

INSPECTION REPORT

The City of York Council

17 November 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The City of York Council (CYC) provides adult and community learning programmes for young people and adults and work-based learning for young people. Adult and community learning provision is located within CYC's learning, culture and children's services directorate and work-based learning programmes are offered by the council's economic development directorate. All provision is funded through contracts with the North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council. The adult and community learning service is based at one of the council's offices in the centre of York. The head of service is responsible for all aspects of strategic and operational management. He reports to the assistant director of learning, culture and children's services. Following a reorganisation of management roles in 2005, the head of service is now supported by a management team consisting of a head of planning and operations and a head of information technology (IT) and e-learning. There are also two strategic managers responsible for family learning and skills for life and quality assurance and staff development. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. A team of curriculum managers and centre co-ordinators is responsible for day-to-day management of the provision.
2. The adult and community learning service's mission is 'to provide opportunities for everyone to be part of a thriving learning community, particularly focusing on participation by people who have had the least benefit from the education system so far'
3. Programmes are delivered through adult education centres based at seven secondary schools. The adult education centres also use about 80 smaller venues such as village halls and community centres. Courses are offered in all but two of the 15 sector subject areas. Adult and community learning programmes are divided into six curriculum areas comprising visual and performing arts and design, information and communications technology (ICT), modern foreign languages, family learning and skills for life, academic studies, and health and well-being.
4. Work-based learning is provided by York Training Centre, based in the city centre. Its mission statement is 'to enhance the economic well-being of the local community through socially inclusive learning and employment opportunities'. CYC provides training for apprentices and advanced apprentices in care, early years care, sport, leisure and recreation, administration and customer service. A small number of learners are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ). CYC's provision in environmental conservation, catering and hospitality and retailing was discontinued in 2005-06 as was its contract with Jobcentre Plus for a range of work preparation programmes.
5. CYC's work-based learning centre employs four managers, four administrative staff and 22 trainer/assessors. Apprenticeship training accounts for 45 per cent of the provision in work-based learning, and vocational training for school pupils aged 14-16 accounts for 30 per cent. The remainder is mostly commercially-funded work.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

6. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** More specifically, provision is good in health, public services and care, ICT, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture, and business administration and law. Family learning is outstanding. Leadership and management and quality improvement arrangements are good and equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

7. **Achievement and standards are good.** Overall success rates are good in most areas of learning. Framework success rates in work-based learning have improved steadily in the past two years and are now satisfactory. Current apprentices are making good progress. Learners develop good skills in ICT, creative arts and modern foreign languages. Those on family learning programmes develop good personal, social and parenting skills. Attendance is good for most courses. Most learners progress well and there are many examples of learners who have progressed from introductory courses to level 2 qualifications. Standards of work are good in all areas of learning.

8. **The quality of provision is good.** Standards of teaching and learning are mostly satisfactory. Teaching in arts, media and publishing is good and outstanding in family learning. Of the 37 sessions observed by inspectors, 19 per cent were outstanding, 49 per cent were good and 32 per cent were satisfactory. None were inadequate. Tutors make good use of resources to support learning in modern foreign languages. For example, tutors of French, German and Italian, use digital projectors particularly effectively to develop learners' spoken responses or conversations without recourse to English. Family learning tutors are well qualified and highly motivated. They deliver well-paced, interactive and challenging lessons which provide learners with a very good range of practical activities and opportunities for discussion. Some of the weaker lessons in ICT are characterised by an over-reliance on work sheets and paper-based activities. Opportunities to develop and reinforce key learning points are not always taken. Assessment is generally satisfactory. Learners receive constructive feedback on written and practical work, which helps them to improve. In work-based learning, training officers use an appropriate range of assessment methods. They plan assessments well and adequately record direct observation of working practice. There is some poor assessment practice in modern foreign languages. CYC has made satisfactory progress to implement the process of recognising and recording progress and achievement in different curriculum areas. This process is clearly linked to programme review and evaluation.

9. **The range of programmes to meet the needs and activities of learners is good,** particularly in arts, media and publishing and family learning. A wide range of information sources is used to support planning, including local intelligence, learner questionnaires and free taster courses to identify potential new learners. The service works closely with schools and other partners to target parents and carers who do not have a level 2 qualification. Partnership working is effective in widening participation and engaging learners. CYC works particularly effectively with schools and voluntary organisations to provide a wide range of accessible venues at times that meet learners' personal needs.

10. **Support for learners is good.** Very good links with statutory and voluntary sector support agencies ensure that every effort is made to provide a network of support for

disadvantaged and vulnerable learners and families. Publicity materials provide clear and effective guidance to prospective learners. Most telephone and personal enquiries at the advice and guidance centre or learning centres are dealt with helpfully and efficiently. Tutors provide good individual support for learners in class. Laptop computers are available on a free loan and free creche support is provided to targeted provision. Recent developments in an entry to employment (E2E) programme are effectively supporting young learners who did not attend school regularly or who were excluded from school for long periods. One hundred and fifty-five pupils aged 14-16 are in work-related learning provided at CYC's training centre. Support is particularly effective in meeting the individual needs of work-based learners. Tutors make frequent visits to employers to support learners in the workplace. Most are making very good progress towards completion of their apprenticeship.

