

Careers Yorkshire and The Humber Limited

National Careers Service

Inspection dates

7–10 March 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	
Quality of information, advice and guidance	Good	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	
Outcomes for customers	Good	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Well-qualified and experienced advisers adeptly and sensitively identify customers' needs and barriers to progressing further.
- Customers receive useful help from advisers that effectively raises and broadens their understanding of the available career options.
- Customers progress well compared to their starting point and achieve their work, learning or development goals.
- Customers make good improvements in their personal confidence and self-esteem; they acquire a more informed and realistic appreciation of the available opportunities and take pride in their achievements.
- Customers are motivated by their experience to reflect on their skills and knowledge and undertake effective actions to improve them.
- Most customers receive appropriate help to improve their English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.
- Leaders and managers have established an organisational culture that empowers and inspires advisers and customers to succeed.
- Leaders and managers respond well to regional priorities and the demands of rapid changes in employment sectors.
- Not all advisers effectively promote customers' understanding of online safety.
- A minority of customer groups do not achieve their personal goals as well as the main cohort.
- In a few cases, advisers are not sufficiently skilled to address the needs of customers who speak English as an additional language.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Careers Yorkshire and The Humber Limited holds the National Careers Service contract for the region that covers Yorkshire and the Humber. It is a partnership of three careers companies: Aspire-igen Limited, C & K Careers, and Prospects Limited. The head office is in York.
- The three companies in the partnership deliver approximately 87% of the National Careers Service contract. Six subcontractors provide the remainder. Overall, advisers meet with in excess of 53,000 customers each year at one of the 11 offices or 155 outreach centres in the region. Jobcentre Plus staff refer around 70% of customers to the service.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Advisers should routinely check, and where relevant develop, customers' understanding of how to stay safe online.
- Advisers should identify and address all customers' English, mathematics and ICT skills development needs.
- Managers should ensure that all customer groups make the same high rate of progress in achieving their personal goals.
- Managers should provide relevant training and support so that all advisers are confident in using the appropriate strategies to meet the needs of customers who speak English as an additional language.
- Senior leaders should strengthen governance arrangements by expanding the range and variety of expertise available through the recruitment of independent governors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, managers and governors have established a clear mission for the service to inspire and empower individuals to progress in learning and work. Managers actively encourage all staff to promote the organisational values, which focus on providing a high-quality service for all customers. Staff from across the service show good commitment to achieving the mission and values. They structure information, advice and guidance sessions skilfully to help engage and motivate customers. This helps boost customers' confidence, and improve their independence and prospects.
- The prime and subcontracting arrangements help to ensure that the provision addresses the needs of the regional communities successfully. Many of the subcontracting organisations deliver a portfolio of services within their regions, such as youth services, online training and careers advice and guidance. These complement well the work they deliver for the National Careers Service.
- Performance management is good. This ensures that subcontractors and the overall service make good progress in meeting ambitious performance targets. The prime contract manager gives good support to subcontractors to help them raise standards. All subcontractor managers understand fully the goals and outcomes expected of them.
- Managers make good use of valuable labour market information to enhance the customers' experience. For example, managers regularly identify training, employment or volunteering opportunities across the region and share this information with advisers. Most advisers use this information effectively to provide a high-quality and responsive service to customers.
- Managers maintain close and effective links with a broad range of organisations in their regions, including Jobcentre Plus, the local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), local authorities, training providers and further education colleges. This network enables advisers to signpost customers appropriately to meet their needs.
- In most centres, accommodation and resources are generally suitable and fit for purpose. Advisers have particularly good access to high-quality online resources, which they use very effectively to help support and inform customers.
- Leaders and managers are particularly good at identifying and responding at short notice to regional changes in employment. For example, following the announcement of a potentially large-scale redundancy by a steel company, managers responded very quickly by providing a team of advisers. Their work helped support employees at risk and reduced the impact of redundancies on the wider community.
- Leaders evaluate the overall quality of the provision effectively. Self-assessment and quality improvement plans are generally accurate. They broadly align to the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. The majority of staff are aware of the key priorities for improvement. Managers monitor successfully the quality of information, advice and guidance sessions as part of productive arrangements to improve their quality. They provide appropriate support to advisers when it is necessary to raise or maintain professional standards.
- Staff training and professional development are good. Advisers are suitably qualified for

their role. Managers arrange a regular programme of training activities on relevant themes. Recent training, for example, has helped advisers make better use of labour market information and supported them in producing high-quality action plans. All advisers attend regular meetings at which they identify effective solutions to concerns or challenges they experience and share best practice.

