

YMCA Training

Inspection date

3 August 2007

Inspection number

301553

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	4
Summary of grades awarded.....	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Effectiveness of provision	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	6
Key areas for improvement.....	7
Main findings	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision.....	8
Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	9
What learners like	10
What learners think could improve.....	11
Sector subject areas.....	12
Health, public services and care	12
Retail and commercial enterprise	14
Preparation for life and work.....	17
Business, administration and law	20
Learners' achievements	23

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' quality monitoring or annual assessment 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
- Retail and commercial enterprises
- Preparation for life and work
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. YMCA Training was founded in 1978, in the north of England, in response to the growing number of young people who were unable to find employment during the recession. It was a department of the National Council of YMCAs in England up until July 2002, when the business was transferred into a new corporate and governance structure. YMCA Training was established as an independent charity and company limited by guarantee, and as a YMCA affiliated to the National Council. It is one of the largest voluntary sector training organisations in the country and operates in 50 locations. YMCA Training employs approximately 580 full- and part-time staff.
2. YMCA Training contracts with 14 local LSCs and with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The contract with LSCs covers work-based learning for young people in advanced apprenticeships, apprenticeships and entry to employment (E2E) provision. YMCA Training also has one Train to Gain contract. DWP provision has not been included in this inspection as their Prime Contracts will be inspected separately. All learners work towards formally accredited national vocational qualifications (NVQs), vocational qualifications, short course provision or other awards appropriate to their personal and social development, and training and employment needs. The range of training programmes and areas of learning match the needs of learners in the local labour market. YMCA Training covers eight of the 15 areas of learning, four of which were directly inspected, the rest being sampled by paired observation, learner interviews, data on success rates and portfolio evidence. Health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprises, preparation for life and work and business administration and law were inspected and graded. YMCA Training has 2,773 learners, of whom 904 are apprentices, 512 advanced apprentices, 439 E2E learners, 14 on Train to Gain provision and 236 on short European Social Fund (ESF) programmes. Currently 668 learners are on the DWP Prime Contract provision. Several LSCs fund YMCA Training for additional pilots and projects from other funding sources including neighbourhood support funds, direct from schools, private funding and ESF. All these projects have links with, and supplement, the government-funded training programmes. Around 85% of YMCA Training provision is government-funded.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject area

Health, public service and care	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Retail and commercial enterprise	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievements and standards are satisfactory as is the quality of provision and leadership and management. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. The quality of provision in health, public services and care, preparation for life and work and business administration and law are satisfactory. Provision in retail and commercial enterprises is good.

CAPACITY TO IMPROVE

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. YMCA Training has demonstrated that it has satisfactory capacity to improve. Learners' success rates improved steadily from unsatisfactory in 2004-05 to satisfactory and slightly above the national rate for 2005-06. Over the same period, timely success rates also improved. Data is accurate and timely. The provider has a clear focus on improvement.
5. The self-assessment process is good, thorough and inclusive. All centres complete a self-assessment report. The findings are summarised and collated into a national self-assessment report. Staff are well-involved in writing the centre self-assessment reports. The views of staff, learners and employers are collected and used effectively. The effectiveness of steps taken to improve since the previous inspection are satisfactory. Most of the key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been addressed, though some have only been partially considered. Inspectors agreed with many of the findings in the self-assessment report. The national report informs quality improvement plans not just across sector subject areas but also in the areas of equality and diversity, quality, health and safety and human resource management. All centres also complete quality improvement plans for their centre. All plans are used to inform improvements and progress is well monitored.
6. Arrangements for quality assurance are incomplete. Lesson observation data is not routinely collected and analysed at centre level, and is not used systematically to inform improvements. Some quality procedures are out of date. Arrangements for quality assurance focus on contract compliance and not on assuring the quality of the learners' experience.

