
Meeting of the Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services

16 July 2007

Report of the *Head of Adult Services*

OUTCOME OF AN INSPECTION BY THE ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE INTO THE WORKSTEP EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

1 Summary

To provide the Executive Member with a summary of the findings from the recent Adult Learning Inspection of the Workstep Programme and to seek Member's support to actively promote the programme and related services within the Authority.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Workstep contract with Job Centre Plus is to provide up to 52 places for eligible participants with a disability to be supported into employment.
- 2.2 The Manager and staff working to support the Programme are based at the Yorkcraft site, on Tadcaster Road York, that also hosts the sheltered workshop. At present there are 44 participants on the Programme, thirty-one of whom hold positions in the sheltered workshop whilst the remaining thirteen have jobs with host employers in both the Private and Public sector.
- 2.3 For participants seeking work, support from the programme can take different forms. Two employment officers are able to offer one to one sessions to help participants search for, find and retain paid employment in positions that are best suited to their skill level and capability. A job coach can spend individual time with a person to help them increase their skills and confidence in their new-found positions and where required staff can offer specific help and advice to devise reasonable adjustments in work environments or tailor systems to the special needs of particular individuals.
- 2.4 For people who are already in permanent positions who then have an illness or accident which causes a disability, similar levels and types of support can be made available through the programme to help retain them in their employment by addressing the difficulties which have arisen as a result of their new disability.

2.5 The programme is managed by the Disability Services and Employment Manager who, with his deputy, currently manages the Workstep Programme, sheltered workshop at Yorkcraft, day services for people with a disability and the transport service for Housing & Adult Services.

2.6 **The recent Adult Learning Inspection Feb 2007**

In February this year a planned Inspection of the Workstep Program by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (national level) took place. Three inspectors visited the site for three days and interviewed several participants, support staff, external employers, scheme and senior managers and other CYC staff. They also made a thorough inspection of the sheltered workshop area and interviewed the Operations manager, employment officers, job coach and supervisors. The Inspectors made visits to other host organizations talking to both participants and employers.

The results of their findings were, in the main encouraging and overall the management of the program was assessed as “good” although corporate weaknesses were again identified similar to those they had found in their previous inspection visit of 2003. These related to:

- o the need for the authority to develop a corporate marketing strategy for the Workstep Programme.
- o raising the general awareness of the Workstep Programme throughout the authority

Specifically the key findings from the inspection related to two components:

1 Preparation for life & work- training; - grade 2 good

The operational management of the Workstep Program was assessed as “good” and Inspectors agreed with most of the judgments in the self-assessment report prepared earlier by the Manager and his staff. They noted that there was progress for the majority of participants and that participants and employers were actively involved in the self-assessment process. The promotion of work-based qualifications was seen as “very good” as for many participants this was the first time they had achieved a formal qualification thus giving them confidence and work-based skills in different occupational areas. The placements met the aspirations of participants, who took pride in their work. Participants with host employers, using the additional support of a job coach, had well-structured objectives and clear tasks broken down into manageable elements of learning.

The Inspectors went on to praise the effective promotion of literacy and numeracy skills and acknowledged the good use of the review process, which encouraged appropriate challenges for the participants.

“ Support is very well planned to sustain participants in work. The Workstep team is active and responsive in meeting individual needs. Very good use is made of job coaching to develop a variety of personal and work skill. Good communication and partnership working successfully uses the professional skills of all involved with the delivery of support. Where necessary, contact and practical help is frequent and regular. Workstep staff will adapt their working schedules to meet the needs of participants and provide practical support to employers.”

The only weakness in this area was the need for the new quality assurance system to be fully implemented.

2 Leadership and management - grade 3 satisfactory

Although Inspectors acknowledged the progress made by CYC towards promoting equality and diversity, the lack of an overall clear strategy for:

- o the progression of Workstep employees into unsupported employment and
- o insufficient promotion of the scheme to under-represented groups

These were identified as a weakness during the previous Adult Learning inspection in 2003. The Workstep Programme at present is running at 80% of capacity and requires an effective supported strategy to be able to increase the participating numbers and to encourage its business use both within and outside the Council.