11. The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The adult and community learning self-assessment process is critical and inclusive. The service makes good use of staff and learner feedback to make judgements about the quality of provision. CYC identified most of the key strengths and weaknesses that the inspectors found, but understated some strengths in family learning, arts, media and publishing, leadership and management and quality improvement. Inspectors gave a higher grade for these aspects of the provision. The self-assessment grades for ICT, languages, literature and culture and equality of opportunity matched those given by inspectors. The adult and community learning quality improvement plan is comprehensive and provides clear timescales and responsibilities for improving the provision. The self-assessment report produced by the council's work-based learners team is insufficiently inclusive. Inspectors found different strengths and weaknesses for most aspects of the inspected provision but gave the same overall grades.

12. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. CYC has made considerable improvements in its adult and community learning provision since the previous inspection in 2003 and the quality monitoring visit in 2005. Work-based learning has also improved significantly since the inspection in 2002 and the reinspection of health, public services and care in 2003. Inspection grades have improved for all areas of learning. Many weaknesses identified during previous inspections have been successfully dealt with, and some are now strengths. Leadership and management and quality improvement arrangements are now good. Success rates in work-based learning are improving and the proportion of learners who complete within the planned period is increasing.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE CITY OF YORK COUNCIL:

- maintain the high standards of provision
- maintain and further develop partnership working
- maintain a broad and affordable range of provision in adult and community learning
- reinforce understanding of equality of opportunity in work-based learning
- systematically implement all aspects of quality assurance
- extend e-learning to work-based learning

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Health, public services and care			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Social care Apprenticeships for young people	14	2	
Early years Apprenticeships for young people	33	2	

Information and communications technology			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
ICT for users Adult and community learning	297	2	

Arts, media and publishing			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Fine arts Adult and community learning	310	2	
Crafts Adult and community learning	220	2	
Media and communication Adult and community learning	53	2	

Languages, literature and culture			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Other languages, literature and culture Adult and community learning	564	2	

Business administration and law		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	7	2
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	6	2

Family learning		1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning Adult and community learning	195	1 1

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

13. Inspectors reported on and graded CYC's adult and community learning provision in ICT, arts, media and publishing, languages, literature and culture and family learning. CYC's work-based learning provision in health, public services and care and business administration and law was also inspected and graded. Inspectors gave an overall grade for leadership and management and contributory grades for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Inspectors sampled provision in adult and community learning and work-based learning areas that were not separately reported on and graded. The inspection was carried out in three stages during October and November 2006.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	42
Number of learners interviewed	217
Number of staff interviewed	99
Number of employers interviewed	10
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	47
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	16
Number of visits	3

Leadership and management

Strengths

- comprehensive strategic and curriculum planning and management in adult and community learning
- particularly effective partnerships to promote learning and skills
- very good city-wide strategy for provision of information, advice and guidance

- very effective strategy to promote accessibility to e-learning in adult and community learning
- good arrangements for appraisal and staff development
- good strategies for widening participation
- very effective quality improvement strategies

Weaknesses

- weak reinforcement of equality of opportunity in work-based learning
- insufficiently well-established aspects of quality assurance

Health, public services and care

Strengths

- good progress towards framework completion
- good individualised support for learners
- good employer involvement in training

Weaknesses

- insufficient resources to support new programmes
- poor understanding and reinforcement of equality of opportunity

Information and communications technology

Strengths

- good success rates for the examination-based computer programme
- good development of skills
- very effective and accessible virtual learning environment
- good community-based learning

Weaknesses

- insufficiently individualised target-setting on some non-accredited courses
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Arts, media and publishing

Strengths

- good development of creative and craft skills
- much good teaching which challenges learners
- particularly effective and responsive curriculum planning

Weaknesses

- insufficient quality monitoring of aspects of teaching and learning

Languages, literature and culture

Strengths

- good achievement
- good use of resources to support learning in foreign languages
- good academic and personal support for learners of foreign languages
- particularly effective recent strategies to improve quality in foreign languages

Weaknesses

- some poor assessment

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good progress by learners
- good development of learners' vocational skills
- good off-the-job training
- good employers and work placements

Weaknesses

- insufficient employer involvement in reviews
- insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training

Family learning

Adult and community learning

Strengths

- very good development of learners' personal, social and parenting skills
- good achievement on accredited courses
- outstanding teaching and learning
- highly responsive and flexible programme to meet learners' needs and interests
- very effective support for learners
- outstanding leadership and management

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT THE CITY OF YORK COUNCIL:

- good teaching and support materials
- friendly and approachable staff
- being treated as adults
- small group teaching
- relating theory to practical work
- convenience and accessibility
- learning new skills and techniques
- learning about the culture behind the language
- regaining confidence
- inspirational teaching

WHAT LEARNERS THINK THE CITY OF YORK COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- insufficient car parking
- too much paperwork
- slow internet access