

Meeting:	Children, Culture & Communities Scrutiny Committee
Meeting date:	17 October 2023
Report of:	Angela Padfield
Portfolio of:	Councillor Jo Coles – Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care and Councillor Kilbane – Executive Member for Skills

Scrutiny Report: Performance of York Learning Strategic Plan 2022-2023

1. This report (Annexe A) presents York Learning’s end of year performance against their strategic aims for the academic year 2022/23.

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.

Policy Basis

2. 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, guide managers, and ensure there is robust and accountable governance arrangements.

Recommendation and Reasons

3. This report is for discussion, challenge, and comment on the service’s performance over the last year.

Reason: To help monitor the service and provide sound governance arrangement for York Learning Services.

Background

4. 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 and wellbeing. The service is funded exclusively from external contract funding and fee income which is in the region of £4.4m.
5. This report, which is for the academic year 2022/2023, is an important element in enabling the service to demonstrate to Ofsted that it has secure and robust governance arrangements in place.
6. Access to cultural activities:
 - York Learning continues to provide a strong cultural offer that is accessible to all. The offer is wide ranging to promote Arts and heritage crafts as well as other interest to provide engagement pathways into learning. We have maintained discretionary rates (means tested benefits) in all weekly Painting, Drawing, Crafts and Dressmaking courses to ensure they are accessible to all. Learners can also apply for hardship funding, and we also have a growing social prescription model to enable access to free courses from referral partners to those who feel they can't afford to access a course or don't see why spending money for accessing a course or engagement activity may support their wellbeing. We currently get direct referrals for social prescribing from Kyra, CVS, Job Centre Plus, Mind and Local Area Teams.
 - City wide annual Community Arts Events/Projects in either Fine Arts, Textiles or Crafts are run across the city to engage with a wide range of community groups, charities, and schools. Last year, we focused on the making of Morsbags (shopping bags from recycled and unwanted fabrics). This year we have also had a Dressmaking and Millinery Event for learners to celebrate what they have created, and we have organised the Adult Learning in York Week to promote adult learning overall with a range of free provision across the city with other adult learning providers such as York College, University of York, Kyra, U3A and the Railway Museum. This year, we are continuing to engage people in Morsbags to reinforce the preserving of the environment and ways to be sustainable. We are also undertaking a partnership project with All Saints of North Street where we will engage with a

target group to design and make a stained-glass artwork entitled “The Anchorite”.

- There has been a range of courses which intertwine maths teaching with the activities of sewing, dressmaking and craft courses which fulfil the Multiply agenda, enable free classes to make them accessible whilst also generating an opportunity to introduce these cultural activities to residents who will not previously have engaged with them. This will continue through this current academic year and will be based at Westfield School, Door 84, and Clarence Street. They have been designed to equip learners with the basic skills to alter clothes to “fit” (either them or their family members), encourage sustainability by using existing garments and hopefully equip learners with the skills they need to continue to sew at home.
- This year we have introduced a new ‘All Inclusive Arts & Crafts’ course just beginning at Explore York, designed for people who may require a more bespoke approach to learning and welcome to those particularly with dementia. Sessions will include felt making and embroidery along with art collage, printmaking, and sketch book ideas.
- Learning to leisure activities we have also started two ‘Keep Moving! – Seated and All Inclusive’ exercise courses’ starting at Marjorie Waite court. One of which is specifically aimed at people suffering the symptoms of dementia.
- There continues to be learning provision in different languages which is picked up in more detail in point 10 below.

