

York Learning Strategic Plan Performance 2025/26

Summary

1. The purpose of this report (Annex A) is to provide information on York Learning's performance against their strategic aims for the academic year 2025/26 and towards the skills challenges in the city.
2. 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.

Background

3. 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 grant/contract funding and fee income which is in the region of £6-7m. This report, which is for the academic year 2025/2026, is an important element in enabling the service to demonstrate to Combined Authorities and Ofsted that it has secure and robust governance arrangements in place.
4. The strategic report is grounded from the Accountability Agreement for 25/26 (Approved 14th June 2024). Within the Accountability Agreement we set targets based on the LSIP (Learning Skills Improvement Plan) and how we aim to perform against it with key aims set. Bringing the strategic plan to members brings scrutiny to those aims and our performance for members to discuss and challenge.
5. In July 2019 Scrutiny agreed to the formation of York Learning's Governance Board with the proviso that it did a yearly report to scrutiny on performance.

Consultation

6. The report has been created through collaboration with the service management team within York learning and the Improvement Board of Governors. The plan is presented for consultation, comments and the opportunity to seek clarification on any areas for concern.

Options

7. This report is for discussion there are no options.

Analysis

8. The strategic plan concentrates on our performance in the academic year just gone towards the agreed accountability agreement aims for 2025-2026. Our performance overall is good towards targets. Most targets have been improved considerably, with the majority having managed to reach the higher target set: -
 - 8.1. Career information advice and guidance (CIAG) continue to be a strength in developing career progression. Participation in CIAG has continued to grow from 60% to 75%.
 - 8.2. Wider progression into wider FE/HE (Further Education/Higher Education) is happening but has not reached the target of 40% it is currently at 28.9%. We continue to develop learners to embrace higher learning and internally our numbers have grown. In 24/25 we had 151 learners on L3 or above provision and this academic year 25/26 it has grown to 185.
 - 8.3. 19% of the offer has shifted to be also available as online, blended or hybrid learning (from 17%) and we expect that to increase to 23% by the end of the next academic year due to the additional short 'bite sized' provision which will increase a modular opportunity to learn. Whilst we continue to work hard on growing this model, we will continue to prioritise a focus of face-to-face learning for our priority groups.
 - 8.4. Successfully trailblazer pilots have run this year in the following:
 - i) 16-24yr olds have been able to access career information advice and guidance and/or take their GCSEs when usually they do not have access to it. Sixteen learners were able to access the programme of which eleven have sat English and/or maths exams. Year 2 will add on an element of mentoring to further support young people also.

- ii) Heritage Construction project in year one has recruited 20 individuals aged between 16- 55. There were mixed gender, abilities and backgrounds and the project engaged with a local employer Pinnacle Conservation Ltd for the repair and preparation of a heritage site at 1 Museum Street for commercial letting. Participants learned skills such as lime plastering, sash window repair and roof repair in a live site environment working to high industry standards. The project has been highly successful with all but one participant completing the training and live site experience. As 20 was the maximum safe number that could be trained in this way, we had to create a waiting list for a further 6 people who would like to attend future provision. We have now completed a successful procurement exercise for Year 2 to expand the breadth and scope of the programme to ensure a robust and speedy transition into the labour market through a mixture of direct and self-employment in this industry where we hope to recruit a further 30 participants. Both participants and the employer gave hugely positive feedback at the end of year one saying the following: -

“Getting the opportunity to learn all these skills on a real building site has been invaluable. It's been great to feel our work has been contributing something”.

CEO Adam Hickey said: “The York Learning Team pulled out all the stops to help us establish this programme in an incredibly short space of time, managing to recruit a great cohort to give this pilot scheme the best chance of success”.

- iii) Inspiring 50+ has worked with a range of adults who have engaged to learn how to improve their wellbeing and employability through a range of workshops and training 24 participants who have engaged in the programme which exceeded targets set by the Combined Authority. Out of those 13 were attending workshops about self-employment using an existing skill or passion, such as selling their craft on Etsy. Successful trials through Inspiring 50+ has led to the creation of a new program in 26/27 called ‘Support Your Future’ helping those with wellbeing challenges to engage and find support back into employment.

