

INSPECTION REPORT

City of York Council (Workstep)

15 February 2007



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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Contents

Summary

| | |
|---|---|
| Description of the provider | 1 |
| Overall effectiveness | 1 |
| Key challenges for City of York Council (Workstep) | 1 |
| Grades | 2 |
| About the inspection | 2 |
| What learners like about City of York Council (Workstep) | 4 |
| What learners think City of York Council (Workstep) could improve | 4 |

Detailed inspection findings

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Leadership and management | 5 |
| Equality of opportunity | 6 |
| Quality improvement | 7 |
| Preparation for life and work | 9 |

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The City of York Council (CYC) is a unitary authority and offers Workstep training for the residents of York and North Yorkshire. Workstep is part of the Housing and Adult Social Services Department and is based at the Yorkcraft supported business. The disability services and employment manager has overall responsibility for Workstep, and is supported by a deputy disability services and employment manager, an operations manager, two supported employment officers and six supervisor/coaches.

2. Most of the participants are based at the Yorkcraft site working on commercial contracts including bulk mailing, contract packing, sign-making, archiving of council documents, and warehousing and distribution. Other participants have external placements with host employers throughout York and North Yorkshire.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** CYC's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for quality improvement. Its approach to equality of opportunity is good, as is its provision in preparation for life and work.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is thorough and comprehensive. The views of participants, staff and employers are collected through questionnaires and taken into consideration, although there is little contribution from external partners. The self-assessment report is analytical and self-critical and most of the strengths and weaknesses identified matched the inspectors' judgements.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Managers have a good understanding of the actions necessary to improve the Workstep programme. The quality assurance arrangements are near completion and are becoming established within the organisation. Actions to further improve the provision and increase the number of participants are awaiting council approval.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CITY OF YORK COUNCIL (WORKSTEP):

- implement an effective strategy to improve rates of progression into open sustainable employment
- ensure quality assurance arrangements are integral to all stages of the Workstep programme
- maintain and develop the high profile and activity levels of education and training within the programme
- implement an effective strategy to increase participation, particularly by groups that are currently under represented

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

| Preparation for life and work | | 2 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Employability training</i> | | 2 |
| Workstep | 44 | 2 |

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. The inspection took place during February 2007 and only covered the Workstep programme. Other elements of the council's publicly funded learning, including adult and community learning and work-based learning programmes, were not inspected during this visit.

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of inspectors | 3 |
| Number of inspection days | 9 |
| Number of learners interviewed | 21 |
| Number of staff interviewed | 28 |
| Number of employers interviewed | 9 |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 9 |
| Number of partners/external agencies interviewed | 2 |
| Number of visits | 1 |

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good and effective strategy to improve literacy, numeracy and language provision
- steady improvement of management systems
- good strategy to identify barriers to employment

Weaknesses

- no effective strategy to improve uptake of Workstep places and progression into unsupported employment
- incomplete quality assurance system
- insufficient promotion of Workstep to under-represented groups

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Strengths

- good promotion of work-based qualifications
- very good development planning
- active and very well-planned support to sustain participants in the workplace

Weaknesses

- low progression rates into unsupported employment

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CITY OF YORK COUNCIL (WORKSTEP):

- 'the security and safety of the job'
- 'it's the first job I've ever had'
- 'the manager talks to us all and asks us how we are'
- 'the specialist facilities have made all the difference to me'
- 'it's such a friendly environment'
- 'good support to help me stay in work'
- 'Workstep works for me'
- 'a national vocational qualification helped me put learning into practice'
- 'it focuses on abilities, not disabilities'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK CITY OF YORK COUNCIL (WORKSTEP) COULD IMPROVE:

- 'I would like more work to do'
- 'more jobs at the council'
- 'let more people know about what we do'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good and effective strategy to improve literacy, numeracy and language provision
- steady improvement of management systems
- good strategy to identify barriers to employment

Weaknesses

- no effective strategy to improve uptake of Workstep places and progression into unsupported employment
- incomplete quality assurance system
- insufficient promotion of Workstep to under-represented groups

7. The organisation has devised and implemented a clear, relevant and successful strategy to improve participants' employment-related literacy, numeracy and communication skills. Regular reviews take place with the college that provides the literacy, numeracy and language training, and the review records show that the strategy is being developed further in the light of experience. At first, training took place at the Yorkcraft supported business, but now participants have gained in confidence they travel to the college's premises. Most participants are in a class specifically for the supported business, but a small number have progressed to open classes. Participants value the certificates they gain, and are showing the benefits of their learning in their working life. They are also gaining enormously in confidence, and CYC joins in celebrating their success. Further courses to improve participants' speaking and listening skills are scheduled to take place in the summer.

