

Careers Yorkshire and The Humber

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58868

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Last day of inspection: 6 November 2009

Type of provider: nextstep contract

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Information about the provider

1. The prime contractor for nextstep Yorkshire and the Humber is Careers Yorkshire and Humber Limited (CYH). CYH is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. It has five members: Calderdale and Kirklees Careers, Aspire-i, igen, Prospects Services Limited and VT Enterprise. The board of directors provides strategic leadership. There are seven unpaid non-executive directors, one from each of the five members, one from Union Learn and a representative from Business Link Yorkshire. The regional manager of CYH reports to the board. CYH operates in four sub-regions: West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Humberside. Each sub-region has an operations manager who is responsible for the delivery of the service and reports to the regional manager.
2. For the business year 2008–09 CYH was allocated targets of 48,871 customers accessing the universal service and 14,661 for the differentiated personal service (DPS). From January 2009 an additional aspect of the service was introduced, universal plus, to accommodate adults who already hold a level 2 qualification but who, as a result of the economic downturn, need more in-depth support. CYH does not have a customer target for the universal plus service.
3. CYH has a network of 40 subcontractors: nine in both Humberside and South Yorkshire, 14 in West Yorkshire and six in York and North Yorkshire. In addition there are two regional subcontractors. The five main subcontractors are Calderdale and Kirklees Careers, Aspire-i, igen, Prospects Services Limited and VT Enterprise.
4. Yorkshire and the Humber has five major cities: Bradford, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield and York as well as large rural areas such as those in North Yorkshire. The unemployment rate across the region in the three months to August 2009 was 8.9% compared to the national average of 7.9%.

Type of provision	Number of customers in 2008/09
Universal services	49,239
Universal plus services	2,694
Differentiated and personalised services (DPS)	17,847

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Overall effectiveness

5. The overall effectiveness of CYH's nextstep provision is satisfactory. There is a clear vision for the service. The board sets a clear direction for the company. Managers have successfully managed substantial growth following the recent expansion of the service. The self-assessment process is good and thorough. Judgements are based on a range of evidence, including feedback from customers and subcontractors. The self-assessment report is judgemental and evaluative. It identifies most of the areas for improvement found by inspectors. Grades awarded by inspectors mostly matched those of the provider.
6. Outcomes for customers are satisfactory overall. There is insufficient data on customer progression outcomes as not enough customers are followed up to determine outcomes. Advice sessions are satisfactory overall. Customers develop increased confidence and motivation. Venues are welcoming, safe and accessible.
7. CYH communicates well with subcontractors. It provides them with good support, advice and training for their staff. The performance of individual subcontractors is monitored effectively at quarterly review meetings. Customer participation is well monitored but targets are not set for progression outcomes. Arrangements for safeguarding and equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Value for money is satisfactory. There is insufficient monitoring of the high proportion of customers that fail to attend their appointments. CYH has not devised a strategy to address this problem.

Main findings

- The proportion of customers who progress into employment, education or training is satisfactory. The number of customers followed up to determine their progression is low. The data available show that positive outcomes for universal, universal plus and DPS customers are satisfactory.
- Customers improve their awareness of their existing skills and receive a good range of information on alternative career opportunities from their nextstep advisers. Most customers develop increased confidence and motivation following their sessions.
- Too many customers fail to attend their pre-arranged appointments, especially those referred from Jobcentre Plus. Many customers referred by Jobcentre Plus have received insufficient information about nextstep from their Jobcentre Plus advisers.
- Advice sessions are satisfactory. In the better sessions advisers raise customers' aspirations well and give good encouragement to explore a wide range of learning and work opportunities based on good labour market information.
- The quality of action plans is too variable as identified in the self-assessment report. Some plans are good but others miss out important details of customers' backgrounds and circumstances and do not record the full detail of discussions. Too many action plans lack sufficiently specific or time bound actions and some are insufficiently individualised.
- The needs and interests of customers are well met. The service is delivered in a good range of accessible city centre, rural and community locations. There is good flexibility in delivery times to meet customer needs. However, waiting times are too long in some areas, often up to four weeks.
- Partnership collaboration is particularly good. Advisers have access to a wide-ranging network of learning and support providers. Partners within the CYH consortium collaborate well to share expertise; for example, to provide peer quality monitoring.
- Strategic leadership in relation to managing change is good. CYH has recently experienced a significant increase in its target volume of work, due to the provision of additional funding to meet the needs of the region following large-scale redundancies. Managers have successfully implemented a demanding expansion programme.
- Support for, and communication with, subcontractors is good. CYH has a comprehensive training programme which is carefully designed to meet the development needs of subcontractor staff identified through a thorough training needs analysis.
- Networking and partnership working are strong at regional and local levels. The regional advisory forum provides a good opportunity for managers to meet to exchange information and facilitate partnership working. CYH works well with external partners to provide an effective and efficient co-ordinated service to employees who are under threat of redundancy.

