's team. Board members and staff have received training in safeguarding, and care plans are now in place for those learners who require them. Staff have implemented thorough and rigorous systems to ensure that incidents are recorded, reviewed and monitored on an individual basis. However, they still need to ensure that they follow up any actions resulting from incident investigations to identify trends and take relevant preventative measures.

Staff have developed a well-designed and easy-to-read introduction to safeguarding for learners and an early evaluation indicates that learners feel safe and have a clear understanding of the key issues. Choices does not always ensure that employers and learners attending work placements are sufficiently informed of safeguarding issues at work.

**What progress has been made in developing and using management information to monitor the impact of the provision?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

At the last inspection, management information systems were incomplete and did not provide managers with sufficient information to help monitor or make decisions about provision. Choices has worked with an external provider to develop data collection and now submits appropriate information to the funding bodies according to contractual requirements. Choices established budget management as a priority after the last inspection and sound systems are now in place under the direction of a member of the board who has responsibility for budget and performance management.

Performance data are now much more detailed, and managers and staff use the information well to determine learners' progress and achievement of qualifications. One recent response has been to instigate changes to the qualifications offered to ensure that each learner works towards the most appropriate ones according to their abilities and overall aims. However, the data they use to identify achievement are not broken down sufficiently according to different groups of learners and different funding streams.

**What progress has been made in ensuring that all staff are working towards appropriate qualifications and that Choices has sufficient assessors, internal verifiers and numeracy specialists?**

**Reasonable  
progress**

Choices has recently increased the number of assessors and internal verifiers and now has sufficient trained staff to meet current requirements and ensure that assessments and verification activities are carried out promptly. Two members of staff completed a relevant teaching qualification in 2011. Managers have improved the staff recruitment process and interviews for teaching posts now have an element

of micro-teaching as part of the process. Roles and responsibilities are now clear and managers support staff well in their roles.

The organisation is implementing a detailed programme of continuous professional development for each member of staff which aims to ensure that they continue to develop their expertise in supporting learners with a wide range of complex needs. Staff have not recently had appraisals or performance reviews and Choices recognises the need to reintroduce these processes.

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