8. Managers based at the Yorkcraft site have a thorough understanding of Workstep and other employment programmes for people with disabilities. They are highly committed to promoting Workstep but currently have a limited influence over future developments.

9. CYC has the well-developed and consistent staff management systems expected of a local authority. Members of staff have an induction, staff handbook, objectives, an appraisal system, and regular meetings. A new annual appraisal system was recently introduced that concentrates on personal development. Staff development is satisfactory. Training requirements are identified by the management team and there are some good training activities to support the individual needs of participants.

10. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory and involve supervisors and participants. Production and packing areas in the supported business are well maintained with circulation areas kept clear and potentially dangerous areas cordoned off. Risk assessments are appropriate and revised as necessary. All participants have received awareness training in dealing with hazardous substances and in back care where appropriate.

11. Communication within the supported business is satisfactory. Managers and supervisors have professional and supportive relationships with participants. There are formal and informal opportunities for staff to express their views, and managers keep all staff and participants informed of developments, particularly those relating to the future of the factory site. Participants are well represented by the relevant trade union and receive regular briefings from their trade union representative.

12. The lack of an overall strategy for Workstep was a weakness at the previous inspection in 2003. Despite this, there is still no clear strategy for the role of Workstep within the council, or for the supported business. Following recent reorganisation, the entire day-service provision for adults is consulting on modernisation, and the Workstep programme is just one part of this provision. The Workstep programme is running at 80 per cent of capacity, and has been for some time, with no effective strategy either to increase the numbers coming onto the programme, or to progress those who have been on it for a long time. Many long-term participants transferred from the previous supported employment programme. There have been discussions with the council about using Workstep to help with its management of long-term absences, but progress has been slow, and no council employees have so far been transferred to Workstep. The factory element of the supported business is locked into declining industries, and there is no strategy to enable it to diversify into other more profitable areas which would reflect local employment opportunities or meet the needs of the workforce. Managers have discussed the need for a marketing strategy, both within the council and to the wider community, but no such strategy has yet been devised. Employers and participants now have a leaflet about Workstep, and say they now understand the programme. Information about the Workstep programme is available on CYC's website but it is not easy to find.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

13. CYC's strategy to identify and overcome barriers to employment is good. All participants' personal files provide a good analysis of their disabilities and the effect these have on their employability. Good use is made of information gained from participants who have previously followed the work preparation programme. The Workstep training grant is used very effectively to develop specific employability, personal and social skills through accredited vocational training, including lift truck training and driving instruction.

14. The checking of participants' awareness and understanding of equality of opportunity has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Employment advisers and supervisors reviewing participants' development plans adapt their discussions on equality of opportunity to the participants' level of understanding. For participants with learning difficulties there is a strong focus on ensuring safety in the workplace and that individuals know what to do if they feel they are being bullied or harassed. Within the supported business, decisive action is taken if cases of bullying or harassment are reported. CYC encourages a strong culture of mutual respect and the valuing of all employees regardless of disability or ethnicity.

15. The disability services and employment manager works well with the council's equalities manager and human resources corporate development manager. They have developed a strategic approach to raise awareness of Workstep to support the council's aspiration to increase the number of people with disabilities it employs. The 'Pride In Our Community' strategy identifies the under-representation of disabled people in the council's workforce and proposes a way to ensure equality in all aspects of the council's

activities. In particular, this means ensuring departmental heads have a good awareness of the support available through access to work and Workstep, the implications of disability discrimination legislation, and the potential effect on attendance management and staff retention of supporting staff with undeclared disabilities. The strategy is at an early stage and at the time of inspection had not had a significant effect on increasing the number of participants progressing into council employment.

16. The monitoring of equality in the workplace is satisfactory. There are appropriate arrangements to ensure that host employers have equal opportunities policies. If an employer does not have an appropriate policy they are offered a model policy to adapt. All workplace reviews include a check of equality of opportunity.