Key strengths

- Good development of learners' skills
- Very effective support

- Good resources to promote learning
- Clear strategic direction
- Good self-assessment process
- Good initiatives to attract under-represented groups into training

Key areas for improvement

- Inconsistent success rates
- Insufficient target-setting and planning of learning for individual learners
- Incomplete arrangements for quality improvement
- Insufficiently established analysis and use of observation of teaching and learning
- Insufficient sharing of practice to raise standards

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. This was accurately identified in the self-assessment report. Overall success rates on retail and commercial enterprises and business administration and law are satisfactory. Success rates for apprentices are satisfactory on health, public services and care however, they are unsatisfactory for advanced apprentices. E2E progression rates are satisfactory. While overall success and progression rates are satisfactory, for some centres success and progression rates are poor in all sector subject areas. YMCA Training is aware of this problem and is taking relevant management actions to improve. In the sector subject areas not inspected, achievement and standards are all at least satisfactory. These programmes run in single centres and most deal with small numbers of learners. In the largest of these programmes, motor vehicle, the success rates for apprentices are satisfactory at 60%. Two advanced apprentices were successful in achieving their full framework in 2005-06. Horticulture success rates are good. Success rates in apprenticeships in design are satisfactory and equal to the national average of 56%. Information and communication technology (ICT) success rates have improved from 20% in 2003-04 to 57% in 2005-06 and are now satisfactory. Learners with multiple barriers to learning progress through levels from pre-E2E to mainstream programmes and to higher education very well.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. The quality of provision is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. This was accurately identified in the self-assessment report. The better training includes detailed planning, effective strategies and trainer enthusiasm to engage with the learners, many of whom are attending programmes despite severe barriers to education and personal difficulties. In retail, effective one-to-one coaching develops good levels of skills. In the less effective training, trainers are insufficiently experienced in teaching or do not have sufficient vocational knowledge to deliver the programmes. Resources are good in most centres with a good range of books, activities and materials. Access to computers and online materials is good.
9. The range of programmes is satisfactory in meeting the local needs of each centre. This was partially identified in the self-assessment report. Historical factors determine much of the provision in each centre. Senior managers are currently reviewing the provision and are developing strategies to standardise the programmes across centres as well as access to all funding streams.
10. Guidance and support for learners is good. This was highlighted as a strength in the self-assessment report. Support for learners' personal issues is good, most centres have qualified counsellors available and mentors provide additional support on many programmes. All staff have a good understanding of the needs of the target groups catered for by YMCA Training. Learners appreciate the time and effort taken by training advisers to explain programme requirements, especially to those learners with extensive barriers such as literacy, numeracy and language needs. Good liaison with

employers supports learning and evidence collection. Regular reviews take place with learners but employer involvement varies across areas. In some cases, action plan targets lack clarity. The information, advice and guidance to learners in all centres are good. Extensive posters and information sheets give learners a clear idea of available programmes.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

11. YMCA Training has a clear strategic direction, a strength highlighted in the self-assessment report. There is a good strategic plan which contains clear mission and vision statements informed by appropriate values. The strategy presents a clear vision for the future development of the organisation. An annual plan, business development and marketing plans contain more detailed annual targets and objectives to meet the strategic aims. Progress against plans is reviewed regularly. The skills for life strategy is satisfactory, as is staff training to meet the needs of the strategy, however, there is no specific action plan to ensure consistent development.
12. Self-assessment is a good and fully inclusive process involving staff and stakeholders. The final report is evaluative identifying strengths and weaknesses. The quality improvement plans address all the identified issues and is used well to make improvements.
13. YMCA Training is involved in a broad range of initiatives to attract under-represented groups into training. This was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. During 2006-07, 2,000 learners have been engaged in pre-16 and not in employment, education or training (NEET) programmes. Good partnership work with schools delivers an alternative work-related curriculum for disaffected and disengaged Key Stage 4 learners, through 13 centres. Other very effective engagement programmes include a pre-entry to employment course, programmes for young single parents and for young offenders. These programmes provide effective starting points with opportunities to progress to E2E programmes, apprenticeship programmes, further education programmes and employment.
14. Internal communication is good. The staff intranet is used well and contains appropriate information on a wide variety of appropriate topics. There is a clear meeting structure and records of meetings and actions are good. A diverse range of methods are used to communicate with staff on a range of subjects. Staff are consulted well on changes which directly affect them. Although there are many opportunities for staff to meet together and share good practice, some centres perform significantly better than others.
15. Every centre has a well-trained equality and diversity adviser. The advisers have a key role in updating centre staff and dealing with equality issues in the centres. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Data relating to the participation of different groups of learners is collected and well-used by centres to plan local