- Analysis of data on customer progression is insufficient. CYH does not adequately follow up customers to establish whether they have progressed into employment, education or training after their advice session. Outcome targets for individual subcontractors are not set.
- CYH does not monitor the attendance of customers, although some subcontractors gather this information and take satisfactory action to minimise the number of customers who fail to attend their appointments.
- CYH has a draft skills for life strategy and action plan which have still to be finalised and implemented.

What does Careers Yorkshire and The Humber Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of customers successfully followed up to establish progression data.
- Monitor the progression rates of different subcontractors and take action to close any gaps in performance.
- Continue to monitor and improve the quality of advice sessions and customer action plans to ensure that all customers receive a high quality experience and have an action plan they understand and use effectively.
- Implement a system to monitor customer attendance and quickly develop a strategy to reduce the number of missed appointments.
- Reduce waiting times for advice session appointments.
- Finalise and implement the skills for life strategy so that advisers can offer appropriate advice and referrals.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What customers like:

- the good service
- the helpful and friendly advisers
- getting lots of useful information
- improved confidence
- the wide range of options explored that had not previously been considered
- help with producing a curriculum vitae.

What customers would like to see improved:

- classes nearer home
- more clarity and specific information in response to redundancy
- shorter waiting times for appointments
- more help in finding possible employers

- quicker progress towards completing a curriculum vitae.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- a good introduction to the nextstep service
- the flexibility to provide in-house and out-of-hours services to employees
- the good partnerships with other support agencies to meet employees' needs
- employees value the service provided.

What employers would like to see improved:

- variations in quality between nextstep providers
- more opportunities to have nextstep support earlier in the redundancy process
- greater clarity about the differing roles of nextstep and jobcentre plus.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. CYH has a satisfactory capacity to make and sustain improvements. Strategic leadership relating to the management of change is good and managers have successfully implemented a demanding expansion programme to meet the needs of the region following large-scale redundancies. CYH has strong networking and partnership working at regional and local levels.
9. CYH has a quality strategy and processes that are currently being implemented. A 'quality in action' group, which includes representatives from subcontractors, meets bi-monthly. Effective quarterly reviews of subcontractors take place. A system for observing advisers is being implemented. CYH audits a sample of customer action plans which ensures that they meet the required standard. Data on customer outcomes show improvements over the last three quarters.
10. The self-assessment process is thorough and makes effective use of a range of information including the views of subcontractor staff. The self-assessment report is judgemental and evaluative and it successfully identifies the main areas for development identified by inspectors. The development plan is detailed with clear targets, responsibilities for actions and success indicators. It is monitored rigorously at monthly management meetings.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

11. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Progression rates for customers are satisfactory. The number of customers followed up to determine their progression has been low for both universal and DPS sessions. The data show that positive outcomes for DPS and universal plus customers are satisfactory. A high number of these customers were unemployed at the time of their first session and of these just over a third progressed into employment. For universal customers progression rates for the same period are satisfactory. Advisers have too little understanding of the performance of the service and the destinations of customers.
12. Customers make satisfactory progress towards their employment or learning goals during and between sessions. Customers make good improvements in their awareness of existing skills and receive a good range of information on alternative career opportunities from their nextstep advisers. They also receive good advice on curriculum vitae development. Customers develop increased confidence and motivation following their sessions and are better able to recognise barriers to gaining employment. Customers make a satisfactory contribution to the community. Opportunities for volunteering are clearly identified in many advice sessions.
13. Non-attendance at pre-arranged appointments is too high in some locations, especially for those customers referred from Jobcentre Plus. Many customers

referred by Jobcentre Plus are not given enough information about nextstep from their Jobcentre Plus advisers.

14. Venues are welcoming, accessible and customers feel safe. Advisers have a good awareness of safeguarding and the need to consider customers' potential vulnerabilities. They provide good, clear explanations to customers on safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

15. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Advisers engage well with customers and establish a good rapport. They are sensitive and empathic. In the better sessions advisers raise customers' aspirations well. They encourage customers to explore a wide range of learning and work opportunities based on good labour market information. Customers are satisfactorily involved in decision-making during sessions. There is insufficient encouragement in some cases for customers to take responsibility for their own progress, particularly in the development of their curriculum vitae. Some sessions are too repetitive and lack structure, and some are too rushed. A small number of advisers are insufficiently familiar with the cost implications of self-employment options.
16. The quality of action plans is too variable as identified in the self-assessment report. Most contain a sufficient and accurate record of the discussions with clear, specific and time-bound actions that are understood and useful to the customer. However, some plans leave out important details of customers' previous experiences and current circumstances. Some action plans lack sufficiently specific or time-bound actions. Some advisers use pre-populated action plans. Others do not complete the information required in each section accurately and they are not a useful basis for subsequent sessions. In some cases customers leave sessions without an action plan and completed plans are sent to them after the session. Customers are therefore not able to agree the recorded actions.
17. Resources are satisfactory. Information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactorily used at most venues although there is limited access to ICT at some outreach venues which restricts the amount of information available for customers. Paper-based materials are appropriate and in some specialist centres a wide range of good quality careers materials are available to advisers and customers.
18. The needs and interests of customers are met particularly effectively. nextstep services take place in a wide range of accessible city centre, rural and community locations. Delivery times are flexible to meet customer needs but waiting times are too high in some areas. The service meets the needs of particular groups, such as refugees and asylum seekers, well. The redundancy support service is responsive and successfully meets the needs of employers and employees well. However, in some instances, the intervention does not happen sufficiently early in the redundancy process.