17. Staff are appropriately trained in equality and diversity. Some have received up-to-date training in supporting participants with communication difficulties, and use the skills they have developed to increase their effectiveness with participants who have hearing impairments or other communication difficulties.

18. Access to the production areas at Yorkcraft is satisfactory. A recent accessibility audit identified the need for some improvements, but managers quickly took action and most of the recommendations have been carried out.

19. The factory environment is not stimulating and does little to encourage an understanding of equality and diversity. Although the qualifications of staff and Workstep participants are prominently displayed, the walls in most production areas and the canteen are bare with no positive images of people with disabilities or examples of other achievements by participants.

20. Data on equality of opportunity is collected satisfactorily and analysed by the management team. However, it is not routinely used to set targets to increase participation from under-represented groups.

21. The self-assessment report correctly identifies the lack of a strategy to encourage referrals and recruitment from groups currently under-represented on the programme. Women in particular are significantly under-represented in the supported business. The strategy drafted by the disability services manager is currently awaiting approval. Although occupancy figures are sent monthly to Jobcentre Plus there has been no increase in the number of referrals.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

22. The management systems for the Workstep programme have steadily improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Much effort has gone into analysing and improving some of the key Workstep processes, particularly the development plan. The development plan is now seen much more as a 'living document', and employees are interested enough in its content to want to refer to it between reviews. CYC has spent considerable time improving the form which is used to record the plan, as well as the formal review process employees undergo with their supervisors. The supported employment officer who developed the new form referred to examples from other providers in the region to make the best use of existing good practice. The disability services and employment manager oversees all the goals on the development plans, and feeds back helpful comments on them to the supervisors who drew them up, to provide

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL (WORKSTEP)

ongoing training and support. CYC has also worked hard to improve its management information system. One of the Workstep employees, supervised by his supported employment officer, has combined several pre-existing spreadsheets of employee information, into an overall database. Managers had tried unsuccessfully to use a commercial Workstep-specific information system, but then felt that it would be better to design their own. They find it much easier to produce reports on activities through this system, and combine information about individual employees.

23. CYC has recently designed a comprehensive quality improvement system. At the previous inspection there was criticism of its lack of such a system. The introduction of formalised quality assurance was delayed by restructuring and reorganisation in the council. The system is not yet complete and some procedures are still being written. There is a monitoring system, but it has not yet been used, as the procedures have only just been written. There are no clear timescales for when the system should be reviewed. The system is capable of identifying where CYC is falling short of its targets, or where procedures are not being adhered to, but it is too new to have had a systematic effect on the quality of the provision.

24. The self-assessment process has been developed over the past five years. It is now very inclusive, with inputs from staff, both formally and informally, and from employees and employers. During the time it has been carrying out self-assessment, CYC has been looking for ways to improve the feedback it gets from employers, both in terms of the response rate to questionnaires, and the quality of the information derived from them. It used the services of a university student on secondment to help with questionnaire design and with the interpretation and presentation of information. The student produced a report with detailed recommendations for improvement, all of which the Workstep managers adopted. The most recent self-assessment report has much more detailed information about employers' views than previous reports. It is generally helpful and accurate.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Employability training</i> Workstep | 44 | 2 2 |

25. CYC's Workstep programme is contracted to provide 52 places. There are 30.5 places at Yorkcraft supported business and 11.5 places in supported employment in host organisations. At present, there are 44 participants, 40 of whom work full time and four part time. External placements are in the private and public sectors. Thirty participants transferred from the supported placement scheme, representing 68 per cent of the total. Seventy-five per cent of the participants are men, as nearly 90 per cent of the participants at Yorkcraft. Just over 2 per cent of the participants are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

26. About a third of participants have a learning difficulty. Others have neurological conditions, mental health needs, sensory impairments or conditions restricting mobility or dexterity.

27. There are opportunities for on-the-job training in the workplace and off-the-job training with a variety of providers.

Employability training

Strengths

- good promotion of work-based qualifications
- very good development planning
- active and very well-planned support to sustain participants in the workplace

Weaknesses

- low progression rates into unsupported employment

Achievement and standards

28. The promotion of work-based qualifications is very good, both in the supported business and in host employer provision. Participants are encouraged to obtain work- and leisure-related qualifications and may also receive financial support to fund learning. For example, the achievement of a qualification in basic food hygiene helped to promote employment opportunities in a catering company. The achievement of appropriate qualifications is promoted positively at progress reviews and nearly two-thirds of participants have achieved a work-related qualification since 2001. The achievement of targets is good. In 2005-06, nearly three-quarters of participants achieved their targets. Individual achievement is celebrated at the Yorkcraft site in displays of qualifications and by noting successes at workforce meetings. For many participants this is the first time they

have achieved a formal qualification. Participants develop good levels of confidence and work-based skills in different occupational areas. Initial assessment leads to the appropriate identification of workplace development and support requirements.

