

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of provider: City of York Council

Date of visit: 6 May 2009

### Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in November 2006 at which leadership and management and quality improvement were good and equality of opportunity was satisfactory. Provision was good in health, public services and care, in information and communication technology, in arts, media and publishing, in languages, literature and culture, and in business, administration and law. Family learning was outstanding.

City of York Council (CYC) provides adult and community learning programmes and work-based learning for young people and adults. Adult and community learning provision is located within CYC's Learning, Culture and Children's Services directorate and work-based learning programmes sit within the council's Economic Development and Partnerships Unit. The scope of the visit covered provision funded by York and North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In addition to adult and community learning and work-based learning, CYC now also holds a Train to Gain contract.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve achievement and standards in both adult and community learning and work-based learning?	Reasonable progress
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CYC has made reasonable progress in improving learners' success rates in both adult and community learning and work-based learning. In adult and community learning, overall success rates have improved steadily from 69% in 2005/06 to 79% in 2007/08. In health, public services and care, just over half of all courses have 100% success rates. A consultant identified several errors in data input but it was too late to alter the information held on the Gateway. Therefore many courses have higher success rates than are actually recorded on the Gateway. The LSC has confirmed this discrepancy. CYC is taking steps to ensure that data capture is more effective in future. However, even using the amended data, a minority of courses have success rates below the national averages. CYC has identified this and is taking actions to improve them.

In 2007/08, overall and timely success rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices were significantly above national averages. For example, overall success rates for apprentices in 2007/08 were 82% compared with the national average of 64%. It is too early in the contract year to assess overall success rates for Train to Gain learners. However, success rates on the three health and care National Vocational Qualification programmes that are complete are very high at 92%, 96% and 100%. The progression rate in Entry to Employment (E2E) has improved from 29% in 2006/07 to 42% in 2007/08 and is currently satisfactory at 50%.

What progress has been made to improve long course success rates?	Reasonable progress
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CYC has made reasonable progress to improve long course success rates. In Skills for Life, overall success rates have improved steadily in the three years since 2005/06, rising from 57% to 65% in 2006/07 and to 76% in 2007/08. Due to problems with the accuracy of the data the actual rates are higher. However, even with amended data, three English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes remain below national averages. CYC is resolving this situation through improved monitoring, better information, advice and guidance and more formal progress reviews to ensure learners are on target to achieve on time. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of these actions. In addition, the council has taken a strategic decision, in discussion with the LSC, to discontinue all A level provision as this was an area with consistently poor success rates.

What progress has been made to extend e-learning across work-based learning?	Reasonable progress
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CYC has made reasonable progress in extending e-learning across work-based learning. The quality of hardware to support the development of e-learning has improved since the previous inspection. CYC has replaced its computer workstations with upgraded hardware and industry standard software. All workstations have access to the internet. All staff who need to have a laptop computer are provided with one. Learners have access to four laptop computers with satellite internet access at community venues. Digital cameras are now used by learners to support their learning. CYC use online testing for adult literacy and numeracy, key skills and the business administration technical certificate. CYC subscribes to useful online resources, which tutors and learners in social care use well. The e-learning strategy, dated July 2008, is appropriate. Three staff have benefited from specific training to lead three e-learning projects. These include the identification of e-learning tools to support staff and learners, improving mobile working and developing e-portfolios. Learners cannot access learning materials, schemes of work or teaching presentations in electronic format from a service intranet. Although learners in adult and community learning have access to a virtual learning environment, learners on work-based learning programmes do not.

What progress has been made to further develop the good partnerships in adult and community learning?	Reasonable progress
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CYC has made reasonable progress in further developing the good partnerships identified in the previous inspection. Senior staff remain involved in key strategic groups although some of these have altered significantly since the previous inspection. CYC continues to make good links with senior representatives from other providers in the city and in wider regional support partnerships. CYC still co-ordinates the jointly-produced publicity for all part-time learning opportunities in the city. Partnerships with the library service have been strengthened since two good quality flexible learning centres were opened in libraries in key areas of deprivation. Family learning continues to work closely with schools and is developing very strong working relationships with Children’s Centres. CYC’s work-based learning provider is kept informed of changes in provision through its partnerships with other work-based learning providers. CYC is developing further good partnerships with a range of specialist providers from the voluntary and statutory services sectors who support learners with a range of learning disabilities and difficulties. While these partnerships continue to improve the service, the wider strategic development within the council is incomplete.

