

Choices 4 All

Reinspection report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Established in 1997, Choices 4 All (Choices) is a specialist work-based learning provider funded and supported by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and local authorities. EFA learners have a range of learning disabilities many with a range of other disabilities and are aged between 16 and 25 years; the majority are more than 19 years old. Learners can join the programme at any time of the year. There are 30 learners currently participating, 14 funded by the EFA and 16 by local authorities.
2. The focus of the training is on independent living skills, employability skills and training for life. Choices provides Foundation Learning, including functional skills, life and living skills and an employability award. Programmes are tailored to meet individual needs and include English for speakers of other languages and work experience with local employers or in a realistic workplace setting provided by a social enterprise, Moveable Feasts, based in Choices.
3. Choices is based in small, secure premises close to the centre of Harrow with good access to town centre facilities and the transport network. Harrow is an ethnically diverse borough in London with a population comprising 47% White British and 53% Black and minority ethnic groups. Of Choices learners, 60% are from minority ethnic groups and 40% are White British.
4. At the inspection in June 2011, Choices was awarded a grade 4, inadequate for overall effectiveness. In the subsequent monitoring visit, in January 2012, inspectors identified eight themes and found that reasonable progress was made in seven with insufficient progress in one area.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners:	
Foundation Learning	25 full-time learners 8 part-time learners
Entry to Employment	8 full-time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	
Preparation for life and work	3

Overall effectiveness

5. A satisfactory proportion of learners progress to further education, training and sustained employment. Learners improve their employability skills, gaining good social skills and increased confidence. Most lessons are fun yet challenging for learners, but targets in individual learning plans are not sufficiently specific and measurable or informed by learners themselves to help them make progress at a faster pace. Arrangements to meet the needs and interests of learners are satisfactory. The number of work placements has trebled since the last inspection, improving the range of vocational options for learners. Care, guidance and support for learners are good, enhanced by the personal and pastoral tutors and supportive volunteers. Leadership and management are satisfactory; the board of trustees and senior managers provide better leadership than at the last inspection. Safeguarding arrangements are good, reinforced with learners and closely monitored. Equality and diversity are promoted well and the organisation has created a very inclusive environment. Quality improvement procedures have developed further since the last inspection and are well understood by staff. Self-assessment has also improved and is now more critical and informed by all stakeholders, including learners, although data to monitor attainment and progression are not always readily available.

Main findings

- Choices has improved qualification completions and progression into employment, further education and training to a satisfactory position. Of the eighteen learners on programme, four have left in 2011/12 but only three have progressed into positive destinations. Of all learners on programme this year nearly three quarters have achieved at least one qualification and half have achieved more than one.
- The development of employability skills is good. Learners understand the importance of good timekeeping, suitable personal appearance and appropriate communication at work, and ably demonstrate this.
- The promotion of health and well-being is good and learners engage in a range of activities to help them keep fit and eat healthily. Health professionals give useful talks and learners gain an increased understanding of wider health issues.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well planned and well timed to include varied tasks that engage learners, who make good progress against lesson outcomes. However, assessments for learning and learners individual goals do not always link well to lessons.
- Although improved, many targets remain insufficiently specific and learners have little involvement in their creation. Too many targets within individual learning plans are too broad and progress made against them is difficult to measure accurately.
- Effective partnerships, including stronger links with parents and carers, enable improved access and support for learners. The development of a parents' forum has been helpful in improving communication.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners value the help provided by the personal and pastoral tutors and volunteers.
- Management oversight has improved. The board of trustees provides clear strategic direction offering specialist knowledge and skills to support organisational development.
- Senior managers have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. However, data to measure attainment and progression are difficult to retrieve. This hinders their frequent and regular use as an effective management information tool.
- Arrangements to safeguard learners are now good. Incident recording that contributes to an overall monitoring report is particularly effective in helping identify a pattern of events that might require intervention.
- Tutors incorporate the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning particularly well. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities and are respectful of each other. Staff and learners have created an inclusive, tolerant and welcoming environment.

- The self-assessment process has been further developed with a stronger focus on quality improvement. While this has enabled managers to identify a number of areas for improvement, it is too soon to see the full impact of actions taken.

What does Choices 4 All need to do to improve further?

