

West Yorkshire Learning Providers Ltd

Focused monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Jean Holden-Smith HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider
Bradford Chamber Business Park
New Lane

Address: Laisterdyke
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD4 8BX

Telephone number: 01274 665454

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

West Yorkshire Learning Providers Ltd (WYLP) is a not-for-profit making membership-based organisation, formed in 2003, to be the single network organisation for learning providers across West Yorkshire. WYLP is also a training consortium under a prime contract with the Skills Funding Agency for the provision of Train to Gain.

WYLP has a board of directors elected from the membership, together with non-executive representation from regional stakeholders. Since the previous inspection, WYLP has seen significant changes both internally and within its consortium partners. The current staff team consists of an executive director, a funding and contracts manager, a part-time finance officer, a network co-ordinator and a contract administrator. WYLP now offers fewer training programmes than it did at the time of the previous inspection and the number of partners has reduced by over 45% to 16.

WYLP was inspected in October 2008. The overall effectiveness of the provision was satisfactory. Achievement and standards, and the quality of provision were graded as good. Capacity to improve, leadership and management, and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. Engineering and manufacturing technologies, and health, public services and care were both graded good. Business, administration and law was satisfactory.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit, which include the two mandatory themes of outcomes for learners, and self-assessment and improvement planning.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has WYLP made in integrating the quality improvement arrangements into all aspects of the provision? **Reasonable progress**

WYLP has made reasonable progress in developing and integrating its quality improvement arrangements. Following the inspection in 2008, WYLP reviewed its self-assessment and quality improvement arrangements. The 2009 self-assessment report (SAR) produced after the inspection remains inclusive, but no longer focuses on retention and achievement, rather on success rates as a measure of performance. The SAR now gives clear key strengths and areas for improvement but it is still too descriptive. The report's text does not always support the grades awarded. The quality improvement plan produced immediately after the SAR is now an integral part of the quality improvement cycle. However, some of the actions and outcomes are insufficiently detailed. WYLP has developed and improved the quality audit process and now includes the monitoring of providers and quality assurance arrangements,

but WYLP has been slow in implementing a procedure for observing training. At the previous inspection, WYLP did not sufficiently assure the quality of inductions even though learners had raised issues about induction on their evaluations. WYLP now acts more quickly on the points raised in learners' evaluations.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has the provider made in improving success rates, particularly completion within planned timescales? **Insufficient progress**

WYLP's completions within planned timescales were judged low at the last inspection and remain low. In 2008/09, the rate was 8% below the national rate. Level 2 completions within planned timescales declined between 2006 and 2009. The rate has improved in 2009/10, but remains 5% below the national rate. The rates for level 3 provision improved between 2006 and 2009, but current data for 2009/10 do not show that this improvement has been maintained. The overall success rate for the last three years has been maintained at around 85% and is currently similar to national rates.

Skills for Life completions within planned time scales have remained consistently low for the last three years and in 2008/09 they were 21% below the national average. Current data for 2009/10 indicate that these rates have improved by 11%, but they remain below the national rate.

What strategies are in place to improve the monitoring of learners' progress and improve timely outcomes? **Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, WYLP has implemented rigorous processes to monitor learners' progress. Quarterly one-to-one reviews analyse all learners' progress against their individual learning targets. Each month consortium providers report on the progress of learners approaching the last month of training and those beyond their planned end date. Effective interventions and improvement plans are in place for those providers not meeting WYLP's minimum success rate. At the last inspection, 26% of learners were beyond their planned training end date. WYLP has reduced this to 4%. Current data show that the number of learners who achieve within their expected training time has significantly improved. Consortium providers cite WYLP's improved monitoring as a key factor in these improved success rates. They value the updates on performance and the well-planned and frequent audits. For new providers, WYLP provides useful guidance on setting realistic individual training targets and predicted end dates. Although detailed audits are in place, the minimum level of performance set by WYLP lacks challenge. The target was not incrementally based on the preceding year's national average but this has now been changed for 2010/11.

Leadership and Management

What progress has WYLP made in the use of management information to plan, evaluate and monitor the provision?

Reasonable progress

WYLP has made reasonable progress in improving the use of management information systems to evaluate performance. This was identified as a key area for improvement at the previous inspection. WYLP now uses a national computerised recording system and has staff with expertise in using this system. WYLP is now able to plan, evaluate and monitor the provision more effectively. Useful reports are produced for board meetings. Operations staff are able to gain access to monthly performance reports by individual providers and are able to monitor and compare the performance of individual providers, different sector subject areas and qualifications. Success data are reported as leagues tables, allowing providers to judge themselves against other consortium members as well as regional and national averages. WYLP uses contract monitoring reports every three months at the contract review meetings to check the progress of individual learners and quickly identifies providers who are underperforming.

Has WYLP continued to maintain the particularly good collaborative working to access funding and support?

Significant progress

A key strength at the previous inspection was the particularly good collaborative working to access funding and support. The consortium members continue to benefit from good responsive support from the staff at WYLP, even though there are fewer staff. Providers within the consortium value the additional knowledge, insight and information that the consortium provides. They value the particularly good partnership working, networking and integrity of the consortium. Meetings of the consortium are well attended. The reports provided from regional and national meetings provide a basis for good and beneficial discussions at consortium meetings. The annual general meeting included guest speakers able to give current information on the possible changes to programmes and funding. The executive director is involved with funding agencies at regional and national level. Strategies are in place to respond to any changes in government policy. The new management information system gives providers information on their performance and this is shared across the consortium in the newsletter and on the web page. Providers spoke of WYLP's impartiality as a major benefit of the consortium. WYLP has been successful in several project funding applications that have benefited partners, particularly in the development of Skills for Life strategies.

What progress has WYLP made in the implementation of safeguarding arrangements and further development of equality and diversity?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, WYLP has satisfactorily implemented its own safeguarding policy. WYLP has a designated member of staff who has completed appropriate

external training. WYLP's policy focuses effectively on vulnerable adult learners and provides appropriate guidance on the minimum safeguarding requirements expected from consortium providers. All providers have designated safeguarding staff and contact links with local safeguarding boards. WYLP's quarterly review includes the audit of providers' central registers, staff qualifications, staff training, policy and practice. Action plans are in place for providers when changes occur or update training is required. Although risk assessments adequately consider the safety of learners, there is insufficient emphasis on risks incurred by the most vulnerable learners. A newly recruited consortium provider has used WYLP's policy and guidance to extend its existing safeguarding policy to reflect the needs of adult learners.

WYLP is now able to monitor the performance of different groups of learners but has not yet implemented strategies to ensure that any differences are minimised. WYLP has applied for funding to set up an equality and diversity network that will share good practice across the region. Learners' induction now includes more comprehensive equality and diversity information, particularly in relation to the workplace.

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
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