What progress has been made to maintain the broad range of provision in adult and community learning?	Reasonable progress
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CYC has made reasonable progress in maintaining the broad range of provision. In the previous inspection, CYC had a range of adult and community provision based around leisure and arts courses. It made a strategic decision to safeguard this provision across the city by turning them into self-financing courses. A ‘bursary system’ is available to supplement courses for those learners who find the fee prohibitive. CYC has retained the wide range of courses across the city. It works with other providers to ensure that the wider offer is fair and not in competition with them. CYC uses core LSC funding to target the more vulnerable learners across the city. Family learning courses are located well in Children’s Centres across the area and reach vulnerable learners such as young parents or young people facing homelessness.

In addition to the central adult and community learning provision, CYC also has a much wider work-based learning offer. As well as the apprenticeships and the E2E programme, it now has Train to Gain provision. CYC works effectively with some key employers such as the NHS, the University and different council departments to provide training for staff, particularly in Skills for Life.

What progress has been made to reinforce equality of opportunity with work-based learning learners?	Reasonable progress
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CYC has made reasonable progress in reinforcing equality of opportunity in work-based learning, an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Each year, over a three-year period, all staff had training in some form of equality and diversity. The training manager is an equality champion for the work-based learning provision. Staff have increased confidence both in teaching equality and diversity and in challenging inappropriate language and behaviour. CYC has devised six good three-hour training sessions for apprentices covering equality and diversity. These include topics such as disability discrimination, diversity, bullying and harassment and religion. Staff use a good range of innovative resources and teaching and learning methods throughout the programme. CYC has established equality and diversity within the E2E programme, however these learners do not benefit from the specific equality of opportunity training provided for apprentices. All work-based learners cover equality and diversity at induction appropriately. CYC has redesigned the documentation for recording the reviews of learners' progress and these include a section on equality of opportunity. Some records are thorough and demonstrate good reinforcement of equality of opportunity clearly. However, not all records are of good quality.

What progress has been made to improve quality assurance processes?	Insufficient progress
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CYC has made insufficient progress in improving the insufficiently established quality assurance processes identified at the previous inspection. At the time of the previous inspection, a key challenge for CYC was to implement all aspects of quality assurance systematically. The self-assessment process has improved considerably. The processes and documentation for the observation of teaching and learning are different in work-based learning provision and adult and community learning. In work-based learning, CYC observes all teaching staff once each year. Training for, and the number of observers, is insufficient. Although some peer observations take place, this is not part of a coherent strategy and outcomes are not recorded sufficiently. No moderation process is in place. In adult and community learning, CYC has met its target of observing 50% of teaching staff each year. The observers benefit from regular training. CYC has a moderation process. However, not all feedback is thorough and useful. CYC uses paired observations well with both CYC staff and peer review partners, to standardise grades.

Arrangements for quality assurance including audit are insufficiently systematic and are not planned well. They do not always lead to information which clearly contributes to quality improvement. CYC does not have a clear quality policy or strategy. In work-based learning, a quality calendar has been established, but completed actions are not recorded. Although some quality assurance activity

includes the audit of some documentation, formal arrangements do not cover all key documentation.

### Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made to ensure self-assessment and post-inspection action plan processes drive improvement?	Reasonable progress
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CYC has made reasonable progress in ensuring it uses self-assessment and quality improvement planning to drive improvement. At the previous inspection, clear differences existed in the effectiveness and accuracy of the self-assessment process between adult and community learning and work-based learning. The adult and community learning self-assessment report was critical and inclusive; the work-based learning report was insufficiently inclusive and accurate. For 2007/08, CYC has produced one self-assessment report covering both adult and community learning and work-based learning. The process is clear, thorough and understood well by all staff. Staff, learner and partner views clearly contribute to self-assessment judgements. CYC curriculum leaders attend regular training on writing self-assessments. Overall, the report is evaluative and critical. However, the use of data, and in some cases evidence, to support judgements is insufficient. Managers and peers within CYC internally validate sector subject area self-assessments. As part of a peer review initiative, adult and community and work-based learning partners moderate the overall self-assessment. The quality improvement plan covers all the areas for improvement, although as identified by CYC, some areas are insufficiently detailed. CYC monitors progress against the plan regularly and updates it formally twice each year. CYC is committed to continuously improving the self-assessment process. It has identified appropriate areas for improvement in the process and content of the next report.