19. Partnership collaboration is particularly good. nextstep advisers have access to a wide network of learning and support providers. Partners within the CYH consortium collaborate effectively to share expertise, including peer quality monitoring. Demographic information is successfully used to respond to changing needs and demands. Advisers in some areas engage proactively with employers particularly well to promote the service.
20. Care and support for customers are satisfactory. Skills for life referral arrangements are appropriate. However, not all advisers are equipped to recognise customers' literacy or numeracy needs and they do not promote skills for life provision sufficiently.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

21. Leadership and management are satisfactory. CYH has recently experienced a significant increase in its target volume of work due to the provision of additional funding to meet the needs of the region, particularly South Yorkshire, following large-scale redundancies. Managers have successfully implemented a demanding expansion programme. Staff are flexible and respond well to change. They have been well supported to meet the needs of a more diverse customer group.
22. CYH has strong networking and partnership working at regional and local levels. The regional advisory forum provides an opportunity for managers to meet to exchange information and facilitate partnership working. CYH works well with external partners to provide an effective and efficient co-ordinated service to employees who are under threat of redundancy. It provides highly effective support for its subcontractors. Communication with subcontractors is good. They value the consultation and partnership approach. CYH provides a good range of training for subcontractors and their staff, which is highly valued. The programme is carefully designed to meet the development needs identified through a thorough training needs analysis.
23. CYH does not adequately follow up customers to establish whether they have progressed into employment, education or training after their advice session. Subcontractors have clear targets for customer participation but not for progression. CYH does not monitor the attendance of customers, although some subcontractors gather this information and take action to minimise the number of customers who fail to attend their appointments.
24. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. CYH has introduced adviser observations as part of its quality system. The process is constructive and has led to some improvement in the quality of advice sessions. However, the observation process is not yet fully implemented. The quality manager undertakes audits of customer action plans. Most action plans are of a satisfactory standard. Subcontractors receive general feedback on the action plans sampled, including identified good practice and suggestions for improvement. However, advisers do not get individual feedback on their work.

- The audit process has identified the need for training in action plan writing and this is planned.
25. CYH has a draft skills for life strategy and action plan which is still to be finalised and implemented.
 26. The board is supportive and sets a clear direction for the company. It is effective in monitoring customer participation but not sufficiently involved in monitoring quality, customer progression and the impact of policies.
 27. CYH has a satisfactory policy and strategy for safeguarding vulnerable people. The advisers' understanding of safeguarding is good. Most advisers have completed or are currently completing an on-line training package covering safeguarding. Managers and other staff are scheduled to complete the training by the end of 2009. Subcontractors maintain records of CRB checks on their own staff and CYH checks these records are complete. CYH checks that subcontractors have appropriate health and safety risk assessments in place but staff have not received safeguarding risk assessment training.
 28. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. A board member is a designated equality and diversity champion. CYH has an appropriate equality of opportunity policy and strategy. Equality and diversity is an aspect of the observation system. Checks are carried out to ensure subcontractors have appropriate equality and diversity policies. Advisers speak a wide range of community languages. CYH provides an effective service across the region using a range of subcontractors to ensure the needs of disadvantaged and rural communities are met. Appropriate adaptive technologies are available to help people with disabilities. CYH satisfactorily monitors the engagement of customers from targeted groups and has just started to monitor comparative outcomes for different types of customers. However outcomes are not yet monitored by subcontractor or geographical area.
 29. CYH satisfactorily engages customers to support and promote improvement. Following advice sessions, advisers give customers a feedback form to complete. The quality manager collates the feedback and communicates the main findings to advisers. This process provides a useful indicator of customer satisfaction and has been used to inform the self-assessment process. CYH has held one customer focus group to obtain the views of customers.
 30. CYH has a satisfactory system for monitoring comments, compliments and complaints from customers. Posters are clearly displayed in advice session locations to alert customers to the opportunity to provide feedback to the quality manager. The workforce development manager collects employer feedback which is generally positive but little detailed analysis has taken place.
 31. CYH provides satisfactory value for money. Outcomes for customers, the quality of provision, and leadership and management are satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are appropriate. The provision is effective in engaging hard to reach customers and is responsive to the changing regional and local economic

circumstances. However, a high proportion of customers fail to attend their appointments.

Information about the inspection

32. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Quality Manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and data on customers and their progression.
33. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed advice and guidance sessions. Inspectors collected evidence from each of the nextstep services the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Careers Yorkshire and The Humber (nextstep)

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Universal service	Universal Plus service	DPS
Approximate number of enrolled learners		12,278	1,230	4,810
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3			
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			
How well do learners progress?	3			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3			
Do learners feel safe?	3			
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3			
Quality of provision	3	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2			
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3			
Leadership and management	3	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3			
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	---			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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