initiatives to encourage participation by under-represented groups and to analyse the success rates of different groups of learners. Work on *Every Child Matters* themes is well-advanced with information being displayed at all centres and some key sessions, such as induction, being cross-referenced to the themes. Criminal records bureau checks are made appropriately, though some more established staff are still waiting for their return.

16. Staff induction, training and appraisal are satisfactory. Staff are well supported to improve success rates in the new improved organisational structure. Resources for teaching and learning and accommodation are good. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory.
17. The arrangements for quality improvement are incomplete. There is no quality policy or strategy. Some quality procedures are out-of-date. Many quality assurance arrangements focus on contract compliance and not on assuring the quality of the learners' experience. The lesson observation system does not consistently provide a reliable account of the quality of teaching and learning. The data is not used systematically to inform improvements. There are some good aspects of quality assurance such as the regular centre quality performance reviews. A traffic light system then identifies areas for concern. Arrangements for internal verification are consistent across the organisation.
18. Sharing of practice across centres is insufficient. This was not recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report, though under-performing centres were identified as an issue. Overall success rates are satisfactory, however, some centres have poor success rates. Good strategies to increase success rates are insufficiently shared across the provision, despite the number of events held so far. Staff turnover remains high especially in poorer performing centres. Learners are not always given the same support in these centres. The expertise of staff is insufficiently shared across centres to minimise disruptions.
19. Gathering of learners' feedback on all aspects of their learning programme is insufficiently systematic. Feedback is collected from learners annually via a standard, insufficiently detailed feedback questionnaire. Recently more detailed feedback has been collected via a telephone survey of learners but has yet to have impact. Centres also make their own arrangements for collecting learner feedback via focus groups.

What learners like:

- The chance to learn
- Doing a real job
- Support for problems
- People, both learners and staff
- 'It's not like school, you're treated as an adult'
- The chance to work and get a qualification at same time
- The good teaching with really simple explanations
- Improved skills at work
- Good access to books and laptops
- The fun in sessions
- Helping to better yourself
- Setting yourself targets (for achievement)
- Building confidence and self-esteem

What learners think could improve:

- The NVQ language
- Repetitiveness of assignments
- ‘Having a timetable so I know what I’ll be doing’
- More fun activities rather than writing all the time
- More visits out
- Repeating work in knowledge questions
- More opportunities to attend training sessions
- ‘The lessons – so we don’t go over things we already know’

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

20. YMCA Training has 1,576 learners in health, public services and care. There are 440 advanced apprentices and 582 apprentices based in 15 centres. Of these 762 are on early years programmes and 270 on social care programmes. Currently 45 learners are from black or minority ethnic backgrounds and 41 are men. In addition there are 535 privately funded learners on NVQ programmes and 14 on a Train to Gain contract. Most apprentices are employed in one of a range of early years and social care settings, with 238 in employer placements. YMCA Training offer off-the-job training and assessments for the technical certificates and key skills in training centres or employers' premises.