- Most staff promote equality and diversity positively. The ethnic profile of staff broadly matches the communities they serve. The team of advisers possess a broad range of languages and have access to further language support. However, in a few cases advisers are not adequately skilled to deal with situations where customers have limited English language skills.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are generally effective. A small governance team provides good support and challenge to managers. This ensures that managers achieve agreed business and financial targets while improving the service experienced by customers. Governors effectively monitor managers' performance to evaluate how effectively they address regional strategic priorities.
- Senior leaders recognise that the size of the governing team is small and narrow in expertise. Recruitment to expand the team's membership, and bolster its effectiveness, has been too slow. Leaders have yet to fill vacancies caused by the resignation of independent members.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have put in place suitable policies, procedures and training to protect customers. All staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities for ensuring the safety and welfare of colleagues and customers.
- Leaders and managers deal promptly and effectively with any safeguarding concerns raised by staff or customers. For example, through appropriate referral, they quickly limited the impact of a customer who exhibited inappropriate, extremist views and attitudes.
- Advisers usually ensure that they both assess and, where relevant, enhance customers' understanding of safeguarding. In a very small minority of cases, advisers do not check customers have an adequate understanding of online safety, for example to protect them from radicalisation or extremism.

Quality of information, advice and guidance

Good

- Well-qualified and experienced advisers work skilfully with customers to help them develop and progress their career plans. Some advisers use their specialist skills and knowledge in areas such as dyslexia, British sign language and teaching English as an additional language to support customers with specific needs. Advisers are good role models and share their experiences with customers appropriately to put them at ease and

build good rapport.

- Advisers assess customers' starting points very effectively using appropriately focused questions. They discover quickly what advice and guidance customers need beyond the immediate reason for attending. For example, a customer asking for help with interview techniques also received relevant information about apprenticeships and employment opportunities. Advisers explore customers' barriers to employment skilfully. They deal appropriately with customers' disclosures that may influence the feasibility of achieving planned career options.
- Customers benefit from advisers' comprehensive knowledge of education, training and employment opportunities. Advisers provide good guidance and tips on personal presentation, approaching employers directly and applying for work using websites. They promote online resources very effectively to help customers decide on the most appropriate career goals, given their personal circumstances, aptitudes and preferences.
- Advisers successfully ensure that customers develop an appropriate understanding of the range of work and, where relevant, apprenticeships that are available. Customers generally become much more aware and capable of using a good variety of jobsearch strategies. They enhance their personal skills so they can respond appropriately to employment selection processes. For example, a customer expressed appreciation for the significant gains made in becoming better prepared for job interviews. The adviser achieved this by successfully supporting the customer to cope with the anxiety felt before and during the interview.
- Advisers provide customers with helpful feedback to motivate them and challenge their perceptions of their abilities. For example, an adviser helped a single parent recognise and value the skills she had developed in managing a home and looking after children.
- The majority of advisers promote effectively the importance of good English, mathematics and ICT skills. They ensure that customers receive impartial information on local training provision where appropriate. Advisers check the customers' self-assessment of their skills by asking if they can perform specific tasks such as uploading a curriculum vitae (CV) to websites, sending emails and writing letters. This enables customers to make well-considered decisions on whether they need to develop their skills further. However, in a small minority of sessions, the discussion around English, mathematics and ICT is too superficial.
- Advisers usually carefully negotiate skills action plans with customers that provide an accurate summary of the session's outcomes. The majority of targets agreed are clear, specific and challenging. However, in a small minority of cases targets are too general and do not ensure that customers have a clear appreciation of which actions they must carry out.
- In most sessions, advisers promote customers' independence very effectively so that they accept responsibility for completing agreed tasks. Advisers supply high-quality texts and resources to support group sessions on interview techniques. However, on occasions advisers do too much for customers, such as writing their CVs, to achieve the task quickly. While customers are very grateful for this help, it does not effectively develop their self-sufficiency and independence.
- A small number of advisers do not have the appropriate skills and confidence to meet the needs of customers who speak English as an additional language. For example, one

