
Children, Education & Communities Policy & 13 March 2019 Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities and Equalities)

York Learning – Strategic Plan Progress Report 2017/18

Summary

1. This report presents the mid-year performance data for York Learning and updates on any significant service issues. This is part of a regular reporting cycle.
2. This report forms part of the service's governance reporting arrangements which are crucially important for the service in demonstrating to Ofsted that it has secure and robust governance arrangements in place. This requirement has been given more weight in a number of recent Adult and Community Learning Inspections and there is a need for City of York to consider whether the current arrangements are suitable for the future. This will be the subject of a further report to this committee.

Background

3. York Learning is a council service which delivers a range of learning programmes to support people into employment, to improve their skills and to support their personal development. The service is funded almost exclusively from external contract funding and fee income. Originally the service was reporting income for the academic year 2018/19 in the region of £2.9m, but this is likely to increase to just short of £3.3m. The majority of increase in funding is due to a sharp rise in the number of 19-25 year olds high needs personalised learning programmes. The bulk of this funding is "passported" to partner organisations, primarily Blueberry Academy, Choose2Youth and United Response, although there are now 6 independent organisations offering very bespoke support to HNS/SEND learners. There has also been a slight increase in project funding.

4. Annex 2 is a detailed breakdown of income streams for the service. This shows increases in 16-19 and 19+ HNS\SEND funding along with increases in fee income. There has been a slight decrease in funding for level 3 “learner loan” programmes, as a result of lack of demand. Funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency remains static in cash terms which effectively means a reduction in funding. The service continues to look for alternative means of funding via projects which is continuing to be successful.

Significant performance highlights and other issues

5. The service is performing well against most of the measures set out in the strategic plan for 2018/19. This is reported in Annex 1. The services performance in supporting HNS students and in the continued development of its general programme is ensuring a robust and financially sound model on which to base delivery. This has resulted in a 4th year of growth for the service with increases in income, over the period, of £665k.
6. The service has also been successful in procuring a program called ‘Work & Health Pilot’ relating to supporting those on long term sick from work. These learners are mainly referred via GPs and the project has worked with over 90 people, substantially exceeding the project target of working with 10 individuals. Unfortunately this project is now coming to an end and whilst the service is looking at ways in which this can be sustained it is unlikely to be able to do this without access to further funding.
7. The “Positive Progressions”, (a programme aimed at supporting people back into work), has been further extended for another 2 years. This programme offers high levels of support to individuals over a significant period of time, allowing individuals to gain confidence, raise their self-esteem and gain qualifications to prepare them for work. Whilst the audit requirements in the programmes have caused some difficulties for the service and at one point there were some questions about the ability of the local authority to provide the audit evidence required, there is no question that this type of intervention can have a profound effect on individual people.
8. The Community Learning programme continues to increase learner engagement into local community programmes. The service is now seeing a significant increase in the number of learners with low level mental health issues which has lead to the development of a new

'Wellness' offer, focusing on supporting positive mental wellbeing. The aim of the programme is to provide early intervention support to avoid the impact of mental health issues affecting their everyday life.

9. The service continues to provide significant levels of support for those learners who need to improve their English, maths, ICT and employability skills and this remains a key focus for the service. There has also been an increase in demand for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses which has resulted in the service offering further progression courses. However the suitability and availability of city centre rooms to run courses remains a significant challenge.
10. The service has been the subject of a financial internal audit and the overall audit opinion was one of 'Reasonable Assurance'. Several areas were highlighted including the recording of fee income, apprenticeship and loans funding processes. The service has agreed an action plan with audit to deal with any inconsistencies and will be addressing these over the next 6 months.
11. Apprenticeships are continuing to be below minimum standards but their overall achievement rates are on target to have increased from the last academic year of 52.4% to 56%. Challenges continue in encouraging apprentices to complete their learning whilst staying in traditionally low paid jobs.

Options

12. This report is for discussion and comment. There are no options to consider.

Corporate Objectives

13. Any plans and strategies developed are set within the context of the council plan but also respond to a number of sub-regional, regional and national policy objectives.

Implications

14. **Finance:** The service is fully funded via external contracts and grants. Whilst the service has robust procedures in place to ensure the services maximises income this is not without some risks.
15. The report has no Human Resources, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, Information Technology, Property or other implications.

Risk Management

16. There are no risks to consider that arise from this report.

Recommendations

17. Members are asked to comment upon the performance of York Learning and seek clarification on any areas of concern.

Reason: To help monitor the service and guide managers and ensure robust and accountable governance arrangements.

Contact Details

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Report
Approved

Date 4 March 2019

Wards Affected:

All

Background Documentation

The Self Assessment report referred to can be viewed by contacting angela.padfield@york.gov.uk

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

1. Strategic/Service Plan update 2018/19
2. Service funding sources financial year 18/19

Abbreviations

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

HNS - Higher needs support

Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education

SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disability