
**Children, Education & Communities
Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

6th July 2021

Report of the Assistant Director (Customer and Communities)

York Learning – Strategic Plan Progress Report 2020/21

Summary

1. This report presents the end of academic year performance report and data for York Learning. The report forms part of the service’s reporting arrangements, which are critically important for the service in demonstrating to Ofsted that it has robust governance arrangements in place. Feedback on the report from this committee will help to shape the service’s Strategic Plan for the academic year 2021/22 which will be considered by the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities in September.
2. In July 2019 this committee decided to strengthen the scrutiny arrangements in respect of York Learning by establishing a stakeholder governance board (subsequently named the York Learning Improvement Board) to give more weight to the challenge received by the service. It was agreed that the new board should produce a report on the performance of York Learning once a year to be brought back to this committee.
3. The York Learning Improvement Board first met in October 2020. Meetings take place four to six times a year. Members of the board (“York Learning Governors”) are drawn from a variety of backgrounds including:
 - a) A councillor (who acts as chair)
 - b) York Learning Management / Tutor
 - c) CYC Childcare Inclusion Advisor
 - d) An Adult Learning manager from another service (currently Leeds)
 - e) Subcontracting partners – Blueberry and United Response

- f) Employers
 - g) Two learners from different types of provision both accredited and from projects.
 - h) A volunteer
4. Cllr. Daubeney was once again appointed at annual council to chair the York Learning Improvement Board.

Recommendations

5. 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.

Background

6. York Learning is a council service that delivers a range of adult 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. The service has reported income for the academic year 2020/21 in the region of £3.2m. Included in this is an increased level of funding for 19 to 25-year-old high needs personalised learning programmes, the greater part of which is “passported” to partner organisations, primarily Blueberry Academy, Choose2Youth and United Response, in addition to six independent organisations that are now offering very bespoke support to SEND learners.

Significant highlights in performance

7. The services has performed well against the measures set out in the strategic plan for 2020/21. The detail is reported in Annex 1. The service’s performance in supporting 16 to 18-year-old learners and Special Education Needs (SEND) students is a challenging financial model. The 16-18 programme is highly valued but funding does not fully cover the costs and presents a financial challenge to the service. Also, with the 16-24 Special Education Needs (SEND), programme numbers now exceeding targets, this again presents a challenge to budgetary provision. However, both offers are part of a statutory duty on the council and therefore not within the immediate control of York Learning.

8. The service has also obtained extensions to two successful European Social Fund contracts to support some of the most vulnerable people across the city. Respectively called “Action towards Inclusion” and “Positive Progressions”, these two programmes offer high levels of support to individuals over a significant period, allowing them to gain confidence, raise their self-esteem and achieve qualifications to prepare them for work. There are numerous examples of work with very vulnerable individuals having significant affect on their life chances and on their general health and wellbeing. The service have recently been awarded a contract with the Manchester Growth Company to support rehabilitation of offenders back into communities.
9. The service is pleased to report that it was successful in retaining its Matrix Accreditation, which is a national quality framework, which measures how well the service provides information, advice and guidance to learners and how well the service promotes these services. This accreditation has to be renewed every three years.
10. The service continues to provide significant levels of support for those learners who need to improve their English, maths, digital skills and employability skills and this remains a key focus for the service. There has also continued to be a demand for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). However, the availability of suitable city centre rooms to run courses remains a significant challenge especially now that we are returning to the classroom after Covid.
11. Covid highlighted that we have resilient, talented and highly committed management and tutor teams. Tutors willingly engaged with new technologies such as Zoom video conferencing and Google Classroom. Courses were quickly transferred to remote learning during the pandemic and, where needed, tutors safely delivered resource packs to learners to support those on entry-level courses where online learning has limitations.
12. Frequent contact, outside of the classroom, was maintained during holidays and lockdowns, helping with continued engagement and especially with our most vulnerable learners. Support was also provided to residents and learners throughout lockdown with activities and challenges to do alone or with family to support them and helped to combat loneliness, stress and the sense of isolation people were feeling at that time. Learners, residents, parents & carers of disabled young

people have all provided feedback relating to the positive impact of learning via zoom, helping them to remain focused, positive and providing a lifeline to help them stay well both physically and mentally whilst maintaining educational progress.

13. Whilst overall learner numbers have dropped, since online learning has not suited everyone, there have still been many new learners recruited. This is mainly within the online wider community-learning offer, which is encouraging and shows the potential of growth for an ongoing online offer.
14. Whilst the strong online curriculum enabled engagement from all types of learners including the most disadvantaged, going fully online has made new engagement opportunities with the most disengaged incredibly difficult for a period. This is mainly within entry and lower level skills including family learning courses and very evident within IT and Digital skills where improving digital and IT work skills felt too challenging for some learners, thus leading to lower recruitment and achievement. So, for example, achievement in IT for Users within adult and community learning dropped between 2018-19 and 2019-20 from 92.8% to 82.5%.
15. The impacts of COVID have brought the need for the service to have its own venue into ever sharper relief, a fully accessible and highly visible adult learning base, which can inspire and motivate adults to embrace lifelong learning and provide the support that learners require. Officers continue to consider potential options.
16. Considerable work has been done to produce a well-rounded offer for those seeking career and interview guidance to help residents to access skills and opportunities to improve their employment chances. The offer is free and provided in an accessible way.

Options

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

Corporate Objectives

18. 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

19. The report is for information only; there are no implications to consider.

Risk Management

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

Annexes

Annex A: Strategic Plan & Performance Figures 2020-21

Contact Details

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Report
Approved



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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report