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

19 September 2017

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities and Equalities)

York Learning – Update and Progress Report 2016/17

Summary

1. This report presents the end of academic year performance report and data for York Learning. This is the second report to Scrutiny Committee for the academic year 2016/17, the first one was back in November 2016. It also presents the service initial findings from its annual Self Assessment Report, prior to this being presented to the Executive Member in October 2017.
2. These two reports form 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.
3. Annex 2 contains some initial findings from the service's self assessments judgements. These are high level judgements taken from a number of curriculum reports. These are presented for comment in advance of the main report which will be presented to the Executive Member for sign off. The final report is not yet completed as final achievement data is incomplete.
4. At the previous meeting of this committee in November 2016 an income report was presented showing the sources of funding for the service. This has been updated and is included as Annex 2. Please note this income report is for the academic year August 2017 to July 2018.

Recommendations

5. Members are asked to:
 - Comment upon the performance of York Learning and seek clarification on any areas of concern
 - Consider the initial findings of the services self assessment report and make comments and recommendations for consideration by the Executive Member
 - Comment on the issues identified for the new academic year in paragraph 8 in advance of the strategic plan being signed off by the Executive Member

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

Background

6. 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. For the academic year 2017/18 this will be in the region £2.8m, an increase of about £260k on the previous year. The majority of the funding increases is for 19-25 year olds high needs personalised learning programmes. The majority of this funded is “passported” to partner organisations, primarily Blueberry Academy, Choose2Youth and United Response. It is also anticipated that funding via Advanced Learner Loans will increase as a result of increased demand across a number of areas.
7. Annex 1 is the final summary report for the academic year 2016/17. Where achievement data is highlighted this is still subject to some change as exam results continue to trickle in. Commentary on actions is given in detail toward the end of the report.

8. Annex 2 is a summary of the initial findings of the services self assessment process. This report is a high level summary of findings and judgements. More detailed curriculum level reports underpin this and are used to develop a detailed improvement plan for each area of the service. The report is in the process of being completed and following any recommendations from this committee will be presented to the executive member for sign off in October 2017.
9. Annex 3 is a detailed breakdown of income streams for the service. This was requested by members at the last Scrutiny Committee and will now form part of the update report. This funding is for the academic year and includes updated contract amounts confirmed on the 15th August.

Commentary on Performance Report

10. There are a number of positive areas to highlight from the report which might be of interest to members. They are briefly as follows:
 - a) The further increase in take up of loans funding courses and the increase in funding from £140k to £220k. This is as a result of increases in learners in counselling, hair and beauty and workplace learning standalone vocational qualifications.
 - b) The continued growth in fee income from a variety of different courses. This is part of the services growth strategy to enable courses to be cross-subsidised.
 - c) The continued and significant growth in High Needs Support Learners, as part of the local offer. Whilst most of this provision is sub-contracted. It would not have grown without the significant expertise in managing the growth and supporting sub-contracted partners to develop their capacity and expertise.
 - d) Securing two “Big Lottery” contracts to support some of the most vulnerable adults into work and provide stepping stones and support to do so.

11. There are also a number of areas of concern or where plans have not developed how we would have hoped. These are as follows:
 - a) The service had to withdraw from the Digital Inclusion project at Tang Hall and from the Financial Inclusion work with Foodbanks across the city. The former was by mutual agreement with the funders, whilst the decision to withdraw from the work with foodbanks was mainly to do with the nature of the work and the time taking in supporting individuals.
 - b) The service's success rates for Apprenticeship are going to fall below "minimum standards". In essence this means that the percentage of apprenticeships successfully completing their programme is below the national minimum standard. This will result in some intervention by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The fall in success rates is complex, but is mostly as a result of retention on programmes, which is partly a function of the sectors in which the service delivers apprenticeships, primarily Health and Social Care and Childcare.

Strategic/Service Plan 2017/18

12. The services latest Strategic plan for 2017/18 is due to be signed off by the executive member on 25th September 2017. The plan identifies a number of new opportunities and threats for the service as follows:
 - a) Increasing pressures as a result of the substantial bureaucratic requirements for audit contract compliance.
 - b) Funding for High Needs Support learners is increasing substantially for 17/18 as the service responds to the development of a local offer. This puts some pressures on the service due to the "lagged" nature of funding.
 - c) The increase in learners with complex emotional, mental health and socio-economic needs. This places a significant strain on staff both in terms of the time and emotional strain to support learners.

- d) Significant time and effort is required in order to secure funding to support much of the core work of the service. Increasingly contracts are becoming more specific and the operating margins are tougher. Balancing the demands of contract compliance with the funding that specific contracts secure is becoming ever more challenging. In 2016/17 this resulted in the service pulling out of 2 contracts with a combined value of £48k, as the operational requirements were simply too demanding for the funding that was being generated.
 - e) Working with Explore York to develop a new learning offer on the Burnholme Hub site. This is an exciting opportunity to develop a significant offer in high quality learning spaces. We are planning to relocate our counselling city wide offer to Burnholme in late 2018.
 - f) Apprenticeship funding and reforms are causing considerable instability in the sector. For York Learning this has meant a decline in the number of apprentices the service is working with. Conversely the service is seeing an increase in “loans funded provision” as employers increasingly see some of the requirements of apprenticeship presenting a considerable burden without the corresponding benefits.
 - g) Over the past 6 months York Learning has been working with NYCC and East Riding CC to develop collaborative working arrangements. It is anticipated that this work will increase over the next 12 months.
13. The threats and opportunities outlined above will be incorporated into an action plan which will be presented to Scrutiny Committee for monitoring in November. They will also be included in regular management updates and monitored through internal service quality improvement processes.

Options

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

Corporate Objectives

15. 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

16. **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.
17. The report has no Human Resources, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, Information Technology, Property or other implications.

Risk Management

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

Annexes

1. York Learning Strategic Service Plan : Actions 2016/17 Academic Year – Final 2017 Update
2. Summary of Draft Self Assessment Judgement 2016/17
3. Funding sources for York Learning – Academic Year 2017-18

Contact Details

Author:
Alistair Gourlay
Head of York Learning

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:
Charlie Croft
Assistant Director (Communities & Equalities)

**Report
Approved**

Date 7/9/17

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report