- Improve progression into work by securing further work placements linked to learners' vocational skills development, thereby enabling more learners to gain the skills and qualifications they need to achieve independence and successfully enter the world of work.
- Ensure all targets set within individual learning plans involve learners and are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound to meet individual needs in lessons and increase the pace of progress.
- Accurately identify learners' attainment and success in progressing to positive destinations and improve the access to, and production of, data to enable their better use as a management tool.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- their lessons, which are interesting and fun
- the job club that helps them to enter the world of work
- attending work placements and getting qualifications
- cooking because they learn useful skills and enjoy the activities
- helping others and taking on responsibilities
- the support from all the staff who help them learn new skills and support them in work placements
- the extra activities they plan, such as visiting the park and going on trips and visits to interesting places.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the range of courses and the chance to gain more qualifications.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the good communication with Choices, particularly with the Choices' job broker who visits regularly and keeps in touch by email and telephone
- the good links between the training provided on placement and the work learners are doing at Choices.

What employers would like to see improved:

- nothing significant reported.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

6. Choices has a satisfactory record of improvement and had made reasonable progress against seven of eight reinspection monitoring visit themes in January 2012. It has clear and useful targets for senior staff to improve outcomes for all learners and the board of trustees now more ably directs the organisation. Trustees now offer clear strategic direction, prioritising areas for development to improve outcomes for learners. The processes for self-assessment and quality improvement involve all staff and learners and are much improved. New staff, recruited to take on specific roles and responsibilities, include a job broker and pastoral tutor who takes a lead in safeguarding. They have begun to have an impact on outcomes for learners, improved safeguarding arrangements, the development of employability skills and an increase in the number of work placements. All staff are involved in improvement activities and widely consulted about management decisions. A more focused board of trustees, with specific roles and areas of expertise, helps ensure staff are challenged and held to account. The board has high expectations of the accuracy of management information and the effectiveness of reporting arrangements, but data are not always readily accessible, reducing its use as an effective management tool.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

7. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Procedures to accredit learners' employability skills are now in place. Progress towards the achievement of qualifications has improved across all programmes since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory, with 72% of learners having gained at least one qualification during 2011/12. Of the very small number of learners completing their programme during the current year, three have progressed to further training or employment.
8. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Challenging and stimulating teaching in catering, art and employability skills training helps learners produce work of a high standard and attainment is good.
9. The development and reinforcement of numeracy and literacy skills in home management, art and information and communication technology sessions are good.
10. Learners develop good employability skills. They are aware of the importance of good time keeping, suitable personal presentation, appropriate communication skills and the development of literacy and numeracy in preparing for work.
11. Learners feel safe and demonstrate good and positive attitudes within the centre, behaving well and treating each other with care and respect. Within the local community, learners are involved in a wide range of activities such as

fundraising for local and international charities as well as baking for a local hospice.

12. Learners' understanding of health and well-being is good. Since the previous inspection, Choices has made effective links with a range of specialist agencies to provide useful opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of sexual health, relationships and the importance of drug and drink awareness. Learners make good progress in the development of personal and social skills.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

13. Teaching and learning sessions are mostly good or better in information and communication technology, catering, art and employability. Tutors use lesson plans and schemes of work in these sessions very effectively to provide lively, enjoyable and practical activities which are well planned and relevant to learners' diverse needs and interests. Resources are mostly of a high standard and tutors use them well to maintain learners' involvement and help learners make progress. However, in weaker lessons teaching is insufficiently well planned to support the development of learners' skills to achieve their individual goals. Outcomes and group goals for sessions are not always clearly linked to the development of skills and the pace of activities is too slow for some learners.
14. In all sessions, the promotion of equality and diversity is good. Food prepared by learners in the well-designed kitchen reflects the cultural and dietary requirements of learners and their communities. Tutors value the cultural diversity of learners, for example by encouraging them to respond in their first language when taking the register of attendance. Choices uses visual images well to promote equality and diversity.
15. Assessment of learners' skills has improved since the previous inspection. Initial assessment is thorough and tutors use the results well to plan learners' individual timetables and teaching sessions. Recently established monthly reviews provide sufficient information on learners' progress, particularly towards the achievement of qualifications. However, not all recorded targets are sufficiently specific. Progress is difficult to measure and not all learners are fully involved in reviews or in setting targets. Targets are not always broken down into the very small steps which learners need to identify their progress.
16. Programmes offered to widen learners' experience and increase employment opportunities have improved since the previous inspection. Choices' learning programmes are appropriate for the strands of foundation learning. Optional classes in art, visits and exciting excursions expand opportunities for learners to develop independence, personal and social skills. Links with employers have developed well, resulting in 12 work placements. Seven learners are currently on a work placement, an increase from four at the previous inspection.