- 8.5. Job Fairs have continued this year mostly funded via Trailblazers we have run 4 job fairs in 25/26 which has had a total of 152 employer bookings and almost 2,600 job seekers through the doors overall.
- 8.6. Within family learning they have worked hard to introduce, via their programmes, a cultural interest in the city around us. They have introduced to parents and families Padlets (virtual display boards) that exemplified a range of fun things to do around the city during the holidays as well as courses that have developed a better understanding of what is available across the city. ([link to Padlet here York Culture Activities](#)). The team also worked with 'iTravel York' to add maths activities to their walking routes. The 'Discover and Grow' and '123 Go Out' courses had outcomes connected to the national objectives of 'Every Child Achieving' and 'Thriving and Keeping Children Safe'.
- 8.7. Digital inclusion work has continued to be involved with 'Digital Friendly York' and have ensured that the offer has included 3 new communities from IMD areas and across that offer it has included the introduction of new technology. This has included Drones, VR/AR (virtual reality, augmented reality), AI, 3D printing & Cyber Security. They have not been able to increase progression into qualifications due to the new qualifications they were going to use not being ready by the exam boards. Whilst this has been frustrating a new exam board has been sourced and qualifications will be ready to go by September. Enrolment numbers have dropped by 143 in this area due to this issue, the new qualifications will increase progression opportunities and increase enrolment numbers.
- 8.8. We have also been able to identify some funding which will help us towards our search for a 'trades' building and we are looking into ways we can produce an offer that supports adults in upskilling and retraining in 'construction trades' whilst weaving in a commercial offer that would enable us to then expand the 16-18 offer into the building too. This is an ongoing piece of work.

9. Overall recruitment numbers in 25/26 finished at 5,148 (5,339 24/25) enrolments across 547 courses (24/25 562) with 2,448 learners (24/25 2,497). There is a drop in participation numbers, the drop in numbers is due to a variety of reasons:-

- 9.1. Partly reflected by learners being eligible for some of the trailblazer courses
- 9.2. Some courses being unable to run due to insufficient learner numbers.

9.3. Moving some learners out of funded provision. as they are not allowed to keep repeating courses and are therefore no longer eligible, they either move into full cost provision or signposted to local providers who can meet their needs.

9.4. We have also had a drop in numbers this year within Digital courses as we had to stop recruitment around Easter whilst we designed and onboarded a new qualification route.

10. York Learnings final achievement figures for 24/25 Education & Training overall were;

10.1. Achievement 88.2% above national benchmarks(n/b) 87.2% n/b)

10.2. Retention at 93.3% (n/b 93%)

10.3. Pass Rate at 94.6% (n/b 93%).

10.4. 25-26 achievement rates will be kept up to date on our impact report as results come in <https://canva.link/york-learning-impact-report-2025-26>.

- It is still too early to predict where we will be for 25/26 at this point, but almost everything is moving in the right direction. We have had a poorer achievement rate within Routes 16-18 provision than we would have liked within their Functional Skills results.
- The apprenticeship offer achievement & retention rate was at 70.7% which was above benchmarks (n/b 60.4%) with a pass rate at 100% for 24/25 and this year we are currently at 87.5% which is a fantastic achievement.

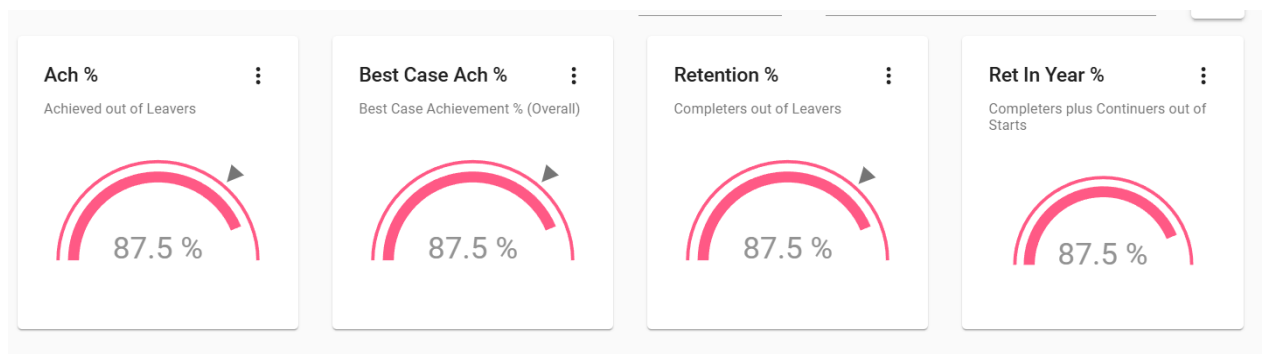


Figure 1 Apprenticeships

11. Achievement in maths overall is better than when last reported at 54.8% (24/25) which currently (before all results are in) has increased overall to 68% (25/26). However, achievement in maths level 1 was below benchmarks which is part of a national and regional picture. Functional Skills L1 was 34.5% compared national benchmarks at 57.1%. As we have reported previously, we have changed exam boards, and we are already seeing better results. However, one of our subcontractors chose to run their own exams with a different awarding body this year and results are poor, we cannot stop them from choosing to do this if quality of provision is high, which it was. Whilst quality of provision is still high the results and their choice of exam board has required us to bring this back in house and collaborating with them. This will affect our overall results but until the GCSE results are in and potential resits are final, we will not have a clear guide on this until later this year (usually December/January).