Strengths

- Good progression
- Very effective support
- Particularly effective management of staff

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory success rates for advanced apprentices
- Insufficient involvement of employers in the planning and delivery of learning and reviews
- Insufficient use of observations of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

21. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Progression is good. Learners progress well from level 1 programmes and from level 2 to 3. In 2006-07, 15% of apprentices progressed from E2E programmes, and at one centre the figure is 48%. Many learners gain promotion at work and take on new responsibilities. Almost 30% of advanced apprentices progressed from level 2 programmes and a high number then progress to higher education, for example in nursing or teaching.
22. Success rates are satisfactory for apprentices but unsatisfactory for advanced apprentices as recognised in the self-assessment report. Overall success rates for both levels are improving but remain low in some areas. In 2005-06, 60% of apprentices achieved their framework but for advanced apprentices this was only 34%. There are significant regional variations in success rates with a range of between 35% and 80% for apprentices and 21% and 52% for advanced apprentices. Timely success rates are very low for advanced apprentices, at 8% in 2004-05 and 21% in 2005-06. YMCA Training is actively working to reduce the number of out-of-funded learners. Learners wait too long before they can start assessments for their NVQ, for example some learners have been on programme for 12 months but have not yet started their NVQ assessments and still have technical certificate assignments to complete.

Quality of provision

23. The quality of provision is satisfactory. YMCA Training provides very effective support for learners, a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. Staff are very approachable and ensure learners can easily contact them via email and mobile telephones. They plan visits to learners to meet each individual's need, varying from weekly to every 6 weeks. Arrangements for assessments are flexible to meet employment patterns. Off-the-job training is very flexible and is available in the centres or workplace as individual or small group sessions. Assessors provide a good range of resources and guidance for assessments. Simplified wording of knowledge requirements and assignments helps learners with literacy support needs. Good links with outside agencies promotes very effective personal support when needed.
24. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, there is insufficient use of evidence in the technical certificate assessments to support the knowledge requirements of the NVQ. Many learners are repeating the demonstration of understanding with further written work.
25. Procedures for internal verification are satisfactory. In some regions significant weaknesses were identified, such as too few observations of assessment and candidate interviews. A clear, monitored action plan shows appropriate actions are taken. The introduction of regional internal verifiers has been successful in promoting a more rigorous approach.
26. The identification and provision of support for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Vocational staff provide support, which in turn is supported by a skills for life expert. However, support needs are not always clearly identified and monitored in learner's files.
27. Learners receive satisfactory information and guidance, particularly when progressing between levels. The criteria for entry to programmes is carefully used to ensure that learners are appropriately placed.
28. Employer involvement in the planning of training, assessment and reviews is insufficient, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. In most areas, employers have little or no involvement in the planning of learning and assessment. There is no planning to ensure the effective use of employer training. Employers do not receive information on topics covered in off-the-job training, nor do they give information on plans of work to link in with off-the-job training. Employers have very little involvement in the planning of assessments and insufficient use is made of witness statements or in-house assessors. In some regions, most employers are not involved in reviews except to add a comment to the review form. A recent survey of employers showed that most want more involvement in their employee's training.

Leadership and management

29. The management of staff is particularly effective. Communication is good between all levels of staff. New staff have a well-planned and effective induction to the organisation and region. Monthly individual reviews set clear targets for staff and actions monitored. Bi-monthly team meetings provide good opportunities for reviewing centre targets and for training. In one region these have not occurred for some months due to a recent restructure. Staff are well supported by managers especially when extra workloads are necessary due to staff changes. Staff undertake a good range of development both

locally and nationally. Opportunities are relevant to the sector skills areas and to organisational needs. Staff are up-to-date and have relevant qualifications. All staff either have, or are undertaking, appropriate teaching qualifications. Involvement in the self-assessment process is good with all staff contributing to the annual events.

30. The understanding of equality and diversity by staff and learners is satisfactory. However, some staff are unaware of recent changes in legislation relating to gender and race equality. There are too few men or learners from minority ethnic backgrounds on the programmes.
31. There is insufficient use of the observations of teaching and learning. A detailed observation plan for all staff covering all aspects of the learner journey is in place. In some centres, this plan is not being followed. Information collected from the process is insufficiently used to improve practice across all centres. One centre identifies actions and analyses and implements training needs. In most centres, there is insufficient identification or follow through of actions. There is little analysis of the grades or overview of centre performance.

