

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: YMCA Training  
Date of visit: 10 September 2008

### Context

YMCA Training (YMCA) was last inspected in August 2007. Its overall effectiveness and capacity to improve were satisfactory. Health, public services and care, preparation for life and work and business administration were satisfactory. Retail and commercial enterprise was good.

YMCA provides apprenticeships, Entry to Employment (E2E), European Social Fund and private training at 27 centres throughout England. YMCA has 780 learners following apprentice programmes, of which 490 are advanced apprentices. An additional 670 learners are enrolled on E2E programmes.

YMCA has increased the number of Train to Gain learners in five of the sector subject areas, including basic skills, through direct contracting arrangements with the Learning and Skills Council. In July 2008, a new quality director was recruited to lead the recently extended operational management team.

### Achievement and standards

How successful has YCMA been in improving success and progression rates?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

Apprenticeship success rates are satisfactory, as they were at the previous inspection. Overall success rates have improved by 8% and timely success rates by 13% over the previous two years, bringing them both to around the national averages. Success rates have improved equally in advanced and apprentice programmes. However, the advanced apprentice overall success rate for 2007/08 remains low at 5% below the national average. The improved success rates apply across all sector subject areas. Overall success rates for advanced apprentices in health, public service and care, which were unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, improved from 34% to 51% in 2007/08.

The E2E progression rate remains almost static, with only a slight improvement from 52% in 2006/07, to 54% in 2007/08. In addition, too few learners achieve their personal objectives, with again only a slight improvement from 50% in 2006/07, to 53% in 2007/08.

Have strategies been adopted to improve the variations in success rates between centres?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

The inconsistency in success and progression rates between training centres was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. YMCA has strengthened the monitoring of performance through the establishment of operational managers for each region. Internal performance targets are effectively set using internal trends and national guidelines. Monthly operational team meetings evaluate training centre and programme performance by the use of colour-coded management information reports. The provider has recently introduced a detailed intervention process for poorly performing centres. To date, this process has only been implemented for training centres with poor financial performance, rather than poor quality.

During the reviews of the provision, YMCA established a link between those training centres with out-of-funding learners and those with poor performance. The previous policy of tolerating a proportion of out-of-funding learners at each centre has been removed. An extensive evaluation of the E2E provision and its alignment with the foundation learning tier has been used to review how YMCA's programmes can better match the needs of learners. Some inconsistency remains between training centres on apprenticeship programmes. The progression rates into employment and the achievement rates of personal aims on the E2E programmes still vary greatly between training centres, with rates ranging from 13% to 71%. No target is set for the achievement of personal objectives and progression rates overall are 9% below YMCA's internal target of 63%.

#### Quality of provision

How effectively has YMCA remedied the insufficient planning of learning and target-setting for individual learners?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The insufficient planning of learning and target setting at learners' progress reviews was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. An extensive staff development programme, scheduled throughout the year, focuses on the planning of effective progress reviews and strategies to engage learners. The planning of learning is now depicted by a grade as part of the lesson observations process. However, the grades are not yet collated to evaluate trends. Staff are working towards the new qualifications framework for teaching and learning as part of a phased approach to qualifying staff. Schemes of work and lesson sequencing are monitored by operational managers against set criteria. Lesson plans make sufficient reference to differentiation by drawing on a range of learning activities. Some lesson plans include extension activities which could support individual work or extend a topic, together with resources that support less able learners. The monitoring of learners' progress review documentation is more thorough. The quality observation process has been extended to include learners' progress reviews. Training centre co-

ordinators and operational managers audit the review records, providing any necessary staff development at centre level. Some sector subject areas have introduced additional time between the reviews to allow staff and learners to discuss learners' progress towards their targets and any perceived barriers to achieving them. A newly introduced 'skills mapping' tool on E2E programmes establishes more individualised personal objectives, promoting more meaningful personal targets. Learners' targets are sufficiently detailed. Targets are measurable and planned completion dates are clearly recorded.

How effectively are learners comments collected and acted upon?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

At the previous inspection, the gathering of feedback from learners was unsystematic and insufficiently detailed. It was identified as an area for improvement during the self-assessment. YMCA carefully considered a range of methods before introducing a new system which is managed by an external agency. A well-structured plan involves initially gathering feedback from all learners, followed by a process of sampling specific groups. The learner engagement strategy is currently being updated. All learners have completed the questionnaire and YMCA is awaiting the agency's report.

#### Leadership and management

Has the analysis and use of observations of teaching and learning improved?	Insufficient progress
---	-----------------------

A new system to plan and record the grades from the observation of teaching and learning across the organisation has been established. The number of observations and the proportion of grades is one of the key performance indicators monitored by managers on a monthly basis. The number of observations completed has increased and they now cover a broader range of activities, including induction, training and learners' progress reviews. The systems are too new to measure the consistency across training centres and the impact on the quality of the learners' experience. However, some improvement in success rates and a reduction in the number of out-of-funding learners has occurred.

The organisation has invested significantly in staff development, including paired observations, to improve the quality of observations and the expectations of staff being observed. A system of moderating observations across the training centres has not yet been established. Observation records show inconsistencies between the grade awarded and the evidence produced. The strengths and areas for improvement are insufficiently focused to provide the observed staff with a clear indication of how they can improve. The observation system insufficiently identifies good practice that can be shared across the organisation. A monthly bulletin provides updates on key issues and begins to share good practice. A group has been established to identify and share good practice but it is very new and it is too soon to

assess its effectiveness. Outcomes from observations are not yet used sufficiently in self-assessment or individual staff performance reviews.

How effectively has YMCA improved the insufficient arrangements for quality improvement?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

Self-assessment arrangements involve staff at all levels. All programmes and training centres complete local self-assessment reports. The organisation has not yet established a quality improvement policy and strategy, an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Plans are in place to present a policy to the board in January 2009. The regional operational managers have a clearer direction in raising standards through the monthly monitoring of key performance indicators. The new system has yet to be reviewed by senior managers to evaluate its impact. The quality improvement plans based on the self-assessment reports are not completed at national level. At training centre level, many of the targets are too vague and the outcomes are insufficiently measurable to enable their success to be monitored. The organisation's post-inspection action plan does not contain all of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and insufficient progress has been made in many areas. The organisation has detailed management information but does not use it systematically for self-assessment, for example to provide evidence for the leadership and management grades, particularly relating to equality and diversity and the success of different groups of learners.