Basic skills English and Maths currently look like below but there are still exams being sat at this point of writing the report.

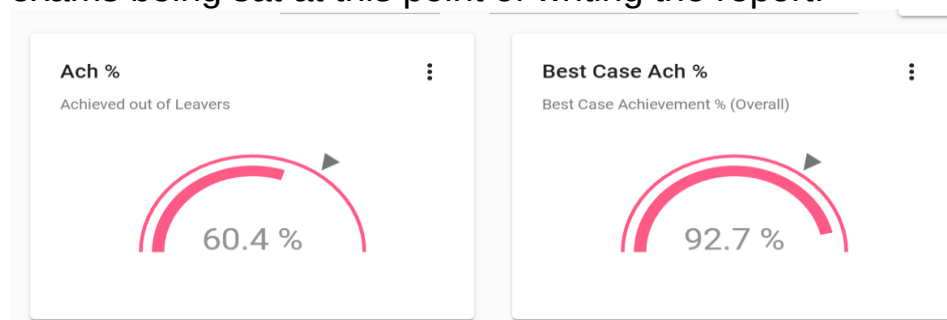


Figure 2 as at 30 July 26

12. Attendance continues to be challenging in the 16-24 young people's and high needs offer, mainly through, social emotional mental health issues, however with the additional mentor work we are putting in place this year additional site visits before starting and looking into 'Owls' bringing the classroom into their home, we are hoping that this will help engage and prepare the next cohort better.
13. We are pulling together an Impact Report (which is still being updated) as grades and feedback to keep the latest updates on grades to you as they are being received. <https://canva.link/york-learning-impact-report-2025-26>

Council Plan

14. The service offer aligns with the Council Plan 2023–2027 and its vision of creating a city for all. It contributes to the plan's four priority areas:
- **Equality and Human Rights** – by focusing on the needs of those who are marginalised, financially disadvantaged, underserved communities or those who are made vulnerable and promoting inclusive education.
 - **Affordability** – through free courses and fee discretions and providing families and others with information and support to help manage the cost-of-living.
 - **Environment and Climate** – by promoting and supporting sustainability through discussions around resident's daily routines. How to be sustainable in the fashion, creative, tech, childcare and adult care industries and also promoting bus and cycle routes to classes.
 - **Health and Wellbeing** – by engaging and creating relationships with residents and providing pathways to wellbeing that support and reduce isolation, loneliness and increase confidence, resilience, and opportunities they receive the right support at the right time to thrive.

Implications

15. This report and its annexes do not make any recommendations or changes to existing approaches or policies for City of York Council, our partners or our communities. As such no implications have been recorded below.
- **Financial** – None
 - **Human Resources (HR)** - None
 - **Equalities** - None
 - **Legal** - None.
 - **Crime and Disorder** - None
 - **Information Technology (IT)** - None
 - **Property** – None

Risk Management

16. This report carries no known risks.

Recommendations

17. Members are asked to consider the attached Strategic/Service Plan, challenge performance if needed, and *support the Plan*, subject to any suggested changes.

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

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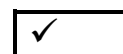
**Report
Approved**



Date 4 August 2026

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

York Learning Impact Report: <https://canva.link/york-learning-impact-report-2025-26>

Annexes

1. Annex A York Learning Strategic Plan 2025_26
2. Annex B Accountability Agreement 25_26
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s183414/Annex%20A%20Accountability%20Statement%20York%20Learning%202025-26.pdf>
3. Annex C York and North Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan
https://www.wnychamber.co.uk/app/uploads/2023/08/LSIP_York_and_North_Yorkshire_2023.pdf
4. Supporting Paper - York 10 Year Skills Plan -
(<https://www.york.gov.uk/YorkSkillsPlan>)
5. Supporting Paper – York’s Economic Strategy 2022-2032
<https://www.york.gov.uk/performance-policies/york-economic-strategy>

Abbreviations

CIAG - Career information advice and guidance
FE/HE - Further Education / Higher Education
IMD - Index of Multiple Deprivations
YNYCA - York North Yorkshire Combined Authority
VR/AR - Virtual Reality / Augmented Reality
3D - Three Dimensional
AI - Artificial Intelligence
n/b - National benchmarks
OWL – Video linked device to bring the classroom into the home of the learner