customer could not understand the questions asked by an adviser. The adviser did not simplify the questions or explain the jargon used to aid the customer's understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Advisers help to build customers' self-confidence and self-esteem very effectively. Customers engage and respond well in their discussions with advisers. They are encouraged by how quickly they receive information and advice that is relevant to addressing their needs. Customers take pride in what they have achieved. As a result, they become more informed and realistic about the options available to them.
- Customers are motivated and keen to improve their personal situation. Advisers ensure that customers are appropriately inspired to take independent actions that effectively contribute to achieving their future goals. For example, advisers provide customers with constructive feedback to ensure that their CV is fully relevant to applications to their preferred employment sector.
- Customers develop a good appreciation of the content and relevance of the information and advice they receive. They can explain in detail how they are able to use them in progressing their training or employment.
- Customers feel safe and comfortable when participating in both individual and group sessions. Advisers secure confidentiality of discussions with customers very effectively. They sensitively use specialist external agencies to help customers with multiple barriers to achieving their short- and long-term goals. For example, an adviser effectively helped a customer with impaired mental health to explore the full range of support available. This allowed the customer to focus on solutions rather than the barriers to his progress. As a result, the customer was empowered to compile and use an action plan for improvement.
- Customers are punctual, polite and attentive when attending individual sessions. They respond and contribute well to questioning and summarising of discussions undertaken by the adviser. Many customers are enthused by their experience of attending an advice session and readily agree to participate in further meetings. Session attendance rates vary between venues and geographical areas but are good overall.

Outcomes for customers

Good

- Customers make good progress when compared to their starting point. Advisers are usually adept at helping customer identify the often complex and multiple barriers that impede their achievement. Customers receive carefully formulated help so they can explore and develop strategies to attain their aspirations. For example, a customer with low self-confidence and self-esteem was successfully reintroduced to paid employment through participating in part-time voluntary work.
- A high proportion of customers achieve their personal goal of securing sustained employment or further learning or development. Since the commencement of the contract, managers have taken relevant actions to improve the outcome rates, which show an improving trend. Performance generally meets the targets set by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).
- The proportion of customers who value the information, advice and guidance they receive

is very high. Customers are appreciative of the gains they make, for example in how their understanding of acquired skills and knowledge can support the achievement of their career goals. Advisers use this improved self-awareness appropriately to help customers explore a wider range of career options. For example, a customer who had completed a social care course did not wish to pursue opportunities in this sector. The adviser introduced the customer successfully to alternative career options, with development opportunities, that utilised her prior achievements.

- Managers' collection, analysis and evaluation of data to assess the performance of different customer groups is effective. They have accurately identified differences in specific customer groups' progress when compared to the main cohort. For example, progression rates for customers aged 18- to 19-years-old and those with a declared disability require improvement. To address these variations, managers have implemented improvement actions, but it is too early to assess their impact.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1236778
Type of provider	National Careers Service
Area Director	Rosie Cantrell
Telephone number	01904 656 655
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At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<p>Aspire-igen</p> <p>Best Training Ltd</p> <p>North East Lincolnshire Council</p> <p>Carers UK</p> <p>C&K Careers</p> <p>Swarthmore Education Centre</p> <p>Sheffield Futures</p> <p>Next Generation</p> <p>Prospects Ltd</p>
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Information about this inspection

The quality manager, as nominee, assisted the inspection team. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of customers and other stakeholders; these views are reflected within the report. They observed one-to-one adviser sessions and group sessions. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Nigel Bragg, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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