Retail and commercial enterprise

Good: Grade 2

Context

32. Currently 109 learners are on programmes in retail and commercial enterprise, of whom 105 are apprentices and four are advanced apprentices. There are 98 learners following programmes in retailing and wholesaling, with two on warehousing and distribution programmes. One learner is on other service programmes, with eight working towards hospitality and catering qualifications. There are 69 male learners, 13 are from minority ethnic groups and 20 have disabilities. All learners are on apprenticeship programmes,

with 64% employed, and the rest on work placement. Inductions are given at employers' premises or at the local training centre. Workplace visits by assessors are made every two to four weeks for assessments, progress reviews and some individual coaching.

Strengths

- Good skills development
- Particularly good resources
- Highly effective teamwork to improve provision

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently clear targets set at reviews

Achievement and standards

33. Achievements and standards are good. The development of learners' skills is good. Learners receive good on-the-job training from employers and develop useful job skills. They take responsibility for everyday tasks and work well on their own initiative. Some learners have been given sole responsibility for tasks at work. They substantially develop their wider personal skills and become much more confident, particularly in dealing with customers and relating to work colleagues. Learners' communication and team-working skills improve greatly. Employers see them as valuable team members, and for some unemployed learners, clear candidates for employment. Learners develop good work related literacy and numeracy skills. Many learners gain useful additional qualifications such as food hygiene certificates and lift truck qualifications. In the year 2006-07 to date, 42% of unemployed learners on programme at the Oldham centre, which has the most learners, have progressed into employment. Learners make satisfactory progress toward their qualifications, with many achieving key skills and technical certificates in the early stages of their programme.
34. Apprenticeship success rates are satisfactory. Overall achievement of advanced apprenticeships nationally in 2005-06 was 40% rising to 75% in the current year. Apprenticeship achievement was 49% in 2005-06, rising to 58% in 2006-07. However, some centres' achievement rates over this period are noticeably lower, with some figures as low as 11% and 17%, and unlike better-performing centres, showing no improving trend. YMCA Training identified this as an issue in the self-assessment report and is taking actions to improve.

Quality of provision

35. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Learning resources at YMCA Training are particularly good. Staff are well-experienced in the retail sector area and a number of centres have assessors with a diverse range of experience. Retail staff at the largest centre all have substantial experience as retail managers in various sectors of the trade. Accommodation at the main centre is of a high standard, including provision of information technology equipment and dedicated skills for life training rooms, all of which are well-used. Learning materials are good, with professional standard notes and exercises from the sector skills council, as well as use of online resources and exercises

for learners. Centre staff have developed good occupationally relevant skills for life training materials.

36. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Sessions are well-planned, with suitable lesson outlines. Training advisers have a good rapport with learners, and individual coaching is of a high standard.
37. Assessment and verification practice is satisfactory. Good-practice guidelines outline how these processes should be carried out. Effective use is made of assessment planning documents and sampling plans for verification. Activities of assessors and verifiers are well-recorded in sufficient detail and new internal verifiers receive good support.
38. The programme is satisfactory in meeting learner and employer needs. NVQ standards match well with learners' job roles. Reports from awarding body external verifiers are largely positive.
39. Learner support is satisfactory. Learners see their assessors as providing good support through clear explanations and coaching. Many employers and placement providers give learners constructive advice and guidance with generating evidence for their NVQ, and gaining access to assessment.
40. Targets set at reviews in some centres are not always sufficiently clear. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. The wording of targets themselves on review documents is not always specific enough for learners to know exactly what they are required to do by the assessor. Similarly, clear dates by which the learner is required to have completed the planned task, to ensure learners' timely achievement, are not always stated.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are good. This was identified in the self-assessment report though not expressed as a key strength. Teamwork to improve provision is highly effective. A new, highly-experienced team has joined the Oldham centre over the last two years. Other centres have sector staff with a diverse range of relevant occupational experience. Oldham centre staff work as a tight-knit team and there is a high degree of co-operation and communication. The team have a clear vision of how the programme should improve. A very detailed programme plan sets out precisely how the retail apprenticeship should operate. This links to a clear programme structure and then to specific session planning. Clear direction and drive for improvement is given by centre managers, who enable staff to take direct responsibility for programme marketing and development. Communication across centres is open and very effective. Management action to improve success rates in the poorer achieving centres has not as yet been sufficiently effective. Success rates vary significantly across the national provision.
42. Staff training and development is satisfactory, and continuous professional development is integrated with company procedures. A comprehensive management information pack is used at staff and management meetings for decision-making. A wide range of company information is available to all staff via the intranet. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory, and learners have an adequate understanding. Development of

the self-assessment report was an inclusive process, with centres taking a self-critical approach.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