7. Subcontracted SEN (Special Educational Needs) provision
Personalised learning packages are funded through the 16-18 EFA (Education Funding Agency) Study programme funding stream as the eligibility for this also covers those with Education health care plans (EHCP) up to the age of 25 who want to study post-16 or post-19 education after leaving secondary education. Funding for this programme comes through a student number allocation which states the overall number of students that can be funded, the guided learning hours that they should be undertaking, and of that number how many places can be allocated to high needs support (HNS) students. HNS students are those with EHCPs whose learning needs require additional funding above and beyond £6000 per academic year. This funding can pay for a myriad of resources and additional staffing for those students who require considerably greater input than their mainstream peers. The funding model is

complex and operates on a lagged basis. Local authorities are treated differently to FE colleges under this funding stream and also have a duty of care to ensure that if provision is available then students must be placed in it regardless of funding availability. As York Learning couldn't provide all of these options in house, it has been better to subcontract this provision and support those external organisations with a robust quality process in place to monitor performance.

- The local offer is currently via 6 different local subcontractors that specialise in personalised learning programmes but all of which have slightly different learner outcomes and themes depending on the individuals interest.
 - These students study full time, accessing a variety of educational and vocational study, accredited English and maths and access to enterprise opportunities and work placements. There is a wide variety of options and pathways to choose from to meet the needs, aspirations, and interests of the learners.
 - This is a strong part of York Learning's offer that performs very well overall. Two providers are on action plans for improvement which is mainly related to some poor achievement rates related to English and maths. Our subcontracting partners say they are well supported by us throughout the quality processes.
 - We have been successful in increasing funding for numbers in 22-23 from 97 to 104 places. We have decided not to pursue more funding for this coming academic year as we feel we need to revisit the quality processes with all providers to maintain the focus currently required.
 - The service has just completed a thorough audit via Veritau in the processes of managing this offer, the funding, and the procurement processes. All expected actions have been implemented with most now completed. There were no concerns on our fitness to continue receiving and subcontract the funding for this offer and the process we follow.
8. Our language offer has shrunk over the last few years, which is a part of a visible trend nationally. However, we are keen to continue to promote the modern foreign language provision as it encourages and promotes cultural awareness and diversity. For 23/24 We have sighted two courses in a target area of the city and reduced the price of the Spanish Absolute Beginners in order to attract a wider audience, which has worked very well so far.

Currently the offer consists of; -

- French, Spanish, Italian & BSL (although the BSL which was full has had to be cancelled as the tutor pulled out). We are hoping to expand into Lip Reading for 23/24.
- Courses are designed with clear starting points and progression routes from Absolute Beginners (year 1), Year 2-4 to Advanced Culture & Conversation. However, all languages do not operate at each level depending on the number of learners who progress as that decides if a course can continue to be offered.
- Delivery models include: -
 - Face to Face,
 - Blended (3 x face to face sessions and 7 x online sessions)
 - Online only.
- We have kept a 'Means Tested Benefit' rate within all languages courses up to Year 3 after that if a learner particularly would struggle to pay for the course, at the full costs rate, we will ask them to submit a learner support request via the hardship fund.
- Challenges in languages are myriad which include: recruitment of tutors which has been very difficult over the last couple of years, partly a negative impact from Brexit; a drop of languages within some schools have seen some teachers leave the sector altogether and there are very few trained BSL tutors. Language tuition moved online due to Covid and thrived at first but has struggled to pick up post covid. Learners are often motivated to take up a language when they travel and post covid the decline in t travel at first and the cost-of-living impact afterwards is all part of those dropping numbers of engagement for learners.

Consultation Analysis

9. The report has been created through collaboration with the service management team within York learning.
10. The plan is presented for consultation, comments and seek clarification on any areas for concern.

Risks and Mitigations

11. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks identified associated with the areas of work covered in this report are its image and reputation. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score has been assessed at 7 which equates to "Low". This is acceptable but means that regular monitoring will be required of the Quality Improvement Plans.

Wards Impacted

12. All Wards

Contact details.

For further information please contact the author of this Decision Report.

Author

Name:	Angela Padfield
Job Title:	Head of York Learning
Service Area:	Customers and Communities
Telephone:	01904 555987
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	06 October 2023

Background papers

No papers.

Annexes

Annex A: York Learning Strategic Plan 2022-23