

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Strathmore College Ltd

Date of visit: 7 February 2008

Context

In July 2003, Strathmore College and Strathmore Care Services were acquired by Craegmoor Healthcare Limited. The college is one of three colleges owned by the group. There are approximately 30 residential learners and 18 day learners who use the college facilities which are situated on a variety of sites in the Stoke on Trent and the Newcastle under Lyme area. The college recruits regionally and nationally. All teaching is practical and makes extensive use of floristry and catering retail outlets based at Jasmine in Newcastle under Lyme and other industrial sites in the vicinity. The college also makes substantial use of its residential homes for the training of independence skills.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in developing systems for tracking overall learner progress and development?	Significant Progress
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The college has made significant progress in developing a range of different tracking systems to monitor learners' progress. Systems complement a change in the structure and focus of the learners' individual learning plans (ILPs). ILPs are in the process of development and are being used effectively to track learners' progress; however, learners' involvement is presently under-developed. Every half term an effective peer group critique of progress of the learners' ILPs provides a means of tracking progress. The half-yearly reviews also track learner progress and development. These now assess a wider range of personal development skills. This change was introduced at the beginning of September 2007 and is not yet fully established.

Quality of provision

How effective is the observation of teaching and learning in improving the learning experience?	Reasonable progress
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The outcomes of lesson observations are used effectively to inform supervisions and appraisals and identify individual staff training needs. An external consultant conducts observations to provide a benchmark for the rigour of internal observations. The college's lesson observation formats requires the observer to record teaching and learning outcomes. However the progress of the learner is not fully captured. There is insufficient formal internal moderation of observations. Since the last annual assessment visit observations of daily living skills sessions have been introduced leading to an improved learner experience.

What progress has been made in developing the processes of review, revision and dissemination of learners' targets to ensure improved coherence?	Significant progress
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Since September 2007, the setting of targets has improved to include a wider range of skills that the learners acquire through their lessons. Learning targets are in the process of development and are becoming increasingly specific and relevant to the learners. The development of targets involves all trainers and managers in all parts of the college. The targets are reviewed every half-term and revised if necessary. There is rigorous peer appraisal of targets set for learners to achieve. The half-yearly review meetings also review and revise the targets effectively. The learners' involvement in generating these targets is limited, though many are increasingly involved in steering their review meeting. Some objectives contained within support plan are insufficiently included in ILPs.

How effective has the training of staff been in developing their skills in the use of communication strategies?	Reasonable progress
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The college has recruited further assistance in addressing communication strategies for those learners with communication difficulties, some related to Autistic Spectrum conditions. The training for staff and the support for learners and staff has been effective in developing strategies lead by learners. Several learners have used social stories to aid communication and understanding. As a result, learners and staff have benefited from improved

working relationships, understanding and atmosphere. Although the strategies have proved effective, they are not yet included as ILP targets or targets in lesson plans.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made by the college in promoting equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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The college has improved the access for people with physical disabilities in the vocational areas, and has plans to improve access further in some of the houses that it owns, where the reasonable adjustment can be made. The college, as a part of the parent company, is developing a plan for a single equality and diversity scheme with the aim of promoting equality and diversity more effectively. The college has policies and procedures in place in line with current equalities legislation. The college does not analyse sufficiently learner achievements according to race, disability and gender. There is insufficient action being taken to recruit staff and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.