43. There are 439 learners on E2E programmes in 18 centres across England. A further 236 learners are on ESF funded pre-E2E and NEET group projects. Currently 55% of learners are men, 15% belong to minority ethnic groups and 34% have a disability. There are 97 staff working on the E2E programme. Following an induction programme lasting up to six weeks which includes initial assessment of literacy, numeracy, personal and vocational skills, most learners complete a period of work experience in a chosen vocational area. While learners' duration on the programme varies, their average length of stay on the programme is 17 weeks.

Strengths

- Good development of skills and confidence
- Good resources to promote learning
- Particularly effective work with employers and external agencies
- Good strategies to increase progression onto E2E

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient planning for the needs of individuals

- Insufficient links between centres to raise quality
- Insufficiently established observations of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

44. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop good levels of skills and confidence. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Personal and social skills development is good. Learners understand the importance of the skills they are learning and value them highly. They learn a range of employment-related skills such as working on tills in shops, dealing with customers and arranging stock in warehouses. Many work on their own initiative. Behaviour in classes is good.
45. Progression rates have risen slowly to a satisfactory level of 49% in 2005-06, and 47% in 2006-07 to date. However, there is a large variation between centres, from over 70% at one centre to 30% at another. Success rates for qualifications show a similar wide variation between centres but are satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

46. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Resources for teaching and learning are good. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. A good selection of games, activities and books are available and used to stimulate interest and learning. Learners have good access to computers and to internet-based learning activities. Centres are well-furnished with comfortable furniture projecting a professional image. Staff encourage learners to treat their environment with respect and learners appreciate the good quality environment in which they work.
47. Work with employers and external agencies is particularly effective in meeting learners' needs, a strength which was identified in the self-assessment report. Good information and guidance is given to both learners and employers to match learners to appropriate placements. Essential information for work experience providers, including agreements and health and safety checks and copies of learner information including progress reviews are kept in a useful binder to encourage employers to refer to it regularly. Much time and care is spent to ensure learners understand and can commit to the demands of the individual workplace. Employers are very supportive and have a good understanding of the various barriers to learning that learners have. Learners attend work placements reliably and punctually and develop useful skills. Partner agencies are used well to support learners, especially when they are experiencing difficulties. Learners are referred to agencies that specialise in debt advice, counselling, sexual health and housing issues. Often YMCA Training staff accompany learners to these agencies. Links with Connexions staff are strong.
48. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The better sessions are well-planned with a range of activities that stimulate the learners. Poorer sessions are slow in pace and do not meet the individual needs of learners. Job club activities are satisfactory, although not all activities use a sufficient variety of approaches or provide enough inspiration to fully engage learners. A good variety of activities are provided on some programmes, such as circus skills and graffiti art, provided at one centre to stimulate development of personal and social skills. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