Informally Inspectors also wished the authority to consider how a clearer differentiation could be made between the Workstep programme as a Job Centre Plus funded scheme and the sheltered workshop as a CYC subsidised service

2.7 The opportunities to develop the services exist through:

- o special contract arrangements held at the Yorkcraft sheltered workshop, which gives authorization for preferential consideration to be granted when the sheltered workshop submits estimates for CYC work.
- o Recent amendments to the City of York’s policy and procedures for recruitment, selection and retention that recognise the potential for the Workstep scheme to promote and support potential and present CYC employees with a disability.
- o Wider strategic partnerships

3 Consultation

The findings of the report were shared with the employees who agreed with and were pleased with the overall conclusions. Employees would

welcome raising the profile of the Workstep contract within CYC and look forward to a more opportunities for different work settings.

The full report has been shared with host employers.

Early discussions have taken place with staff in the Corporate Human Resources unit to implement the revised HR policies. Details about the Workstep contract will be incorporated into city of York literature and given prominence in Disability Awareness Workshops for Managers

4 Options and analysis

4.1 An action plan is being developed to respond to those issues raised by the inspection. This action plan will need to reflect:

- o The completion of the quality assurance programme.
- o the promotion of wider opportunities within Council departments. Compared to the general population of York, people with a disability are under-represented in the Council workforce. The Council, as a large employer, has the opportunity to use the scheme to demonstrate good practice through effective use of the revised policies to support recruitment and retention.
- o The development of a realistic marketing strategy. The factory element of Yorkcraft is at present locked into declining industries, and requires a stronger strategy to enable it to diversify into other more profitable areas. New opportunities for work, which would reflect the needs of the local market as well as the needs of the workforce, must be sourced. .
- o Utilising the Workstep programme as an integral part of the modernisation of day services. The employment service needs to become an integral part of the continuum of options, which can be made available to people with a disability who are referred for services. To this end new information leaflets informing both potential employers and participants about the Workstep Programme have been produced and the CYC web site has been updated to reflect this new information.

5 Corporate priorities

The role of the Workstep program supports the corporate priority aim to increase people's skills and knowledge to improve their future employment prospects.

6 Implications

6.1 *Financial Implications*

The financial implications of production of information and materials can be absorbed within current budgets. The financial implications of any component of the action plan that cannot be met through existing budgets

will be considered through the normal budget processes as they are identified.

6.2 Human Resources

Discussions have begun to consider the implementation of the Policy and Procedural changes and the potential for:

- o job applicants with a disability to be given support through the programme
- o the programme to be used to support the retention of staff with a disability.

6.3 Equalities

The Director of Housing & Adult Social services will be pursuing relevant corporate components of the programme through his Leadership role with the Equalities objectives.

Legal

There are no legal implications to the report

Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications to the report

Information Technology

There are no information technology implications to the report

Property

Any property implications from consideration of a more distinct separation of Workstep from Yorkcraft will be dealt with through delegated authority and reported to members as required.

Other.

There are no other implications to the report

7 Risk management

There are no known risks should the recommendations of the inspection be adopted/accepted. The risk of not implementing the recommendations could be the ultimate loss of the contract and consequent financial risks of maintaining current commitments

8 Recommendations

That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to note the content of this report and support officers to implement the recommendations required.

Reason. To make further improvements to the service for current and future customers.

Contact Details

Author:

Keith Martin
Head of Adult Services
HASS
Tel: 554003

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Bill Hodson
Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Report Approved Date *2/7/07*

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *List information for all*

Financial
Name *Debbie Mitchell*
Title *Head of HASS Finance*
Tel No. *554161*

HR
Name *Claire Waind*
Title *HR Officer (HASS)*
Tel No. *554519*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Full ALLreport Feb 2007

Annexes:

None