29. Placements meet the aspirations of participants, and they take a pride in their work. Appropriate, challenging targets are set at progress reviews, and progress made between the reviews is checked to support progression. In a few cases, there is insufficient consideration of how targets will be broken down into milestones of learning or how outcomes will be measured. Participants with host employers, using the additional support of a job coach, have well-structured objectives and clear tasks broken down into manageable elements of learning. For example, for a participant working as a cleaner, a daily work sheet clearly sets out a routine of activity stating a precise sequence to be followed. This identifies the room number, the type of product to use, and the areas for cleaning. Reminders about health and safety are also identified and promoted. Literacy, numeracy and language are promoted very effectively at reviews. Participants are increasingly enthusiastic about developing literacy and numeracy skills as the partnership with the college develops and they understand the relevance of such skills to their daily activities. Some targets contextualise learning opportunities to job roles and promote the development of literacy skills through information and communications technology. Achievement and retention are good.

30. Most of the participants transferred from the previous supported employment programme, and for many, progression into sustained unsupported employment is not appropriate. The rate of progression from the supported business and host employer provision is low. Seven participants have progressed since 2001. No-one progressed in 2005-06. This weakness was recognised in the self-assessment report. Strategies are being developed to improve progression into open employment. For example, better use is being made of the supported business to provide short-term work experience to support the development of a work ethic, improve motivation and increase confidence. However, it is too early to predict the effectiveness of this initiative. Referrals to the programme from Jobcentre Plus are currently very low.

The quality of provision

31. Development plans are used and managed very well. The current document is now well established following trials and reviews. Participants value the document and are able to identify how the development process supports their attainment of employment and personal skills. Targets are becoming increasingly specific, and in the best development reviews individual participants are setting their own objectives. Employment officers and supervisors are becoming more skilful at managing reviews and providing appropriate challenges to participants. Progress is recorded well and good use is made of interim reviews to keep participants motivated.

32. 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 coaches to develop a variety of personal and work skills. Job coaches structure their support very effectively providing intensive activities in the early stages and gradually reducing the level of support as the participant becomes more confident and competent. Employers and supervisors are given good advice and guidance to ensure placements are sustainable. Target-setting at reviews effectively identifies participants' development needs. For example, participants who lack confidence have a carefully managed programme agreed

with the employer, their colleagues and the Workstep team. 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.

33. The organisation has an inclusive approach to meeting individual needs. A profoundly deaf participant has regular contact with a British Sign Language interpreter to convey information in an appropriate format to co-workers and supervisors. Appropriate use is made of the Access to Work fund to ensure equal access to resources and support independent working.

34. Jobsearch arrangements are satisfactory and in some cases good. Appropriate use is made of relevant job vacancy websites and other sources. Supported employment officers work well with individuals to encourage independent job seeking skills and support the application process. Jobsearch participants are well motivated to return to employment.

35. Health and safety practice in the supported business and with host employers is satisfactory. Statutory training is timely and participants understand basic rules and practices. Reviews check participants' understanding and knowledge of health and safety and remind them of any change. Several participants have gained additional job-related qualifications.

Leadership and management

36. The operational management of Workstep is good. Staff morale and the management of performance have recently improved considerably. Regular audits of assessment and development plans are used to report on the quality of initial assessment and development planning. Data is used effectively to record achievement of targets and qualifications. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Participants and employers are actively involved in the self-assessment process but CYC's feedback on the outcome of the process is insufficient. There is no executive summary of the report's outcomes shared with employers. Staff are well qualified, motivated and have relevant industrial and supported employment experience. Communication with the supported business participants is satisfactory. Managers hold regular meetings with participants to keep them informed of business developments, health and safety arrangements, training and development opportunities and other items of interest. Participants can suggest agenda items in advance. Minutes of the meetings are displayed on the canteen notice board but their format is not accessible to all.