49. Planning for the needs of individual learners is insufficient. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. While some learner progress reviews and short-term targets are good, many others are weak with imprecise targets and insufficient learner involvement. While the initial assessments are completed well and provide a useful starting point, they are not always used sufficiently to plan learning. Most session plans are for groups and are often generic. The needs of individual learners in these groups are rarely noted on any planning materials. Teaching of skills for life is satisfactory. However, the literacy and numeracy tuition is not consistently integrated with the vocational parts of learners' training. Employers are not sufficiently included in the review process to better plan learning for the individuals on placement.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategies to increase progression onto E2E are good. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Good use is made of ESF projects for pre-E2E programmes or for courses for vulnerable young adults which ensure learners have a platform from which to progress into mainstream E2E. Marketing of information to learners and partners has improved to enable better access to provision. A wide range of other initiatives target NEET learners. These include provision for 14-16 year olds through a horticulture-based programme, a project for young pregnant women and for learners with young children. Progression from these projects into positive outcomes is often 100%. YMCA Training use data well to monitor learners' progress and to capture where and when they progress. Systems to monitor attendance and sickness are good. Good use is made of a traffic light system to identify where learners are at risk of leaving the programme and need extra support.
51. Links between centres to raise quality are insufficient. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. While some activities do take place at regional and national levels, these are not sufficiently focused to ensure the wide variations in progression and achievement rates between centres are significantly narrowed. Arrangements for national co-ordination of E2E are not fully effective and not all relevant staff are aware of arrangements that are in place. Resources and expertise available regionally and nationally are not fully utilised to minimise the impact of staff absence or shortage on learners.
52. Observation of teaching and learning is insufficiently established to effect improvements. The self-assessment report identifies a lack of observations of teaching and learning as a weakness. A revised process is being established and in 2006-07, most staff have been observed. However, it is not yet effective in supporting improvement. Some records of observations do have helpful comments which support improvement but the process is insufficiently established to secure the improvements desired. Insufficient focus is given to providing support for ongoing improvement or to learners' experience in sessions. Consistent standards of judgements and grades have not yet been achieved.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

53. There are 14 centres offering training in business administration to 164 learners, 129 apprentices and 35 advanced apprentices. This represents 8% of the total provision. Currently 22% of learners are men, 13% are from a minority ethnic group and 15% have a disability. Learners attend off-the-job training in local centres and trainer/assessors carry out regular visits to the workplace. Learners are in placements or are employed in a variety of businesses and industrial administrative offices as receptionists, invoice clerks and administrative assistants.

Strengths

- Good assessment and internal verification systems
- Very effective support and guidance

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient planning to manage individualised training and learning
- Insufficient co-ordination of on- and-off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

54. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are satisfactory. Framework completions for apprentices have steadily improved from 32% in 2003-04 to 52% in 2005-06. In 2006-07, 62% successfully achieved their full framework. Success rates for advanced apprentices are lower at 23% in 2003-04 rising to 40% in 2005-06. For current learners the rate is 55%. Learners' work is at a satisfactory standard. Learners have a good understanding of what is required and are competent in their work roles. Some learners are involved in projects and carry out independent work of a critical nature. One learner has sole responsibility for creating a paperless office. E2E learners progress well to apprenticeships, onto advanced apprenticeships, and from placements into employment. Current learners are progressing better and achieving key skills and technical certificates more rapidly than in previous years.