17. Choices has long established and positive links with Harrow College and a number of employers. These provide a range of opportunities for learners to gain access to college programmes and obtain work experience and jobs. Learners benefit significantly from recently improved partnerships with parents and carers, adult social care and local authority contacts.
18. Tutors make good use of learners' initial and formative assessment to identify needs and provide support. Volunteers in teaching sessions work well with individual learners. All staff are highly committed to providing learners with the information and guidance to help them on the programme, as well as in domestic settings. Two trained volunteer counsellors attend the centre to provide additional support where necessary. Learners value the ready availability of the specialist pastoral tutor to help them resolve personal issues or welfare needs. Choices works well with specialist external agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

19. The day-to-day management of the programme is satisfactory. Managers and staff are ambitious for the learners and encourage them to have high aspirations. Tutors are suitably qualified and feel well supported. They have good opportunities to develop their skills through teacher training and additional courses such as health and safety. The commercial kitchen is used to provide a well-focused vocational experience for learners. Since the last inspection, Choices has responded to the needs of the learners well by adding new features to improve the development of employability skills. The board of trustees and senior managers work hard to raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation. The board of trustees has given a high priority to the areas for development identified in the previous inspection. Management information has improved but is not yet sufficiently accessible to be useful. Board members have accepted responsibilities in championing specific areas of their expertise and offer good, clear strategic direction. They have become more visible within the organisation, offering training and awareness-raising sessions for staff and taking a hands-on approach, giving support and direction. Board members routinely monitor retention and achievement rates and take a wide interest in all aspects of learners' programmes.
20. Safeguarding arrangements are now good. Clear policies and procedures that include signs and symptoms of abuse and useful definitions have been developed. An easy-to-read copy of the procedures for learners has useful pictorial prompts and clues to help those who find reading difficult, or for whom English is not their first language. Staff have implemented thorough and rigorous systems to ensure that incidents are recorded, reviewed and monitored on an individual basis. Helpful incident records contribute to an overall monitoring form presented to the board of trustees for scrutiny. This outlines patterns, such as recurring incidents affecting individual learners, and clearly identifies concerns. The board of trustees has taken a strong lead in ensuring staff and learners are aware of procedures and can act appropriately. Board members and staff have received training in safeguarding. The pastoral and

safeguarding tutor provides a single point of contact for learners and makes clear that their concerns are taken seriously. The value of this role is clear from the increase in learners' concerns brought to the tutor and staff concerns discussed with them.

21. Arrangements to promote equality and diversity are good. Learners have a good awareness of equality and respect each other's diverse backgrounds, experiences and strengths. Learners understand equality and diversity which is promoted well in lessons. Posters, displays and marketing materials all reflect positive images of learners and the diversity of learners' backgrounds. Policies and procedures are clear. Choices makes good use of prompts and clues in documents to help learners for whom English is their second language and non readers to understand their rights and responsibilities.
22. Systems to enable learners to evaluate their learning and contribute to improving provision are satisfactory. The learner voice is a good forum for discussion led and recorded by learners. Learners evaluate their learning sessions, events and activities well. Learners and parents and carers complete regular surveys. Choices has made a number of changes in the light of feedback, for example changing the times for the parents' forum and developing the walk-for-life fitness activities.
23. Staff understand and routinely use the recently-developed quality assurance manual. The introduction of the observation of teaching and learning scheme, including the development of peer observations, is well received by staff. Observers record their findings appropriately and include feedback and actions to improve tutors' practice. The introduction of an appraisal system, that is currently out for consultation by staff, has yet to be implemented. Senior staff adopt an open and transparent management style and are eager to ensure inclusivity. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and the resulting report also takes good account of the views of learners, parents and carers. The quality improvement plan has already led to improvements in the provision, although staff need more time to implement the full programme.
24. Choices provides satisfactory value for money and makes good efforts to promote sustainability. Resources available in classrooms and the well-equipped kitchen are carefully planned to enable flexibility and the best use of space. Sufficient staffing and the good use of volunteers enable learners to make optimum use of the facilities.

Information about the reinspection

25. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's acting chief executive, as nominee, carried out the reinspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's reinspection monitoring visit, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
26. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions and reviewed assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Choices 4 All

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-25 LDD Learner responsive	
Approximate number of enrolled learners	18	18	
Full-time learners			
Overall effectiveness	3	3	
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for learners	3	3	
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3		
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	3 3		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3		
Quality of provision	3		3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	3	3	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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