Quality of provision

-
55. Quality of provision is satisfactory. Assessment and internal verification systems are good. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Assessments are well planned with the full co-operation of the learners and clear targets negotiated with them. Reinforcement at the start of the assessment is comprehensive, and includes a timely reminder of the appeals procedure. Documentation is completed accurately and is very well used to record and monitor learner progress. Identified deficiencies are systematically action-planned. The assessment process successfully informs the learners of their progress. Assessments link effectively with the NVQ standards, but insufficient use is made of workplace assessments to support key skills achievement. Internal verification is very good. Procedures are exceptionally good at capturing all aspects of the assessment process. Verification of portfolios is stringent with minute detail recorded and action planned. An effective system of random sampling includes learner interviews, telephone contact and observation of assessments, induction and reviews. Verifiers work very closely with assessors and provide substantial support for newly qualified and unqualified individuals. Verifiers attend national training and are quick to disseminate changes and share best practice. Extensive use of the intranet improves standardisation, shares information and provides consistency between centres. The improvements to verification systems and their application raise quality standards and learner progress.
56. Support and guidance are very effective in reducing barriers to learning. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners have particularly good access to specialist support through skills for life tutors. Identified literacy and numeracy issues are resolved through a carefully prepared individual programme of support. Staff use partner agencies well to actively promote social, moral and cultural links. Trainers effectively and efficiently manage extended periods away from training for some learners' personal and cultural needs. Speedy securing of placements maintains learner progress on programmes, and match learners' needs and aspirations well. Learners receive quality guidance and contact time from training advisers on a frequent basis. Training advisers know individual learners well and use this information to identify and resolve issues promptly. Training advisers work closely with employers to keep learners progressing and on programme.
57. Planning for the needs of individual learners is insufficient. This was partially identified in the self-assessment report. Initial assessment is good but it is not used sufficiently in individual learning plans. Assessment and interview results are not well-used to identify appropriate learning opportunities in a timely way. All learners follow the same pattern of development irrespective of individual learning needs and prior attainment. Training advisers approach learners of very different abilities in the same style and on the same schedule. For some learners there is insufficient challenge and ownership of their own learning and too much directed control. There is little opportunity to deviate from the set plan. Individual learning plans are very similar.
58. On- and off-the-job training is not co-ordinated to make the best use of naturally occurring evidence. Learners miss opportunities to record and use on-the-job training for evidence for their NVQ. There is insufficient planning to include employer training, and insufficient knowledge of its content. Co-ordination of background knowledge learning and practical skill acquisition is weak. Employers are rarely involved in planning and have insufficient knowledge about unit requirements to suggest work projects. Learners complete key skills and the technical certificate independently from the workplace.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are satisfactory. This was not identified specifically in the self-assessment report but text supports this judgement. Recent management actions to consolidate learners at one centre have been successful. Staff development opportunities are good. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Learners are very aware of discrimination, harassment and bullying issues. Staff clearly understand the implications of cultural and family demands and deal with incidents in a formal and efficient way. However, not all staff are aware of current legislation. Resources are satisfactory. In the better centres, there are good training aids, access to information technology and sufficient space in training rooms. In other centres conditions are cramped, access is difficult and use of adaptive and training technology is inadequate. Observation of teaching and learning is under developed. The self-assessment process is accurate and inclusive.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Health, care and public services

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/c ollege NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	154	57%	51%	27%	27%
		timely	145	29%	31%	14%	16%
	04-05	overall	219	56%	47%	15%	21%
		timely	213	25%	28%	8%	12%
	05-06	overall	196	66%	53%	34%	34%
		timely	200	38%	29%	21%	17%
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	335	56%	43%	18%	17%
		timely	339	20%	18%	4%	6%
	04-05	overall	469	56%	46%	34%	29%
		timely	439	15%	21%	8%	13%
	05-06	overall	608	64%	58%	60%	49%
		timely	582	35%	31%	32%	25%

Retail and commercial enterprise

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/c ollege NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	1	0%	31%	0%	21%
		timely	1	0%	19%	0%	13%
	04-05	overall	4	25%	31%	0%	22%
		timely	4	25%	22%	0%	15%
	05-06	overall	5	40%	36%	40%	29%
		timely	7	29%	24%	29%	18%
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	54	48%	45%	35%	32%
		timely	46	13%	24%	9%	18%
	04-05	overall	86	35%	46%	23%	36%
		timely	85	11%	30%	8%	23%
	05-06	overall	125	54%	54%	49%	50%
		timely	124	46%	38%	44%	34%

Business administration and law

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/c ollege NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	22	36%	46%	23%	28%
		timely	25	12%	30%	45	18%
	04-05	overall	22	50%	47%	45%	32%
		timely	17	24%	34%	24%	23%
	05-06	overall	30	47%	59%	40%	50%
		timely	27	37%	44%	33%	37%
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	78	45%	51%	32%	38%
		timely	71	17%	25%	10%	18%
	04-05	overall	89	51%	56%	40%	46%
		timely	84	29%	35%	27%	29%
	05-06	overall	132	59%	63%	52%	58%
		timely	127	45%	44%	40%	41%

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the provider/college
2004 to 2006

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate*	Progression rate**
03-04	1160	35%	39%
04-05	1645	41%	48%
05-06	1746	41%	49%

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period